

150 years of 'Education for All' on the Isle of Man: context, resistance and resolution¹

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Angela W Little, Professor Emerita, UCL Institute of Education

Comments on this working paper are welcome and may be posted to angela.little@ucl.ac.uk

1.0 Introduction

2022 marks the 150th anniversary of the landmark 1872 Isle of Man Act for Public Elementary Education. The Act re-introduced compulsory education, transferred control of education from the Church to the State and paved the way for the abolition of school fees for all, improvements in the quantity and quality of teachers and the gradual unification, extension and diversification of an independent system of education.

New legislation does not arise in a vacuum. Legislation is driven and resisted by a range of interests, domestic and foreign. Similarly, legislation, once passed, is not implemented in a vacuum. It does not guarantee change on the ground and does not always lead to the expected improvements, especially in the short term. The Act had parallels in the Elementary Education Act of England and Wales 1870 and the Education (Scotland) Act 1872. However, it is neither a copy of them, nor was it created by the government of the United Kingdom.

This paper addresses four broad questions. What was the economic, social, political and education context out of which the Isle of Man Public Elementary Education Act of 1872 arose? What were the social, political and economic interests that promoted and resisted the passage of the Act? What were the similarities and differences with the Acts of England and Wales (1870) and Scotland (1872)? What was the impact of the Isle of Man Act of 1872 on educational participation?².

Much of the paper's general argument draws on earlier accounts³, but extends them in four main ways. Key elements of the economic, political, social and cultural context giving rise to the Act are distilled. The constellation of interests that resisted and facilitated the passage of the Act are presented in detail. Systematic contrasts between the Isle of Man Act and the parallel public education Acts of England and Wales and Scotland are drawn. And a detailed quantitative analysis of the impact of the Act on changes in educational participation in relation to underlying population change across the Island and in particular districts is presented.

¹ I am grateful for comments on an earlier draft to The Rev Dr. Hinton Bird, Dr. Mike Hoy, Professor Simon McGrath and Professor Keith Lewin.

² As a piece of historical writing, this paper falls within what an 'Acts and Facts' approach (McCullough, G. (2020) Compulsory School Attendance and Elementary Education Act of 1870: 150 Years On, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 68, 5, 523-540). Focussing on how and why legislative Acts arise, and with what impact, this may be a less popular approach among historians than formerly. Nevertheless, such questions remain central to any comprehensive understanding of the antecedents and consequences of structural (including legislative) change in education, wherever in the world that change occurs. The paper employs a range of sources, including newspaper articles, legislation, letters, official reports as well as books and journal articles.

³ Notably, Clamp, P.J. (1988) *The Struggle for the Common School System in the Isle of Man: 'A Compulsory Education Bill for Mona'*, *History of Education Society Bulletin*, 42, 18-29; and Bird, H. (1995) *An Island that Led – the History of Manx Education*, Vol 2, Chapter 1, *The New Education Act of 1872*.

2.0 The Economic, Social, Political and Education Context

What was the economic, social, political and education context out of which the Isle of Man Public Elementary Education Act of 1872 arose?

The Isle of Man has a long colonial history. From the late eighth century Norse Vikings raided, then settled and ruled the Island. After the period of Norse rule ended in 1265, Scotland and England fought for control and the Island entered 'dismal period... (notable) more for the damage done to the Scandinavian heritage than any positive development' (Edge, 1997, p.37). From 1405 the Island became what some have termed a vassal state or petty kingdom, whereby the English Crown gave the Island's affairs to the Stanley family and its descendants who controlled much of the Island's internal revenue and policies. The period of these vassal monarchs ended formally in 1765 after which the English crown and imperial authorities 'revested' control over many arrangements, including revenue. Despite 'revestment' and the Representation of the People Act 1832 of the United Kingdom (also known as the Great Reform Act), the Island's government was, until 1866, led by a Governor appointed by the Queen of England, along with a self-selected political elite of large landowners and merchants.

A parish-based-school system was established by Bishop Isaac Barrow, Bishop cum Governor of the Island between 1663-1671. Parish schools (referred to sometimes as petty schools) offered an elementary education in reading, writing and arithmetic, and instruction in the Anglican religion, through the medium of English rather than Manx, the language spoken by the majority of the inhabitants at that time. The clergymen-teachers were required to admit students from the poorest families without the payment of fees⁴. From this time the principle, if not always the practice, of 'Education for All' was established. Subsequent bishops, notably Wilson (1698-1755), Hildesley (1755-1773) and Ward (1827-1838) built on this parish network and sought to improve the practice of Education for All.

In 1704 Bishop Wilson drew up regulations for compulsory education. These became law through an Ecclesiastical Act.

For the promoting of Religion, Learning and Good Manners, all Persons shall be obliged to send their Children, as soon as they are capable of receiving Instruction, to some petty school, and to continue them there until the said children can read English distinctly; unless the Parents give a just cause to excuse themselves, approved of by the Ordinary in an Open Court....⁵

Bishop Wilson worked to separate the roles of teacher and clergyman and the creation of a school room beyond, not within, the church walls. Bishop Hildesley, Wilson's successor, challenged the use of English as the medium of instruction in the parish schools and introduced religious texts in the native Manx Gaelic, an innovation that was short-lived. In later years Bishop Ward extended access to education in remote 'Mountain' areas through dual-purpose school cum church buildings. From these times the principle, if not always the practice, of 'Education for All' was established.

⁴ Hoy, M. (2010) Isaac Barrow: his life and legacy, Culture Vannin

⁵ Gill, J.F. (1883) The Statutes of the Isle of Man Vol 1 1417-1824, London: Printed (by Authority) by Eyre and Spottiswoode

The onset of modernity

Belchem (2000) has described the period of Manx history between 1830 and 1869 as the 'onset of modernity'⁶. From around the 1830s there was growth in the fishing, mining and farming economies and the first regular steamship service between Douglas, the commercial capital, and Liverpool in the North of England was established. The mood for political change was intensifying, influenced by the growth of Methodism and a reform-oriented press. From the early 1800s there was an influx of 'gentlemanly stranger residents', many of them 'half pay' officers who retired to the Island after the Napoleonic Wars, attracted by the cheap living the Island offered at that time. They contributed to the creation of a new English-speaking middle class. Mass tourism took off from the 1860s, attracting thousands of English-speaking visitors from the North-West of England.

A patchwork of education provision

Education on the Island at this time is best described as a patchwork of provision. As we have seen already Bishop Barrow had established a parish-based⁷ school system in the 1660s. This continued to function through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In the early nineteenth century 'National' Schools designed to promote 'education of the poor in the principles of the established church' were opened in towns and villages and followed the 'monitorial method of teaching' in which a single master or mistress supervised young monitors who in turn instructed the children. Both the parochial schools and the National Schools charged small fees (school pence) and offered fee waivers to those too poor to pay.

A number of small private schools were available for those able to pay higher fees and catered to the English-speaking middle classes⁸. A smaller number of fee-paying 'grammar' or 'free' schools, which had opened in the 17th and 18th centuries, continued to offer a classical liberal education at both elementary and post elementary levels. An unknown number of 'dame' schools, run by women from their homes, catered to younger children at low cost.

In 1833, King William's College, a (high) fee-paying 'public school' with boarding facilities was established in the-then capital town of Castletown and attracted students from throughout the British Isles, with Manx students in the minority⁹. Over time the College became the school of choice for the Manx elite - and provided a route to a career in the church, law, banking, the army or the colonial service.

Over the years, the compulsory aspect of the 1704 Act had not been enforced by the church, and by the 1860s school attendance was *de facto* voluntary. Estimates of the enrolment ratio around this time range from 47% to 82%, referring respectively to those enrolled and attending school on a specified day (47%), those enrolled and attending school during a specific month (61%) and the percentage of children reported by parents to be enrolled in school (82%)¹⁰.

⁶ Belchem, J (Ed), (2000), *A New History of the Isle of Man*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press

⁷ A parish is a small administrative district with its own Anglican church and vicar (incumbent), under the direction of the bishop. Parish schools were often referred to as parochial schools. Seventeen schools were established in the seventeen parishes and in four in the towns.

⁸ Bird, H. (1995) Vol 1 Chapter 7

⁹ Christopher, H. S. (1905), *King William's College Register, 1833-1904*.

¹⁰ Board of Education for the Isle of Man, *First Report*, year ending 31st March 1873. Figures for 1872. The denominator used for these percentages is 9,834, this being the number of children reported by parents to be enrolled or non-enrolled in school (Appendix D. Table 3).

Education Elsewhere

Elsewhere, in England and on the European continent, political and economic imperatives were changing public opinion towards the public provision of 'education for all.' On a world scale, the late nineteenth century ushered in a new wave of colonial expansion that reflected rivalries between the great European powers of the day. Britain, France and Germany sought new economic resources and markets, and efforts were stepped up to 'civilise' other parts of the world through religion and education. It was also the eve of what historians term 'the second industrial revolution' and the emergence of the German Empire (formed in 1871) as a rival to Britain's industrial pre-eminence. There was a growing awareness in Britain that publicly funded compulsory education had contributed to Germany's rapid industrial 'catch up.' Up until that time, education in Britain was not compulsory, was driven by private initiative and was not considered to have played a major part in Britain's early industrialisation¹¹. In Prussia and Saxony, by contrast, education was compulsory and provided by the respective governments. By the 1860s it has been estimated that 97.5% of children in Prussia attended school; in Saxony it was 100 %. In England, by contrast, only about 50% of children were receiving some years of elementary education¹².

The Island's press followed education developments in England and Wales closely. In England, the 1867 Reform Act had increased the number of eligible voters, including a much larger number from among the working classes. For some, including Robert Lowe, it became clear that 'our future masters' (i.e., the substantial number of the working classes with the power to vote men in and out of Parliament) should be educated and 'learn their letters.' There must, he thought, be a national system of education.

In England two education charities had been in the vanguard of extending provision of education to the poorer social groups from the early of the nineteenth century. While both promoted the 'monitorial system' of education, the schemes differed in the type of religious education on offer.

One group worked under the auspices of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales. This charity, under the leadership of the Rev Andrew Bell, established what came to be known as 'National' schools that promoted teaching in the liturgy and catechism of the Church of England and the term 'National' expressed the idea (or hope) that that of the religion of the established Church be the foundation of the national education system¹³.

The other group worked under the auspices of 'The Institution for Promoting the British System for the Education of the Labouring and Manufacturing Classes of Society of Every Religious Persuasion' established what came to be known as 'British schools.' Its leader, Joseph Lancaster, was a Quaker. The religious education he and the Society¹⁴ promoted was 'non-denominational,' untied to any specific religious tradition. The two societies competed with each other and 'decades of out-and-out rivalry were fomented'¹⁵.

¹¹ Meisenzahl, R.R. (2015) 'How Britain Lost its Competitive Edge: competence in the second industrial revolution', in Grief, A., Kiesling, L., and Nye, J.V.C. *Institutions, Innovation and Industrialisation: Essays in Economic History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press

¹² Wyatt, L.T. (2008) *The Industrial Revolution*, Westport Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press

¹³ Parker, S., Allen, S., and Freathy, R. (2020) *The Church of England and the 1870 Elementary Act*, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 68, 5, 541-565

¹⁴ known initially as the Royal Lancastrian Society, and, from 1814, the British and Foreign School Society

¹⁵ Parker et al (2020) *op. cit.*

In the years leading up to the 1870 Education Act of England and Wales the National Education League in England had campaigned hard for a national system of fee-free, compulsory and non-religious education. There was considerable resistance. On the face of it, the fault line in England lay between the denominationalists (in this case the Church of England) and the non-denominationalists (including Quakers, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Unitarians). High Church, Evangelical and Broad-Church Anglicans differed in their views on how the church should align with the State in a denominationally plural society, and on whether education should be religious or secular¹⁶.

Back in Mann

Back on the Isle of Man, the religious question had followed a different route. The innovative ideas about the monitorial system of education reached the Island from across the water in around 1810 and a number of 'National' schools were established. But the rivalry seen in England between the denominational and non-denominational societies did not arise.

...the very strong Church influence on the Island made it inevitable that the influence of the National Society's ideas should prevail Although the very first school on the Island was known initially as a Lancasterian School, the British and Foreign School Society ... never succeeded in making headway in the Island, and the rivalry.... which lasted many decades across the water, was unknown in the Isle of Man¹⁷.

But if the rivalry between the Anglican and non-denominational schools did not arise on the Island, tensions between the Anglican and non-Conformist church did. By 1869, the non-Conformists had become a powerful force for change on the Island and the recent reform of the House of Keys and the extension of franchise had, as we shall see, given the general populace the confidence to challenge the authority of the Church of England – in representative government as well as in education.

A new Governor for the Island

In 1863, Sir Henry Brougham Loch, arrived on the Island as its new, young, Lieutenant Governor. Loch was a moderniser, a reformer and a 'great administrator'¹⁸. In his report of progress at the end of his first ten years of office, Governor Loch wrote that he had overseen the passage of seventy or eighty legislative measures. Among the 'most important measures' introduced was what Loch termed the Compulsory Education Act of 1872¹⁹.

After Loch had arrived on the Island he faced a number of political issues, the most pressing of which was the longstanding demand²⁰ from some sections of the population for electoral reform of the House of Keys, the 'representative' branch of the Legislature. Members of the House of Keys – large landowners and merchants - held office for life. When a vacancy arose, sitting members submitted the names of two candidates to the Governor from among their own socio-economic class. Petitions for more representative elections to the House of Keys had fallen on deaf ears. The Reform of the British Parliament in 1833 which led to members of the House of Commons elected by men who met

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Bird, H. (1995) *An Island that Led: the history of Manx education*, Vol 1, p 222

¹⁸ Winterbottom, D. (2012) *Governors of the Isle of Man since 1765*, Douglas, Manx Heritage Foundation, 2nd edition

¹⁹ Private and Confidential Documents of Sir Henry Loch 1873-1882. Government Office Papers, Manx National Heritage Library ms. 09845

²⁰ Pressure for reform had been growing since the 1770s.

<https://www.tynwald.org.im/education/history/1867/Pages/petitions.aspx> accessed 02 09 2021

property criteria, created a fresh impetus to the long struggle for constitutional change on the Island. But that impetus did not come from Westminster. It came from the Manx liberal press, the non-conformists and the temperance movement. Two of its main protagonists, notably Robert Fargher, editor of the *Mona's Herald*, and James Brown, editor of the *Isle of Man Times*, were to suffer imprisonment for their reformist views and demands²¹.

What prompted constitutional change was a combination of severe weather and financial necessity. During the Winter of 1864, a storm had destroyed much of the breakwater in Douglas Bay. This was in the process of being re-built when another fierce storm demolished the new works altogether. A new breakwater was essential for the improvement of trade and transport links with England, not least for the safe landing of the growing numbers of revenue-generating summer-time tourists on the landing pier.

Governor Loch recounts the series of events that followed. There was

A dangerous mass of ruin in the middle of Douglas Bay, impossible to repair, and the Insular Government had no funds available for its removal... I therefore drew to the attention of the Secretary of State for the Home Department to the financial position of the Island and suggested a scheme for the revision of the Customs' duties, and for otherwise changing the system of dealing with the Revenues and expenditure of the Island.... These changes however, involved increased taxation, and the manner, therefore, in which the people were represented, became a necessary question for consideration.... Previous to 1866, the Members of the House of Keys which was considered to be the representative branch of the Legislature, were self-appointed and for life.... The people had long remonstrated against this system.... I felt, however, that the contemplated financial change could not, in justice, be carried out, unless accompanied by an alteration in the mode of electing the Members of the House of Keys, and Sir George Gray.... consented to recommend that the Royal Assent should be given to a measure to be passed by the Insular Legislature, for placing the elective franchise in the hands of the ratepayers. By this means I was able to bring the two proposals, viz. that of increased taxation and that for the election of the Members of the House of Keys, simultaneously forward, and both proposals were accepted and carried²².

Loch negotiated with the British Government to raise funds to repair the harbour works, and at the same time for his greater control over Insular revenue. While reform of the House of Keys was not in fact a condition set by the British Government in return for greater financial control, Loch presented the two proposals to the House of Keys as though they were²³. Suffrage was extended to males who met property criteria, and, in 1867, the House of Keys became a democratically elected body for the first time²⁴. The new breakwater was built, taxation was increased, and the Island's government gained greater control over its surplus revenue. The domestic economic condition of government had changed. The Manx people had obtained 'Home Rule during pleasure'²⁵. The implication of this for education was the potential of the government to fund in part the implementation of the Public Elementary Education Act of 1872.

²¹ Fyson, R. (2016) *The Struggle for Manx Democracy*, Douglas, Culture Vannin

²² Private and Confidential Documents of Sir Henry Loch 1873-1882, op.cit.

²³ <https://www.tynwald.org.im/education/history/1867/Pages/loch.aspx> Accessed 02 09 2021

²⁴ <https://www.tynwald.org.im/education/history/1867/Pages/1st-election.aspx>, Accessed 02 09 2021

²⁵ Moore, A.W. (1900) *A History of the Isle of Man*, Vol 2, London: T. Fisher Unwin, p 812

Concurrent Developments in England and Scotland

As historians of British education are aware, landmark education acts in England and Scotland catalysed a gradual shift of control of education towards the state and away from the church and charities, and a gradual expansion of educational opportunities for all. The Act to provide for public Elementary Education in England and Wales, often referred to as Forster's Act²⁶, was passed in 1870. In Scotland, the Act to amend and extend the provisions of the Law of Scotland on the subject of Education was passed in 1872.

Governor Loch and his officials would have been aware of the political debates surrounding both Acts. The local press frequently published articles on the ongoing debates in the Houses of Parliament in Westminster about education in England and Wales, and a few about Scotland. Loch, being a Scot, would in all likelihood have had contacts who could keep him abreast of developments in Scottish education and the debates surrounding the legislation for education.

Governor Loch tried to introduce legislation for public elementary education on the island *in advance of* that of England and Wales²⁷. It is to that story of 'wanting to be the first' that we now turn.

3.0 The social, political and economic interests that promoted and resisted the passage of the 1872 Act

What were the social, political and economic interests that promoted and resisted the passage of the Act?

Electoral reform was connected with a desire, among many, for a reform of education for the masses. Early in 1868, seven months after the first General Election, a press article asserted:

The whole country is astir. The demand for parliamentary reform, which has happily at length been to some extent conceded, was not more urgent and imperative than is that for some system of national and compulsory education. Within the past few years public opinion has undergone a most wonderful change ... some have even gone as far as to contend that the duty of meeting this much felt want devolved (sic) on the state²⁸.

State involvement was justified in part because it was cheaper to teach 'the people how to become good and useful citizens' than to punish them as criminals. It was claimed that the statistics have 'indisputably proved' that an uneducated person is more likely to become a criminal than an educated person²⁹. If taxes had to be paid it was better that they be paid for opening and keeping open the schools rather than the punishment of crime. It is a question of

more schoolmasters and fewer policemen; more policemen and fewer schoolmasters. Schoolmasters, it is true, are not quite as demonstrable, or quite as ornamental as policemen; they are more useful however, as conservators of public peace and property³⁰.

The compulsory element was justified on the grounds that compulsory vaccinations were already an accepted part of the life against disease. Similarly, education was a type of vaccine that would

²⁶ Forster was the main sponsor of the 1870 Act to provide for public Elementary Education in England and Wales

²⁷ Bird (1995) op.cit.

²⁸ *Mona's Herald* 22 01 1868 'The Education of the People'

²⁹ op cit.

³⁰ *Mona's Herald* 03.11 1869.

prevent children from growing up as ‘roaming the streets or spending valuable time on the roads or on the sands’³¹.

To be the first

The formal political debate was about to start. On Wednesday December 1st, 1869, the Governor announced that he would shortly lay an education bill before the Tynwald Court. Its objective would be

.... the removal of some of the causes of crime (Applause). Crime is frequently the result, in the first instance of ignorance, and ignorance is too often the result of an insufficient provision being made for the education of a large bulk of the population.... It would confer infinite credit upon the Legislature of this Island *if the Isle of Man was the first in which a large, broad, and comprehensive system of education were to be introduced* (Applause)³².

In asserting that education would be compulsory, the Governor reminded the Court that although an Act of Tynwald obliging all children to attend had been passed as far back as 1704³³ the provisions for translating this law into practice had been inadequate. He indicated that the Bill would make school attendance compulsory and would preserve ‘entire freedom in all matters of religion.’ This statement also drew applause. Despite the recent constitutional changes, the responsibility for the inspection of schools would continue to lie with the Council of Education in England while the management of schools would be local and comprise a Board of Education appointed by the Tynwald Court and a School Committee set up in each parish. The costs of education would be provided through school pence (i.e., fees), endowments, collections, rates and customs revenue. The Governor concluded

..... I feel sure that every member of the Court is most anxious in his heart that education should be placed within reach of every child in the Island, however poor, however humble its lot may be, and that the blessings of education should not be confined to the few privileged classes.³⁴

This too was met with applause.

The Draft Bill of 1870

The draft Bill duly appeared in early 1870. Its key features concerned the management of schools, the designation of schools, religious instruction, the certification and inspection of teachers, compulsory attendance and finance. Governor Loch sought to support his case for an expansion of education with statistics. The English rule of thumb at the time was that education needed to be provided for one in seven of the population. The 1861 census had indicated that the population comprised 52,469 persons. The total population for 1870, was estimated to be 57,000, an assumption that generated an estimated pupil shortfall of 2,993 and an accommodation shortfall of 1,823³⁵.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mona’s Herald 01 12 1869 Tynwald Court. Author-added emphasis

³³ Gill, J.F. (Ed) 1883, The Statutes of the Isle of Man Vol 1 1417-1824, 1703-4 Ecclesiastical Constitutions, 158-159

³⁴ Mona’s Herald, 01 12 1869 Tynwald Court

³⁵ Bird 1995 op.cit. p.6

The Bill comprised 72 clauses, of which the main ones concerned the Management of schools, the designation of schools, religion, school inspection and teachers, compulsory education and exemptions, and the levy of a local rate on real estate³⁶.

The new management structure would comprise two layers. The management and supervision of the whole scheme to be entrusted to an Education Board, presided over by the Governor and consisting of five members of the Tynwald Court elected by the Court for any term not exceeding three years. Every parish to have a school committee comprising the incumbent (i.e., the vicar) and churchwardens of the parish plus four other parishioners to be elected at a vestry meeting. Each committee would elect its chairman.

Schools managed by the Board would be designated as 'public elementary schools.' The schools under the management of the Board would be (i) parochial schools (ii) non parochial schools and not erected under the authority of the Act but with the consent of the trustees and legal managers or their majority (iii) new schools erected under the authority of the Act. In the case of (ii), the consent of the parish church clergyman as well as the school trustees would be required.

The religious issue, which, as we shall see subsequently, would become the most controversial part of the Bill, involved myriad elements. In each public elementary school religious instruction would follow the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England. Denominational schools could apply to become public elementary schools on condition that religious instruction be given at times approved of by the Board under the superintendence and direction of the relevant minister or pastor. Five managers were to be appointed for every such school and no denominational school would be subject to the control of any member of the school committee or parish. A 'conscience clause' would apply as follows. Every public elementary and denominational school would be open on equal terms to all children of all denominations, and any scholar in such a school could be withdrawn from any religious teaching or service to which his or her parents may object.

It was proposed that all public elementary and denominational schools would be inspected by a layman. All teachers appointed after the passing of the Act would be required to have certificates of competency from the Committee of Council (in England). Teachers would be appointed by the school committee of the parish or in the case of denominational schools by the managers, subject to the approval of the Board. Teachers could be suspended by the committee or managers, but dismissal would rest with the Board alone. No master would receive a salary less than £50 per year, and no mistress less than £20. The Board would have the power to grant compensation to old uncertificated teachers and pensions to certificated teachers.

Attendance would be compulsory for children from the age of four and parents would be subject to a fine not exceeding five shillings for the non-attendance of their children. Children who were receiving home tuition, attending a grammar, public, endowed or private school. or who were sick or infirm or with mental incapacity would be exempted from attendance at a public elementary or denominational school. Children might be permitted to leave school before the age of 13 if they attained a standard of education prescribed by the Board.

Part of the funding of the new scheme would arise from a 'rate' (i.e., a tax) to be levied on real estate, to cover one third of the balance of expenses of a school, no rate to exceed two pence in the pound and a sum equal to double the rates to be paid out of customs revenue.

³⁶ Mona's Herald, 09 03 1870

Swift Reactions to the Draft Bill

The reaction to the draft Bill was swift. Already by December 15, 1869, objections had surfaced. The Bill, it was claimed, delegates to the Ministers of the Episcopal Church

undue and almost insulting power. Did his Excellency the Lieutenant Governor.... remember that a majority of the inhabitants of the Island were Dissenters..... Why should the inhabitants of the Island, the majority of them being Dissenters, be taxed for the teaching of opposite opinions³⁷

The author of a letter to the editor protested 'I am satisfied that it could never be designed to become law. Men of Mona! Up and tell the House of Keys civilly and plainly, that no such law can be palmed on this Island'³⁸.

Educational developments elsewhere

In recognition of the debate that was looming, the press sympathetic to new legislation sought to inform their readers of developments in education elsewhere. As is also widespread practice in the present day, examples from 'elsewhere' were frequently invoked, indeed cherry-picked, in support of a particular position. Those interested in education on the Island followed the development of a public education bill for England was followed with particular interest. The Manx press reported the tensions in England between the Birmingham League (from 1869, renamed the National Education League) and its advocacy of a national and free education, a school rate, compulsory attendance and secular instruction, and the National Education Union, with its embrace of men of 'all shades of religious opinion' and its advocacy of denominational education³⁹. Readers were kept abreast of the development of an Education Bill for Scotland and the proposals there for a national system of education, unsectarian in principle, undenominational in character and compulsory in operation. All parochial schools were to become National Schools, supported by government and local rates and a central education board for Scotland would be established⁴⁰.

Reports flowed in from further afield too. The Isle of Man Times reproduced extracts from a report from the Society of Arts, redolent of the education league tables seen so often in the present day, in which countries were divided into four categories. In the first category were those most advanced in their education, including Saxony, Switzerland, Baden Württemberg, Denmark, Prussia, Sweden and Holland. England appeared in the second category and Turkey in the fourth. The report authors concluded that 'those in favour of compulsory education will be glad to see that it is only in those countries where that principle is carried out that the state of education is anything like so far advanced as it ought to be'⁴¹.

The Bill is rejected

The first draft of the Bill was rejected by the Legislative Council on February 12th, 1870. The Council had been summoned for four days of work but since they rejected the clause on Compulsory Attendance on the first day, albeit by just a single vote, there was no need for further sittings and deliberation. The Council addressed neither the religious clauses nor the clauses on a local rate. This

³⁷ Mona's Herald 01 12 1869 The New Education Bill

³⁸ Mona's Herald 15 12 1869 Letter to the editor

³⁹ Isle of Man Times 18 12 1869

⁴⁰ Isle of Man Times 12 02 1870

⁴¹ Isle of Man Times 08 01 1870

‘unexpected result has caused considerable sensation in the public mind’⁴². It was also a lost opportunity for Governor Loch and the Island to ‘become the first’ to introduce public elementary education supported by the State, ahead of both England and Scotland. Had the other clauses of the Bill been given an airing the Governor might have become more fully apprised of the resistance the non-conformists to the continued Anglican control of the curriculum and school management. This resistance was building in the wings and would slow the passage of the Bill.

A clause on compulsory attendance was amended quickly⁴³. It specified that any child *under* the age of 12 years who reached a prescribed standard of education could be exempted from compulsory attendance⁴⁴. However, this did not placate the objectors to the Bill in general.

Further resistance

The month of March 1870 saw more objections to the draft Bill published in the press than in any other month that year. ‘Magister’ described the seventy-two clauses of the Bill ‘an elaborate affair for so small a place’⁴⁵, underlining the large overheads of time and resource that must be expended by any small island nation when legislating for small populations. The published articles and letters to the editor raised two main objections – the compulsory ages and hours of schooling, and the religion to be taught in school.

Compulsory attendance

The Isle of Man Farmers’ Club represented the most important insular commercial interest of the day. They objected to the clauses on the ages and hours of compulsory attendance. In a petition ‘to the Honourable the House of Keys,’ their ‘humble memorial’ suggested that the compulsory clause be modified to take account of the scarcity of labour at certain times of the year, especially in the thinly populated agricultural districts. The signatories suggested that children aged 9-12 years should not be compelled to attend school all year round, that compulsory attendance should not extend to more than 300 half days in the year, and that the times of such attendance be at the discretion of the parish School Committees so that ‘the children may be liberated at such periods as they may be most useful for agricultural or other purposes’⁴⁶. They averred that four years of age was too young for children to be made to attend school compulsorily, suggesting, instead, that the start of compulsory education should be six years, with attendance between 4 years and 6 years optional. The *Mona’s Herald* was quick to congratulate the Farmers’ Club on having moved beyond its more usual discussions about ‘thinning turnips.’ It had considered in full the detail of the revised Bill and had taken a reasoned stand⁴⁷.

Religious education

The religious question attracted an even greater degree of opposition. Despite Loch’s promise that education would preserve freedom in matters of religion, the clauses on religious instruction and school management by the Church of England were maintained in the revised Bill. The majority of schools likely to be transferred to the state, many established in the period 1668 -1675, had been under the *de facto* authority of the Church of England. The clauses reinforced *de jure* the Anglican doctrine as the basis of the religious curriculum. Other clauses maintained the control of the

⁴² Isle of Man Times 12 02 1870

⁴³ *Mona’s Herald* 08 03 1870

⁴⁴ Isle of Man Times 05 03 1870

⁴⁵ *Manx Sun* 19 03 1870, letter from Magister to the Editor.

⁴⁶ *Mona’s Herald* 09 03 1870.

⁴⁷ *Mona’s Herald* 16 03 1870 Petitions against the Education Bill

Anglican church over school management via the proposed parish School Committees, comprising the local incumbent of the Anglican parish church, the churchwardens and four members elected at a church vestry (i.e., parish) meeting.

Notwithstanding the customary practice of attending services at both non-conformist and Anglican places of worship, the vast majority of the population did not identify primarily as members of the Church of England. Many non-conformist parents might have tolerated the Anglican religious teaching at a time when the parish and national schools offered the only education available. But with the prospect a new government scheme, with much of the finance deriving from people's taxes, then why should the people's taxes be used to promote Church of England doctrine at the expense of the non-conformists? The effect of the legal provision on Church of England doctrine would be 'to cover the Island with schools for the propagation of Church of England opinion, and this at the expense in great part of non-conformists.' The use of the turnip metaphor continued.

What on earth should have induced the Lieut.-Governor to suppose that four fifths of the inhabitants would receive what four-fifths of the inhabitants don't believe? Verily the Governor must think that the dwellers in Mona have singularly soft heads – something akin to boiled turnips, to hope or expect that the 'doctrine and discipline of the Church of England would be swallowed in the Education Bill⁴⁸.

The Mona's Herald asked what the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England would be. There would be different notions of what would be entailed, a complete *olla podrida* of opinion. Would the Anglican doctrine and the discipline be taught by the local vicar or by the schoolteacher? And if, by the schoolteacher 'it follows that none, but members of the Church of England would be permitted to be teachers in Elementary Schools supported by the rates'⁴⁹.

In their petition, the Farmers' Club had proposed that if any religious education were to be given then it should be a decision for the local School Committees to define and direct⁵⁰. Others agreed⁵¹.

What constitutes religious instruction?

Several contributors to the press maintained their gaze on developments 'across the water.' Under the headline 'Godless education,' one urged caution on a clause then being debated in the English Houses of Parliament on the delegation of powers over religious instruction to popularly elected boards. The writer asserted that local boards would be incompetent to define 'religious instruction.' By way of illustration, he offered examples from a religious examination from the rural Church of England deanery of Manchester and Salford, questioning their suitability.

Three sample questions read as follows.

- 1. What was the sign of the covenant which God made with Abraham?
- 2. Who was Lot? Where did he live? Give an account of his escape.
- 3. What is the meaning of Jacob's name and when did Esau declare that that name fitted him?

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Mona's Herald 08 03 1870 The Keys and the Education Bill

⁵⁰ Mona's Herald 09 03 1870.

⁵¹ Manx Sun 19 03 1870 letter to the editor from 'Magister'

The author of the article points out that two thirds of the questions in the examination paper assessed the simple recall of names, places and dates while none involved a 'religious truth' or a moral lesson. Moreover, the suitability and propriety of some these questions for children were open to question. Indeed, the matters raised by the questions were ones that the examiners might not wish to explain fully. While the article author did not make explicit what those concerns might be, the following may be what the author had in mind.

Question 1 Abraham was the founder of Judaism. God promised Abraham he would make a great nation out of him. God asked Abraham to remove his foreskin and that of all Jewish boys after him. Circumcision is the sign of the covenant.

Question 2 Lot was Abraham's nephew who lived in Sodom. Two angels appeared at his house, but he asked them to go inside to avoid the men of Sodom who wanted to 'know them,' offering his virgin daughters to the men instead. The angels helped Lot and his family to escape. Later he lived in a cave with his daughters who made him drink wine and lay with them. Both became 'with child' by their father.

Question 3 Jacob has at least two meanings – in Hebrew it means heel or to follow and refers to Jacob's birth in which he followed his twin brother, Esau, holding his heel. A second meaning, 'supplanter,' refers to the way in which, in later years, Jacob usurps Esau's birth right, at which point Esau declares that the name 'supplanter' fits him well.

Still others on the Island advocated the withdrawal of government grants from denominational schools, responsibility to be given to the schoolteacher in the new grant-supported schools to teach the 'great truths of Christianity,' and the provision of stated times for the visits to school by the clergy of different denominations to instruct children in their respective faiths⁵².

The Primitive Methodists advocated the more radical alternative of secular education. The *Mona's Herald* was quick to congratulate the Primitive Methodists on their daring

to leap beyond the prejudices and expediencies, the cant and religious nonsense, which so sickly prevail, and to declare that denominational teaching shall not be supported by public rates⁵³.

If, instead of relying on the *Mona's Herald* for an account of the position of the Primitive Methodists, the reader had relied on the *Isle of Man Times*, he or she might have been forgiven for believing that the Prims had advocated the opposite of secularism, as William Harris of Douglas would point out, wryly.

In their petition against the Education Bill, the Primitive Methodists of Peel and Glenmoye stated that the education given in the rate-supported schools ought to be purely secular; and not 'purely sectarian' as stated in your paper Saturday last. Hoping that you will allow this little correction⁵⁴.

Another contributor, keen to keep Manx readers abreast of developments on the parallel debate across the water in England, noted that Mr Jacob Bright will move in the Houses of Parliament that

no religious catechisms or formularies shall be used in any school, nor shall anything in support of or in opposition to the peculiar tenets of any religious sect or denomination be

⁵² *Mona's Herald* 23 03 1870 letter to the editor from 'Observer'

⁵³ *Mona's Herald* 30 03 1870 The Primitive Methodists and the Education Bill

⁵⁴ *Isle of Man Times* 26 03 1870

taught therein, provide that nothing herein contained shall be held to exclude the reading of the Holy Scriptures in such school⁵⁵.

Such a position was 'common sense... shining out bright and luminous as the spirit and body of the time' while the Bill before the House of Keys is 'narrow, partial, sectarian and grossly unfair and has within it the seeds of dissension and social disturbance'⁵⁶.

There were also religious objections to the proposed composition of the School Committees. The draft Bill had proposed that the management and supervision of the whole scheme on the Island be entrusted to a Board of Education. This would be overseen by the Governor and consist of five members of the Tynwald Court elected by the Court. Every parish would have a School Committee comprising the incumbent (i.e., the vicar), the churchwardens of the parish plus four other parishioners to be elected at a vestry meeting. Each committee would elect its chairman. Not surprisingly, the non-conformists objected to this proposal on the grounds that it left too much control in the hands of the Anglicans.⁵⁷ The Farmers Club averred that none of the members of local school committee should be appointed by the church *ex-officio*. They suggested instead that all committee members should be elected by the parishioners⁵⁸. In summing up the strength of the opposition from the public the *Mona's Herald* wrote that the members of the House of Keys will

now know that the masters whom they serve, and whom they are bound to serve, are the public...it is not the province of his Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, the Council, or the House of Keys, to thrust a measure down the throats of the inhabitants which is opposed to their religious convictions⁵⁹.

Two more debates: two more adjournments

In March 1870, the House of Keys met for a second reading of the Bill. But after a petition against the Bill submitted from the parish of Bride, the discussion of the Bill was adjourned until May, in advance of which the *Isle of Man Times* published further suggestions and observations. Since only a minority of the population was in favour of a purely secular education the clauses about teaching the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England should be 'expunged' and replaced by Bible reading and explanation under the direction of the schoolteacher 'without the parson's interference.' The School Committees should be elected solely by the local ratepayers. The enrolment and financial statistics continued to be studied with interest. Not surprisingly it was the imposition of the parish rate that attracted much attention. Rate payers in the towns questioned why they should subsidise education in the country areas where rich farmers paid low wages⁶⁰. 'Influential gentlemen' in the parish of Maughold countered the charge.

The people of this Island cannot possibly afford to pay rates to carry out every new-fangled scheme (hear, hear), Gentlemen, the high rate of wages, and the low price of corn, is sufficient to cause us to reflect before we consent to another burthen (hear, hear)⁶¹.

The adjourned debate on the Education Bill was adjourned for a second time. So many questions were raised about the statistics on educational provision and the financial burden that proposed Act

⁵⁵ *Mona's Herald* 08 03 1870 The Keys and the Education Bill

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Mona's Herald* 16 03 1870

⁵⁸ *Mona's Herald* 09 03 1870

⁵⁹ *Mona's Herald* 23 03 1870

⁶⁰ *Isle of Man Times* 14 05 1870

⁶¹ *Isle of Man Times* 21 05 1870

was likely to impose that the House of Keys asked the Governor to form a Commission to gather the most up-to-date statistics. In its commentary on this further adjournment an author in the Manx Sun remarked that while the Keys could not exactly take pride in what had happened, they also could not be blamed for 'they do not understand the question, and they had the manliness and good sense to confess as much'⁶². However, they did not hold back in their criticism of Mr Sherwood, the recently elected MHK for Glenfaba, who had proposed that the government could find the finance for the implementation of the new scheme of education if the Isle of Man Volunteers (a corps of soldiers) were to be discontinued. The Sun editorial judged that to have mixed these two issues was a humiliating disgrace.

Governor Loch heard the objections and let the Bill rest and 'it was hardly surprising that he did not bestir himself in this field for the rest of the year'⁶³.

If the Governor and the House of Keys had adjourned their debate of the Education Bill, the press had not. The Isle of Man Times printed a letter in late May 1870 in support of the clergy and the schools established by the Established Church. If, as was now proposed, the clergy would have to be elected to the school committees like anyone else, they were likely to refuse to become candidates, thus depriving schools of the assistance of the best qualified person in the parish. Moreover, it was only fair that schools built and maintained hitherto by the established church be permitted to teach the doctrines of that church and under the direction of the incumbent vicar⁶⁴. And, as if to maintain momentum in moving education forward, the IOM Times printed a letter promoting education, for it

gives men knowledge, and this is one of the best gifts they could possess.... some say the Manx are a dull people. This statement is void of truth; for if we notice the Manxmen at the colleges in Oxford, Cambridge and London, we see that it is they who carry off all the prizes.... in Prussia and Germany, the most distinguished scholars are sent by the government to the principal places of education, why do(es) not the Government of the Isle of Man follow the same example?⁶⁵.

A 'Churchman' writing from the Parish of Lezayre urged the passing into law of the 'contemplated' Education Bill 'as soon as possible.'

The number of children who are growing up without an opportunity of receiving a fair education is simply startling. The absurdity of the prominence which has been given to our Harbour Works is never so apparent as when it is considered at the same time with the gross neglect of the education of our young people by those who have been elected to legislate for our good⁶⁶

The press then fell fairly silent on the matter of education between the summer of 1870 to September 1871.

The New Education Bill

Early in September 1871 the press published the New Education Bill⁶⁷. It offered revisions to the clauses on religious instruction (from the Anglican doctrine to 'no religious catechism or religious

⁶² Manx Sun 14 05 1870

⁶³ Bird, H (1995) An Island that Led – the History of Manx Education, vol 2 p 8

⁶⁴ Isle of Man Times 28 05 1870

⁶⁵ Isle of Man Times 18 06 1870

⁶⁶ Letter to the Editor Mona's Herald, 06 07 1870

⁶⁷ Isle of Man Times 02 09 1871, 09 09 1871 and 16 09 1871

formulary of any particular denomination shall be taught'); on compulsory attendance (from age 4-13 to age 7-13); on the composition of school boards (from the incumbent vicar as an *ex officio* member to the election of all members, of whom the incumbent vicar might be one); on the treatment of endowments for education (from a central fund to no central fund); on the fixing of the level of local rates (from the proposed Board of Education to the local School Committees); and on the setting of some administrative regulations and standards (from an Isle of Man Board of Education to the Education Department in London).

Once the new Bill had been published opinions flowed once more, especially during October 1871. Two issues predominated - the proposed level of the local rate to be imposed and, as in the previous round of discussions, compulsory attendance. In the debate in parliament itself, the religious question re-emerged.

The Rates – how much?

There was no change in the expectation that a local rate would need to be imposed as a contribution to the total costs of the scheme, but it was the amount to be charged that continued attracted comment and resistance

.... (that) free education can be given without the imposition of a tax we should be extremely foolish to imagine; but at the same time there is no necessity that a tax of any great amount will be required⁶⁸.

one thing is certain, the Island cannot afford an expensive measure.... We shall be much mistaken if an education bill is promulgated next 5th July⁶⁹.

The *Mona's Herald* went further. It ruminated on the statistics that had been prepared when the original bill had been introduced. Perhaps echoing Sherwood's earlier savings proposal, the paper suggested that were the bishop to sacrifice his 'heavy' salary of £3,000 per annum, the burden on local rates would be reduced and the salaries of teachers, the books of the scholars and the conditions of the school rooms improved. However, the only way to secure this money and secure lower rates would be to disestablish the Church, which was, the paper acknowledged, unlikely⁷⁰.

Compulsory attendance

The clause on compulsory education continued to attract comment in various parts of the Island, not least at some of the annual Harvest Festival services. The Minister at the Lezayre Harvest Festival is reported to have declared that

the Education Bill about to be introduced ... compulsory education would ruin the Island; his hearers had only to remember what the asylum rate had done in Andreas to be convinced of the facts⁷¹.

⁶⁸ *Mona's Herald* 23 09 1871. Free education refers, one must presume, to the provision of fee-free education for the poorest, since the Bill did not propose fee-free education for all. Clause 16 states every child attending a school provided by any school board shall pay such weekly fee as may be prescribed by the school board

⁶⁹ *Ibid*. The Bill was in fact given Royal Assent on 22 04 1872, promulgated by the Tynwald Court on 09 05 1872 and presented to the public at the Tynwald ceremony on 05 07 1872.

⁷⁰ *Mona's Herald* 09 10 1871

⁷¹ *Mona's Herald* 25 10 1871 The parish 'decently supported' 'two lunatics' before the passing of the Asylum Act, and it now costs the parish £300 for this support

This view was reflected in a letter to the editor of the *Mona's Herald*, who drew attention to 'the strikes and troubles that are now perplexing the masters in England.'

Educate the people and I venture to say the country will be irretrievably ruined. Educate the people, and you may as well emigrate at once... I ask the House of Keys to avert such an evil and I implore all ministers of religion to preach a crusade against this iniquitous measure⁷².

At another Harvest Festival event, held at the Foxdale Working Men's Institute and convened by the Rechabites, the Rev F. J. Moore questioned compulsory education and the proposal that an officer be paid to enforce attendance. What, he asked 'if the officer finds a child who had had no breakfast and was in want of proper schooling, as well as food.... (it is) a very short step from school rates to poor rates'⁷³.

From the North of the Island the *Mona's Herald* reported from the Harvest Festival in Andreas. Mr E C Farrant, the MHK for Ayre, expressed a strong aversion to a compulsory system for education, claiming that such a system would be 'injurious both to parent and child,' and would tend to loosen the bond of union which ought to exist between them. In its riposte, the *Mona's Herald* suggested that 'were there a real bond of union other than a terribly degrading one existing between the parents of a certain class and their children, there would be absolutely no need to ask for a compulsory clause'⁷⁴. It reminded its readers of the experience of compulsory education from 'elsewhere.'

The compulsory system had for many years been in operation in Germany, Denmark, Holland, Sweden and Norway ... is the German parent deficient in parental affection for his children? Do the German children lack filial love for their parents?

On balance, there were fewer press articles in favour of compulsory education than against. But a letter to the Editor from a 'Friend of the Working Man' cautioned against dropping the compulsory clause.

Let the working men of Laxey⁷⁵ band themselves together to promote the good cause (of compulsory education). Dangers threaten a bill which would secure to us this priceless boon, and unless some very energetic measures be immediately adopted, most assuredly the compulsory clause, because it is objectionable to a few property holders, will be expunged.... Working men, forwards! And Laxey forever!

The House of Keys debated the New Education Bill in late November 1871. Three issues consumed the lion's share of time – the religious question, compulsory attendance and the 'rates.'

The religious question again

Although the religious question had featured little in the press in the weeks leading up to the publication of the New Education Bill, it attracted much comment during the debate. The clause in the original Bill to the effect that religious instruction would be according to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England had, in the New Bill, been overturned and replaced by 'no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of a particular denomination shall be taught in the school.' A simple wording of the 'conscience clause' in the original Bill, to the effect

⁷² *Mona's Herald* 11 10 1871 'to the editor'

⁷³ *Isle of Man Times*, 28 10 1871

⁷⁴ *Mona's Herald* 25 11 1871

⁷⁵ *Mona's Herald* 25 10 1871. A large number of men from Laxey worked in the Laxey and Snaefell mines

that any scholar may be withdrawn from religious teaching or service to which his or her parents may object, had been replaced by an 11-line, wordy Clause 7 part1, which effectively said the same thing. And although in the debate the discussion of the conscience clause (Clause 7) preceded that of the nature of religious instruction (Clause 13) the two were clearly interrelated in the minds of some MHKs, especially those who wished to revert to the original bill's insistence that the Church of England doctrine be taught to all. As one commented we are 'fighting the whole question over again.'

The arguments, paraphrased below, sallied back and forth back and forth between the proponents and objectors and back and forth between the clauses:

the conscience clause provides 'invidious direction' against religious instruction... Some Methodist petitions wanted to retain the conscience clause....

Children withdrawn from religious instruction should not be allowed to go out to play, they should be provided with alternative secular instruction.....

The school master should give the religious instruction, but not the views of a particular doctrine or sect, only Bible teaching.....

The religious controversies in England that led to legislation for only secular education are not the same as on the Island, where there were only two sects – the Methodists and the Church people⁷⁶.

The conscience clause was retained with an amendment to the effect that any child withdrawn from religious instruction should be provided with a secular alternative. The teaching of a particular religious doctrine was ruled out, with a general acceptance (but no clause amendment) that Bible teaching would be permitted.

Compulsory attendance again

There was also a long discussion about the compulsory attendance clause (Clause 64) which indicated that attendance would be compulsory for children aged 5-13, rather than 4-13 as suggested in the original Bill.

Compulsion, especially during seed time and harvest would pauperise a large class of inhabitants....

Compulsion had not been mandated in England, why here?.....

Compulsion 'shadowed forth a poor law'....

Compulsion should not apply to children as young as 5 years, it should be 7-12 (said one) ... it should be 7-13 (said another)

To be eligible for a grant children should attend for over 100 days....

200 days.... (said another)

150 days.... (said a third)

⁷⁶ Catholics, comprising only a small number of the Island's population, were mentioned occasionally, particularly in relation to the Conscience Clause. indicates a change of speaker during the debate

200 days.... (said a fourth)⁷⁷.

The Keys agreed that attendance would be compulsory for those aged 7-13 years for 150 days in the year. Children between the ages of 10 and 13 could be exempted from school on condition that they achieved of education prescribed and examined by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The Rates again

Now that the Bill looked as though it would become law its funding and, in particular, the imposition of local rates for education came to the fore. Paraphrasing the views expressed

The rate should be paid on real estate, like the Lunatic Asylum rate, and also on all other lands, tenements, tithes and real estate, whether corporeal or incorporeal, including property of the Crown in the hands of lessees.....

but...tenants find it 'hardship sufficient already' to pay the Asylum rate...

it would be an unjust imposition to tax the poor vicarages...

Crown lands could not be rated... don't jeopardise the passage of the Bill....

No mention has been made of one person (the bishop) who received as much from the land as all the rest of the clergy put together....

and what about the mines?⁷⁸.

It was agreed that the education rate would be levied in the same way as the Asylum rate with the addition that rates be payable by lessees of Crown lands, but at half the rate.

One final amendment – maintain a connection with England

The Bill amendments were scrutinised by the Legislative Council and Governor Loch, who proposed one final amendment. He did this in order to 'maintain standards.' Her Majesty's Inspectors, appointed by the Education Department in London, would continue to inspect the schools. The system was cheap, the inspectors independent and selected from a pool much larger than a small Island could ever command. The connection would maintain standards of education, while the management of the schools and entire control over expenditure would be retained within the Island through the local School Committees, the Isle of Man Board of Education and the Tynwald Court. There were additional advantages. The first was that if the Island had not maintained links with London, then non-island school masters and pupil teachers would be unlikely to accept teaching positions on the Island. Secondly, the Island benefitted from training colleges for pupil teachers in England, without contributing to their maintenance. The Keys concurred with this amendment and the Tynwald Court passed the Bill on February 2nd 1872⁷⁹.

While some may have perceived that this final amendment ceded control to the English, the concept and operation of 'control' has many dimensions. Finance was now under the control of Isle of Man government, not England; teacher recruitment, hiring and firing was under the control of the elected local School Committees, not England; control of local School Committees lay with the local ratepayers and neither the Isle of Man government nor England had any say in their membership; the new Board of Education was under the control of the Governor of the Isle of Man, not the

⁷⁷ Mona's Herald, 29 11 1871. Clause 64, indicates a change of speaker during the debate

⁷⁸ Ibid. Clauses 43 and 44. indicates a change of speaker during the debate

⁷⁹ Mona's Herald, 07 02 1872

Education Department in London. The 1872 Bill referred to the control of standards, and the continuation of inspector visits from England who assessed and certified the qualifications of pupil teachers and teachers. Only on these last aspects, albeit particularly important ones for the improvement of the quality of education, did Loch feel the Island should maintain its links with England.

The editorial in *Mona's Herald* was full of praise.

The Insular Legislature have actually done that which for twelve months they were one and all afraid of touching. They have passed an education bill. Granted that they had the model of the English Bill to work upon, still their labours have been great, and although they may have approached the matter with something like the timidity of a youngster taking his first sea bath, once in, they plunged right up to the neck, and floundered, and sputtered, and sank, and swam, and rolled back and rolled forward, until they have landed high and dry before her most gracious Majesty a bill, which like most bills of a similarly revolutionary character, possesses many good while it possesses many bad features.⁸⁰

The *Mona's Herald* indulged in a note of self-congratulation, for

the reports of the debates upon every phase of the Bill – from the hifalutin Christianity of Messrs Dumbell, Lamothe and Stevenson, or the savage growl of disgust of Captain Goldie – have appeared in the *Herald*, and they lay the matter sufficiently before the public to arrive at a conclusion as to what the bill really is. We have got the bill and we now do our best with it...

Royal Assent was given to the Bill on April 22nd, 1872, the Tynwald Court promulgated it at St Johns Chapel on May 9th, 1872, and it was presented to the public at the open-air annual Tynwald ceremony on July 5th, 1872.

4.0 Comparing the Isle of Man Act with those in English and Wales and Scotland

What were the similarities and differences with the Acts of England and Wales (1870) and Scotland (1872)?

The Isle of Man Act of 1872 bears similarities with the Education Act for England and Wales 1870 in some respects and the Education Act for Scotland 1872 in others (see Figure 1). The Scottish Act of 1872 has been described by some as a 'Scottish version of the 1870 Act'⁸¹. Scottish researchers disagree.

The most important Act in the history of Scottish Education became law on 6 August 1872. It came almost two years after the great English Act but owed little to that measure. In important ways differed substantially from the English state of 1870, but the same fundamental need brought both into existence – to impose order on chaos, to create an educational system⁸².

Manx historians would also disagree with the notion that the Isle of Man Act was simply a version of the 1870 Act, even if there are common elements and clauses⁸³. As explained above, Governor Loch

⁸⁰ *Mona's Herald* 07 02 1872

⁸¹ <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/acts/1872-education-scotland-act.html>

⁸² Scotland, J. (1972) The Centenary of the Education (Scotland) Act, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 20, 2, 121-136

⁸³ Bird (1995) op.cit.

had, back in 1869 wanted, 'to be the first' to legislate for Public Elementary Education while the debates in England, Wales and Scotland continued.

Figure 1 presents the main characteristics of the Acts in the Isle of Man, England and Wales and Scotland. The Isle of Man's Act's insistence on compulsory education was shared by the Scottish Act, albeit between 7 and 13 years on the Island and 5 and 13 years in Scotland. England and Wales did not introduce compulsory education until 1880⁸⁴.

Religious matters were spelled out in a large number of clauses in all three countries. Several of the religious clauses were almost identical. The public schools would admit all children irrespective of religious background. Schools would be open at any time to inspection, but religious instruction would neither be inspected nor examined. The government grant awarded to a school would not include an amount for the teaching of religious subjects. A conscience clause meant that parents could withdraw their children from religious instruction or observance. In the Manx case, secular instruction was to be provided for the children that did withdraw.

Where the three Acts differed was in the *content* of religious teaching. While it is beyond the scope of the present paper to explore the antecedent economic, social and political conditions in these three comparator countries and Acts, the following presents a sketch of the religious contours of each that bore an influence on the respective resolutions of the religious question and education. In the English and Wales case, the different views on the content of religious teaching generated a range of options for debate – pure secularism, Bible reading only, Bible reading with unsectarian teaching, Bible reading with unlimited explanation, Bible reading with unlimited explanation plus the Catechism and formularies⁸⁵. For decades in England and Wales, as described earlier in this paper there had been inter-denominational rivalry over the control of education, as between the Anglican 'National schools' and the non-denominational 'British schools.' The National Society promoted instruction in the liturgy and catechism of the Anglican Church, while the British Society promoted non-denominational Bible reading. The non-conformists, including the Methodists, Presbyterians, Unitarians and Congregationalists, objected to the link between state-funded education and the Anglican Church. The compromise, forged by the M.P. William Cowper-Temple, was that Bible teaching with some limited explanation would be permitted but was not mandatory.

The Isle of Man case was simpler. The Lieutenant Governor of the Island, his officials, many of the members of the Council and the House of Keys and members of the Manx elite identified with the Church of England. Yet Anglicans comprised only around one fifth of the population. The Non-Conformist Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists had been in the vanguard of the movement for electoral reform and for educational democratisation for many years, and their victory on electoral reform was very recent and fresh in the minds of the population. The English rivalry between the National Society and the British and Foreign Society was not felt on the Island. Nonetheless, when it came to the prospect of the state supporting the schools and a local rate being charged for that purpose the non-Conformists argued strongly that the Anglican doctrine should not be taught and that the control of the School Committees should not be in the hands of the incumbent Vicar and churchwardens. It was resolved that the Bible could be read, with some explanation by the teacher. This was similar to the Act for England and Wales. In both countries a clause was finally passed to

⁸⁴ Mcculloch (2020) op.cit.

⁸⁵ Prime Minister Gladstone, quoted in Parker, S.G., Allen, S. and Freathy, R, (2020) The Church of England and the 1870 Elementary Education Act, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 68, 5, 541-565

Figure 1 Key characteristics of the Education Acts of the Isle of Man, England and Wales and Scotland

	Isle of Man <i>An Act to provide for Public Elementary Education in the Isle of Man (1872)</i>	England and Wales <i>Elementary Education Act 1870</i>	Scotland <i>Education (Scotland) Act 1872</i>
Pupil Admission Criterion	Religious attendance or abstinence is not a bar to school entry or continuation.	Admission and continuation in school is not dependent on attendance or abstaining from any Sunday School or any place of worship	Open to children of all denominations
Pupil Attendance	Voluntary 5-7. Compulsory 7-13. Exemption 10-13 if sufficient standard achieved, as certified by H M Inspector. Officer may be appointed to enforce attendance	Voluntary 5-13 Officer may be appointed to enforce attendance	Compulsory 5-13 Officer must be appointed to enforce attendance
Religion 1 Exclusions	No religious catechism or religious formulary distinctive of any particular religion shall be taught	No religious catechism or religious formulary distinctive of any particular religion shall be taught	
Religion 2 Inclusions	Award of government grant dependent on provision for reading of the Holy Bible, with explanation and instruction suited to the capacity of the child	Bible with explanation permitted, but not compulsory	(Act pre-amble) The custom of providing religious instruction to continue
Religion 3 Timetable	Religious instruction and observance to be timetabled at beginning or end of school day	Religious instruction and observance to be timetabled at beginning or end of school day	Religious observance and instruction can continue at beginning or end of school day
Religion 4 Conscience Clause	Parents may withdraw child from religious instruction and/or observance; child follows secular instruction instead	Parents may withdraw child from religious instruction and/or observance.	(Act pre-amble). The custom to allow parents to withdraw their children from instruction in religion to continue
Religion 5 Inspection and examination of religious subjects	No inspection or examination of religious subjects	No inspection or examination of religious subjects	No inspection or examination of religious subjects
Religion 6 No grant element for religion teaching	No element of the grant to be awarded for the teaching of religious subjects	No element of the grant to be awarded for the teaching of religious subjects	No element of the grant to be awarded for the teaching of religious subjects

School fees	Poor parents can apply to school committee for fee-exemption. Parents may be fined for non-payment of fees	Poor parents may be granted fee-exemption by school board	Poor parents may apply to parochial board for fees. Parents may be fined for non-payment of fees
School management	School Committees established in every parish and town; School Committees manage a group of schools School Committees report to Isle of Man Board of Education Some regulations and Inspection from Education Department, London	School Boards established only in districts where provision of school accommodation is insufficient for all children; School Board manages a group of schools School boards report to Education Department, London	School Boards established in every parish and burgh; School Boards also manage a group of schools. School Board also manages higher class public schools School Boards report to the Board of Education for Scotland (Edinburgh), which reports to Scotch Education Department (London)
Committee/board membership	School Committee members elected by local ratepayers; committee appoints its chairman – not less than 5 nor more than 15 members; committee members appoint their chairman from among their number	School Board members elected by those on the burges of roll in a borough; or ratepayers in a parish – not less than 5 nor more than 15 members (more in metropolis); School Board members appoint chairman from among their number	School Board members elected by owners or occupiers of lands or heritages i.e., those with names on the ‘valuation roll;’ School Board members appoint chairman from among their number
Transfer of existing schools to the public elementary school status	Existing schools (parish and denominational) could apply voluntarily to become public elementary schools. Government grants awarded only to public elementary schools, not denominational schools	Existing schools (parish and denominational) could apply voluntarily to become public elementary schools. Government grants awarded only to both public elementary schools and denominational schools	Compulsory transfer of all parish schools. Denominational schools could apply voluntarily to become public elementary schools. Government grants awarded only to public elementary schools, not denominational schools
Financing of public schools	Isle of Man Board of Education and Tynwald grant + local rates + school pence + donations. No grant awarded for teaching of religious subjects. Grants made in accordance with Minutes of Education Department (London)	English Education Department ‘parliamentary grant for public education in Great Britain’ + local rates + school pence + donations. No grant awarded for teaching of religious subjects	Scotch Education Department ‘parliamentary grant for public education in Greta Britain’ + local rates + school pence + donations. No grant awarded for teaching of religious subjects
Teachers, Inspection and Standards	Recruitment, dismissal and retirement pension by school committee Schools open for inspection at all times, inspection by Her Majesty’s Inspectors, appointed by the Education Department (London) Teacher qualifications specified by the Revised Code of 1872 (not specified in the Act)	Recruitment, dismissal and retirement pension by School Board Schools open for inspection at all times Teacher qualifications specified by the Revised Code of 1872 (not specified in the Act)	Recruitment, dismissal and retirement pension by School Board Schools open for inspection all times, by Her Majesty’s Inspectors appointed by the Scotch Education Department (London) All principal teachers certificated by the Scotch Education Department. University degree holder deemed to be certificated to teach

the effect that 'no religious catechism or religious formulary distinctive of any particular religion shall be taught.' But there were two differences. In the Isle of Man Act Bible reading was compulsory; in England and Wales it was optional. In the Isle of Man Act Bible reading was a condition for the award of a government grant; in England and Wales it was not.

The Act for Scotland differed. It contained no specific clauses about religious formularies. Rather, the pre-ambule to the Act indicated that the 'custom of providing religious instruction may be continued.' In Scotland, the religious divisions that lay behind the Bill's enactment took a different shape. The main groups of denominational schools at this time were those of the Established Church of Scotland, the breakaway Free Church of Scotland, the Episcopalians and the Catholics. The Church of Scotland churches were Calvinist in theology and Presbyterian in polity and had, for many years, run the parish schools. They were not tied to the Anglican Church. The Episcopalians were linked with the Anglican Church, the Catholics were opposed to the both the Anglican and Presbyterian churches. The Episcopalians and Catholics chose not to join with the new system of public education. The Catholic Church was keen to retain its denominational status, did not wish to confine religious teaching to the beginning or the end of the school day, felt that this new system of un-denominational schools would, de facto, favour the Church of Scotland agenda and feared that the state would not compensate the Catholic church and the communities that had built the schools⁸⁶.

The local management of the public schools was broadly similar across all three countries. Local management boards would be established in school districts and responsible for a group of schools. On the Isle of Man, they were known as School Committees, and in England and Wales and Scotland as School Boards. Ratepayers⁸⁷ in the districts of the respective countries had the right to elect members of the committee/board, whose members in turn appointed their chairman from among their number. While the Isle of Man and Scotland Acts established these management structures in every school district, irrespective the need for additional school places, in England and Wales School Boards were established only in districts where more provision was judged to be required. Among their wide-ranging roles – from the building of new schools to the provision of materials for teaching and learning and the hiring and firing of teachers – was the appointment of an officer to enforce school attendance. While this was optional in England and on the Island, it was a 'duty' in Scotland for such officers to be appointed.

Above the local school committees/boards were different layers of administration. On the Isle of Man, the school committees reported to a Board of Education appointed by the Tynwald Court of the Isle of Man government. However, the Isle of Man government chose to maintain links with England via some regulations set down by the Education Department in London and school inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectors appointed from London. In England, the School Boards reported to the Education Department in London, while in Scotland a new Board of Education for Scotland was established as an intermediate administrative body between the School Boards and the Scotch Education Department in London. Despite its higher level of provision of elementary education than that found in the Island, since Scotland was constitutionally part of the United Kingdom, Scotland was dependent on authorities in London to a much greater degree than was the Isle of Man.

⁸⁶ Distinct positions on education were taken by the Hebridean Catholics and the immigrant Catholics in urban areas, especially Glasgow (personal communication).

⁸⁷ In the Isle of Man ratepayers; in England on the burgess of rolls in a borough, or a ratepayer in a parish; in Scotland, those on the 'valuation roll.'

The clauses pertaining to the position of existing schools varied across the three Acts. In the Isle of Man Act existing schools, both parish and denominational, were free to apply or not to be transferred to state control, with public funds being made available only to those that chose to transfer. In the England and Wales Act, existing parish and denominational schools were free to apply for transfer, but public funds could be awarded to those that did not apply for transfer, as well as to those that did. In the Scottish Act, it was compulsory for all parish schools to transfer control to the state. Denominational schools were free to apply also. However, like in the Isle of Man Act but unlike the England and Wales Act, public funds were made only to schools transferred to the State.

In all three countries the funds for education comprised four elements - government grants, local education rates, school fees (pence) and voluntary donations. In the case of England and Scotland the government grants were 'parliamentary grants for public education in Great Britain,' managed by the Education Department and the Scotch Education Department respectively, in London. In the Isle of Man, the government grant was provided from the Insular Revenue controlled by the Insular government and managed by the Island's Board of Education. All three countries charged school fees and in all three there was provision for exemption from payment for the poorest. In Scotland and the Isle of Man parents could be fined for non-payment of fees. This did not appear the case in England.

The qualifications of teachers, especially principal teachers, were mandated in Scotland but not in England or on the Isle of Man. In Scotland, all principal teachers were to hold certificates awarded by the Scotch Education Department.

One issue that did not feature in any of the three Acts the legislation was the Medium of Instruction. The issue did not surface on the Isle of Man in the run up to the 1872 Act, since any battle between English and Manx Gaelic as a medium of instruction had been lost as early as the late seventeenth century when Bishop Barrow established the English-medium parish school system. Although Bishop Hildesley had attempted to have Manx Gaelic introduced as the medium of instruction in the 1760s his efforts did not have a lasting impact. By the time of the 1872 Act the number of Manx speakers was in substantial decline, though there remained a small number who spoke only Manx at home and whose children were faced with learning English for the first time when they entered school and children were discouraged from speaking Manx at school⁸⁸. It would be fair to say that the *only* curriculum matter that exercised minds in the lead up to the 1872 Act was that of religion – e.g., whose religion? which religious texts? how much time should be given over to religious instruction? Besides reading, writing and arithmetic, other subjects being taught at that time included history, grammar, geography, dictation and needlework. None featured in the debates leading up to the passage of the Act.

In Scotland, by contrast, there were large numbers of Scottish Gaelic speakers and large numbers of Gaelic-medium schools at the time of the 1872 Act. Despite this, the medium of instruction was not mentioned in the 1872 Act for Scotland, nor was there any mention of Gaelic schools or the different linguistic needs of the population living in the Highlands and Islands. However, after the Act was passed the new School Boards actively discouraged the use of Gaelic in schools⁸⁹.

In summary then, the creation of a public system of education on the Isle of Man appeared to be more complete than that in England and less complete compared with Scotland. Despite several similarities (e.g., local rates, fee exemptions for the poorest, admission to pupils of all faiths, the

⁸⁸ Broderick, G (1999) *Language Death in the Isle of Man*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag

⁸⁹ Scotland, J. (1972) *op cit*.

conscience clause, inspections), there were also marked differences between the three Acts. Scotland, at one extreme, established School Boards in every district, mandated compulsory attendance, abolished the parish schools, withheld government grants from denominational schools and imposed compulsory teacher qualifications. England and Wales, at the other extreme, established School Boards only in districts judged to fall below attendance and accommodation norms, compulsory attendance of pupils was not mandated, parish schools could apply for transfers of control, and denominational schools could apply for government grants. Falling in between, the Isle of Man Act mandated compulsory attendance, albeit for the age range 7-13, not 5-13, invited parish schools to apply to transfer to state control and withheld government grants from denominational schools.

On the question of religion, however, the Scottish Act may be seen to have been less inclusive of all religions. The Scottish Act assumed, at one extreme, that Church of Scotland religious instruction would continue as before and took little account of the needs of the Episcopalians and Catholics, who in turn elected to remain outside the control of the embryonic State system. The English Act, at the other extreme, forged a compromise between the Anglicans and the non-conformists and proscribed religious teaching according to any particular doctrine and did not make the teaching of religion a condition for the award of a government grant. Again, the Isle of Man fell in between. A compromise was forged between the Anglicans and the non-conformists, but Bible reading was mandated in every school and was a requirement for the award of a government grant.

5. Beyond 1872: the impact of the Isle of Man Act on educational participation

What was the impact of the Isle of Man Act of 1872 on educational participation?

In the newly democratic Isle of Man the 'debate' about education did not rest with the passing of the Act. The *Mona's Herald* outlined several challenges which lay ahead, of which the local rates, pensions for teachers and the reform of the curriculum of female education were likely to feature strongly. The editorial predicted that in ten years hence there will not be a person in the country who is liable to pay the local rate who will not wish the Act 'at the bottom of the sea.' It predicted social discontent with respect to the payment of pensions for teacher – 'why for teachers and not for poor labourers'? And it foreshadowed the vocationalisation of the curriculum, for older boys and girls. For example, it called for a more complete consideration of 'female education' i.e.

That part of their training which is supposed to fit them for the household duties which are expected to fall to their lot in the natural course of things. We ask is there one girl in ten turned out of school who is capable of making the commonest of common shirts.....all that girls are taught at school is to put a few irregular stitches in a piece of rag of no utility whatever, which piece of rag, generally about a foot square – becomes in the course of the three weeks it is in hand 'making' so black and dirty as to be indistinguishable from brother Johnny's old fustian breeches⁹⁰.

Others called for a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of and remedies for poor attendance at school. The Temperance Movement continued to call attention to the underlying constraint of 'the drink.'

Not a word is said about the drinking habits of the parents which have led to this, nor any reference made to the temperance reformation as a remedy... the real cause why children are not educated is this. The fathers and mothers drink the money which should pay the

⁹⁰ *Mona's Herald*, 07 02 1872

school fee.... We leave the father to go on drinking, the mother to go on drinking (all classes drinking in fact, deceiving ourselves by the idea of making reading, writing and arithmetic the powerful agencies for securing to us a virtuous nation! At present the ground on which this magnificent temple is to be built is a regular swamp, and without a considerable amount of teetotal drainage the building, even with the props of the Insular Government may provide, will greatly disappoint its promoters⁹¹.

Nonetheless, the government set about its work of implementing the 1872 Act. The first practical step taken in bringing the new Act into operation was the election of the new Isle of Man Education Board by the Tynwald Court. The composition of the new body was of great interest to the 'Dissenting Bodies,' who form the majority of the people. The person elected to the new body were the Attorney-General, the Archdeacon, Dr Jones (the principal of the Boys' Independent (Public) school, W B Christian Esq (of Milntown) and Mr John Mylrea, bookseller of Douglas. The Herald, the newspaper most strongly associated with the voices of the Dissenting Bodies judged that

on the whole the people would be satisfied.... The Attorney-General is a thoroughly impartial man, the Archdeacon, if not very liberal, is well versed in the working of the schools of the Island. Dr Jones, the head of the Insular college, is a liberal man, and all classes are safe with him. Dissenters will be pleased at his election when they learn that amongst those who voted against him was the bishop of this unfortunate diocese. This vote looks like a guarantee of his liberality; and Deemster Drinkwater's determined opposition will have the same tendency. Mr Christian, of Milntown, has all along been the champion of fair play and liberality to all sects in the education movement⁹².

The first meeting of the new Board took place on 29th June 1872.

Notices about forthcoming elections of the School Committees appeared shortly afterwards. Local rate payers were called to vote at a specified place, usually a school in their respective parishes and towns. The new Committees were formed quickly. For example, the six members of the School Committee of the Parish of Rushen met for the first time on July 25th, 1872 and set about electing their chairman and vice-chair. They considered a letter sent by the Board of Education giving them guidance for conducting some of the provisions of the new Act, including the collection of rates and the transfer of the management of schools. The Board of Education obliged them to assess how many children resided in the Parish, how many were attending school and, for those not currently attending, how much schooling accommodation was required. To do this they divided the Parish into five districts⁹³.

Despite the good intentions of many of the newly formed Committees it was not long before disparaging comments about their operation appeared in the press. Referring specifically to the Committees in the towns of Douglas and Ramsey one author remarked sarcastically

There's not a single man amongst them capable of initiating one item of educational work, they are genuine blind leaders; let it be our duty to see that they do not lead the blind. 'We must see Mr Clucas' says one; 'we must write to the Board' says another', 'we cannot do

⁹¹ Manx Sun, 16 03 1872. Letters and pamphlets about drink and the Temperance Movement were common at this time in both the Manx and English language press. In Manx, see for example *Illiam as Ysbal: ny Cooish eddyr Manninagh as e Ven-heshey* c.1891, Sayle W and Kneen, W Manx National Heritage I-museum, classification J.64/SAY M18067

⁹² Mona's Herald, 03 07 1872

⁹³ Rushen School Committee Minute Book. 1872

anything until we receive instructions' says a third 'what does the Act say?' hazards a fourth, and then there is a rustling of leaves and such a turning over of pages in the vain effort of looking for something which nobody knows what; and so the matter ends, and the committee go home⁹⁴.

An initial practical task facing the Board was the collection of 'particulars' in respect of the numbers of places available in the current stock of schools and the number of places required for all those eligible to enrol in elementary education in the district. Two surveys were undertaken. The first was a school census, with returns filled up by schoolteachers and the school committee members. The second was a household survey undertaken by members of the School Committees⁹⁵.

The survey data did not tally⁹⁶. The school census yielded a figure of 5975 children in school, of whom 4670 (78%) were present on the census day. The household survey suggested that 8132 children aged 3-13 and over were enrolled in school and 1702 (17%) were not. Of the 8132 (83%) who, according to parents, were 'enrolled', 11% were aged over 13 and 22% were aged under 7 years, leaving 5283 in the age group, 7-13, for whom education was compulsory. The Board of Education estimated the accommodation deficits and surpluses using space per pupil norms. Accommodation was judged to be 'available' already for 3510 children, with 1360 new accommodation places required, but these figures totalled 4870, just 200 more than the numbers judged to be present on the census day. This was a very conservative estimate of 'need.'

Apart from measurement errors, there were several problems in the estimations made. In the school census only children who had attended during the previous month were counted as 'enrolled on the register,' leading to an underestimate of those who turned up on some days during the school year, but not in the previous month. The school census appeared to include the 5- and 6-years olds, who, because they did not now fall within the compulsory age range of 7-13, were, it would seem, then left out of the estimates of accommodation requirement. It had never been the intention of the legislators to exclude the 5-6 years olds, merely to mandate that children aged seven had to attend school. Parents of children aged 5 and 6 were not asked to withdraw their children. The apparent exclusion of the 5- and 6-year-olds in school planning would lead future inspectors to bemoan the number and quality of buildings/classrooms available for the younger children, and the quality of the teaching of the Infants classes. Moreover, 'need' assumed 75% attendance across the board, which was, in turn, at odds with the aspiration of compulsory education for all and regular and frequent attendance by all.

The Board of Education accepted a number of applications for the transfer of a school to Board management. Between 1873 and 1879 17 schools were transferred, all but two of them descendants of the old parochial schools in rural areas and two former National schools. In general, the schools in

⁹⁴ Mona's Herald 09 10 1872

⁹⁵ Board of Education for the Isle of Man, First Report, year ending 31st March 1873

⁹⁶ The school census data included, *inter alia*, the number of inhabitants in their District, considering the 1871 population census and any increase/decrease since then and the Percentage of the population that is of the class whose children will attend Public Elementary school (insert the number or proportion as 7/8 or whatever may be the estimate). Without recourse to the completed returns and discussions by committee members, one presumes that it was accepted that parents of a different 'class' would choose to send their children to private schools or denominational schools that remained outside of the public system. The school committees were not expected to make returns from schools which charged more than 9d per week. In the school census, a distinction was made between enrolled and attending. To be counted as 'currently enrolled' children had to have attended school within the previous month, while 'attendance' was counted for the census day. Members of the School Committee and parents conducted the household survey were asked whether children aged 3-13+ were enrolled in school.

the towns, many of them denominational schools, were slower to apply for transfer of control to the state⁹⁷.

What do the figures tell us?

Whatever the initial difficulties and challenges faced by the respective School Committees and those who filled in questionnaires and collated and interpreted their results the average attendance of school pupils appeared to increase from 3279 in 1871 to 4954 in 1880, a period of time over which the total Island population decreased from 54042 to 53558.

On the face of it then, some progress appeared to have been made over the eight years since the passing of the Act. However, Bird claims that the overall picture was deceptive, data had been manipulated, and there were inconsistencies in the data presented in the Board of Education's reports and those in the English Inspectors' reports⁹⁸. Poor school attendance continued to be a repeated theme of concern in both the Board and the Inspectorate reports. Inspectors from England were critical of several features of the emerging system of modern education, not the least of which was the parsimony of the local School Committees, several of which appeared keen to keep the local rates as low as possible. Most of the members of the School Committees would have themselves have been ratepayers, several were employers of children and youth, and some would have sent or be sending their own children to private schools and not the state schools which they managed. With respect to the enforcement of the law on school attendance, School Committees members would have been wary of arousing the wrath of friends and neighbours, many of whom would themselves have been employers of labour, or who relied on their children to supplement household income.

There were wide variations across the island between the schools, functioning under the same legislation and nominal management systems. In some areas the minimum age of compulsory education i.e., 7 years appeared to have been interpreted as the only valid school entry age, resulting in the loss of large numbers of five-year-olds who would have expected to have enrolled school before the introduction of the Act. This anomaly was resolved when in 1878 an amendment to the Education was passed to lower the minimum age of compulsory attendance to five years. Some school committees expected their teachers to handle large numbers of classes and students, refusing to pay for extra teachers or monitors and keeping the local rates low. Unsurprisingly this led to poor examination performance. Other School Committees were slow to provide accommodation of a decent standard. At the other extreme, there were schools that excelled in terms of enrolment, attendance and achievement, the exceptional case of the Peel Boys' school being cited in several reports.

The initial years of post-1872 implementation appeared to have been out of line with the lofty ambitions of the Act and by 1880 Governor Loch was caught between the view of his Board of Education who claimed steady progress since 1872 and the Inspectorate appointed by Whitehall who presented a more dismal picture. The immediate solution was to appoint yet another inspector. In his 'Special Report' Mr J. H. Davies was, like the inspectors before him, unimpressed by the attendance data. He was also critical of the condition of school buildings and sanitation arrangements, some of which had been rated as satisfactory eight years earlier. He identified three main weaknesses – irregular attendance, the weakness of the teaching staff (too few for too many

⁹⁷ Isle of Man Board of Education Reports, relevant years

⁹⁸ Bird, 1995 vol 2 p 38, op.cit.

classes) and the absence of buildings provision for the 5-7 year olds. Davies attributed all three to the 'unsuitable constitution, the inertness and the parsimony of the School Committees'⁹⁹.

The period 1871-1901

Several legislative amendments were to follow. In 1881 and 1884 amendments of legislation provided for six attendance officers to work with the School Committees across the Island; in 1892 school fees for all school children aged 3-15 years were abolished; and in 1893 the upper age of compulsory education was raised to 14 years, with the proviso that a child aged 13 years could, on achieving a satisfactory level, leave school to take up employment. All appear to have had an impact on the functioning of the School Committees and the schools and on parents, all of which had some impact on participation in schooling.

Figures 2-4 present average attendance between 1871 and 1901¹⁰⁰ compared with the size of the total population¹⁰¹. Population data are divided by 10 in order to present the data on the same graph as the attendance data. This enables the reader to judge whether increases in average attendance are simply a function of a general growth in population or of a real growth in children's participation in schooling¹⁰². Figure 2 also indicates the years in which significant legislation and policies were introduced - the 1872 Education Act (Compulsory Education), the 1884 introduction of attendance officers by the Board of Education, and the 1892 Act abolishing tuition fees, followed one year later by the raising of the school leaving age from 13 to 14 years.

Figure 2 indicates that while there was no overall change in the total population between 1871 and 1901, average attendance increased from 3279 to 8135. The overall trend in the years immediately following the introduction in 1873 of the 1872 Act was upwards, with fluctuations. The change in the entry age of compulsory education to five years in 1878 may explain the fluctuation around that time. Growth continued through the 1880s and appeared to rise a little more steeply in the years following the 1892 Act and the abolition of fees. But this growth is also likely to have followed the raising of the school leaving age from 13 to 14 and the expansion of the Infant School Buildings programme that would have ensured better attendance of the 5-7-year-olds.

Figure 3 presents the growth trend in the Island's capital, Douglas. In this graph the population data are presented as a dotted line 'smoothed' between the census years 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901. Between 1871 and 1891 the population of Douglas rose from 13970 to 19520, levelling off to 19220 by 1901. This arose from internal migration from the rural areas and smaller towns, immigration minus emigration. The graph suggests that average school attendances appear to be growing only in line with population growth until the mid-1880s. From then on there appears to be rapid rise in average attendance, a growth spurt that has been attributed in part to the improved effectiveness and efficiency of the Douglas School Committee from this time.

⁹⁹ Davies, J.H. (1880) Special Report of Her Majesty's Inspectors as to the Public Elementary School on the Isle of Man.

¹⁰⁰ Board of Education Reports. Noting Bird's concerns about attendance data reliability in the period 1872-1880 and his greater faith in the figures between 1880 and 1900, we may infer that the increases in attendance over time may be steeper than those presented in Figures 2-4.

¹⁰¹ Population Census Reports 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901

¹⁰² If population change and change in attendance follow the gradient, then one cannot infer any real increase in the average attendance. If the gradient of average attendance change is steeper than that of population change, then one may infer that attendance is increasing.

Figure 2 Growth in Average Attendance 1871-1901, size of population and key education legislation

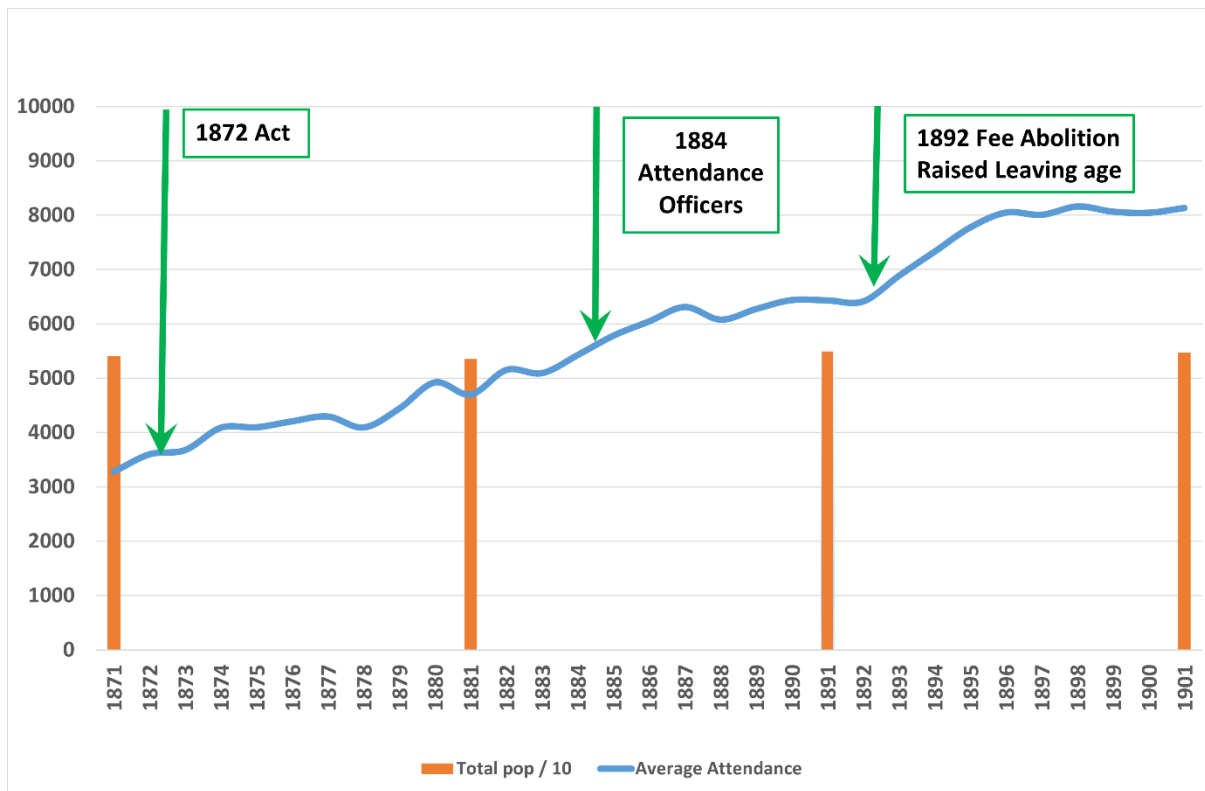


Figure 3 Growth in Average Attendance, Douglas, 1871-1901 and Size of Population

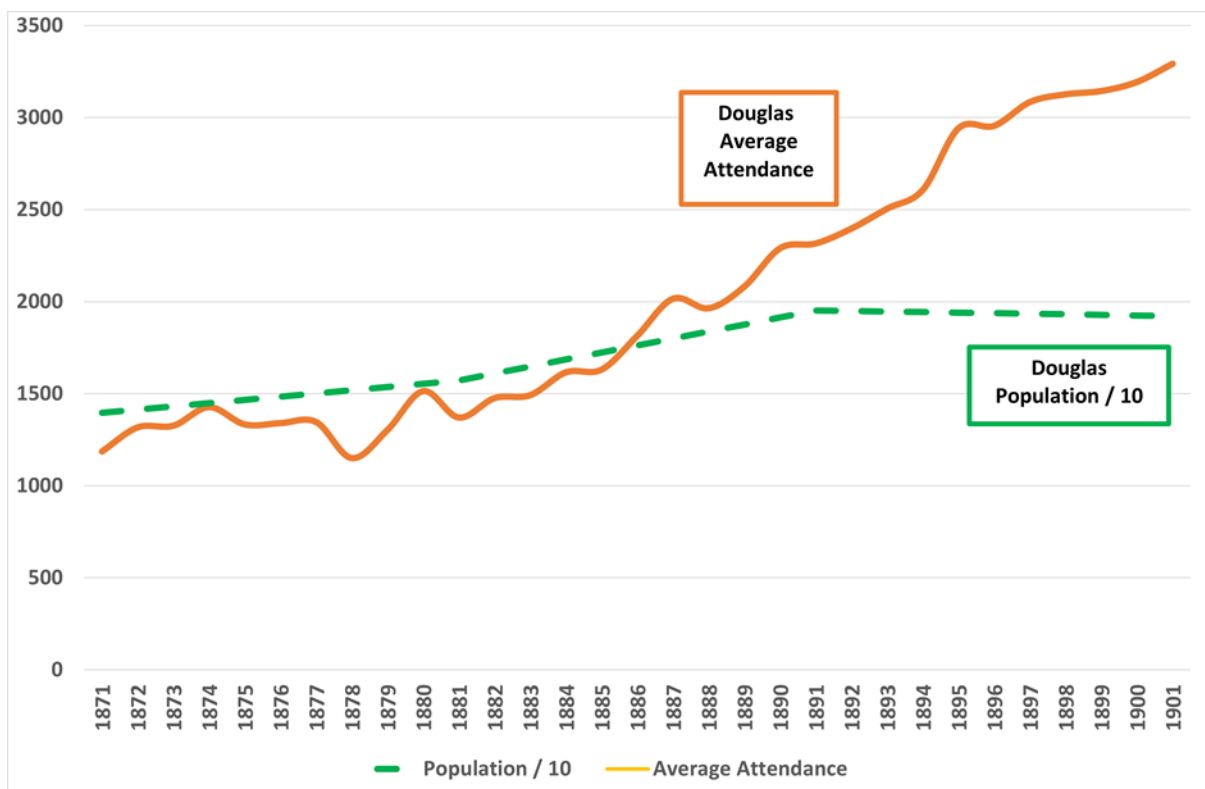


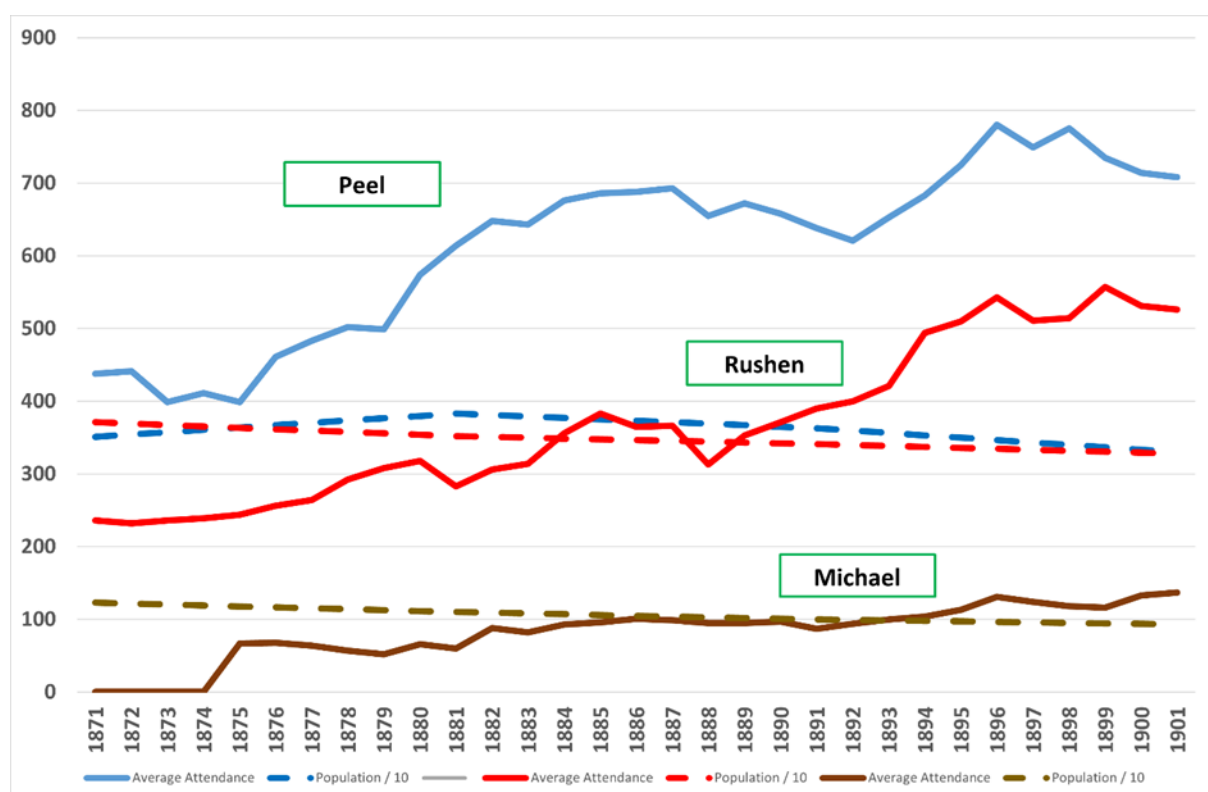
Figure 4 presents contrasting stories from other parts of the Island. Compared with Douglas (Figure 3) the town of Peel in the West of the Island had a higher percentage of its children attending school

even before the introduction of the 1872 Act. This can be attributed to Peel’s remarkable education history and the steady patronage and funding of its schools by the London Clothworkers Company, over a period of two centuries. This was made possible by revenue arising from the 1657 will of a member of the Clothworkers Guild and former boy of the town, Philip Christian¹⁰³. Peel’s population rose between 1871 and 1881 but declined thereafter. Compared with its population, average attendance in Peel grew rapidly over the period 1871-1901.

A different profile emerges in two of the rural parishes, the Parish of Rushen in the South of the Island and Michael in the West. In 1871 the populations of the rural Parish of Rushen and the town of Peel were similar. But a population decline had started already in Rushen, a combination of internal migration to the towns and emigrations to North America. A comparison of average attendance figures with their respective populations suggests that while Rushen fell behind Peel at the beginning of the period it experienced steady growth following the introduction of the 1872 Act until the mid-1880s. After a few years of fluctuation, growth picked up again and followed a similar pattern of growth to that observed in Peel, albeit not reaching the same high level.

The much smaller parish of Michael shows a different pattern again. Like the parish of Rushen, the population of the Michael parish, was already in decline by 1871. No average attendance data were furnished to the Board of Education for the years 1871-1874. From 1875 average attendance figures demonstrated a fluctuating: decline to 1879, followed by growth to 1886, followed by period of no growth to 1891, followed by growth to 1901.

Figure 4 Figure 2 Growth in Average Attendance, Peel, Rushen, Michael 1871-1901 and Size of Population



¹⁰³ Forster, R.E.C. (1990) 'The Pioneering Schools of Peel', The Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society, vol IX, no 3, 269-292

Unlike the figures for Peel, Rushen and Douglas, the figures for Michael derive from a single small school in the village which had been taken over by the Michael Parish School Committee in 1874. The teacher in charge had been in post for 54 years and retired in 1874. The School Committee appointed a new teacher in 1875.

Figure 5 shows the attendance:population ratios for Douglas, Peel, Rushen and Michael and their respective percentage change between 1875 and 1901. Over this period, average attendance figures in relation to the local parish population demonstrated growth over time everywhere. The ratio of the parish of Michael's average attendance figure compared with its population was 5.7, considerably lower than at Peel (10.9) and Douglas (9.1) and lower than Rushen (6.7). By 1901 the rank order of these ratios was the same, even if all ratios had increased considerably. But league tables of this kind can be very deceptive and overlook the rate at which the attendance: local population ratio changes. Districts starting from a low base have the potential to show the greatest rate of growth. This is true in the case of Michael and Rushen. Where Peel and Douglas were still achieving a better attendance relative to their populations in 1901, the rate of growth of the ratio of attendance to population between 1875 and 1901 was less. Rushen and Michael, starting from lower bases, saw their attendance: population ratios grow by well over 230% between 1875 and 1901, with Douglas and Peel growing at just under 200%. The parishes were catching up slowly.

Figure 5 Attendance: population ratios by District, 1875 and 1901, and percentage increase

District	1875	1901	% change in ratio
Douglas	9.1	17.1	188%
Peel	10.9	21.5	197%
Rushen	6.7	16	239%
Michael	5.7	14.7	257%

6. In Conclusion

The Act of 1872 was a landmark and educational milestone for the majority of the Island's children. A central Board of Education was established, and School Committees were established in each of the 17 parishes and four towns. It transferred the control of education of the parochial and national school from the Anglican Church to local School Committees. The Act created a system of national education, funded in large part by the Isle of Man government revenue. The Act re-affirmed the principle of compulsory education and provided for non-sectarian instruction in religious subjects.

A range of interests, at home and abroad, drove the initiation of the Act. On the home front the Island was entering the age of Modernity. External trade and cultural contacts were increasing. The arrival on the Island of a new Governor, the moderniser and reformer Governor Loch, in 1863, was critical to the constitutional reform in 1866 which brought with it increased control of Island finances. 'Across the water' in England and Wales, the 1867 Reform Act had extended the franchise to ever-larger numbers of working men, and it became clear to the political elite that 'our future masters.... should learn their letters.' Opinion was moving to introduce public education to this end for the first time. There were other drivers too, on a world scale. From the 1870s a new wave of colonial expansion by the European superpowers of Britain, France and Germany attracted Manx seafarers, merchants, miners and capitalists, enlarging their knowledge of economic, political and social conditions in the rest of the world. It was also the eve of the second industrial revolution with

Germany beginning to challenge Britain's pre-eminence. Germany's extensive experience of compulsory public education up to that point did not go unnoticed, neither in Britain nor on the Island.

The passage of the Act through the Tynwald Court of the Isle of Man government took almost two years and was driven almost entirely by domestic factors and not by the United Kingdom government. Governor Loch wanted 'to be the first' to introduce a Bill for compulsory education in the British Isles. To this end he introduced a draft Bill at the end of 1869, with clauses on compulsory education for children aged 4-13 years, the raising of local rates to help fund it, an assumption that the doctrine of the Church of England would imbue it, and the establishment of local School Committees, chaired by the local incumbent, to manage it. The reaction and resistance of different interest groups was swift. The farmers objected to the clauses on the ages of compulsory education. The Methodists objected to the notion that Church of England doctrine should frame religious instruction and that the Vicar would chair the local School Committees. Owners of real estate were wary of the imposition of a local parish rate for education. Further debates, further amendments, further objections and further clause revisions led, eventually to a Bill that legislated for the establishment of a public education system with compulsory education for children aged 7-13, local School Committees established across the Island and elected by the ratepayers, a non-doctrinal religious education instruction and no grant support for denominational or private schools. It was a more complete system of public education than that found in the 1870 Bill for England and Wales, and a little less complete than that found in the 1872 Bill for Scotland.

The impact of the Act on school attendance was slow to materialise, and implementation varied across the Island. Many schools were transferred to the Isle of Man Board of Education in the early years and a programme of school building was launched. Enrolment and attendance figures grew only slowly, and teacher-pupil ratios remained high, with many schools relying on multigrade teaching in which a single master/mistress was responsible for several classes and/or on the appointment of young, inexperienced pupil teachers. Over time, however, and with a number of important amendments on the ages for compulsory education, the appointment of central attendance officers, the abolition of school fees and the raising of the school leaving age to fourteen, enrolments, attendance and achievement did improve. By 1901 the average attendance had grown to 8135 from 4097 in 1875, while the population hardly grew at all. Relative to population, average attendance doubled over a period of 26 years.

Developments through the 20th and 21st century

Already by the end of the century, those who made education policy for the Island were extending their vision for public education and turning their attention to the post elementary years and the establishment of higher-grade schools and higher-grade classes. Evening schools were established in 1902, including evening classes for the training of pupil-teachers (1903). A Higher Education (i.e., post Elementary Education) Act was passed in 1907 and a school meals Act, with free provision for poor children in 1915. In 1920 the local School Committees were abolished in 1920 and replaced by the Isle of Man Central Education Authority. Children aged fourteen were obliged to attend school and could leave at the age of 15. Financial allowances were available made to prospective teachers to train on and off the island and trained teachers continued to be recruited from off island. By 1948 an island wide system of comprehensive secondary education, and the separation of primary and secondary schools, with separate head teachers had been established. And government grants became available to students who wished to gain admission to higher education institutions 'across the water.' In 1986 the school leaving age was raised to 16 years, some 15 years later than in

England. Population growth in the 1970s and 1980s led to the building of new schools and extensions to others. And in 2002 a Manx medium primary school with all-island entry had opened.

By 2022, 150 years after the introduction of the 1872 Act, ever large numbers of students complete their secondary education at the age of 18 years and move on to universities 'across'. Some continue their higher education at the University College of the Isle of Man, affiliated with the University of Chester. The private provision of pre-school education is extensive, with government grants available to parents to off-set costs. The number of subjects on the secondary school curriculum has increased, subject choices in the upper grades were not restricted by gender and a Manx medium primary school had been established. The system produces public examination results on a par with those in England and Wales. And, in contrast with England and Wales, there are no Standard Assessment Tests and no School Inspections. There is just one fee charging school¹⁰⁴, five secondary schools, one university-affiliated college and thirty-two primary schools.

The 1872 Act created the foundation on which rests today's comprehensive system of 'education for all' and from which it will develop in the future.

¹⁰⁴ King William's College provides education from primary through to upper secondary education. This school is inspected by the Independent School Inspectorate which also inspects all the schools belonging to the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference.