

326.1073

W.T. McCOY AND HIS DIRECTORSHIP OF EDUCATION

IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA 1919 - 1929.

by

W.G. RICHARDS, B.A., B.Ed. (Melb.)

Submitted in partial fulfilment
for the degree of Master of
Education in the University of
Adelaide, 1973.

CONTENTS.

Preface.

SECTION 1. NARRATIVE OF W.T. MCCOY'S CAREER 1866-1929.

1. W.T. McCoy's Career in New South Wales.	1.
2. Director of Education in Tasmania 1910-1919	12.
3. McCoy's Appointment to South Australia and the Initial Years of His Directorship.	31.
4. Imperial Education Conference 1923 and the Middle Years of McCoy's Directorship.	58.
5. The 1927 Imperial Education Conference and McCoy's Last Years.	84.

SECTION 2. REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF MCCOY'S WORK IN EDUCATION. PART I.

6. Education Organizations.	102.
7. The South Australian System of Education.	109.
8. McCoy and His Ministers.	118.
9. McCoy's Work at the Central Office.	142.
10. McCoy and His Teachers.	163.
11. McCoy and the South Australian Public Teachers' Union.	175.
12. McCoy's Administration of the System.	195.

PART II.

13. McCoy's Predecessors and the New Education.	201.
14. Primary Education 1.	209.
15. Primary Education 2.	235.
16. Post-Primary Education.	255.
17. Technical Education.	279.
18. Teacher Education.	295.
19. Summary. McCoy and Education in South Australia.	305.
20. Conclusion.	310.

Bibliography.

SUMMARY.

Section one is a chronological account of W.T. McCoy's career in New South Wales, Tasmania and South Australia.

McCoy rose from pupil teacher to inspector in the New South Wales Education Department. He gained the office of Director of Education in Tasmania in 1909 because of his tact and practical ability. He reconciled the factions in Tasmania and put the state education system on a sound footing.

McCoy took over the South Australian Education Department in 1919 after plans had been made for developments by the 1915 Education Act but there was no forceful leader available to put these plans into effect. Although he was appointed at a time of economic recession he did not allow this to block practical changes which consequently lifted education out of its lethargy. By his personal qualities and his capacity to lead he quickly gained the confidence of his officers and teachers. In 1923 he attended the third Imperial Education Conference in London, and then he visited educational institutions and observed educational practices in the United Kingdom, on the Continent and in North America. On his return he submitted a report and recommended to the Government practicable suggestions to improve local education. From 1924 to 1926 during the office of the Labour Government, which was most sympathetic towards educational development, McCoy was able to implement plans which he believed were most essential to the system in South Australia. A definite school building programme was inaugurated, school medical services were extended, a psychologist was appointed, central schools were established and the consolidation of rural schools was begun. After his second term abroad in 1927 McCoy brought back ideas for agricultural education and vocational guidance in the secondary schools.

Section two is a more detailed examination of the main aspects of McCoy's work for education in South Australia. Section two is divided into two parts. The first part examines the foundations and operations of the education system and McCoy's directorship so that he can be evaluated as an educational administrator. The second part deals with the

theory and practice of education in the state schools before and during McCoy's directorship in order that developments in education can be determined and McCoy's contribution assessed.

McCoy served under five different Ministers of Education and changing ministries enabled him to seize the initiative to adopt a progressive policy in education. He was unpatronizing and forthright, invariably frank, but constantly tactful with his Ministers. He spent much time in close personal contact with his Ministers. Through them he hoped to convince reluctant politicians that an adequate state education system cannot be operated on minimum resources.

McCoy inherited and accepted the highly centralized system of educational administration with its stress on efficiency, standardization and uniformity. Although he depended on the experience of his senior officers and established a sound organizational climate he was definitely the director of the organization. The time for significant community participation in educational decision making had not arrived, and neither the Advisory Council nor the schools were expected to be innovators in education.

McCoy was always anxious about the welfare of his teachers. In return he expected them to attain adequate qualifications and be efficient and effective in the classroom and be interested in the community. He established and maintained harmonious relations with the South Australian Public Teachers' Union.

In primary education McCoy followed the Australian practice of spreading educational facilities as evenly as possible over the whole State, and in places where no schools were provided correspondence tuition was organised. He established infant departments in large primary schools. He led the way in curriculum revision on the basis that schools should combine academic and practical activities and aim ultimately to produce good citizens. In post primary education he developed facilities to cater for the needs of South Australian society in the most practical way permitted by the times. He regarded high schools as the elite schools for the academically able, and he developed central schools to cater for the majority

of adolescents and to convert an apathetic society into realizing the advantages of post primary schools.

McCoy inherited a progressive system for the education of apprentices and a capable and experienced Superintendent of Technical Education in Fenner. McCoy supported Fenner in his task of establishing as sound a system of technical education as the resources of the state permitted. McCoy systematised the courses at the teachers' college according to the schools in which the trainees would teach in the future.

This is to certify that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



William Taylor McCoy (1866 - 1929)
Director of Education, South Australia 1919 - 1929.

PREFACE.

A comprehensive account of the history of education in South Australia cannot be compiled while extensive periods in the State's development remain unexplored by researchers. This work aims to examine one decade - the 1920's. It is co-incidental that this decade corresponds with the directorship of one man. However, people and time are inseparably bound, so glimpses of the period can be seen through the story of this man's career. It is hoped however, that this work will make a small but constructive contribution to the history of public education in South Australia where only the achievements of J.A. Hartley and the first Director of Education, A. Williams have so far been evaluated.

Although all the Australian states constituted highly centralized educational systems in which every detail of administration was placed in the hands of an official staff, developments in education were often due to the personality, ability and vision of the Directors of Education. Systems of public administration are not entirely effective in themselves, but men in positions of power and control within the systems can create the momentum for development. Published research contained in A.R. Crane and W.G. Walker's book Peter Board. His Contribution to the Development of Education in New South Wales, and J.O. Anchen's book Frank Tate and His Work for Education indicates how even within rigid, centralized administrative systems these directors were able to help education develop in the changing world. This work attempts to examine how W.T. McCoy influenced education within the South Australian system.

McCoy is unique in the history of Australian education in that he has been the only person to hold directorships of education in two states. He rose from pupil teacher to inspector in New South Wales, and he was appointed Director of Education in Tasmania, and in 1919 Director of Education in South Australia. He worked in different states but in similar systems.

On his appointment to South Australia McCoy took charge of a comparatively new system, new in the sense that it had been constituted as recently as December, 1915. He already had nine years experience as a Director of Education while progressive forces were modifying the late 19th Century formalities of the narrow, inflexible primary school curriculum. During this time provisions were also being made for secondary schools and for making more realistic links between schools and life. The major portion of this work is devoted to the story of McCoy's efforts to develop the system along the lines of advancing educational practices.

McCoy's reputation as a Director of Education stands high in the memories of those who worked with him, and the commentaries written during and after his directorship have apparently genuine praise for his achievements, ability, ardour and genial humanity. A.J. Schulz, the Principal of the Teachers' College, in a descriptive review of education in South Australia in 1927 stated that

the development of the South Australian public education system during the last six years has been the most pronounced in the history of the state. 1

Throughout his essay Schulz implied that this progress was due to W.T. McCoy because as soon as he was appointed

practically at once a new and strong tide of educational progress set in. 2

Comments in the Advertiser at the time of McCoy's death credit him as being a successful and constructive Director of Education.

Mr. McCoy had spent nearly ten years of unremitting toil to perfect the education system of this state.

Mr. McCoy possessed high scholastic attainment, and his undoubted ability as an organiser, coupled with a broad vision, courage and tact made his tenure of office an admitted success. 3

It is possible that Schulz may have been pointedly praising his Director and undoubtedly elegiac statements in an obituary often need scrutinizing. McCoy was further commended by Sir Archibald Grenfell-Price

1. G.S. Browne ed. Education in Australia London 1927 p.177
2. Ibid.
3. Advertiser 13 August, 1929 p.15 e-d.

in a book entitled One Hundred Years of Education written for South Australia's centenary year.

"When Mr. McCoy took charge in 1919 he introduced many reforms and improvements. At no time during its history did the department progress more rapidly. Mr. McCoy was a man of dominating personality, and during his term of office he was enabled to carry out his policy of development. He obtained the enthusiastic help of progressive teachers, and his term will be remembered as a time of advancement in all directions." 1

Writing in 1938 I.L. Kandell, the American comparative educationist, placed McCoy amongst the men of vision in 20th Century Australian education "builders who did not confuse centralization with bureaucracy".² This evidence suggests that McCoy's directorship is worthy of investigation and evaluation. McCoy then appears to have been a leading figure in South Australian education. He follows in the line of significant Directors of Education. There is a need to evaluate his directorship if he is to take his proper place in an eventual comprehensive account of the development of public education in South Australia.

The organization of this study of McCoy's directorship, requires the examination of certain basic questions. What exactly were the educational developments during his directorship? Why did they occur? How much can be attributed to McCoy? What can be attributed to his predecessors, his associates or to propitious times? In attempting to answer these questions I have divided the text into two sections, the first is a narrative of McCoy's career and the second consists of a review and evaluation of McCoy's work in education in South Australia. Such a plan is inclined to induce repetition. I have consciously endeavoured to reduce repetition to a minimum, but this minimum may serve to emphasize important features of McCoy's achievements. I believe that sequential reference to various aspects of education should help to form a clear portrait of the man and his work. The answers to the questions listed make no pretence of being definitive. In spinning the various fibres to make the thread breaks sometimes occurred and weak lengths had to be roughly connected because of the lack of detailed

1. Op.cit. p.8

2. I.L. Kandel Types of Administrations (Melbourne 1938) p.50

understanding of the nature of all the fibres. This indicates that some people warrant further study and some features need further examination. Among the notable people are W.J. Adey and C. Fenner who were McCoy's conscientious and efficient executive officers and who later became Directors of Education themselves; A.J. Schulz who had already been Principal of the Teachers' College for nine years before McCoy's arrival and who was to hold that position for a total of thirty nine years; Dr. Gertrude Halley, the principal medical officer, who founded the school medical services, and Dr. Constance Davey, who contributed most significantly to psychological study and to special education in the State. There is also much work yet to be done on South Australia's pioneer efforts in the technical education of apprentices, and the voluntary work of the mothers' clubs, school committees and councils.

ABBREVIATIONS.

<u>Deb. S.A.P.</u>	<u>Debates, South Australian Parliament.</u> (Hansard)
<u>E.G.</u>	<u>The Education Gazette,</u> South Australia.
<u>Ed. Regs.</u>	<u>Regulations under the Education Act 1915</u>
<u>N.S.W. P.P.</u>	<u>New South Wales Parliamentary Papers</u>
<u>Report of Tour Abroad 1927</u>	Report by W.T. McCoy, Director of Education, of observations and enquiries made with regard to education during an official visit to Great Britain and other countries 1927. (Adelaide, 1928).
* <u>S.A.A.</u>	South Australian Archives
<u>S.A.P.P.</u>	<u>South Australian Parliamentary Papers</u>
<u>S.A.P.T.U.</u>	South Australian Public Teachers' Union.
<u>S.A.T.J.</u>	South Australian Teachers' Journal.
<u>Tas. P.P.</u>	Tasmanian Parliamentary Papers

*
Explanatory Note: Many of the files examined in the preparation of this work were in the registry of the Education Department. Now all the files are deposited in the South Australian Archives. Although they are identified by their departmental numbers they can be traced in the archives.
e.g. S.A.A. E.D. 2631/1920 means Education Department file number 2631 of 1920 in South Australian Archives.
S.A.A. M.E. 218/1921 means Minister of Education file number 218 of 1921 in South Australian Archives.
S.A.A. C.S.O. 741/1919 means Chief Secretary's Office file number 741 of 1919 in South Australian Archives.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(The source from which they are derived is shown in brackets.)

PLATES.

- William Taylor McCoy (1866-1929) Director of
Education, South Australia, from 1909-1929.
(Supplement to E.G. August 1929) Frontispiece
- English Teachers Leaving for Australia
(Daily Mirror, London. Undated cutting in
E.D. 2707/1923) following p.61
- Laying the Foundation Stone of the Technical
College for Apprentices
(E.G. May, 1926 p.164) following p. 70
- Some of the School Inspectors with C.C. Charlton
1925.
(Photograph in the possession of Mr. A.L.T.Peake) following p.152
- Laying the Foundation Stone of the Teachers'
College
(Supplement to E.G. February, 1926) following p.301

PLANS.

- Conspectus Showing Scheme for Training Teachers in
South Australia
(S.A.P.P. 1921 No.44 p.23) following p.48
- Ministries in the South Australian Parliament
(Statistical Record of the Legislature 1836-1955
(Adelaide 1966) pp.98-100) following p.119

FIGURES.

- Figure 1. Primary School Woodwork Enrolments
(S.A.P.P. 1930 No.44 p.24) following p.229
- Figure 2. Enrolments in the Correspondence School
(S.A.P.P. 1932 No.44 p.7) following p.248
- Figure 3. Central School Enrolments
(S.A.P.P. 1932 No.44 p.6) following p.268

TABLES.

- Table 1. Expenditure on Education 1924-1929
(S.A.P.P. 1929 No.44 p.48)
(S.A.P.P. 1930 No.44 p.44) following p.131
- Table 2. Expenditure on Buildings 1920-1929
(Annual Reports of the Minister of
Education) following p.131
- Table 3. Uncertificated Teachers in Primary
Schools 1919-1929
(Annual Reports of the Minister of
Education) following p.167
- Table 4. Statistics on Primary Education 1919-1929
(S.A.P.P. 1930 No.44 p.42) following p.210
- Table 5. Classification of Primary Schools 1921-1929
(Annual Report of the Minister of Education)following p.210
- Table 6. Expansion of Teaching in Domestic Art.
1919-1929.
(Annual Report of the Minister of Education)following p.227
- Table 7. Number of Students in Each Year in High
Schools.
(Annual Report of the Minister of Education)following p.256
- Table 8. Statistics on High Schools 1919-1929
(S.A.P.P. 1930 No.44 p.43) following p.256
- Table 9. High School Staff holding any type of
University Degree
(Annual Reports of the Minister of Education) following p.261
- Table 10. Total number of Pupils Attending Higher
Primary Schools.
(Annual Reports of the Minister of Education) following p.265
- Table 11. Numbers of Apprentices and Probationers
Attending Classes 1923-1929.
(Annual Reports of the Minister of Education) following p.289
- Table 12. Number of Apprentices and Probationers
Registered under the Act.
(Annual Report of the Minister of Education)following p.290
- Table 13. Number of Students in the Teachers' College
1921-1929.
(Annual Reports of the Minister of Education) following p.296.