

STATISTICAL NOTES

AGE DISTRIBUTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED PROVINCES

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In the December, 1933 issue of the Bulletin of the All-India Federation of Teachers' Association, Rai Sahib Debnarayan Mukherjee, Vice-Principal, Teachers' Training College, Agra, contributes an interesting article on the problem of age-distribution of students in the English Schools of the United Provinces. His study is based upon the ages of students in different classes for the three years 1932, 1933 and 1934, the number of students in the last named year being 18,268, scattered over 46 English Schools, of which 19 are Government and 18 non-Government Institutions.

Mr. Mukherjee makes a statistical analysis of the figures and proceeds to show that in spite of the absence of any departmental rules prescribing a maximum age-range for every class of an English School, there can be noticed the existence of a fairly well-defined age-range of about 4 years in the case of about 70% of the students of that class, as would be evident from the following table:—

Class	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Age-Range	7'04 to 10'5	8'08 to 11'62	8'08 to 12'62	10'14 to 14'08	11'41 to 15'61	12'02 to 16'06	14'24 to 18'06	15'45 to 19'21

He also finds that there are in every class "a few grown-up boys who are progressively over-age for that class when compared with those who are underage."

He argues that it is not desirable to have in any school especially in the lower forms "small children of nine and ten sitting side by side with growing and grown-up adolescents of fourteen and above, for the unstable mental and physical characteristics of the latter require a different course of treatment from the comparatively simple needs of the former." Besides, this obviously creates "complex problems of organisation, teaching and discipline" in each class. He therefore advocates the introduction of a well-defined age-range for each class as shown in the following table:—

Class	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Age-Range	7-10	8-11	9-12	10-13	11-13	12-16	13-17	14-19

This arrangement allows for a variation of the range in years of age in different stages of the school course. The maximum of 19 years seems to be satisfactory in this sense that as this is the legal age for attaining majority, it is only right that students above this age should shoulder adult responsibilities in life instead of wasting their time and energy, as well as those of others in school.

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This measure, however, is not without some practical difficulties, as the writer himself admits; because it is only the physical age of the pupil that has been considered here, but the mental age also is an important factor which cannot be ignored. Further, the proposed measure, if carried out, will naturally lead to the segregation of two groups of students—over-age and under-age—for each class which will obviously necessitate different kinds of treatment. Mr. Mukherjee invites the Government Schools to take up this task and show how to manage and educate such groups of students instead of doing what other schools are also doing more or less efficiently.

Mr. Mukherjee's paper is full of interest to the educationists as well as to statisticians. He has brought out many interesting facts and touched many points which require further investigations. For instance he has found that an average pupil finishes his school course from class III to class X in about ten years instead of in eight, which is assumed to be the normal period. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate how this loss of about 2 years is brought about, and to find out at what stage the average scholar loses most time and why. We believe a fuller statistical analysis of Mr. Mukherjee's figures may be taken up with advantage. For example, taking these schools to be fairly typical in the province, it should be possible to calculate the average age of the school-going population, and if such a study is continued for a number of years, an indication may be obtained from a comparison of these mean ages as to the relative efficiency of the educational system in the secondary schools. A comparison of the Government and non-Government schools on these points may also be interesting. Further, the nature of the distribution of ages in different classes can be studied with advantage, and may be expected to throw a good deal of light on the educational situation.

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