

school-teacher in the ordinary sense of the term, there is a tendency to regard the making of of certain garments as the chief, if not the sole, object of instruction. In other words, no attempt is made to make the course educative rather than utilitarian in character, or to link it in any way with other subjects of the school course, such as drawing. There is also evidence of a tendency to utilise methods of drafting patterns based on principles that for obvious reasons are not explained to the pupils. While well-fitting, nicely-finished garments are no doubt very desirable, it is in our opinion a grave mistake, if a natural one, to make the production of such garments the sole object of a course in dressmaking for school-children. It cannot be stated too often or too emphatically that in the case of school classes for instruction in handwork it is the means and not the end that is all-important. The real test of the work of such classes is not, as is too often supposed, what may be termed the output of the classes, but rather the character of the operations and methods involved in the production of the output. The number of recognised school classes in operation during 1904 in the several education districts, together with the subjects of instruction, is set forth in the table on page 5.

#### B. TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

The reports supplied by controlling authorities and attached to this report give full details of the work of the various technical and art schools and classes during 1904. There are now over twenty schools equipped in a more or less complete manner for the carrying-on of technical, continuation, and art classes. In addition to the classes at these schools, classes were also held at about thirty other places in such buildings as were available for the purpose. It is worthy of note, in connection with the first establishment of classes, that controlling authorities have in most cases endeavoured to utilise wherever possible available buildings, either in the shape of public-school class-rooms or of suitable rented rooms and workshops. There is little doubt that this is the better course to pursue in connection with the inauguration of schemes for technical instruction in the smaller centres, since it enables those interested in the classes to form a more accurate estimate of the real requirements of the district before taking steps to provide permanent accommodation.

During the year buildings for technical and school classes have been completed at Gisborne, Hastings, Timaru, Waimate, and Kaitangata, while grants have been made to controlling authorities for the erection of, or additions to, buildings at Wanganui, Nelson, and Dunedin. Grants have also been made from time to time for the provision of, or necessary additions to, furniture, fittings, and apparatus for classes in various parts of the colony. A review of the year's work shows that satisfactory progress has been made in the direction of providing and extending facilities for technical instruction not only in the larger centres, but also in country districts, and, although the progress made appears to be regarded in some quarters as not altogether commensurate with local requirements and conditions, yet we venture to express the opinion that, taking all the circumstances into account, the present condition of technical education throughout the colony is at least as satisfactory as that obtaining in other young and scattered communities. We believe that a sound system of technical instruction, adapted to the varying conditions in different parts of the colony and to the needs of those whom it is intended to benefit, can be established without the necessity arising at the outset for elaborately equipped institutions on the lines of the technical schools and colleges of older countries, where the conditions are altogether different from those that obtain in a young colony such as ours. When it is remembered that in the process of the development of a young country the demands on the public funds must necessarily be heavy, and that provision for technical education is only one of the many ends in view, it would certainly appear wiser to provide first of all for the barest essentials for many schools than to equip a few in accordance with the latest developments elsewhere. Technical schools exist or should exist for the benefit of the pupils, not of the instructors, and still less for the purpose of providing fine buildings equipped with elaborate furniture, fittings, and apparatus, when the local needs for some time to come call merely for buildings and equipment of a much simpler character. Surely we cannot expect to be able to begin at the point at which older countries have only now arrived after a long period of preparation and effort.

The success of a technical class may be said to depend not only on the efficiency of the instruction and the suitability and sufficiency of the equipment, but also on the extent to which the students are able to benefit by the instruction, and on the number of students so benefited. It is unfortunately evident from a perusal of the reports on the various schools and classes that a by no means small proportion of the students attending the classes are unable to benefit to the fullest extent by the instruction, even where it is of a quite elementary character; and, further, that it is too often a difficult matter to get students to take up courses of work adapted to their occupations and callings. It would seem that this state of things alone renders it undesirable at present to do other than proceed very gradually in the matter of extension, especially in the direction of higher technical education. At the same time, however, we should endeavour to educate the public mind to the importance of serious and systematic study on the part of those by whom technical instruction in the true sense of the term should be regarded as a vital necessity. It is suggested that valuable assistance in this direction might well be forthcoming from firms and others giving employment to those who would be benefited by regular attendance at technical classes. Much also can be accomplished by endeavours to get hold of pupils before they have had time to lose the habit and regular and systematic study. The regulations providing for free technical education have enabled controlling authorities to achieve something in this direction, as is shown by the fact that whereas in 1903 less than £100 was paid by the Government to controlling authorities on account of free technical education, in 1904 over £600 was distributed, and there are indications that a considerably larger sum will be expended during 1905. As regards the subjects of instruction taken up by the free pupils or holders of junior technical scholarships, it is a matter for regret that, with so large a range of subjects from which to select, the subjects most generally taken up have been those connected with commercial pursuits. It is to be hoped that the returns for this year will show a more satisfactory state of affairs.