

While the number of students (18,247) under instruction last year indicates that a fair proportion of our young people recognize the value of the educational facilities that the technical schools afford, there are no doubt a large number of our young people for whom the schools have no attraction. Among these are a number who have left the public school without gaining a certificate of proficiency (one of the qualifications for a free place) and have gone to work, many of them taking up forms of employment that lead nowhere in particular. It is not unlikely that many of these would under appropriate conditions affording the necessary opportunities and stimuli eventually fit themselves to enter the ranks of the industrial workers of the Dominion. It is true that the Education Act provides the necessary machinery for requiring such young persons to attend technical classes, but the fact remains that although this machinery has now been available for nearly six years it was in 1915 put into operation in only fifteen school districts, confined to four education districts, all in the North Island. Whatever the reasons may be for the failure on the part of local education authorities generally to follow the lead given them elsewhere, it is obvious that some other means of gaining the desired end must be sought. A partial solution may be found in the extension of the present regulations governing free places so as to provide for the free education along certain definite lines of approved pupils leaving the public school without having qualified for further free education.

Regulations have been recently gazetted providing for the admission without payment of fees of duly accredited returned soldiers to technical schools. It is too early to form any reliable estimate of the extent to which the regulations are likely to be availed of, but it is gratifying to know that the schools, as was expected, are prepared to afford every facility to all soldier-students admitted under these regulations.

TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOLS.

These schools, eight in number, are of secondary grade, and provide industrial, commercial, and general domestic, agricultural, and art courses. They are under the same management as the technical schools, of which they form part.

The number of pupils in attendance during the year was as follows:—

	Technical High School.					Number of Pupils.	
						1914.	1915.
Auckland	397	464
Wanganui	185	185
Wellington	285	254
Napier	79	108
Westport	14	20
Christchurch	414	421
Dunedin	288	304
Invercargill	177	199
Totals	1,839	1,955

The total enrolment for the year, which shows an increase of 6.3 per cent., must be regarded as satisfactory, indicating that the schools are catering successfully for a number of young people who would not otherwise proceed to schools of secondary grade.

The number of pupils taking up the various courses provided was as follows:—

Course.	Number of Pupils.		Totals
	Males.	Females.	
Industrial	489	1	490
Commercial and general	333	688	1,021
Domestic	327	327
Agricultural	115	..	115
Art	2	2
Totals	937	1,018	1,955

Over 52 per cent. of the pupils took commercial and general courses, industrial courses being taken by 25 per cent. and domestic courses by 16.7 per cent. There was an increase of twenty-four in the number of pupils taking agriculture. Seven of the schools offered industrial, commercial, and domestic courses; in addition, four offered an agricultural course and one an art course, while one school (Westport) offered an engineering course only. Capitation payments totalled £20,985, being at the rate of £10.7 per pupil. The rates of capitation vary from £12 10s. a year for first-year pupils to £15 for third-year pupils in the case of free pupils and from £8 5s. to £10 in the case of other pupils.