

The examinations for proficiency certificates which entitle pupils to receive free secondary education appear to have been held in the usual way, partly by the Inspectors themselves and partly by the Inspectors assisted by the teachers. The results vary very much indeed, Auckland securing 78.4 per cent. of passes, Taranaki 65.8 per cent., Wanganui 68 per cent., Hawke's Bay 82.2 per cent., Wellington 68.2 per cent., Nelson 59.1 per cent., Canterbury 67.8 per cent., Otago 76 per cent., and Southland 69.5 per cent. This variation is not to be taken, even when measurable results alone are considered, as a reliable indication of the relative efficiency of the instruction in the different districts: as well depend on a comparison of the results of the Junior National Scholarship Examination. Whence, then, the variation? The Department supplied, in the case of English and arithmetic, test questions that are as nearly uniform in standard as the staff of Inspectors can make them. Is the difference due to lack of uniformity in the standard of marking the candidates' work? An investigation conducted by myself in the year 1920 produced most interesting results, which might, I would suggest, be once more be studied with profit by the Inspectors. I am quite convinced that S. 6 classes in Canterbury are not likely to be more than 8 per cent. less efficient than those in Otago, or that the difference in attainments between Auckland and Wanganui S. 6 pupils is represented by as much as 10 per cent. The subject is a fruitful one for inquiry, and one that indeed demands investigation, since either unfit pupils are being sent forward to the secondary schools or well-prepared pupils are being debarred from the benefits of free secondary education. Possibly both these defects will be found. The following table shows the comparison more clearly:—

| Education District. | Percentage of Passes, 1921. | Variation from Median. | Percentage for 1920. | Variation from Median. |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Hawke's Bay .. .. . | 82.2                        | +14.0                  | 70.6                 | +3.2                   |
| Auckland .. .. .    | 78.4                        | +10.2                  | 76.3                 | +8.9                   |
| Otago .. .. .       | 76.0                        | +7.8                   | 80.2                 | +12.8                  |
| Southland .. .. .   | 69.5                        | +1.3                   | 67.9                 | +0.5                   |
| Wellington .. .. .  | 68.2                        | Median                 | 66.7                 | -0.7                   |
| Wanganui .. .. .    | 68.0                        | -0.2                   | 62.5                 | -4.9                   |
| Canterbury .. .. .  | 67.8                        | -0.6                   | 65.4                 | -2.0                   |
| Taranaki .. .. .    | 65.8                        | -2.6                   | 66.9                 | -0.5                   |
| Nelson .. .. .      | 59.1                        | -8.1                   | 67.4                 | Median.                |

The median percentage of passes for the year 1920 was 67.4, which is only 0.8 per cent. lower than for last year. The maximum plus and minus variations for the 1920 median were +12.8 compared with +14 last year, and -4.9 compared with -8.1 last year. The second and fourth columns show the extent to which the percentage of passes in the different districts varied from the median during the years 1921 and 1920. It is worthy of note that the districts that exceeded the median percentage of passes were the same in both years.

From returns furnished by the teachers the Inspectors in Southland estimate that more than 53 per cent. of the pupils who completed at least a year in S. 6 availed themselves of the facilities provided for free secondary education. In Wellington, Wanganui, and Otago districts the corresponding percentage was nearly 50. The Hawke's Bay Inspectors estimate that not more than 3 per cent. passed into unskilled ranks or "blind-alley" occupations. Even this small percentage represents a loss to the community and a weakness in our system, which up to the present includes no organization for giving vocational guidance to pupils apart from that offered voluntarily and incidentally by the teachers.

The district high schools continue to serve a very useful purpose in country districts. In one education district, Wanganui, out of 606 S. 6 pupils entering upon post-primary education, 243 pupils went to secondary schools, 209 to a technical school or technical high school, while 120, or 20 per cent., entered the district high schools. In several districts the Inspectors report that difficulty is found in securing trained teachers who have some knowledge of science. The number of subjects, combined with the varied attainments of the pupils, makes the teacher's work in a small secondary department very difficult indeed, and there is still some doubt whether the remuneration is sufficient to induce trained teachers to enter upon this work. When, however, the "school age" is extended to fifteen, and the primary course remodelled to introduce secondary education at an earlier stage than at present, the secondary departments of district high schools will assume a new importance and give wider scope for the promotion of trained secondary teachers. The following are some of the comments made by the Inspector who visited the district high schools:—

"In all cases we find the secondary assistants keen and industrious; but many of them lack experience, and practically none of them read any work dealing with their profession. Wherever the work is clearly outlined, as in mathematics and science, the best results are secured; this would indicate the advisability of defining more specifically the work in the other subjects as well, as is done for similar schools in New South Wales and Victoria."—*(Auckland.)*

"Under the present conditions there is little chance for promotion for teachers engaged in the secondary work of district high schools, and we are of opinion that if these were graded as secondary-school teachers with a view to providing greater opportunities for promotion there would be more encouragement for teachers to take up this branch of the work."—*(Wanganui.)*