

Prior to 1901 there was no provision for technical instruction in the South Canterbury District. Timaru, was, however, one of the first places to take advantage of the machinery provided by the Manual and Technical Instruction Act of 1900. During the intervening years steady progress has been made. In addition to a substantially built and well-arranged technical school at Timaru, suitable buildings for manual training and technical classes have been erected in connection with the district high schools at Temuka, Waimate, Pleasant Point, and Fairlie. The technical classes at each of these places are conducted by Managers, with the Education Board of the district as controlling authority.

When the present system of technical instruction was inaugurated Otago, thanks to local enterprise, already had a strong technical school, which was carried on in Dunedin in a building previously used as a brass-foundry. Since 1901 the building has been considerably modified and added to, with the view of meeting as far as possible the rapidly increasing demand for instruction. It is evident, however, that the limit of usefulness has now been reached, and a movement is in progress which has for its object the raising of funds in aid of the erection of a building more suited to present-day requirements. In addition to the technical school, Dunedin has a School of Art, where classes under the control of the Education Board have been carried on for many years. There are also two up-to-date manual-training centres. Suitable buildings for manual training and technical classes have also been provided at Port Chalmers, Kaitangata, and Oamaru; while the Education Board is at the present time considering proposals for providing facilities for manual and technical instruction in connection with several of its district high schools.

In 1901 a beginning had already been made in Southland, for the classes then in operation may be regarded as the nucleus of the present technical school in Invercargill. The building in which the classes are now carried on is a substantial structure in brick, with detached workshops, serving also the purpose of a manual-training centre. At Riverton and Gore similar centres have also been provided.

It will be evident from the foregoing remarks that a very satisfactory response has been made during the decade under review to the demands for facilities for technical instruction, especially when it is remembered that the population of the Dominion is less than that of a large European city, and necessarily somewhat scattered. It is pleasing to be able to record that, in addition to the moneys voted by Parliament, considerable monetary assistance has been forthcoming from local sources in aid of necessary buildings and equipment.

Very soon after the inception of the movement the need of a supply of trained teachers was keenly felt. It was soon realized that, as one of the world's greatest teachers has said, it is a matter of small moment what subjects you study, but it is of vital importance with whom you study; and, although no special steps were taken to supply the necessary technical training for those who proposed to take up technical-school teaching as a profession, it will generally be acknowledged that we have now in the schools a body of instructors well qualified from many points of view for the positions they occupy. In some cases it has been found necessary to draw upon older countries for trained teachers for some subjects of instruction, notably subjects of pure and applied art. It is gratifying, however, to note that the number of ex-students holding appointments, some of them important ones, on the staffs of our technical schools is increasing every year. A brief review of present-day methods of instruction will show that improvements in teaching have not lagged far behind progress in other directions. One of the most prominent and pleasing features of the work and a feature which helps to pave the way for further improvements, is the readiness with which a large number of students enter on courses of related subjects. In earlier days it was common to most students to confine their attention to one or two unrelated subjects, and the schools consequently were for the most part merely aggregations of unrelated classes. Financial considerations also in many cases compelled the school authorities to cater for what may be called the amateur student, with the result that the trade student was conspicuous by his absence. To-day, in the more important schools at least, the position is completely reversed. In the larger centres individual classes of the old type having little or no relationship to technical instruction are fast disappearing, giving place to courses of instruction bearing directly on the industrial requirements of the locality. This very desirable change is, to some extent, due to the system of free places that now obtains in connection with the technical schools.

As regards improvements in methods of art-instruction, one of the most important is the elimination of the flat copy as an aid to teaching. Except in the case of some of the smaller centres, students are now brought face to face with natural and real things, and are taught to express their own impressions of these in various media. Design is no longer regarded as an abstract study: it is realized that "design is the language you learn from your work"; that "as your skill in handiwork grows so well your power of design or arrangement"; and that "design cannot be separated from handiwork." Design, apart from its application to clay, metal, wood, leather, or other material, is now seldom taught. The higher branches of pure and applied art are generally supposed to flourish only in those countries that have reached maturity. However this may be, the opinion is expressed that some of the original and unaided work produced by students attending art classes in New Zealand compares favourably with similar work in older countries. A combined display, now and again, of the best work of our schools would, it is thought, do much to encourage and stimulate students.

A knowledge of mechanical drawing was a few years ago considered to be the all-important technical equipment in workshop practice. To-day the ability to make an intelligent freehand sketch of a given part of a machine or of a building is considered to be of more vital importance. In most of the schools instruction in mechanical and architectural drawing apart from instruction in mathematics and mechanics and a knowledge of materials is exceptional. The classes are equipped with fairly complete sets of models, which are used for sketching and drawing purposes,