

The appended table shows the variation in attendance of students in certain occupations in the last eleven years. Both sexes are included, but in the commercial group females probably predominate, while students from the engineering and building trades are probably without exception males.

The effect of the war is clearly seen in both groups, and also probably to some extent that of the "slump" of 1921-22, though most of the shrinkage in these groups between 1921 and 1922 was due to the regulations for compulsory attendance in force in certain country districts having been placed in abeyance.

STUDENTS IN TECHNICAL SCHOOLS.

Occupation.	Numbers attending Technical Classes from certain Groups of Industrial Occupations in the Years										
	1913.	1914.	1915.	1916.	1917.	1918.	1919.	1920.	1921.	1922.	1923.
Clerical .. .. .	1,752	1,874	1,996	2,207	2,382	2,173	1,911	2,146	2,214	1,957	1,972
Shop and warehouse .. ..	1,144	1,187	1,307	1,422	1,373	1,295	1,295	1,300	1,042	1,203	858
Dressmaking, millinery, &c. ..	230	267	241	262	249	227	227	245	240	264	135
Tailors and tailoresses .. ..	84	118	100	127	102	68	102	85	131	86	83
Printers, &c. .. ..	151	170	176	147	176	151	130	119	130	79	83
Total commercial .. ..	3,361	3,616	3,820	4,165	4,282	3,914	3,665	3,895	3,757	3,589	3,131
Engineers and mechanics .. ..	638	644	699	745	784	826	961	876	900	701	754
Electricians .. .. .	238	228	214	248	261	316	278	476	408	359	420
Plumbers and metal-workers ..	601	622	441	377	351	290	362	546	577	511	634
Woodworkers .. .. .	535	521	454	384	315	289	346	506	539	428	519
Painters, plasterers, &c. .. .	162	136	126	117	124	101	109	79	107	186	69
Total engineering and building	2,174	2,151	1,934	1,871	1,835	1,822	2,056	2,483	2,531	2,185	2,396
Number of centres at which recognized technical classes were held	132	138	168	151	154	131	110	121	94	66	56
City and Guilds Examinations: Trade subjects—											
Entries .. .. .	270	215	186	250	236	226	156	261	339	363	362
Passes .. .. .	172	133	122	141	128	111	70	161	185	187	165
Percentage of passes .. .. .	63.8	62.0	65.7	56.5	54.3	49.0	45.0	61.8	54.6	51.5	45.7

It appears generally from the table that there is a distinct tendency for the classes in the engineering and the building trades to grow stronger, while, on the other hand, the continuation and commercial classes tend to become on the whole smaller. The weakening of these classes in numbers is perhaps largely due to the increase in the numbers attending full-time post-primary courses, the increase in which has been large in both district high schools and high schools; while in technical high schools the number attending fourteen such schools in 1923 was 5,024, as against 1,664 attending eight schools in 1913, an increase of over 200 per cent.

In connection with these figures it should be noted that there has been in recent years a considerable shrinkage in the number of centres in which recognized technical classes are being held. While this shrinkage is partly due to a change in the method of recognition, it is also, largely due to the discontinuance of such classes as woodwork for amateurs, dressmaking, cookery, English, arithmetic, and elementary commercial subjects in small centres. The growth of the post-primary day-school system has to a large extent removed the necessity for such classes, though doubtless as population increases an increased demand may warrant the re-establishment of such centres, with more satisfactory courses bearing directly on local industries.

The results of the City and Guilds Examinations for the past ten years would appear to show that in trade subjects the standard of attainment is not so high as it was before the war, though the difference is not well marked, the proportion of passes to the total number of trade students being much the same as in former years. The only trade in which progress may be gauged by results of local examinations is that of plumbing. In this trade the Plumbers' Board has had occasion to note in the last few years a distinct decline in average attainment of candidates for certificates. This decline is due, in the opinion of the technical-school teachers, mainly to the fact that, whereas before the Plumbers' Board of New Zealand was set up under the Plumbers Registration Act the passing of first-, second-, third-, and fourth-year examinations was a usual and often a prescribed preliminary for apprentices wishing to qualify for certificates, it is not now compulsory for apprentices to take any specific technical-school course before sitting for the certificate examination, with the consequence that a large proportion of the candidates attempt to prepare for the examination by a short course of cramming. Steps are being taken in at least one centre to ensure, by day classes as well as by compulsory attendance at evening classes, that the apprentices shall take a full course extending over the years of apprenticeship. The extension of this principle to other trades is contemplated by the provisions of the Apprentice Act of 1923. This Act provides means by which in any trade and locality the Arbitration Court may direct attendance of young learners at suitable classes, while provision is also made whereby the cost of more directly vocational training may be met by the employers if the majority employing the majority of the workers in any trade in any locality are prepared to co-operate in establishing classes.