

2. ABRIDGED REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION AND THE INSPECTORS OF TECHNICAL SCHOOLS AND MANUAL-TRAINING CLASSES.

SIR,—

Education Department, Wellington, 28th July, 1928.

We have the honour to submit, in accordance with the regulations, the following report on manual and technical instruction for the year 1927.

We have, &c.,

W. S. LA TROBE.

M. DYER.

F. C. RENYARD.

W. S. AUSTIN.

The Director of Education, Wellington.

I. TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

ATTENDANCE.

The total number of students in part-time day and in evening classes was 12,408, of whom 5,699 held junior or senior free places and 6,709 paid fees. Of the total number, 1,494 had been attending day schools for primary instruction in the previous year. From Table J 8 appended to this report it will be seen that 6,740 students, being over 54 per cent. of the total, were seventeen years of age or over, while 1,505, or 12 per cent., were under fifteen years of age. Of this 12 per cent., however, a considerable number—probably at least one-third were part-time day pupils included among the 1,221 persons whose occupation was given as that of “student” in the returns made by the schools and summarized in Table J 7 appended to this report. It is probable, therefore, that less than 8 per cent. of the evening-class pupils were under fifteen years of age. Of this 8 per cent., those under fourteen years of age all held, under the regulations, a certificate of proficiency and were free-place holders.

It is noteworthy that the proportion of girls to boys in the evening classes is only about 57 per cent. This ratio has been decreasing in recent years. This increasing disparity is due mainly to the small and diminishing attendance of girls at technical classes in cookery, dressmaking, millinery, &c.

The following table gives a comparison of the position in 1927 with that in 1919, based on the numbers of students attending from the leading groups of occupations and not on the courses which they were taking :—

Occupation of Pupils.	Number enrolled.		Increase or Decrease.
	Year 1919.	Year 1927.	
Domestic pursuits	2,911	1,359	— 1,552
Agricultural pursuits	753	178	— 575
Clerical pursuits	1,911	2,573	+ 662
Industrial pursuits	5,071	5,718	+ 647
	10,646	9,828	— 818

In 1919 the total numbers of pupils over seventeen years of age, including all groups of occupations, were 4,305 males and 4,587 females, whereas in 1927 there were 4,346 males and only 2,394 females over seventeen years of age. The decrease is mainly in the classes for domestic subjects, although there is also a considerable decrease in the numbers of agricultural and pastoral workers taking classes. The whole of the decrease in the number of agricultural students is due to the fact that in 1919 it was a common practice for Education Boards to arrange for short courses for farmers in country centres. These courses might occupy only a few days in any one centre, and the classes were generally well attended—a class of twenty or thirty farmers being not uncommon. Such short courses have not been held in recent years, the instructors who formerly took the work being now more fully occupied with the supervision of elementary science and nature-study in the primary schools.

In regard to classes in domestic subjects, the decay of country classes, due originally to drastic pruning during the slump of 1920–22, has probably been one of the chief reasons for the decrease in the numbers attending. The primary causes of this marked decrease in country classes are not to be found, however, in the temporary curtailment of facilities during the slump, nor in the apparent