

Since technical education is more particularly concerned with the reactions between man and material things, it follows that the workshops and laboratories are the features which should distinguish such schools from all others, and they should form the nucleus about which should centre the activities of the whole school. This fact is becoming more fully realized in recent years, and so far as funds have been available the equipment has been modernized and improved not only by direct grant from the Government, but also by the setting-apart for this purpose of a proportion of those grants which are made for general purposes. It is being recognized that a new industrial revolution is taking place at the present time in New Zealand, a movement which is much more pronounced and complete in the older countries of the world—that of industrial specialization—and this fact must have strong repercussions upon our system of vocational training.

There are signs that the schools are aware of what is happening, and are taking such steps as they may to meet the new conditions of industrial organization in which their students must in the future find their places.

It must be realized that the process of adjustment cannot be carried on without considerable expenditure of money, and that the schools have but little to spare after essential working-expenses are paid, which could be devoted to this purpose.

Reviewing the teaching as a whole, it can be confidently stated that in increasing degree the work is gaining yearly in vitality, sincerity, and in adaptiveness to industrial conditions and the general educational needs of the largest section of the community.

MANUAL TRAINING.

The work of handicraft training in special centres of pupils attending primary schools and district high schools has been carried out with zeal and success during the past year. With but one exception, handicraft training for boys takes the form of woodwork and for girls of cookery, housewifery, and laundrywork.

So far as the teaching in woodwork is concerned, distinct improvements have been noted during the past year. A well qualified body of young and enthusiastic teachers is being built up. These teachers, nearly all fully trained and expert tradesmen, have studied the theoretical basis of their craft and the process of education, and have in many cases gained the whole or part of the teacher's handicraft certificate awarded by the Education Department. The improvement in schemes of work and in the facility for individual work for advanced boys is evident. Greater attention has been paid to the care and maintenance of the equipment and to the sharpening of the tools, with beneficial effects upon the quality of the work produced. It is unfortunate that in some districts supplies of suitable timber for manual training are not easy to obtain, for it is undoubtedly true that in those districts where suitable timber is supplied the results have amply justified the extra expenditure.

In the teaching of domestic science chief attention is paid to the art of cookery, but laundrywork and needlework taken as short courses occupy a subsidiary place in some districts.

The teachers are, on the whole, well trained and perform their tasks satisfactorily. Owing to the need for economy and the reduced allowances paid to Boards, the supply of material has been cut down to the barest minimum by some Boards, and the difficulties of teaching have thereby been greatly increased; for cooking methods are profoundly affected by the quantities of materials handled, and if taught in relation to very small portions may not be applicable to such quantities as are ordinarily used in home cookery. Much more attention is now paid to the cooking of complete meals and to the working-out of balanced dietaries, as opposed to cake, pie, and pudding making, which a few years ago were almost the only dishes undertaken. No doubt the insistence of the late Inspector of Home Science upon the study of food-values as a proper basis for the cookery schemes is bearing good fruit, and her influence is still strongly felt in such matters as the selection and preparation of suitable breakfasts, lunches, and teas for children of school age as a regular part of the curriculum; the tasteful setting of the tables and the serving of the food and the care and proper cleanliness of equipment.

Attention is more properly being laid on cookery as an art, though such reference to scientific principles as can easily be comprehended by the pupils is not neglected; indeed, in some cases it is in danger of being overdone. Where, as in the case of some senior schools, the domestic science mistress takes not only the cookery, but also the home-science work in the school laboratory, the happiest results may be expected and are often realized.

The equipment of the cookery-rooms in the manual training centres is generally fairly adequate, though the maintenance of such equipment is a somewhat difficult and expensive matter as the bulk of it grows older. The cleaning of these centres also offers some difficulty, and is a matter of anxiety to many of the instructresses.

TECHNICAL CLASSES.

During 1931 evening and part-time day technical classes were conducted in forty-three centres, the same number as in 1930. The total number of students in these classes was 10,536, of whom 5,316 held junior or senior free places and 5,220 paid fees. The numbers show a decline of 678 free and 615 paying students, a total of 1,293 as compared with the preceding year. Half of the fall in numbers is due to a reduction of 652 in the number of junior-free-place holders in evening classes, while the total reduction in numbers of students between the ages of fourteen and seventeen years is 974—nearly three-quarters of the total drop—the number of pupils of these ages falling from 4,852 in 1930 to 3,878 in 1931. This fall in numbers of evening students may be ascribed partly to the return to day schools of pupils unable to find work, and partly to trade depression and the absence of young apprentices in many large trades, partly also to unemployment among the large class of boys and girls