

Even in Form V of the post-primary school there have been changes, as is shown by the following table, which gives, over forty years, the increase in the numbers of pupils sitting for the external examination ordinarily taken at the end of Form V. Up to 1934 this was the University Entrance (Matriculation) Examination. From 1934 onwards it was either the University Entrance or the School Certificate Examination, and so the total number of individuals sitting for either of these examinations is given. From 1946, when the standard of the University Entrance was raised by one year, the sole examination at Form V was the School Certificate :—

Year.				Five-year Age-group (15 to under 20).	Candidates.
New School Certificate—					
1947	..	..	..	126,500	8,447
1946	..	..	..	128,100	8,300
1945	..	..	..	129,500	6,693
1944	..	..	..	130,800	6,952
1943	..	..	..	132,400	5,398
1942	..	..	..	133,500	4,942
1941	..	..	..	135,000	5,044
1940	..	..	..	136,400	5,191
1939	..	..	..	135,400	5,437
1938	..	..	..	133,500	4,925
1937	..	..	..	132,500	4,860
1936 (Census) ..	..	..	..	132,245	4,774
1935	..	..	..	130,935	4,602
Matriculation and School Certificate —					
1934	..	..	..	132,354	4,610
1931	..	..	..	133,800	4,779
1926 (Census) ..	..	..	..	124,314	4,679
1921 (Census) ..	..	..	..	107,350	3,643
1916 (Census) ..	..	..	..	91,404	1,546
1911 (Census) ..	..	..	..	88,458	1,102
Matriculation—					
1906 (Census) ..	..	..	..	87,117	1,292

The second column in the table gives, for each year concerned, the total number of boys and girls in New Zealand in the age-group fifteen to nineteen inclusive, which would be the group including most of the candidates. This provides a rough measure of the increase in population over the period. It will be seen that the relevant population increased by 45 per cent. between the years 1906 and 1947, whilst over the same period the number of candidates for the examination increased by 553 per cent. Between 1945 and 1947 there was a drop of 2·3 per cent. in the age-group, but a rise of 26·2 per cent. in the number of candidates.

This rapid rise in the proportion of the population entering for the School Certificate Examination is, of course, the logical conclusion of the policy of free post-primary education for all. The striking jump in the figures for the past two years is, no doubt, due in the main to the new status of the School Certificate, and to the fact that it can now be taken with a wide range of subjects, many of them of a practical or technical nature. Highly desirable though this growing popularity of the School Certificate is, it must not be forgotten that it inevitably means a lowering of the average standard in academic subjects of the candidates. Many pupils are now sitting for the examination who, ten years ago, would not have thought of doing so. So it is only to be expected that the efforts of some of them in English and other academic subjects should leave much to be desired. It is for the Department to see that, however wide and practical the range of subjects may be, the over-all standard of the pass mark be maintained.