

The schools are, however, faced with the task of devising suitable work for the short-course pupils, who have enrolled in much greater numbers since the school-leaving age was raised. For the majority of these pupils the School Certificate Examination will be of little interest—they will not stay long enough at school to enter for it. The problem is, therefore, to improve their standards in basic subjects, to fit them as fully as possible for the parts they will play in the world, and to create an interest in further educational activities. The subjects of the common core are the key to these problems, and it is to the content of these subjects and the teaching methods required that most thought must be given. A great deal of progress has been made, particularly in the teaching of general science, physical education, art and music, but further experimental work is needed in the teaching of English, elementary mathematics, and social studies, particularly because of the extreme variation in ability among those coming on to post-primary schools. We have had and have valued greatly the advice of our colleagues in the primary service in these matters.

Complaints are occasionally made of the lower standard of attainment apparent in pupils leaving our schools. Critics do not always recognize that many pupils now enter post-primary school who only a few years ago would have gone straight to work. It is reasonable to assume that the natural intellectual ability of these pupils is, in many cases, comparatively low. Many of them are incapable of reaching a high standard in fundamental subjects, but there can be no doubt that they gain in confidence and in initiative by their stay at post-primary school. The standard of the average or better pupil is high, and he is in the fullest sense better educated than his predecessor of a generation ago, for the standard of education is, in the long run, fixed by the standard of the teacher, and the community has every reason to be pleased with the calibre and the devotion of members of the teaching profession. In the upper school, the standard in individual subjects is higher than it used to be. That is due to a number of related causes, chiefly concerned with curriculum and syllabus changes. A high standard in a limited range of subjects may, however, be obtained at the expense of a broader and more liberal education, and the work in the upper school is therefore constantly under critical review.

THE SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

This examination was introduced to provide a certificate of attainment for pupils who are not proceeding to the University, and thus to remove from the University Entrance Examination itself large numbers of candidates whom it did not concern.

What we have to look for, therefore, in gauging the success of this change is a considerable reduction in the numbers qualifying for University Entrance. There might well have been also a reduction in the numbers taking School Certificate, for a complete pass in that examination is not essential to those going on to the University Entrance, even by examination. The figures given below do show a substantial drop in University Entrance candidates. There is also, however, a very large increase in the numbers entering for School Certificate, so that it would appear that the change has been effective in both directions.

The tables immediately following give the numbers entering for School Certificate and (by courtesy of the University of New Zealand) the numbers entering for University Entrance in each second year since 1940:—

Year.				Number Entering For	
				School Certificate.	University Entrance.
1940	..	..	..	5,028	5,191
1942	..	..	..	4,942	4,947
1944	..	..	..	6,052	543*
1946	..	..	..	8,300	3,257
1948	..	..	..	8,592	3,711

* Candidates under old regulations entered for the School Certificate Examination.