

In most cases the adoption of a rural course—or, in other words, the attempt to bring the curriculum of the rural schools into closer touch with their environment—has been attended with results which must be regarded as encouraging in view of the many real difficulties to be surmounted, and, in a few instances, of the opposition to be overcome. Much of this opposition is probably largely due to a misapprehension of the end in view, which is something more than the preliminary training of young persons for agricultural pursuits. It is not the function of the district high school to train pupils for this or that profession, vocation, or trade, but rather to provide a general education—an education that will prepare them for the duties of manhood or womanhood. A curriculum that is definitely related to the pupils' environment is at least as likely to achieve this end as one that is not.

It is a matter for surprise and regret to know that in the case of some schools, happily few in number, the proposal to adopt a rural course has been opposed by members of the teaching profession.

It is, of course, recognized that the present arrangements are to be regarded as tentative and provisional. The difficulty of obtaining teachers possessing the necessary experience and practical knowledge has compelled Education Boards to rely mainly on the system of instruction by itinerant teachers, whereas if the best results are to be obtained, the instruction, or most of it, should undoubtedly be provided by the regular staff. This and other disabilities to which it is unnecessary here to refer will, it is hoped, disappear in time; meanwhile some progress has been made in the direction of attaining the end in view, and the opinion is confidently expressed that in the not far distant future what has been, and is now, though to a less extent, regarded as a particular and special course of instruction for the few will become the recognized course for all so far as the rural schools are concerned.

There has been a very satisfactory increase in the number of public-school classes receiving practical instruction in some branch of elementary natural or physical science. The number of recognized classes in operation in 1910 was 227, with a total average attendance of 7,042, as compared with 148 classes with a total average attendance of 5,181 for the previous year. Instruction in science requiring special laboratory accommodation is practically confined to district high schools, over 50 per cent. of which are now provided with such facilities. In public schools not so provided elementary botany or elementary physical measurements, both of which provide opportunities for individual practical work under ordinary school conditions, are the branches of science usually taken.

Although the number of classes for swimming and life-saving continues to increase, 165 classes being recognized for 1910, as compared with 136 for the previous year, the attention given to this important and useful branch of knowledge still leaves something to be desired. It is to be hoped that wherever facilities are available steps will be taken to provide regular and systematic instruction in swimming and life-saving. Nearly 60 per cent. of the public-school classes in operation during the year were confined to three education districts.

New buildings or additions to buildings for manual instruction have been erected or are in course of erection at Devonport, Carterton, Masterton, Greytown, Levin, Motueka, Dunedin, Invercargill, and Riverton, while necessary equipment has been provided for classes at Cambridge, Carterton, Masterton, Greytown, Levin, Wellington, Hastings, Waipawa, Dunedin, and Riverton.

Recognized classes for manual instruction were also carried on during the year in connection with twenty-six of the twenty-nine secondary schools in receipt of Government grants. The chief branches taken up and the total average attendance were as follows:—

Subjects of Instruction.	Average Attendance.	
	1909.	1910.
Woodwork	273	361
Cookery	463	512
Dressmaking	170	278
Natural science	841	1,325
Experimental science	691	940