

treatment of this important branch of manual instruction, due largely to the opportunities provided by training classes for teachers, to the advice and guidance of the itinerant instructors, and to the distribution by controlling authorities of suggestive and helpful aids in the shape of pamphlets and leaflets. Valuable assistance also continues to be rendered in many cases by agricultural and pastoral associations, school committees, and members of the farming community interested in the work. In addition to prizes which have been freely offered, contributions in money and kind to the value of over £240 have been received by controlling authorities during the year. These contributions carry a Government subsidy of £1 for £1.

Reference was made last year to the inauguration in certain districts of rural courses in connection with the secondary departments of district high schools. During 1910 such courses were carried out in five education districts, as follows:—

	District.	Number of Schools.	Number of Pupils.
Taranaki		1	50
Wanganui		5	105
Wellington		6	162
Hawke's Bay		1	45
South Canterbury		3	85
Totals		16	447

The capitation paid on account of rural courses carried out during the year at these sixteen schools amounted to £2,750, equivalent to a rate of £6·15 per pupil.

There are indications that courses on similar lines will shortly be established in connection with certain district high schools in Auckland, North Canterbury, and Otago.

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.