

About one-fifth of the students in attendance held free places as above. The total number of junior free pupils was 2,258, a decrease of 19, and of senior free pupils, 1,633, an increase of 326. Over 45 per cent. of the students who entered on junior free places in 1914 continued to attend in 1915. Of the total number of senior free pupils in their first year 30 per cent. had previously completed two years at technical classes as junior free pupils. The remainder were admitted either from technical high schools, secondary schools, or district high schools. In addition to the students holding Government free places, 465 students held scholarships or free places provided locally. Regulations requiring the attendance of young persons between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, who are not otherwise receiving a suitable education or who are not specially exempted from attendance, were in force in seven school districts in Auckland, in six in Wanganui, and in one in Taranaki and Hawke's Bay respectively. The number of students attending under these regulations was 858, an increase of 422. Of this number 526 were males.

Capitation payments for the year on account of free technical education amounted to £7,771.

The following technical schools had roll numbers of 500 and over, exclusive of the technical high schools carried on in connection with some of them:—

| School.                                   | Roll Number. |       |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------|-------|
|                                           | 1914.        | 1915. |
| Auckland Technical College .. .. .        | 1,620        | 1,451 |
| Dunedin Technical College .. .. .         | 1,195        | 1,277 |
| Wellington Technical College .. .. .      | 1,119        | 1,163 |
| Christchurch Technical College .. .. .    | 1,295        | 1,156 |
| Wanganui Technical College .. .. .        | 741          | 984   |
| Palmerston North Technical School .. .. . | 545          | 566   |
| Dunedin School of Art .. .. .             | 617          | 535   |

The slight fall in the attendance noticeable in the case of some of the schools may fairly be ascribed to withdrawals as the result of enlistment.

The attendance generally must be regarded as satisfactory in view of the fact that it is for the most part voluntary. It is gratifying to note that the proportion of students who take up definite courses involving attendance on three or more evenings a week continues to be maintained.

While the number of students (18,247) under instruction last year indicates that a fair proportion of our young people recognize the value of the educational facilities that the technical schools afford, there are no doubt a large number of our young people for whom the schools have no attraction. Among these are a number who have left the public school without gaining a certificate of proficiency (one of the qualifications for a free place) and have gone to work, many of them taking up forms of employment that lead nowhere in particular. It is not unlikely that many of these would under appropriate conditions affording the necessary opportunities and stimuli eventually fit themselves to enter the ranks of the industrial workers of the Dominion. It is true that the Education Act provides the necessary machinery for requiring such young persons to attend technical classes, but the fact remains that although this machinery has now been available for nearly six years it was in 1915 put into operation in only fifteen school districts, confined to four education districts, all in the North Island. Whatever the reasons may be for the failure on the part of local education authorities generally to follow the lead given them elsewhere, it is obvious that some other means of gaining the desired end must be sought. A partial solution may be found in the extension of the present regulations governing free places so as to provide for the free education along certain definite lines of approved pupils leaving the public school without having qualified for further free education.

Regulations have been recently gazetted providing for the admission without payment of fees of duly accredited returned soldiers to technical schools. It is too early to form any reliable estimate of the extent to which the regulations are likely to be availed of, but it is gratifying to know that the schools, as was expected, are prepared to afford every facility to all soldier-students admitted under these regulations.