

1. EXTRACT FROM THE FORTY-SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

GENERAL.

Number of Schools.

THE number of technical high schools open during 1922 was thirteen, in addition to which there were ten organized technical or art schools offering day courses. Technical classes were also conducted in forty-three manual-training or other centres, the total number of centres being sixty-six, a decrease of twenty-eight on the number for the previous year. This was due to the restrictions imposed by the Department in the case of classes where the numbers were insufficient to warrant their establishment.

Attendance.

The total number of students receiving instruction in all technical classes was 16,464, as compared with 20,181 in 1921. The attendance at technical high schools increased from 3,349 in 1921 to 4,202 in 1922, an increase of 853.

Of the total number of 16,464 students, 3,979 held free places at technical high schools, 4,405 at other technical classes, 324 were attending continuation and technical classes held under the regulations for compulsory classes, and 366 were attending under the regulations relating to the free instruction of discharged soldiers.

The decrease in numbers of those attending technical classes is due to several causes, of which the principal are the reduction in the number of centres owing to non-recognition of classes which did not enrol sufficient students to warrant their establishment in a time of financial stress, and the suspension of the operation of regulations requiring compulsory attendance at evening technical classes in certain centres. The restrictions due to the necessity for severe economy have been relaxed since the end of the year, but it is not intended at present to make provision for compulsory attendance at evening classes, as the weight of well-informed opinion appears to be against its reintroduction.

The decrease in the number of pupils attending under the compulsory regulations was about 1,250; and there was also a decrease of over 300 discharged soldiers attending without payment of fees under arrangements made with the Repatriation Department. Nearly all the remaining 350 discharged soldiers would finish their courses at the end of the year. A large drop of 3,600 in the number of paying students was partly due to restriction of classes, and partly to other causes, among them probably the general financial depression. These losses were partially balanced by an increase of nearly 600 in the number of holders of free places in technical classes other than classes at technical high schools. This increase consisted largely of day pupils in the smaller technical schools.

In the case of technical high schools the increase of 853 was somewhat more than 25 per cent. of the total numbers for the previous year. So far as actual student-hours are concerned, this increase rather more than balances the decrease in student-hours due to fall in attendance at other technical classes, since each full-time day pupil attends on the average not less than eight times as many student-hours as an evening pupil.

With the increasingly large attendance of pupils at high schools, the more elementary evening classes must diminish, though advanced classes, held mainly in the larger centres, will not be affected. On the whole, the larger centres maintained in their evening classes numbers at least equal to those for the previous year, while the day classes largely increased.

It is noteworthy that though the number of fee-paying pupils fell from 10,738 in 1921 to 7,167 in 1922, and though the fees charged in 1922 were on at least as low a scale as in 1921, the total fees collected rose from £8,440 in 1921 to £8,504 in 1922, showing that on the average the number of classes taken per student had increased.