

TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION IN SAORSTAT ÉIREANN.

1.—Local Schemes of Technical Instruction.

The functions of the Technical Instruction Branch of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction which were transferred to the Department of Education by the Ministers and Secretaries Act, 1924, had been created a quarter of a century previously by the Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act of 1899.

Under the latter Act there was considerable development of Technical Instruction in the quarter of a century during which it was administered by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. The Technical Education Schemes organised during this period provided instruction which, in cities and towns, comprised various branches of Science, Art and Technology, while, in the rural areas, the schemes dealt largely with Manual Instruction, Rural Industries and Domestic Science.

The Technical Instruction Schemes taken over by the Department of Education were all under the management of local Statutory Committees constituted on a voluntary basis. These Committees, which were set up by County, County Borough and Urban District Councils, fell into two main types—(1) purely Technical Committees, and (2) combined Technical and Agricultural Committees. The purely Technical Committees were sub-divided into three classes—County Borough, Urban, and Joint County and Urban.

In the academic year 1928-29 the total number of students enrolled in classes in Technical Schools was 28,900, and the total number of class enrolments under County Schemes of Technical Instruction, elsewhere than in Technical Schools, was 40,037. For the corresponding Financial Year the Department's contributions in aid of local schemes of Technical Instruction amounted to £164,932, and the contributions from local Rates to £66,258.

In 1926 a Commission was appointed by the Minister for Education "to enquire into and advise upon the system of Technical Education in Saorstát Éireann in relation to the requirements of Trade and Industry." The recommendations of the Commission covered a wide field. Additional legislative powers will be required to carry into effect those which the Government decided to adopt are conferred by the Vocational Education Act, 1930.

Under this Act corporate bodies to be known as Vocational Education Committees replace the pre-existing Technical Instruction Committees. These bodies possess wide powers in relation to administration and local financial aid for the purposes of Vocational and Continuation Education. The financial provisions in connection with the functions of the newly constituted Committees will become operative in the financial year 1931-32. The Act confers power on the Minister for Education to make Continuation Education compulsory for young persons between the ages of 14 and 16 who are not already in attendance at approved schools. Attendance at a recognised course of instruction for at least one hundred and eighty hours in each year would be required under the terms of the Act. A list of the new Committees appointed under the Act is appended.

II.—Technical School Examinations.

In May each year, examinations in the Subjects of the Courses provided at Technical Schools and Classes are conducted by external examiners in co-operation with the Department's Inspectors. In 1928 the total number of entries for all subjects was 5,561 and the number of successes obtained was 3,721. Examinations were conducted in subjects of the following Courses:—

Commerce, Building, Applied Chemistry, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Motor Car Engineering, Domestic Economy and Art.

In conjunction with these examinations the Department has arranged to hold examinations in Telegraphy and Telephony for Post Office employees.

III.—Training of Teachers.

Facilities provided by the Department for the training of teachers of technical subjects include:—

(a) The Full Honours Course of the Technical School Examinations;

(b) Special Long Courses conducted by the Department. Such courses are on a Scholarship basis, the award of Scholarships being determined by a competitive examination designed to test the technical and general educational suitability of the applicants. The most recent courses of this nature have been in Manual Training and Motor Car Engineering.

To meet the demand for additional teaching staff, which will arise under the Vocational Education Act, the Department are holding, in the year 1931, special intensive courses of training in Manual Woodwork, Metalwork and Motor Car Engineering, and Domestic Economy.

(c) Central Summer Courses conducted by the Department for the supplementary training of teachers. These are intensive courses conducted usually during the month of July. The most recent courses of this nature covered the following subjects:—Furniture Design; Electrical Equipment of a Motor Car; General Art; Modern Concrete Work; Composite Courses in Shorthand, Type-writing, and the study of phonetics in relation to the phonographic writing of Irish; Physics; Chemistry; Rural Science; and General Elementary Science.

(d) Local Summer Courses for the training of teachers of Science and Domestic Economy in Secondary Schools. These courses are conducted under local management subject to control by the Department.

(e) Training Institutions such as the Irish Training School of Domestic Economy, Kilmacud, Stillorgan, County Dublin, under the direct control of the Department, and St. Catherine's Training School of Domestic Economy, Sion Hill, Blackrock, County Dublin, recently established under separate management subject to control by the Department. The duration of the courses at each of these Institutions is three years, the first year being devoted to a course in Household Management, and the remaining two years to the training as teachers of suitable students selected from those who have completed the first year course.

(f) Training for Art teachers provided principally at the Metropolitan School of Art, Dublin, which Institution is under the direct control of the Department. In alternate years the Department offers for competition a number of Teacherships-in-Training with the object of encouraging capable Art students to undertake such a course of training as will enable them to become Art Teachers.

(g) Special examinations for teaching qualification in particular subjects, e.g., Manual Training (Woodwork), and certain Art subjects which are supplementary to the Art Course of the Technical School Examinations.

IV.—Trade Scholarships.

The Department offers annually a limited number of Trade Scholarships with the object of enabling selected persons who are not over 20 years of age on the 1st July of the year in which the Scholarships are awarded, and who have been engaged in certain specified industries for a period of at least two years, to obtain systematic instruction in the principles of Science and Art as applied to these industries. The courses most recently conducted for such Scholarship-holders include:—Cabinet-making, Motor Garage Work, Painting and Decorating, and Plumbing. The courses provided for the academic year 1929-30 are in Motor Garage Work, and Electrical Installation.

V.—Day Trades Preparatory Schools.

These Schools, conducted under a number of Technical Instruction Committees, are intended for the training of boys who have reached the higher standards of the primary school and desire to prepare for employment in the skilled trades.

VI.—Day Apprentice Schools.

An organised Day Trades Apprentice School is conducted by the City of Dublin Technical Instruction Committee. It provides for a two years' course which takes the place of the first and second years of apprenticeship. During the training the pupil is virtually an apprentice, and on entering the trade he is paid at third year rates. An examination is