

Maoris and Technical Education

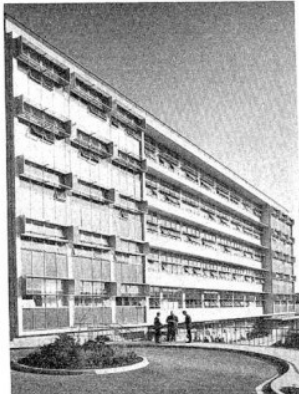
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This is the first of four articles about the new polytechnics and the opportunities they offer to young Maoris in search of training.

The number of students being taught in polytechnics (technical institutes) has

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risen rapidly in the last few years. Yet very few Maoris are to be found in these new institutes except in a few special areas where training schemes have been arranged with the Department of Maori and Island Affairs.

There's nothing strange about this absence of Maori students. Most people don't even know what polytechnics are. This is understandable also because they're still very new, less than ten years old. They're to be found in the four main centres only, and Hamilton since last year. City people have a better chance of knowing something about them but people living in the country may never hear much about them.

And because most Maoris either live in rural areas or are newly arrived in the cities the name 'polytechnic' often doesn't mean much.

And just exactly what are they?

Polytechnics are places where people of all ages can learn skills which will help them to get or hold a job by which they can earn a living. They are educational institutions run by the Government where people can be trained for an occupation.

The training given covers a wide range. There are trade courses for apprentices in

One of the new Technical Institutes at Auckland

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carpentry, motor mechanics, electrical work, panel-beating, paper-hanging and many other jobs.

There are courses for people wanting to work in offices or in commerce; in shorthand and typing, in business management, in accountancy, and in salesmanship. And there are other courses for those wanting to be technicians, draughtsmen, computer programmers, clothing designers, journalists, or graphic and industrial designers.

In the polytechnics the word 'technician' is used to describe people who are given a higher and more advanced level of training than a tradesman receives. The technician stands about mid-way — in terms of training — between the university graduate who can be described as a technologist, and a tradesman.

The biggest increase over recent years in the number of students and courses has been in this technician field — which is open to both boys and girls. Because it is still so new Maoris tend to know less about it than trade training, and so very few are enrolled in technician classes.

Polytechnic students have about only two things in common. They have all left school

and they're all training for jobs. Otherwise they're very different in age, in occupation, in educational background, and in the sort of course they're doing.

Some come for full-time courses of one year, or two, or three, or four. Others — the big majority — are already working for some organisation and so come only part-time for perhaps four or eight hours a week. Other part-timers come for as many as 14 or 16 hours a week, depending on the type of course they're doing.

Entry into courses varies a lot also. For some a student needs a good educational qualification such as passes in certain subjects at School Certificate or University Entrance level. These would be needed for technician and some full-time courses.

Two, but preferably three, years secondary schooling is sufficient for most trade courses, though today there is a tendency for some employers to ask for good results at School Certificate level as well.

But though entry standards vary, one thing can be said for certain; the better a student does at secondary school the better chance he, or she, has of coping with the more specialised training at a polytechnic.

Architectural students at a 'Polytech'



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