

Turnover of Business Teachers in the Secondary Schools of Kansas, 1952-1953

By Billy Lee Fowler*

Public school officials have long been aware of the fact that the number of business teachers who leave their positions each year is high. They also have known that this high rate of turnover is detrimental to their school systems because of the continuous readjustment that is necessary with the hiring of new teachers. Furthermore, this detriment to the public school systems becomes more apparent with the realization that many teachers who leave their positions are successful business teachers. It should be realized that the loss of these teachers cannot be measured in dollar and cents. This loss creates an inefficiency in teaching that is caused by the new and inexperienced teachers who are constantly replacing experienced ones.

Apparently the factors that cause business teacher turnover are either not well enough known or not thought important enough by educators to warrant much attention. Therefore, there is a need for a better understanding of these factors.

The purpose of this study is: (1) to determine how much business teacher turnover there was in cities or towns with a population of 700 or more in the state of Kansas during the school year of 1952-1953; (2) to show the main reasons for this turnover; and (3) to determine whether this turnover could be reduced.

Using the population figure mentioned above, a questionnaire was sent to each of the principals of 208 high schools. They were asked to list the number of business teachers who left their schools during the 1952-53 school year. Replies were received from 191 principals, who listed forty-nine business teachers as withdrawing from their positions during this school year.

Important Factors Resulting From This Study

Some important factors brought out in this study about business teacher turnover that may give a partial solution to the turnover problem are summarized below.¹

The first- and second-class cities of Kansas seem to have a lower rate of business teacher turnover than the third-class cities. Seventy-one

*Mr. Fowler is a teacher in the Business Education Department of Mankato, Kansas, High School. This study originated as a Master's Thesis at Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, in 1954. The writer acknowledges the advice and counsel of his committee in the preparation of this study: Professors Russell, Hansen, and McGill.

1. The statistical data supporting these conclusions may be found in the copy of the thesis in the William Allen White Library, Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia.

first- and second-class cities of this study had a turnover of twenty-one business teachers out of a total of 193. This is a 10.88 per cent turnover. Third-class cities had a turnover of twenty-three business teachers out of a total of 115, a twenty per cent turnover.

Of thirty-two of the forty-nine teachers making changes, two out of three, or 65.31 per cent, did so for reasons which could have been prevented by improving the current teaching situation in terms of salary and/or professional conditions.

The two most important reasons for business teacher withdrawal were: "to accept a better teaching position" and "to get married." Ranking third was "to pursue another occupation." It was found that the most important reason offered by men was "to accept a better teaching position." The most important reason for women was "to get married." It is apparent that men tend to take teaching positions in small cities to obtain professional experience and then accept teaching positions in larger cities, resulting in lower turnover in the latter. Equally apparent, many young women used teaching as a source of livelihood until they were married.

Lack of experience was not a factor influencing withdrawals from business teaching. Most of the business teachers had had enough teaching experience to enable them to make a satisfactory adjustment to their last school systems. Twelve teachers in this group making changes spent only one year in the systems where they taught, and thirteen spent two. Thus, twenty-five out of forty-six teachers,² 54.34 per cent, did not spend more than two years in the school systems they left. The service of these teachers seemed to be too short to be of much value to the communities from which they withdrew.

The ages of the turnover teachers varied a great deal. For example, two of the teachers were twenty-three years of age, while two others were thirty-six. Also, there were nine teachers past forty who withdrew from teaching, but only three of these retired. Therefore, the conclusion may be presented that withdrawal from the business teaching field was not by any means limited to very young teachers.

Recommendations

As a result of this study of business teacher turnovers, the following recommendations are made:

1. The high rate of turnover that is caused by teachers who leave to accept a better position is a serious problem confronting the small cities. This high rate of turnover is a result of the lack of opportunities for advancement in these school systems. It is recommended that these small cities adopt an adequate promotion policy.

2. Three teachers retired.

2. Furthermore, it is recommended that these small cities adopt a uniform pay scale on a national basis that will be fair to all teachers. The present practice of bidding for and accepting positions by business teachers in these small cities is a practice that is detrimental to these small school systems.

3. Higher salaries could hold many teachers who accept non-teaching employment and, therefore, reduce turnover.³

4. It is difficult to assess the factor of marriage for women in this problem of withdrawals from the teaching profession generally, as is known, and from business teaching specifically. It is recommended that a careful study of this factor be undertaken in reference to the field of business education. A more carefully stated selection policy on the part of schools would probably be helpful.

5. It was found that the business teachers who withdrew from their positions had spent only a short time in their school systems. It is recommended that a better selection of new teachers on the part of principals and school boards can help in this situation.

6. It is recommended that every school system keep an up-to-date personal history card for each teacher in its system. This information should be made available to future principals and research workers.

7. Suitable homes should be found for new teachers. Too often it is left entirely to the teacher to find suitable housing. Principals who keep an up-to-date list of suitable housing facilities in their communities are commended.

8. It is recommended that further studies should be made concerning the factors affecting turnover of business teachers in the secondary schools.

3. Cf. "A Minimum Scale of \$3600 to \$8200," *NEA Journal*, XLII, 9 (December, 1953), pp. 569-70.