THE PLACE OF OFFICE PRACTICE
IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

APPROVED:

[Signatures]
Harold B. Munkertz
Major Professor

[Signatures]
W. A. Lasiner
Minor Professor

[Signatures]
L. A. Short
Director of the Department of Education

[Signatures]
L. W. Short
Chairman of the Graduate Council
THE PLACE OF OFFICE PRACTICE
IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North
Texas State Teachers College in Partial
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MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

Rosser Elaine Conlee, B. B. A.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES. ......................................................... iv

Chapter
I. INTRODUCTION. ................................................... 1

   The Problem
   Delimitations
   Sources and Treatment of Data
   Questionnaires Used
   Related Studies
   Definition of Terms

II. AN ANALYSIS OF THE HIGH SCHOOL COMMERCIAL CURRICULUM. ........ 8

III. THE APPARENT NEED OF THE BEGINNING OFFICE WORKER. ............ 21

IV. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS ..................... 33

APPENDIX. ......................................................... 38

BIBLIOGRAPHY. ...................................................... 43
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Population, Number of Business Houses, and Number of High Schools in Gregg, Rusk, Smith, and Upshur Counties.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Comparison of the Number of Commercial Students with the Number of High School Students and the Number of High Schools Investigated.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The Number of Commercial Teachers That Checked Each Purpose of the High School Commercial Department</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Commercial Courses Offered in the High School and the Year Each Course Is Offered</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The Number of High Schools Using Each Machine</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Number and Kinds of Jobs Held by High School Trained Students and the School Training Used on the Job</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Training Required for Beginning Office Workers and the Per Cent of Employers Who Require Each Type of Training</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Machines Used in Business and the Skill Demanded on Each</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The Per Cent of Employers Who Checked Each Type of Training That Is Usually Lacking in Inexperienced Employees</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which the high school commercial department is meeting the needs and requirements of the business man in training students for positions in the business office.

Delimitations

This study was confined to an investigation of employees in business offices, all other phases of business being excluded. Every type of office, however, where the high school graduate could normally be expected to be found was examined.

The information was gathered from four counties in East Texas—Gregg, Rusk, Smith, and Upshur. These counties were chosen for two reasons. First, they are accessible to the writer. Second, these counties comprise the richest oil district in Texas; consequently, they are thickly populated, and many young men and women are employed in business offices in this area. An investigation of the high schools and business opportunities of this district was thought to be representative of a like investigation in practically any district in the state.
A study of the following table shows that, in the four counties examined, there are thirty-nine towns with less than one thousand population and sixteen towns with more than one thousand population, the entire population numbering two hundred four thousand, one hundred thirty-eight. These are the preliminary figures released by the 1940 census. In all of these one hundred fifteen cities, towns, and villages, Sun and Bradstreet list a total of four thousand, two hundred sixty-four business houses.\(^1\) In the same district, there are thirty-nine accredited high schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of County</th>
<th>Number of Towns with Population Less Than 1000</th>
<th>Number of Towns with Population More Than 1000</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Number of Business Houses in the County</th>
<th>Number of High Schools in the County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gregg</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57,945</td>
<td>1860</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rusk</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>51,008</td>
<td>849</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>69,020</td>
<td>1233</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upshur</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26,165</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>204,138</td>
<td>4264</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of this group, twenty-one high schools and two hundred business men were visited. The field of business

\(^1\) The Texas Almanac, 1941-42, pp. 117-131.
was divided into ten sections where it was thought that office workers were most likely to be found—banks, doctors' offices, lawyers' offices, mail order houses, lumber yards, oil companies, oil supply houses, public utilities, and retail stores. Twenty managers from each type of office were interviewed personally.

Sources and Treatment of Data

The data were collected, chiefly, through personal interviews. Before the interviews, questionnaires had been carefully made out with all the main points of issue clearly set forth. Each person interviewed was asked to fill out the blanks on his particular worksheet. Then he was encouraged to talk freely and offer any suggestion or criticism that he wanted to make in the hope that these spontaneous statements would help the interviewer to understand something more of the problems of both employer and commercial teacher.

These questionnaires were carefully checked and tabulated before any conclusions were attempted. The tables were studied, and comparisons were made with other studies along this same line.

A research into published materials was also made. There have been many studies made on the needs and requirements of the business man, and most authorities agree on two things. First, the commercial high school is not meeting the requirements in its curriculum. Second, business men
are not agreed on what they want and are making it hard for
the school to revise its curriculum. Until the school teach-
er and business men can meet on a common ground and discuss
their points of contention openly and freely, there can be
no happy solution of the problem.

Questionnaires Used

Exact duplications of the questionnaires used in this
investigation may be found in the appendix, pages 38-42.
The first one was used when the high schools were visited
and the commercial teachers were interviewed. The second
one was used when the problem was discussed with the busi-
ness men who employ office helpers.

The term "Other Comments" is found at the end of each
of the questionnaires. In this space were written some of
the more important criticisms or suggestions offered by the
person interviewed. The business men, as a rule, were more
talkative and gave more spontaneous information than did the
teachers.

Related Studies

In the study of commercial and non-commercial students
made by J. W. Stewart, it was found that high school com-
mercial graduates exceeded high school non-commercial grad-
uates from the standpoint of average annual earnings, because

\[^{2}\text{"Commercial and Non-Commercial High School Graduates"}
(Unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Business Education,
North Texas State Teachers College, 1939). p. 47.\]
they were more interested in their work and because they were unemployed a smaller percentage of the time. But Mr. Stewart recommended that the curriculum be revised to meet the growing and ever-changing demands of business. "The head of the commercial department," he says, "should be informed at all times regarding trends in vocations, so that constant revision may be made of the type of subjects offered." This study was made in four of the largest cities in the Texas Panhandle, namely, Amarillo, Borger,ampa, and Panhandle.

James Hodge investigated the situation at Denton, Texas. He examined the commercial curriculum at the Denton Senior High School and then questioned the business men of the same city in order to determine whether that curriculum were adequate for their needs. He recommended that "one Standard Electric Adding Machine, one Addressograph, one Burroughs Calculator, and five sets of filing equipment" be added to the equipment of the high school commercial department. This recommendation strongly indicates that there is a need for an office practice course—or at least a stronger course than is now offered—in the training of young business men and women who intend to seek jobs in the city of Denton.

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Ibid., p. 49.

Bula E. Reno made a similar investigation in Austin, Texas. She states that business men usually prefer college- or university-trained students, because "they are more mature and have a better-formulated concept of business and its requirements." There isn't anything that the high school can do about this age requirement of employers. Perhaps the twelve-grade plan will help a little. However, there is much that can be done in teaching technical skills and developing desirable traits in the would-be office worker. Miss Reno continues, "Technical skill has been stressed to such a degree that an estimated fifteen per cent of the labor turnover is due to lack of ability in technical skill, while the remaining eighty-five per cent is due to lack of desired personality traits."

Definition of Terms

The term Office Practice Course is used to indicate a course in the operation of those machines, other than the typewriter, most commonly found in offices, such as adding and listing machines, the comptometer, bank bookkeeping machines, addressograph, ediphone, and duplicating machines of all kinds. His course should include, also, a study of office routine and an analysis of those personality traits.

"Integration of Commercial Teaching with Business" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, School of Business Administration, University of Texas, 1938), p. 79.

Ibid., p. 79.
so desirable and necessary in an office. As much practical experience as possible should be provided.

**Co-operative training** is a fairly new expression as applied to the commercial high school. It refers to the practical experience that a student gets while he is still in high school. The teacher and employer should keep in touch with each other and be sure that the student is being taught at school those things which he puts into operation at the office.

**Commercial student** is a term used to indicate any student taking any commercial course other than typing that will help to fit him for a position in the business world.

**Clerical work** is that work in an office which is un-specialized but which requires intelligence and some education. Some examples of clerical jobs are filing clerks, telephone switchboard operators, operators of labor-saving machines, and reception clerks.
CHAPTER II

AN ANALYSIS OF THE HIGH SCHOOL COMMERCIAL CURRICULUM

"The boy and girl who wish to get an advanced foothold in the business world prepare for it in the school of commerce of a university. That is the most desirable education for people with their ambition. But as graduates from the commercial course in high school, they can at least enter the humbler ranks of office workers and press onward, encouraged by the knowledge that their superiors once began as they."\(^7\)

Naturally the high school commercial course cannot hope to reach the standards attained by the school of commerce of a university, but it does have a definite place in today's society. Eighteen of the twenty-one commercial teachers interviewed stated, definitely, that their departments keep many students in high school who would otherwise drop out. One other thought that this statement was probably true. Why? There is a very good economic reason. Many young people cannot afford the expense of a college education, but they can stay in high school a year or two longer in order to fit themselves for better jobs. The ones who get the best jobs are those who take a post-graduate course and

\(^7\)Joseph Gottler and Harold Brecht, Careers Ahead, p. 242.
devote themselves to a year's study of commercial subjects after they have completed the regular four-year high school course.

**TABLE 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of High Schools Investigated</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of High School Students</td>
<td>7333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Commercial Students</td>
<td>2954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Commercial Students</td>
<td>40.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of all the thirty-nine high schools in the district, the seven largest, the seven smallest, and seven of the medium-sized ones were chosen for investigation. The total enrollment of all these schools was seven thousand three hundred thirty-three, while the commercial students in the same schools numbered two thousand nine hundred fifty-four. Thus, approximately forty per cent of this year's high school graduates have prepared—or at least partially prepared—themselves for jobs in the business world. An analysis of the high school commercial curriculum will help to show how well they have succeeded in this preparation.

**TABLE 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of the High School Commercial Department</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preview of the Field of Business</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training for a Position</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Preparation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Satisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The major purpose of the majority of the high school commercial departments is to give the students a preview of the field of business as a guide for further work after high school days. Not far behind is the purpose of fitting students for positions immediately after they graduate from high school. Only two schools gave college preparation as a reason for the existence of their commercial courses. Both of these are very small schools in farming districts, and neither one offers an extensive study of business. The majority of these students, according to their instructors, go to Tyler Commercial College anyway before applying for positions; so the high school training merely prepares them for the higher training.

One instructor said that if her students got a personal satisfaction out of her classes and, through her, learned to love the world of commerce, then she felt as if her work were well done whether they gained enough knowledge to hold a position or not.

**TABLE 4**

**COMMERCIAL COURSES OFFERED IN THE HIGH SCHOOL AND THE YEAR EACH COURSE IS OFFERED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Course</th>
<th>Number of Schools Offering Courses</th>
<th>Year Each Course Is Offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Typing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 4—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Course</th>
<th>Number of Schools Offering Courses</th>
<th>Year Each Course Is Offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Shorthand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial Training</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Practice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bookkeeping</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Junior Business</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Commercial</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Commercial</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Commercial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Salesmanship</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Advertising</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Occupations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One school requires all students, commercial or non-commercial, to take typing in order to get a high school
diploma. Another requires all commercial students to take it. In three schools, typing is listed as a prerequisite to shorthand. At least four different teachers voiced the opinion that it should be a prerequisite even though it is taught concurrently with shorthand in their departments. Shorthand is taught under three different titles—shorthand, secretarial training, and office practice. Seventeen schools teach this course under one of its three titles. Four instructors offer both shorthand and office practice, teaching dictation and letter-writing in the one class and setting up a model business office in the other. These are offered in the junior and senior years in all schools except one which offers all of the commercial courses in its curriculum to anyone who wishes to take them.

Eighteen schools teach bookkeeping, which is definitely placed in the junior and senior years. Two reasons given for both bookkeeping and shorthand being placed this late in the high school curriculum are, first, to let the students mature as much as possible before attempting the courses, and second, to teach the fundamentals as near as possible to the time of their practical use. Commercial arithmetic was found to be a prerequisite to bookkeeping in three cases, and it is strongly recommended, though not required, for all commercial students.

Junior Business Training is offered in thirteen schools and is invariably placed in the freshman year. This is the
first commercial course offered to the high school student, and its main purpose is to acquaint the prospective commercial employee with the field of business.

Both commercial law and commercial geography, especially the latter, are looked upon rather lightly by all the instructors who teach them. Each one seems to think that the time spent on these courses could well be taken up with something more worthwhile.

Occupations is a new course which seems to be gaining ground rapidly. Two schools taught it for the first time during the year 1940-1941. Two others plan to offer it in the year 1941-1942, and several more are talking favorably about it. In this course the student studies the theory at school a part of the day and gets practical experience working a few hours each week at a job in town. The school supervises the town job as much as possible and stays in close contact with the business man who makes the job possible. Only the most capable are able to pass this course and work themselves into permanent jobs. This is the first definite step toward a better understanding between the school and business.

Six schools--three of them among the largest in the district--do not own a single machine other than typewriters. Five more have only one or two adding or listing machines. The lack of money was not given as a reason for this lack of equipment, for each of these schools has a budget that could
easily take care of several hundred dollars worth of new machines each year. The school trustees simply have not yet been sold on the value of these machines to their commercial departments and to the students when they train.

TABLE 5

THE NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOLS USING EACH MACHINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Machine Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adding Machines</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculators</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listing Machines</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comptometers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditto Machines</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hektographs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimeographs</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microscopes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Bookkeeping Machines</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictaphones</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checkwriters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only one comptometer was found in the entire district. This machine is considered to be a four-months course within itself by the company which manufactures it. Too, it is found in very few small businesses where high school students usually find work. Therefore, the comptometer does not have much place in the average high school of the smaller towns.

The hektograph is clumsy and difficult to handle, and it is rapidly giving way to the more modern ditto machine, which does the same work more quickly and easily and turns out a prettier and neater finished product. Only one hektograph, as compared with four ditto machines, was found. Ten schools have mimeographs, and three have microscopes to study along with them. Each instructor was quite enthusiastic about the value of duplicating machines.
Two schools were found to possess a bank bookkeeping ma-
chine and a dictaphone each, and one was found to give some
instruction on a checkwriter.

Expert or even mediocre skill is not taught on any of
these machines. The students are taught and shown how to
operate them. Then each pupil gets as much practice as he
is able to get on his own initiative. As one teacher com-
mented, "The functions of these machines are all studied in
the office practice and bookkeeping classes, and each pupil
is required to learn how to operate each one."

In teaching commercial work, three instructors pay only
a little attention to spelling and punctuation, while all the
rest are very strict along these lines. Since neither busi-
ness English nor spelling is taught anywhere as a course by
itself, most of the teachers feel that some instruction in
these subjects is needed, and typing seems to be a good
place to give it.

The minimum state requirement in typing is thirty words
per minute. Seven schools expect only this minimum require-
ment of the students; two set their standards at fifty words;
all the others aim for forty words. These goals are checked
by fifteen-minute tests. The last semester of typing is in-
v variably taken up entirely with letter form and placement.
A greater number of commercial students take typing than any
other one subject, a total of one thousand, eight hundred
ninety students, or sixty-four per cent of the entire
commercial department, being enrolled in typing classes.

Seven instructors demand only the state requirement of seventy words per minute in shorthand, but the rest demand from eighty to ninety words. One teacher was frank to say, "I set my goal at seventy, and, of course, I always have a few who reach ninety or even a hundred. However, if my students reach sixty words on new material and can take it easily and efficiently, I'm perfectly satisfied." This goal is checked by a five-minute test. Transcription is not closely checked for time. The teachers give a five-minute test and then give the forty-five minute typing period to transcribe the dictation and set it up on the page in neat, correct letter form. Accuracy and neatness rather than speed are stressed. Twenty per cent of all the commercial students, or a total of five hundred ninety-one boys and girls, were enrolled in shorthand classes during the past year.

The schools which are fortunate enough to possess dictaphones give thirty hours of dictation each semester to each pupil by this method. Another instructor requires all of his shorthand students to work at least one full week in an office during the last semester and get in thirty hours of dictation and transcription from a business man. Another teacher assigns each one of her shorthand students to another teacher in the system for one period every day. This period is supposed to be spent taking dictation, typing tests and
lesson plans, cutting stencils, or doing anything else that
teachers might want done. When the superintendent or
principal wants anything along that line done, he is always
supplied with a commercial student to do it for him; but the
value of this practical experience is negligible, because
such calls are seldom made, and only the best students are
sent to answer them.

Filing is usually taught in junior business training.
These departments offering office practice place it in that
course also. The systems of filing taught are those found
in Reed and Morgan's adopted text for junior business train-
ing, namely, alphabetical, numerical, and chronological.
The subject and geographic methods are also touched. Only
one other system was named by anyone—Shane's.

None of these schools even makes an attempt to analyze
the personalities of the students nor to develop such traits
as loyalty, courtesy, and tact. Such remarks as this were
made by each one of the teachers interviewed: "Of course,
I try to teach my pupils those things in an indirect way,
but no special course or period is allotted to the teaching
of business ethics."

Only three schools do any follow-up work on a business-
lke basis after the student graduates. Twelve instructors
do a little and hear from a good many of their ex-pupils
and know personally of those who have been successful in
getting positions in or around the local community. Six teachers answered that they had been in the system too short a time to do much of that kind of work.

Nine of the instructors said that they did not contact the business men of their communities at all in order to check up on the type and quality of the work done by their students. Only one of these schools, however, was of any size. Six of them were country schools where there was little or no office work to be done in the community, and a check-up was unnecessary. The remaining twelve schools make regular check-ups to see if their students are being used by the local business men and to see if these students are doing satisfactory work.

From two to twenty per cent of the students are said to get positions with no further training than that given by the high school commercial department. Six instructors--each one from smaller schools--stated that none of their students go to work directly after graduation; they admitted, however, that the reason was inadequate preparation. The majority of these jobs held by high school graduates are clerical positions where only a mediocre knowledge of typing is required along with the regular high school course.

A few of the more serious and capable students are able to hold secretarial and bookkeeping positions. The boys and girls who are fortunate enough to get these better positions
TABLE 6

NUMBER AND KINDS OF JOBS HELD BY HIGH SCHOOL TRAINED STUDENTS AND THE SCHOOL TRAINING USED ON THE JOB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Who Got Jobs</th>
<th>Kinds of Jobs Gotten</th>
<th>School Training Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>Clerical Work (The majority)</td>
<td>Typing, Calculating Machines, Commercial Arithmetic, Duplicating Machines, Filing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretarial Work (A few)</td>
<td>Shorthand, Typing, Calculating Machines, Duplicating Machines, Filing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bookkeeping Jobs (A few)</td>
<td>Bookkeeping, Commercial Arithmetic, Adding Machines, Calculating Machines, Duplicating Machines, Typing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salesmen (A good many)</td>
<td>Salesmanship, Advertising, Commercial Arithmetic, Adding Machines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

are usually those who have spent an extra year in high school taking only business work and specializing in a particular course; for example, shorthand and typing are taken if the
ultimate aim is to be a secretary. An "A" record is usually made by these students. These people also have good literary foundations.

Many of the students gain positions as salesmen. However, so many young people get these same jobs without the benefit of the commercial course that a salesman can hardly be named as a product of the high school commercial department.

Eight and one-fourth per cent, or two hundred forty-three students out of two thousand, nine hundred fifty-four commercial graduates, seems to be a very small number who get jobs with no further training than that given in the high school, especially when the fact that job-preparation is a major aim of the high schools is considered. A study from the business point of view might help to clarify the situation.
CHAPTER III

THE APPARENT NEED OF THE BEGINNING OFFICE WORKER

The usual work done in any office is bookkeeping, accounting, auditing, stenography, typing, collecting and formulating statistics, and general clerking. Some qualifications and preparation are demanded for each type of work, regardless of the type of office in which it is done. The smaller the office, the more of these jobs that are combined. In some very small businesses, only one employee takes care of everything. It is seldom that a high school student without a few years of experience gets a position of this kind. He usually takes his first job under the watchful eye of a senior secretary or directly under the supervision of his employer.

The offices investigated for this study were all small ones, using from one to six stenographic and clerical employees. These smaller offices are the ones in which most of the high school students get their early training in the commercial world. The most ambitious of these youngsters get a year or two of experience there and then move on to better positions, sometimes in larger firms. The less capable fall by the wayside to make place for others.

Each office manager interviewed gave the ability to type and a knowledge of filing as being essential tools of his
employees. Fifty-six and one half per cent of them require only a mediocre skill in typing. These offices put out comparatively few letters, and the employees are not kept busy enough to go at a high speed all day. Banks, oil companies, and lawyers usually require expert typists with a speed of seventy or eighty words a minute. No one, however, will allow accuracy to be sacrificed to speed.

### Table 7

**Training Required for Beginning Office Workers and the Per Cent of Employers Who Require Each Type of Training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical Skills</th>
<th>Personal Training</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Training</td>
<td>Per Cent</td>
<td>General Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filing</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Good English Spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typing</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Legible Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorthand</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty in appearance</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty in work</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>Ability to meet the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silence in regard to office affairs</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>84.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tact</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtesy</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Resourcefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of humor</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of offices use the alphabetical method of filing. Doctors and lawyers use chronological and subject filing also. Public utilities and mail order houses use the
cross-filing method. Oil companies use the geographic method. Thirty-nine of the men were afraid to give their filing systems a definite name, insisting that they use their own particular types. On examination, their files were found to be rather carelessly kept by the alphabetical method. A general knowledge of filing is all that is required of the beginning office worker, since each business varies its filing system to meet its own particular needs.

Eighty-eight per cent of the employers insist that their employees know shorthand. Of these, only twenty-four per cent expect a speed of eighty or more words per minute. Some of these are bankers, some are oil company superintendents, one is a department store manager, and one is a lumber company manager. The other employers said that so long as their employees know enough about shorthand to take a letter and transcribe it correctly, they do not mind giving the dictation slowly. The managers who do not require shorthand make good written English a necessity. Each one tells his secretary what message to put into a letter and then expects her to do the rest without further assistance.

Good English, both written and spoken, correct spelling, and legible writing are required by one hundred per cent of the employers. In most of the offices can be found a good dictionary. One insurance manager said, "I don't mind buying a dictionary, but I do mind being asked how to spell every other word, and I won't tolerate a misspelled word in a
letter." Good English plays a very important part in an office. First, concise, correct English makes a much better impression on clients than do slovenly habits of speech. Second, poorly constructed sentences often cause misunderstandings and result in loss of goodwill and customers. Illegible handwriting causes loss of time and, oftentimes, misunderstandings. Although the typewriter has taken much of the burden of handwriting from the secretary, there are still many times when typing is not practical.

A knowledge of arithmetic was named by seventy-three and one half per cent of the men as being essential in an office. The others seemed to think that calculating, adding, and listing machines are taking the day, and their operation is all that is necessary for the office worker to know.

Personal training, according to a great majority of employers, is much more important than technical skills. Of course, the ideal employee possesses both. But the secretary who possesses a high degree of intelligence, loyalty to her employer, the ability to meet the public, courtesy, and tact, who is neat both in her personal appearance and in her work, who is resourceful in times of emergency, who is always silent in regard to office affairs outside of office hours, and who has enough sense of humor to laugh when things go wrong—that secretary will go far even though her technical training is not as good as the average when she first goes on the job. She is of much greater value to her employer than the skilled,
well-educated secretary who has none or few of these personal qualifications.

**TABLE 8**

**MACHINES USED IN BUSINESS AND THE SKILL DEMANDED ON EACH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Machine</th>
<th>Number of Machines Found</th>
<th>Number of Employers Demanding Each Degree of Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typewriters</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Mediocre—113 Expert—57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculating Machines</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>Mediocre—102 None—65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplicating Machines</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Expert—6 None—32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Bookkeeping Machines</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Expert—20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-ray Machines</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Expert—15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictaphones</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Expert—4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comptometers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>None—4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recorders</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Expert—3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lathes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mediocre—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressographs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Expert—2 Mediocre—1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only ten different types of machines were found in all of the twenty kinds of offices investigated. Each office had at least one typewriter. Fifty-six and one half per cent of the managers require no particular skill on this machine—just the ability to type neat, correct letter in a reasonable length of time. All of the banks, fifteen lawyers,
thirteen oil company superintendents, eleven public utilities, nine lumber companies, nine oil supply houses, five insurance agencies, and five retail stores require expert typists. No manager will allow uncorrected errors in typing, but a few neat erasures are tolerated. Correct letter form is stressed, but every employer, it seems, has his own personal idea of what constitutes the perfect letter, and few of these ideas agree with those of the commercial teacher.

Calculating machines are used in eighty-three and one half per cent of the offices. These machines are very different as to model and type. The number of Burroughs and Monroe machines exceeds, by far, all the other makes. Adding, listing, calculating, electric, hand-driven—all of these kinds may be found. Fifty-one per cent of the managers require only mediocre skill, and thirty-two and one half per cent require no skill at all on the calculators. Twenty-six and one half per cent think that these machines take the place of a knowledge of the mathematical skills. Only four comptometers were found, and no skill is required in the operation of any of them.

Duplicating machines are owned by eighteen per cent of the businesses—retail stores, public utilities, insurance agencies, banks, and lumber companies. No skill is required in the operation of eighty-four per cent of these machines, but the typists must know how to cut good, clear stencils. Some employees go into an office without ever having seen a
mimeograph and learn in a short time to put out fairly neat copies of print. For colored pictures, it takes more patience and practice to learn. Employers, as a whole, do not seem to mind training their office workers on this machine. The duplicators found in banks require expert operators to run them.

All twenty banks possess bank bookkeeping machines, and all require expert operators. Eleven bank presidents, however, made statements something like this, "Give me an intelligent young man who likes the work and is ambitious to advance, and I'll be glad to teach him to be a banker." An expert bank bookkeeping machine operator can be trained in a very few months. One man said that he prefers beginning employees to have no special training, as he likes to train them in his own particular methods. Thirty per cent of the banks own duplicating machines, twenty per cent own dictaphones and ediphones, and fifteen per cent have recordaks. Expert operation of all these machines found in banks is required.

All of the medical and dental doctors possess X-ray machines, and three dentists have lathes. Expert skill is required on the one, and mediocre skill is required on the other. Of course, these machines have no place in the high school, since doctors never take high school students into their offices. Each physician and dentist stated, definitely, that he would not have a girl under twenty-three or twenty-four years of age in his office. No further training after high
school years is required, but an eighteen-year-old does not have the poise and dignity that one must have in an office of this kind. Silence is golden with a doctor. His secretary knows all the secrets of his patients, and a very young person is apt to talk at the wrong time, even though her intentions are perfectly good. Too, one doctor mentioned the fact that a very young girl's reputation is at stake when she takes a job as a doctor's secretary. These facts are not true of an optometrist. One optometrist said that he had rather take an inexperienced high school commercial graduate than anyone else and teach her the job. He then guarantees her a permanent position somewhere in the state.

Only three addressographs and graphotypes were found in the entire district. The operators of two of these machines are required to be expert, and the other one is required to be mediocre. These do not have much place in the smaller business offices.

It makes no difference to forty-eight per cent of the employers whether their office employees are high school graduates or commercial college graduates. Sixteen per cent state positively that they would not hire anyone under twenty-one to twenty-five years of age anyway. That fact makes it impossible for any high school graduate or many commercial college graduates to get positions with those people. Twenty-eight and one half per cent of the employers
prefer high school-trained help and twenty-three and one half per cent prefer commercial college-trained help. There are several arguments given for each preference.

First, the high school-trained boy or girl will usually take any type of job and not think it is beneath his dignity. Second, he realizes his shortcomings and is usually willing to take suggestions from his superiors and co-workers. Third, he is not a "know-all" but will acknowledge that he is sometimes wrong.

On the other hand, the commercial college graduate is better trained than the high school student. Too, he is more mature and experienced, and, consequently, he has more poise and dignity.

Only sixty-six and one half per cent of the offices have ever employed high school-trained workers. Of these, sixty-seven per cent report that the boys and girls make satisfactory employees. Thirty-three per cent report "fairly satisfactory." It is noteworthy that not one employer brands them as being "unsatisfactory."

Every person interviewed gave poor spelling as a characteristic of his beginning office workers. Carelessly spoken and poorly written English is also widely prevalent. Eighteen and one half per cent of the employers complain of poor letter forms. One manager is quite sure that a course in the psychology of human beings should be placed in the high school and should be required of all commercial students. Each...
employer is quite enthusiastic about a course in personality training being added to the high school curriculum. Too many secretaries know too little about office dress and office manners.

**TABLE 9**

*The per cent of employers who checked each type of training that is usually lacking in inexperienced employees*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Personality Training</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken English</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>Courtesy and tact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written English</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>East, correct dress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record Keeping</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>Ability to meet the public</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Form</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All office managers expect to do a little training of their beginning employees. Twenty-eight per cent have to do quite a bit of on-the-job training. These men do not mind helping beginners to learn the work; in fact, twenty-one and one half per cent of them prefer to do their own training. They do have the right, however, to expect the employee to be serious and capable and ambitious to do his part.

Co-operative training is too new for the average businessman to understand much about it. Many of the persons interviewed had never heard of it until they were asked to answer the question on their questionnaires. Fifty-two per cent answered that it would be asking too much of an office manager to train a
student in practical experience while the high school was giving him his theoretical training. Fourteen per cent said that they would co-operate with the high school if they were asked, but they were not very enthusiastic over the idea. One man said that the students working for competitive firms would meet in a group at school and unintentionally exchange business secrets. Thirty-four per cent of the employers applauded the plan of co-operative training and expressed the idea that the high school would be much more successful in training office employees if the business world would help a little by showing what is desirable and necessary in that training.

Before planning a business career, the beginner should consider well the advantages and disadvantages of office work. There is much to be said on both sides of the question.

For office work, it may be said: First, there is a wide range of possibilities in the type of work that one may choose to do. Second, there are excellent opportunities for promotion. Third, office work is pleasant and permits contacts with cultured people. Fourth, the pay is good for efficient workers, and the amount of training required is little. Fifth, the office employee usually gets a half holiday on Saturday. Sixth, part-time employment is sometimes allowed.

Against office work, it may be said: First, there is considerable confinement connected with office positions. Second, office work is routine and often gets tiresome and monotonous. Third, the pay of some positions is on a
commission basis. If, in spite of the disadvantages, one chooses office work for his career, he should learn the ten commandments in business and stick to his desk.

1. Be cheerful. It pays to smile under any circumstances.
2. Do your best. Others are trying to outdo you.
3. Be different from others. Don’t think you are imposed upon.
4. Don’t be boastful about what you do. Others do things occasionally.
5. Be independent. Use your own time for personal matters.
6. Control your temper at all times. To lose it is injurious to your health.
7. Do not speak evil of others.
8. Be prompt, even when the boss is out of town.
9. Work steadily, even when the boss leaves his office.
10. Stick to your task until it is completed.

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*Smith and Blough, Planning a Career, pp. 311-312.*

*Ibid., p. 326.*
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The high school's two main purposes in maintaining a commercial department are to give the students a preview of the field of business as a guide for further work after high school days and to train the students for a position in the business world immediately after graduation. This last purpose is successful to the extent of 8.25% of the graduates getting positions.

The courses taught in the commercial high school and most used in positions gained by beginners are typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, commercial arithmetic, junior business training, and salesmanship. English, though not a commercial subject, is also very important. Occupations is a new course, but it is rapidly becoming popular, and it is a definite step toward a better understanding between the commercial teacher and the business man.

The high school is setting its standards of work high enough, but only the most capable and ambitious of its graduates are able to get positions without further training. These students usually spend an extra year in high school studying only business subjects.
Business men, as a whole, are very lenient with beginning employees. If expert operators are required, the employer usually gives a long enough training period for the intelligent person to acquire the skill.

A general knowledge of filing is all that is required in the average office, since each business varies its filing system to meet its own needs.

More important in the average office than technical skills are the personality traits of the office worker. He should be neat in dress and work, loyal to his firm, intelligent, resourceful, courteous, and tactful. He should be able to meet the public with poise and dignity.

The typewriting and calculating machines are the two most important machines in the small office. Other machines commonly found are duplicating and bank bookkeeping machines. The typewriter and calculator can never take the place, entirely, of legible handwriting and a knowledge of the fundamentals of arithmetic.

Conclusions

The high school instructor and the office manager do not understand each other, and while they are working for the same ultimate goal, they are working at cross-purposes and the student is not getting the most out of his commercial training in the high school.

The business manager is not sure of the materials and
methods in which he would have his employees trained. Business is eternally changing, and new ideas are being put into practice every day.

The beginning office worker is poorly trained in spelling, both spoken and written English, and personality traits. He can expect his employer to teach him the office routine, but he does not have the right to expect to be taught those things that he should have learned in high school.

Schools are beginning to see the value of giving the students some practical experience along with their training of facts and theory and are trying to do something about it. The average business man, however, still has to be educated to the value of co-operative training. If approached tactfully by the commercial teacher, most of them will co-operate and soon learn the benefits of this training.

Recommendations

After studying the conclusions reached in this investigation of high school curriculums and business requirements, the writer has the following recommendations to make:

That the high school put a vocational guidance course in the commercial department and consider well the person in charge of it.

That a strong office practice course be placed in the junior and senior years. The office practice teacher should be required to have some actual business experience and to
know the business employer's requirements thoroughly. Desirable personality traits should be studied and developed to a high degree.

That the commercial instructor be required to make a survey of the community in which he teaches at least every two years in order to see what is required of business employees. He should then plan his courses of instruction to meet those needs.

That a spelling course be placed in the high school. This subject should include the rules of syllabication and diacritical markings and a thorough study of the dictionary.

That either a Business English course be added to the commercial department or that a closer co-operation between the regular high school English department and the commercial department be attained.

That business arithmetic, with special application of the types of problems which are actually found in business, be made a required part of the work of all commercial students.

That handwriting be included in the work of the commercial student if he does not write legibly and easily.

That students be encouraged to become familiar with the business firms in the community and the work they are doing.

That a good study of occupations—the requirements of the job, the returns, and other features—be used without the necessity of taking time to go on the job and make a
nuisance of oneself when he is worth less than nothing to the employer.

That all commercial students be graded closely and not sent out into the business world before they are fully prepared to handle jobs.
APPENDIX

Questionnaire presented to high school commercial teachers:

1. What subjects are offered in the commercial department of your high school, and in what year is each of these subjects offered?


2. What is the enrollment in your commercial department? ________ In your entire high school? ________

3. What is the average age of the commercial graduate? ________ Youngest? ________ Oldest? ________

4. Do you think this department keeps some pupils in school who would otherwise drop out? ________

5. For what are the commercial subjects in your high school primarily intended? (Check)
   a. For college preparation? _____
   b. To fit the student for a position immediately after he finishes high school? _____
   c. For a preview of the field of business as a guide for further work after high school days? _____
   d. Others? ___________________________

6. Approximately what per cent of your students get jobs without further training than that given in your department? ________
   a. Are these jobs, in large part, clerical work? ________
   b. What other types of work do they get? (Check)
      Secretarial ________ Others ________
      Stenographic ________
      Bookkeeping ________

38
c. What parts of their school training do they use on the majority of these jobs? (Check)

- Shorthand
- Typing
- Bookkeeping
- English
- Calculating Machines
- Others

7. In teaching commercial work,

a. What attention do you pay to spelling and punctuation?
   - None
   - A little
   - Quite a bit

b. What rate of speed do you aim for in typing?

c. Do you drill your typists in letter form and placement?
   - No
   - A little
   - Quite a bit

d. What rate of speed do you aim for in dictation?
   - In transcription

- Do your students have any opportunities to take letters from anyone besides the teacher?
   - From whom?
   - How many hours per semester?

- What system—or systems—of filing do you teach?

- Does your bookkeeping course include record keeping as well as mercantile bookkeeping?
   - No
   - A little
   - Quite a bit

- What training is given on machines aside from typewriters? What degree of skill is required on each of them? ("E" for expert skill, "M" for mediocre, and "N" for none).

- What percent of your commercial students take shorthand?
- Typing?
- Commercial Arithmetic?

8. Do you specially train your students in business ethics, such as loyalty, tact, and courtesy?
9. What follow-up work is done by you after the student graduates?
   None _____ Very little _____ Quite a bit _____

10. Do you contact the business men of the community to see if the work done by your students is satisfactory?
    If they are using your students and your training of them? ______ If you are giving your students the training needed for the jobs in your community? ________

11. Other Comments: ____________________________________________________________
    ____________________________________________________________
    ____________________________________________________________
    ____________________________________________________________
    ____________________________________________________________
    ____________________________________________________________
Questionnaire presented to the office managers:

1. What age boy do you prefer to take as a beginner in your office? _______ Girl? _______

2. What must a beginner know in order to get a job with you?

   **Special training:**
   - Machines
     - Approximate speed in dictation
     - Filing system—or systems—used
     - Other requirements

   **General training:**
   - Written English
   - Penmanship
   - Arithmetical ability
   - Other requirements

   **Personal characteristics:**
   - Intelligence
   - Ability to meet the public
   - Loyalty
   - Resourcefulness
   - Sense of humor
   - Courtesy
   - Tact
   - Neatness in work
   - Neatness in appearance
   - Silence in regard to office affairs
   - Others

3. What office machines do you use, and what degree of skill is required on each of them? ("E" for expert skill, "M" for mediocre, and "N" for none).

   - Typewriter
   - Calculating Machines
   - Duplicating Machines
   - Billing Machines
   - Bookkeeping Machines
   - Dictaphone
   - Addressograph
   - Others

4. Do you prefer an employee with a high school commercial course or one with a commercial college course? _______ Why? _______
5. Have you ever worked young men and women from the local high school? (Check) Satisfactory _____ Mediocre _____ Unsatisfactory _____

6. What training should your inexperienced employees have that they do not seem to have when they come to you? (Check)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Shorthand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar &amp; Punctuation</td>
<td>Machine Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record Keeping</td>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Training, such as courtesy and tact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. How much "on-the-job" training do you have to do in order to get your work done as you think it should be done? (Check)

None _____ A little _____ Quite a bit _____

8. Do the local commercial teachers ever come to your place of business to inquire about the job requirements in your office? (Check)

No _____ Seldom _____ Quite often _____

9. What do you think of co-operative training, in which the business man takes a high school student in his office a few hours each day, with a low salary, and gives him practical training along with his school training?

Do you think this arrangement would work out satisfactorily? _____

or

Do you think it would be too great a burden on the business man? _____

10. Other Comments: __________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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