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TEACHER PLACEMENT BY PUBLIC AGENCIES

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DIFFICULTIES IN FILLING TEACHING POSITIONS.

For the biennium ending June 30, 1920, filling educational positions of all kinds assumed an importance scarcely thought of in previous years. Not enough even of untrained, inexperienced persons could be secured at any time during the two years to fill the teaching places of the country. The number—always too small—of trained, experienced workers who were willing to stay in the profession was greatly reduced. Military service took the best of the younger men teachers; governmental services newly initiated or greatly expanded to meet war-time needs called away the more active and progressive women; the Young Men's Christian Association, Knights of Columbus, Red Cross, other relief organizations, and the scientific and technical branches of the varied war industries drew heavily from the ranks of principals, superintendents, and college faculties; the business world found remunerative places for educators; and the creeping slowness with which teachers' salaries were advanced to meet the increasing cost of living drove many to try other lines of work. In September of 1918 there was a shortage of 50,000 teachers, and 122,000 inexperienced ones were entering the field. Approximately 10 out of every 45 of all the teaching places were either vacant or filled by new people. The shortage increased throughout the period. Fewer students took courses in education, the annual output of graduates from the colleges of education and the normal schools was decreased and campaigns to reenlist former workers were not markedly successful. In June of 1920 there was no apparent way of securing the 15,350 high-school teachers necessary to complement the force for secondary instruction.

APPOINTMENT COMMITTEES AS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS.

This situation changed the attitude of the board of recommendation, appointment committees, placement bureaus, or other organizations in higher educational institutions and State departments designed to serve as clearing houses for positions and workers. From

being bodies whose chief function was to help young people secure positions, they became service organizations to help fill the schools with workers. In June of 1920 reports were received at the Bureau of Education from 260 institutions, representing 120 smaller colleges, 19 larger universities, 23 State universities, 25 technical schools, 55 State and private normal schools, 7 county normals, and 11 city normals. Below is a tabulation of the returns:

Requests for teacher positions—Number of places filled.

Institutions reporting.	Number of schools reporting.	Number that have an organization for placing teachers.	Number that have no such formal organization.	Number that kept records of placement work.	Requests received for nominations to fill vacancies.	Positions reported to have been filled.	Number of registrations with placement organizations.
Smaller colleges	120	74	46	47	8,040	1,979	2,121
Larger universities	19	19	.....	15	15,126	2,550	3,594
State universities	23	23	.....	14	13,280	3,025	9,702
Technical schools	25	15	10	6	1,695	387	376
Normal schools	55	41	14	29	13,571	4,260	4,644
County normals	7	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
City normals	11	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Total	260	172	70	111	51,712	12,196	20,437

DEMAND MUCH GREATER THAN SUPPLY.

Without exception all of the 260 institutions that reported to the bureau indicate that the requests for teachers were far in excess of the supply avaliable for placement. The 46 smaller colleges and 14 normals that have no formal placement organizations report all of their available people taken so quickly as to make bureaus unnecessary. The 10 technical schools report that none of their graduates cared to teach. County and city normals are as a rule parts of a larger administrative system, and their output is immediately taken over by the system. Sixty-one of the institutions reporting did not keep records of their placement work. Usually those were cases in which it was the part-time duty of some already overworked person or committee. The number of positions reported to have been filled is much less than the number that actually was filled. School boards and registrants alike are prompt to express dissatisfaction but singularly neglectful about reporting successful placements. Boards may and often do ask several institutions to make nominations for the same position or positions, so there is undoubtedly embodied in the 51,712 requests a considerable number of duplications. This is easily offset by the fact that many of the requests were for more than one teacher—a fact noted but the figures not given by the persons reporting—and that large numbers of requests came to those schools that kept no record. An estimate of three times as many requests as registrations is conservative.

METHODS IN PLACEMENT WORK.

While placement work is handled in many different ways in the different institutions, in some of the larger schools it is provided for in the regular budget and has taken on the character of a high-class professional service. In most of these the plan of operation and the policies followed are fairly uniform. The bureaus are organized for and deal primarily with the students, alumni, and graduates of the school in which the bureau is located. As a rule there is no charge for the service. If there are fees, the amount is small and may be merely to cover the cost of postage and typing. A statement of the registrant's personal characteristics, his experience, and a list of references are required from him. From his instructors and professors estimates of his work and ability are obtained. These written estimates are held to be strictly confidential, are sometimes required to be couched in moderate terms, and to apply only to those things about the registrant of which the writer is directly informed. General letters of recommendation are not as a rule accepted. No schools have reported the use of intelligence tests or intelligence ratings in placement work. The institutions do not recommend, and many of them send out credentials only at the request of school officials. Sometimes the papers of several persons are submitted. Usually but one nomination is made. In general the purpose of the bureau is to give board and registrant a knowledge of each other and leave them to work out their own arrangements.

SPECIAL POLICIES.

Apart from the general policies of placement adopted and followed by most schools, certain ones are following unusual lines much of the time, and many did special work during the war. One of the larger normals discouraged any tendency on the part of its graduates to accept positions that would group any great number of them in any one city, town, or county; tried to distribute its supply of trained people fairly equally and widely over the State; divided its graduates into three salary classes and advised each to ask for the salary of the class in which she was placed, and requested that all seniors make no teaching contracts until after Easter, in order that during the process of salary readjustment the seniors would not come in competition with older experienced teachers. It also made a special effort to supply teachers to those schools from which it was receiving students.

Many bureaus registered nongraduates and graduates of other schools. While this was primarily to meet the emergency and was sometimes accompanied by a refusal to make nominations for positions in other States and sometimes even in the territory within the

State not usually served by the school, there is still a definite desire on the part of a number of institutions to arrange some plan of exchange of registrants' credentials with other institutions of the State or those of other States. There is no national organization of placement officers; and no general scheme of interchange, however desirable it may be, has been effected.

Institutional placement bureaus charge no commission; so they are not tempted to try to fill a large number of positions for commercial reasons. Their success lies not in placing many teachers—for the last two years the number they placed was limited only by the number of registrants—but in so placing the trained minds with which they deal that the largest amount of effective service will be rendered by satisfied workers. They recognize that to learn the needs of positions and to fill those positions with the persons best fitted for them is a high grade of professional service. In order that the bureau may be free to carry out its work, some schools require that no recommendations shall be made by any member of the faculty except such as are made through the appointment committee. Others require that registrants send out a very limited number of applications and either inform the bureau of any sent or gain its consent before sending. Most placement bureaus are studying carefully the needs of the territory they attempt to supply. A western normal that graduates students on the first of nearly every month has had an appointment bureau in operation for nearly 20 years. By experience and careful study the bureau has grown to know the needs of every section of its territory. There are few unsatisfactory placements by that school.

FOLLOW-UP WORK.

A number of institutions, after having made a placement, do definite follow-up work. Others recognize the great value of such work and would do it if the means were available. One institution undertakes to keep in touch with its graduates during their first three years of service. Others attempt to keep files of the higher grades of positions and to assist in promoting their successful alumnae to such places. A western agricultural college sends out a worker to visit and help all of its people who are doing their first year of teaching. Another middle west institution helps its graduates to get located in teaching positions, then secures yearly reports from supervising officials on the quality of the work done, and if possible attempts through visitation to become acquainted with the character of the institution in which the work is being done. Whenever an adverse report on the professional reputation or efficiency of a graduate is sent in, a frendly visit is made to ascertain the situation, the cause, and the remedy. Sometimes the college does not agree with the adverse report of the supervising official.

BUREAUS IN STATE OFFICES.

Bureaus of teacher placement have been organized in connection with the State offices of education in 16 of the States. Of these, 10 are authorized by legislative act, 5 on the authority of the State superintendent of public instruction, and 1 by the State board of regents. In 15 other States the work is handled at the office of the State superintendent in an informal way and as a matter of personal accommodation. In 17 States nothing is attempted along this line. Legislation for the work increased somewhat after the United States entered the World War. The work in Massachusetts was authorized in 1911; in Minnesota in 1913; in New Hampshire in 1915; in Maine, South Dakota, and Wyoming in 1917; in South Carolina in 1918; and in Iowa, Oklahoma, and Alabama in 1919.

The Massachusetts State teachers' registration bureau became operative in 1912. It acts as a State clearing house for teachers. Minnesota, Iowa, South Carolina, and Alabama are also working toward effective State clearance in their organizations. Minnesota reports the largest number of placements, 773 teachers having been placed in 1919.

The great hindrance to the development of the work in the State offices is reported as the lack of funds. Registration fees are authorized in seven States, but with the exception of Minnesota, where it is $3 a year, the fees are too low to be of material aid. In nearly every case the legislative act carries little or no appropriation, and the work is added to that of the regular office staff.

NATIONAL PLACEMENT BUREAUS.

Nationally both the Department of Labor and the Bureau of Education have undertaken to do teacher-placement work. In September of 1918 the teacher shortage was called to the attention of President Wilson, and he allotted to the bureau from the fund for national security and defense $25,000 to be used for establishing and maintaining a School Board Service Division to assist school officers throughout the country in obtaining teachers. The committee on education and special training of the War Department had already asked for assistance in getting qualified instructors for the Students' Army Training Corps units.

SCHOOL-BOARD SERVICE.

Early in October the commissioner announced the establishment of the division for the purpose of assisting officers of education in finding teachers for colleges, normal schools, and technical schools, superintendents and principals of schools, and teachers and supervisors of special subjects in secondary and elementary schools—such

teachers as are usually sought and obtained from the country at large rather than from the communities in which the schools are located. He asked that educational institutions send in lists of former graduates, those about to graduate, former faculty members, and the names of any persons who were capable of teaching and who might be induced to take up the work. The aim was to use to the best advantage the available teaching corps and to call into the profession as a patriotic duty all who could be of use. Wide newspaper publicity was given to a campaign to keep the schools open and to the work of the division as a help in attaining that end.

Registrations and requests for nominations began promptly. By February 1, 1919, the names of 3,500 teachers had been received. The division had made nominations to 1,100 positions in high schools, colleges, and universities, and to 400 or more grade and rural schools. In addition to maintaining a list of workers immediately available, the bureau undertook a directory of men and women who were satisfactorily placed and did not wish to have their names used as candidates for other places.

The abrupt termination of hostilities in November, and the consequent beginning of demobilization, made it seem possible that many of the returning soldiers could be secured for teaching places. The especially well-selected and well-trained group of young psychologists, some 300 in number, who were released in December and January, were registered with the bureau and the attention of superintendents in larger cities was called to the unusual opportunity to establish departments of psychology and research. The bureau attempted to arrange with The Adjutant General's Office a plan for placing discharged soldiers who were fitted to teach. The attempt was not successful.

The School Board Service Division continued its work until July 1, 1919. On that date the fund for national security and defense ceased to exist as such, and Congress has not appropriated any funds for teacher register work. The division was then closed. During this period of its existence School Board Service had carried on a strong publicity campaign to mobilize the teaching force of the country, had thoroughly canvassed the schools to determine their needs, had secured the names of 13,000 teachers ready for active duty and of 6,000 for a directory, and had made 15,000 or more nominations for positions. On October of 1919 Congress gave a deficiency appropriation of $5,000 to continue the work. After the division had been dormant for five months it was reopened with a smaller force of workers.

Of course the lists of names were more or less out of date, so it was necessary to announce the reopening of the division and to send

to each of the 13,000 active registrants a letter asking for information as to his desire or ability to teach. To this letter the division received 5,000 replies. Part of the falling off in the number of registrants was probably due to lack of confidence caused by the first closing of the division and to less extended publicity, but much of it was unquestionably due to an increasing shortage of teachers.

As soon as a fair return of registrations was received the division announced to colleges, universities, and high schools that it was open and ready for service. The colleges and universities took but little advantage of the offer. The high schools made requests for teachers of all kinds at an average of at least 175 a day. The lowest number asked for in any one day was 25, the highest 436. Teachers of domestic science, manual training, and agriculture were in special demand. The names of all the active registrants of the division were sent out numbers of times in three or four weeks. Congress again refused appropriations, and on July 1, 1920, the work of the division ceased for a second time.

The rather incomplete sketch of teacher placement by public organizations makes it clear that the work is a necessary and very important service. The policies that must be followed in order to bring about the best results have been fairly well established by experience. The bureaus engaged in it need to be more closely coordinated and methods of exchange of credentials, evalution of certificates, and standardization of credits need to be provided.

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