DESIABLE TECHNICAL SKILLS AND OTHER QUALIFICATIONS FOR BEGINNING OFFICE WORKERS AS SUGGESTED BY REPRESENTATIVE PERSONNEL INTERVIEWERS IN PORTLAND, OREGON

by

LOUISE BORIN FIESS

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# Table of Contents

## Chapter I: Introduction
- Introduction .............................................. 1
- Statement of the Problem ............................. 2
- Significance of the Problem ......................... 3
- Purpose of the Study ................................... 6

## Chapter II: Survey of the Literature
- Introduction .............................................. 8
- Teacher-oriented Literature ......................... 9
- Management-oriented Literature .................... 13
- Student-oriented Literature .......................... 14
- Combined-interests Literature ....................... 16
- Summary .................................................. 20

## Chapter III: Techniques and Procedures
- Scope of the Study .................................... 21
- Limitations of the Study .............................. 21
- Definitions ............................................. 22
- Method of the Study ................................... 25
- Development of the Interview Schedule ............ 26
- Obtaining Representative Sample .................... 29
- Method of Tabulation .................................. 31

## Chapter IV: Findings of the Study
- Office Size .............................................. 34
- Job Titles and Descriptions ........................... 34
- Employment Interviews ................................ 36
- Testing and Verifying Qualifications ............... 37
- Personal Files and References ....................... 44
- On-the-Job Orientation and Probation ................ 47
- Termination of Employment ............................ 49
- Employer Opinions ..................................... 51
- Summary .................................................. 54

## Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations
- Conclusions .............................................. 56
- Recommendations ........................................ 58
- Summary .................................................. 61

## Bibliography .............................................. 62

## Appendix
- A Interview Schedule .................................. 65
- B List of Interviews .................................... 70
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>Tabulation</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Tabulation of Responses of Twenty-seven Employers Regarding Pre-Employment Testing or Verifying of Nine Office Skills</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Percentage of Representative Employers Who Do Pre-employment Testing or Verifying for Nine Office Skills</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Tabulation of Responses of Twenty-seven Representative Employers Regarding Pre-Employment Testing or Verifying of Twenty-six Personal Characteristics of Beginning Office Workers</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Percentage of Representative Employers Who Do Pre-employment Testing or Verifying of Twenty-six Personal Characteristics of Beginning Office Workers</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Tabulation of Responses of Twenty-seven Employers Regarding Sources of Reference Asked of Beginning Office Workers</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Tabulation of Responses of Twenty-seven Employers Regarding Method of Follow-up of References</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This study has been designed to investigate the problem resulting from an apparent variance in opinions relative to job qualifications of beginning office workers in Portland, Oregon. There are at least three different groups who, unknowingly, have conflicting opinions on pre-employment training of high school graduates entering office work. The three groups are: the teachers, the applicants, and the employers or personnel interviewers.

During the high school years there is no way to determine which students may later apply for office employment, and so the problem concerns those who have had some training in office procedures as well as those who have had no business courses, but who do apply for office work. It is probably true that this is not peculiar to office work. No such assumption need be made, however, in order to justify the investigation of the problem.
Comparing notes on application experiences, beginners may discover discrepancies in standards as emphasized in home, school, and the application interviews. Employers may find applicants with adequate technical skills who are not employable for other reasons. Teachers may learn that personnel interviewers do not always use the same pre-employment criteria as they have previously published or stated. Thus, it appears that employers, teachers, and applicants desire compatibility and meaningful inter-group communication yet at the same time share the hypothesis that employment practices do not compare favorably with applicant preparation.

Statement of the Problem

The problem for this thesis is to determine in definitive terms, by means of personal interviews, what desirable technical skills and other qualifications personnel managers seek in beginning office workers. An effort will be made to get opinions of representative employers regarding the personal traits they seek; the experience they expect young applicants to have; the on-the-job training programs they are willing to offer; and the emphasis they place upon school and other references.

This investigation will also attempt to answer these questions:
1. Are high school graduates prepared for office work?
2. What technical skills for offices do employers expect of high school graduates?
3. Do employers impose a minimum standard of office skills upon applicants?
4. What personal characteristics do employers consider desirable in beginning office workers?
5. Is more emphasis put on personal traits than on technical skills?
6. What percentage of employers pre-test candidates for screening purposes?

This thesis will utilize extensively views of employers regarding technical skills and personal characteristics desirable in beginning office workers in Portland, Oregon.

**Significance of the Problem**

**Reservoir of Workers.** High school graduates who do not go directly to colleges may go into military service, try some phase of selling or distribution, or apply for some kind of office work. Those applying for office employment may or may not be desirable applicants. Often girls plan to work in offices only as a means of supplementing the family income. Other young men and young women look upon office jobs as apprenticeship to business careers. Many apply to ascertain whether they will like office work. Some apply because parents or other relatives have been office employees. Although some employers find in this reservoir of young applicants the trainees they want, others take from this source only because it is all that is readily available; others want older, more experienced office workers.
Future Demands. Although employers may at present be forced to draw from beginning office workers, they may be anticipating personnel programs which allow for employing only qualified workers. It seems logical that the demand for office workers in Portland will increase, considering that nationally the demand for clerical office workers is expected to increase from a total of 6,016,000 in 1950 to 7,456,000 in 1960, an increase of 1,400,000. (18,p.5)

The local chapter of the National Office Management Association (N.O.M.A.) has not published figures for Portland, but accepts the national study which predicts that office machine operators, stenographers, secretaries, and typists may soon be in short supply. (18,p.5)

Training Responsibilities. Employers of office personnel may feel that schools have the responsibility of training students to be well qualified in certain basic skills and information that will benefit them in office work as well as in carrying out their community responsibilities. Employers accept the financial burden of training beginning workers for specific promotions, but they have standards which beginners must meet before employment. A great deal can be accomplished when teachers and counselors are informed of the qualifications requested by employers. This information must be available to the schools before they can accept the responsibility given
them by employers. If knowledge and ability most desired in offices is not shown by young applicants, employers will assume a "shortage of adequately trained young people and force increased employment of those in higher age brackets..."(18,p.5)

The problem of finding out just what knowledge and ability should be emphasized in the schools becomes even more significant upon reviewing the predictions of the National Office Management Association in its recent booklet, Clerical Employment Trends in the Office. Based on a two-year national study made by the Drexel Institute of Philadelphia, it presents statistics and trends as a "help to all business executives, personnel managers, and business educators at all levels..."(18,p.1)

Increasing specialization in clerical occupations is making it more and more difficult to find adequately trained young people among high school graduates. There is thus a growing training deficiency among 18-24 year olds for office jobs.

...It is assumed that the educational system and business will provide better facilities for training of young people for office jobs. It is evident already that industry is gearing itself to spend more time in training the average employee. This is true regardless of the size of the organization.

Experience seems to indicate that the smaller business will feel the pinch of experienced workers shortages in the future unless there is a broadening in the training of young people at the high school level in the skills that will be in demand. (18,pp.15-16)
When office employment receives such national recognition and concern, it seems advisable to appraise locally the requirements for beginning office workers.

**Current Content.** Training programs vary among the schools to some degree, depending upon the background and training of the teachers and the emphasis by the administration, but basically Portland schools use the curriculum prescribed by the Oregon State Department of Education and the local handbooks issued by the supervisors of each subject field. Under such programs, it is possible that only students declaring majors in business education, or those taking elective courses in business subjects receive training in business information or office procedures.

**Purpose of the Study**

Teachers, students, and employers have a mutual concern in knowing existing employment procedures for beginning office workers in Portland, Oregon. During the high school years neither counselors nor students are certain who might be applying for office work within a year or two. A candid report from employment officials may avoid misunderstandings which have arisen among teachers and students and personnel interviewers regarding interpretation of job requirements.
This study will review employment practices in selected offices in Portland, Oregon. Through oral interviews, personnel directors will be asked what personal traits and technical skills high school graduates should possess to be employable as beginning office workers.

The tabulated results should help all teachers prepare students to understand office procedures in industries, factories, utilities, government bureaus, retail stores, transportation companies, and schools. Primarily, it should help teachers prepare students for employment and application procedures, and secondly, it should help students become better aware of their responsibilities in business or office situations after they leave school and become consumers and patrons using business information.
CHAPTER II
SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature survey of the present problem must be presented as teacher-oriented, student-oriented, management-oriented, and that directed toward the combined interests of these groups. Teachers, high school students, and employers share a common problem in needing to recognize and enumerate actual and necessary qualifications for office job placement, yet each group uses resource material written by and for its own interests.

Educational journals seem to concentrate on subject matter and teaching and learning techniques. Management literature advises on management procedures and policies, including testing, employing, and training programs, but may be unaware of the goals and programs of the schools along this same line. Student literature and "Career Day" programs may be limited to glowing descriptions of titled positions and rates of pay and "fringe benefits" rather than responsibilities, qualifications, and status of beginning workers.

Indication that these interests can join forces to the benefit of all groups comes from studies made by the National Office Management Association (N.O.M.A.) in co-operation with chambers of commerce and school districts
in some areas. Although the national office of N.O.M.A.
has no record of such studies being made in Portland to
bring to teachers, students, and the public the opinions
of employers regarding job applicants, the N.O.M.A. has
asked to be informed of the outcome of the present study.

Teacher-oriented Literature

Business education teachers receive periodicals,
professional journals, textbooks, seminar instruction,
workshop evaluations, and methods courses designed to
prepare them to be better teachers. Teachers in other
subject fields receive similar aids within their own
subject areas, so may be unaware of goals for business
information for all students.

At business education professional meetings, busi-
ness teachers seriously and sincerely discuss their
attempts and ambitions to train superior office workers.
Findings of these meetings are printed later in their
professional periodicals as a part of their resource
literature. A good example was the United Business
Education Association meeting in Portland, Oregon, in
July 1956. This meeting was a part of the national
convention of the National Education Association.
Business teachers from all parts of the United States,
including Hawaii and Alaska, took part in discussing
Future Business Leaders of America Clubs, How to Improve Publications from the UBEA Office, and Programs for Conventions and Regional Conferences.

Topics discussed at professional meetings are often repeated by business teachers to business teachers in other periodicals, such as Business Education World; United Business Education Association Forum; National Business Education Quarterly; and the Balance Sheet. Typical of all these sources of literature, the latter aims "to provide an open forum for the constructive discussion of problems of interest to the classroom teacher and to the profession as a whole". (6, p.49)

A thesis, Problems of Beginning Office Workers, was summarized in the October, 1956 Balance Sheet. (14, p.55) It reported results from questionnaires returned by 120 beginning office workers and twenty-two employers in the combined greater Cincinnati and greater Pittsburg areas. It emphasized problems of applicants rather than requirements of employers, and recommended that "a closer cooperation between business and education be established for the purpose of providing realistic instruction and practice in job getting and job holding". (14, p.55) The thesis was the contribution of Dr. Frank E. Liguori of Teachers College, University of Cincinnati.
Another doctoral thesis recognized the problem as having a wider scope than employment. Dr. E. C. McGill of Kansas State Teachers College concluded that:

...there is not enough difference in importance to justify offering separate basic business courses for those young people planning to go into business and those planning to go into non-business activities. (15, p. 49)

He recommended that all teachers receive instruction in basic business knowledges, competencies, and skills as a part of their professional preparation.

The National Business Education Quarterly, published by the United Business Education Association, has for the past three years devoted its fall issues to digests or summaries of selected research studies completed during each previous year. Spring issues listed titles of research studies completed or under way each year. They reported that the following communities have been surveyed as a first step to co-ordinate employment procedures and school course offerings:

- Oklahoma City; Cincinnati and Pittsburgh (a combined study); Cleveland; Nashville; Framingham, Massachusetts; Denver; Byesville, Ohio. (20)
- Boston; Goodland, Kansas. (12)
- Santa Ana, California; Kansas City, Kansas and Missouri. (30)
- Oshkosh, Wisconsin. (29)
The 1953 issues omitted studies which were of local interest only. (21) The Oklahoma City and a St. Louis survey will be discussed as combined-interests literature.

Literature used by teachers interested in job qualifications of students who may be applying for office work may come from manufacturers, distributors, dealers, and salespeople promoting office machines, textbooks, school and office supplies. Such material includes pamphlets, charts, research information, and other free and inexpensive material. Teachers may obtain visual aids, bibliographies, guides to resource material from public libraries, school districts, and local community service organizations.

The Oregon State Department of Education and the Portland Public School System each publish courses of study and guides for instruction, and lists of evaluated textbooks. The Handbook on Business Education is limited to business education teachers. (24) A general Instructional Guide, Secondary Education (23) views goals and course content for all high school courses and includes departmental bibliographies. It is available to all Portland high school teachers.

Teachers may use national and local testing programs if they are interested in supplementing their literature on pre-employment training. "A testing program is an
integrated series of professional activities, all directed toward examining individuals by appropriate tests and procedures, and subsequently furnishing meaningful report of their test performance". (7, p. 4)

Management-oriented Literature

Just as teachers join professional groups, read special literature, take more courses, and teach accordingly, so do employers work hard keeping up to date on personnel methods, job procedures, and employment problems. They attend forums, conferences, and personnel association meetings; read trade papers, professional journals, books, and periodicals; and then set up their individual employment programs accordingly.

Management has many people with various titles who do pre-employment interviewing, testing, evaluating, employing, on-the-job training, and up-grading of office workers. These people are exposed to job descriptions, job requirements, and all types of applicants. To find literature covering their work one must read many issues of Personnel Administration, Personnel and Guidance Journal, Office Management, Personnel Psychology, Office, Office Executive, and Personnel Journal. Also, the National Office Management Association publishes an extensive bibliography. These titles are typical:
Management literature seems to emphasize training after employment. It assumes that beginning office workers may not be aware of the relationship of their jobs to the organization as a whole, and that employees need encouragement to accept responsibility.

Student-oriented Literature

Students, as prospective employees, also have literature keyed to their interests and level of understanding. Popular magazines and newspapers sometimes offer suggestions on how to apply for employment and how to act on the job. Textbooks used in business courses sometimes include sections on job attitudes and behavior. Many business firms publish booklets outlining job requirements. By studying the available literature, a student might find that the general requirements for office workers do not coincide with his ideas or aptitudes. He could then eliminate office work as a vocational possibility. Another student might review the same literature and decide to develop the desired qualifications.
The following student-directed literature typifies privately published material which can help students if made available to them:

**Can I Be An Office Worker?**, a free publication published by the Public Relations staff of General Motors Corporation. Using cartoon-type illustrations and simple language, it gives the history and phases of office work, advantages and disadvantages. (9)

**Getting the Right Job**, published by the Glidden Company. "This booklet has been compiled from experiences and observations of people who have interviewed thousands of job applicants". (34,p.1)

**A Career-Planning Guide**, designed for the use of students and their parents, and issued by Field Enterprises in 1956. It emphasizes that "personality characteristics, special abilities and ways of working are the three most important elements that make for a successful career". (8,p.1)

**Can I Get The Job?** published for students by General Motors Corporation. It points out "some of the strong personal characteristics found in young people who are successful on their first job". (10,p.31) They included perseverance, politeness, punctuality, interest, ambition, enthusiasm, dependability, good memory, personal cleanliness, neatness, respect for authority, and patience.

There seems to be no shortage of generalized material directed to students, but rather, the lack seems to be in itemizing specific status and responsibilities.
Combined-interests Literature

Although much material on job training, placement, and success appears directed specifically to teachers, or to management, or to students, as distinct groups, some studies have been made making identical useful literature available to all interested groups. For example, the National Office Management Association combined the studies made by its Oklahoma City chapter with a survey by the Oklahoma City school system. Their resulting publication, Business Educational and Employment Survey of Oklahoma City (19) covered opportunities and entrance requirements for beginning office workers, the deficiencies and duties of beginning office workers, and tabulation of the kinds of office machines utilized in Oklahoma City offices. It had practical value for the community for which it was designed.

Although the population of Oklahoma City is approximately half that of Portland, some of the recommendations to business men and business teachers might apply to both cities. The recommendations were lengthy, but in essence were: (19,p.17-19)

1. Students in secondary schools should be provided with the opportunity to develop a quantity of general business information.
2. The public schools should attempt to develop...initiative, willingness to assume responsibility, interest in work, willingness to perform unpleasant tasks, dependability, aggressiveness, and adaptability...

3. Business should attempt to improve their employment practices to the extent that the right person is employed for the right job...

4. ...suggestion to expand the work-experience programs...

5. ...induce greater numbers of students to remain in high school until they have graduated, so that more students meeting the most common general education requirement will be available for office work.

Similar literature, combining interests of schools, students, and employers was published under the direction of the Business Education consultant of the St. Louis, Missouri Public Schools, assisted by representatives of N.O.M.A. and the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce.

Their Business Education Survey Relative to Office Workers (25) covered a city whose population is almost double that of Portland, Oregon. Recommendations included:

1. The high schools...have in the past and are likely to have in the future a heavy responsibility for the training of office workers...

2. (Students should be taught) the problems faced in the taking of general intelligence tests, aptitude or job proficiency tests, performance tests, and tests of fundamental mathematics.
3. Unquestionably, the employing business organizations...expect the schools to provide basic skill training in all types of office work...

4. ...the schools might well continue and even extend the present opportunities in office-work experience...

5. (Schools should give students indication of wide variety of work done in office positions.)

6. The survey report justifies office machine instruction...

7. ...essential or desirable knowledges, abilities, or traits should be woven into the subject matter content at such places as are most feasible and effective for instructional purposes.

8. (listed specific characteristics needing greater emphasis by the school instruction)

9. (listed personal goals and ideals relating to work and one's co-workers)

10. The results of the survey...give significant direction and emphasis to many desirable procedures and practices (to emphasize in school work) that is realistic to the community in which the prospective young worker is to earn his living and to live his life within the limitations of his individual potentialities. (25,p.51-53)

The Seattle Washington Public Schools and N.O.M.A. made a joint study in 1946 to consider business education courses in schools as a way of preparing high school students for office work.(26)

Science Research Associates, Incorporated, typifies other organizations that direct research studies and
their results toward schools, management, and teachers. It publishes pamphlets designed to answer junior high school and high school student questions on personality development and vocational opportunities. It publishes similar material designed for parents and teachers, plus occupational briefs and tests to be used by teachers or employers to determine student aptitudes.

The University of Illinois Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations publishes some non-technical material "to add to a general understanding of the entire field of labor management relations". In an annotated bibliography, typical selections included:

- Tools for the Teacher; Ralph E. McCoy, 1952
- Industrial Sociology; Peabridge and Wray, 1953
- Psychological Factors in Employee Training; Homer L. Gammill, 1951

Other literature touching this field includes the books, pamphlets, and reports from the United States Department of Labor. Some of these publications are used by state employment agencies for job classification.

Local newspapers provide an informal but widely used source of literature about skills and other qualifications required of beginning office workers. "Help Wanted" advertisements offer a clear picture of qualifications considered desirable within the area.
Cartoon features sometimes use ridicule to illustrate undesirable characteristics found among office workers.

Summary

To review literature for the present study, it became necessary to consider employers, teachers, and students as three interest groups having a common problem but with various channels of communication. It appeared that some groups were unaware of literature published by other groups. There are more points of agreement than disagreement regarding pre-employment training and application practices, but unless each group reads the problems and solutions suggested by each other group the volume of literature available will have no bearing on the solution of any of their problems.

Nationally there seems to be a gradual trend toward combining and circulating findings of management surveys. Limitations of the present study to metropolitan Portland Oregon where such surveys have not been published, made it necessary to consider literature from other cities whose findings might be applicable locally.
CHAPTER III

TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES

Scope of the Study

This study is directed toward practical service to employers, to teachers, and to high school students. The background material has included study in education, business education, and sociology. Education courses provided a valuable background in theories used in presenting ideas to students; business education courses provided methods to be used in preparing students for office work; sociology courses helped to give understanding, analysis, and interpretation to the relationships among teachers, students, and employers.

The scope was limited to inquiry within representative offices in Portland, Oregon.

Limitations of the Study

Although geographically the study was confined to Portland, the persons interviewed represented local, national, and international interests or firms. No inquiry was made regarding their experience or training. Their duties and influence regarding employment of beginning office workers determined their authorization as representatives of their respective offices.

A major limitation was that restricting the interviews to organizations whose office staffs had
fifty or more employees. This permitted inclusion of city, county, state, and federal civil service since their employment procedures for small offices are the same as for large ones, and in the Portland employment situation civil service has many office employees. This limitation caused omission of some lumber, transportation, insurance, radio, television, and moving picture industries. Few of these businesses have large office staffs in metropolitan Portland, although they represent large payrolls.

Neither temporary office workers, such as summer employees, nor college trained workers were considered. The hope of relating findings to high school training limited the beginning office workers under consideration to high school graduates. No limitation was made regarding "major" or course of study during the high school period.

Definitions

Terminology in this study and the interview schedule remained simple, with common usage dictating the choice of words. The problem involved finding what technical skills and other qualifications high school graduates should have upon applying for beginning office work. The goal was to get the information by direct questions
to personnel interviewers. The following interpretations clarify the words and phrases used in the interview schedule and the title of the thesis.

Desirable rather than demanded admitted that employers do accept minimum skills. Mr. G. W. Tisdale, who writes for management periodicals, said in a letter:

"...there are definitely certain qualifications which one would look for, possibly hope for, but in the current tight market, not demand, but which we would expect of young people who are applying for clerical or secretarial positions..." (31)

Technical in this paper meant "characteristics of a profession" (2, p. 1243), and skill meant "competent excellence in performance; expertness". (2, p. 1132) Thus, the technical skills necessary for office workers might include spelling, vocabulary, grammar, finger dexterity, typewriting, shorthand, handwriting, figure writing, and business mathematics.

Personal qualifications, personal characteristics, or personal traits might convey the same meaning as other qualifications, the term used in contrast to technical skills. The present study considered the following other qualifications: Accuracy, attendance, attitude toward rules, consideration, courtesy, cooperation, concentration, health habits, hobbies, honesty, initiative, interest in environment, willingness to follow instructions, leisure time activities,
level of maturity, neatness, oral expression, organization of work, punctuality, physical health and abilities, responsibility, reasoning ability, reaction to routine, reaction to competition, sincerity, social activities, and working with groups.

**Beginning office workers** refers, as a term, to high school graduates, girls or boys, who may not plan to attend colleges or universities, but who present themselves as applicants for jobs in offices. They may or may not have taken business education courses or have had previous work experience. Some beginning office workers may have tried industry or service occupations before turning to office work; some may have entered military service first; some may have devoted time to home obligations before applying for office jobs. As a result, the ages of those considered here may range from seventeen to twenty-one.

**Personnel interviewers** include personnel managers, directors, training department executives, office managers, employment managers, assistants to personnel managers, and those with similar titles. Their jobs could include determining the skills and personal qualifications desired for each position, interviewing applicants, administering testing programs, and representing the organizations. Civil service employment
offices or other places where no one conducts pre-
application interviews may have clerks hand out job
announcements and applications, then have an "examiner"
do interviewing after applicants have passed qualifying
tests.

Representative, used in adjectival form, explains
that the personnel interviewers who co-operated in the
study represented transportation, communications, retail
trade, civil service, banks, schools, utilities, or
factory offices.

Office workers have been defined in this way:

Office workers are concerned with the
'paper work' of a business or industrial
organization. They handle the reporting
of business data, keep the records, and
perform the bookkeeping and accounting
operations needed to keep the business
functioning smoothly...In performing these
functions, office workers are responsible
for much of the mail and correspondence
resulting from normal business activities...

To do this work requires the services of
a number of trained specialists...Office
jobs vary from one office to another,
depending upon the nature of the firms,
business, and its size, the number of
people employed and the degree of record
keeping involved...(9,p.5)

Method of the Study

This study uses the survey method of applied
research. As Dr. George L. Bush of Kent State Univer-
sity in Ohio has written: "The applied researcher is
interested in solving a special practical problem". (3,p.6885) When asking questions directed to employers, the investigator hoped for specific, practical answers which might later be used by teachers and job applicants.

"Causal-comparative" might further describe the method of this study. The term as defined in The Methodology of Educational Research, by Good, Barr, and Scates, (11,p.229) fulfills these characteristics:

- Source of data---direct observation
- Type of control---uncontrolled observation
- Approach---------cross sectional
- Typical purpose--determination of causal relationships
- Typical form for stating results--group likenesses and differences

More specifically, the method included research into publications, developing and administering an interview schedule, compiling a representative list of Portland offices employing over fifty workers, tabulating answers, drawing conclusions, making recommendations—all with teachers and students in mind, but using employer opinions.

Development of the Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was designed and used in check list form. Personnel managers co-operating knew the purpose of the study and that a schedule would be used as a discussion guide during the interview. The
five-page interview schedule in its final form was simply worded, and perhaps sounded "easy" to those being questioned. It achieved that characteristic after many changes and much editing.

Some basic questions arose by the very nature of the problem involved. What technical skills do employers expect of high school graduates? What level of achievement in technical skills are specified before employment of typists, stenographers, clerks, cashiers, bookkeepers, aides, trainees, and machine operators? What tests for aptitude, intelligence, and personal or social adjustment must be met before applicants can qualify for office jobs? What are the chief causes of job termination among office workers who were employed when seventeen to twenty-one years of age?

The answers to these few questions would have been revealing and helpful to teachers and applicants, yet by elaboration and addition of some specific questions highlighting problem areas, an original draft of the interview schedule was developed which became even more meaningful and useful.

The interview schedule developed further after a study of the job classification book used by the Oregon State Employment Service.(30) Its job descriptions outlined the need for certain skills and other
requirements for beginning office workers. Questions relating to these qualifications were put into the interview schedule. Mrs. Lois Cecil, placement director for high school students and beginning office workers, reviewed the first draft and made suggestions which were incorporated into the final questionnaire.

The investigator added questions which had arisen during her experience and observation in offices, teacher-training courses, and classroom teaching.

Pamphlets, periodicals, textbooks, and correspondence with people close to the problems of employment and beginning office workers suggested further questions. A tentative draft was sent to the National Office Management Association, which encourages research on office procedures, and publishes findings for the benefit of members in all parts of the United States. When their technical adviser, Mr. Harry Baker, sent approval of the interview schedule, he also asked that the Portland Chapter be allowed to use its findings and that copies of the study be sent to him. Another draft was returned with useful notations by Mr. Theodore W. Kling, the Staff Director of N.O.M.A. Educational Division.

Five test interviews were made and some questions re-worded for clarification. After five more interviews, the order in which some questions had been asked was
changed. These changes did not affect the validity of the findings, and so some of the original interviews were used in later tabulations. The final copy of the interview schedule had eighteen questions, some with several parts. (Appendix A)

Obtaining Representative Sample

Before the interview schedule could be used, it was necessary to compile a list of representative offices in Portland that employed fifty or more office workers. The statistics department of the State Employment Office has no such analysis of Portland offices. Their clerical division, which places stenographic and secretarial workers, could supply names of firms that ask for applicants, but did not have the total numbers of office employees for these firms.

Mr. Allan Mellis of the Chamber of Commerce Industrial Division provided a list of manufacturing firms which included total numbers of employees in each industry. This gave some idea of the volume of correspondence, bookkeeping, timecards, payroll, supplies, and clerical work. Names of larger firms from this list were placed on cards, prior to locating names of their personnel directors. Names of non-manufacturing firms were added by Mr. Mellis from his personal unofficial and unpublished files.
Mr. Mellis later discovered another unpublished list which proved to be a nucleus of sources of information for this study. It was his copy of the 1956 Personnel Management Committee. It listed thirty firms and their personnel directors. Some were duplicates of names on the first list. Some were outside the geographic limits of the study, such as Reynolds Metals at Troutdale, Oregon Saw Chain at Milwaukie, and Tektronix at Beaverton. It also listed firms whose businesses represented the area, but whose local staffs were small—such as Lumber Industrial Relations Committee, Pacific Coast Association of Pulp and Paper manufacturers, and Columbia Basin Sawmills. Fourteen interviews were made later on the basis of the 1956 Personnel Management Committee list.

The Rotary Club executive secretary gave permission to use the Rotary Club membership roster to provide a check against the previously compiled list. Next, City, County, State, and Federal Civil Service employment offices completed the list.

After the representative list of offices had been compiled, appointments and interviews were scheduled. (Appendix B)
Oral interviews were preferred in this study for several reasons. The answers would be more valid than results from a mail survey; there would be no chance for a questionnaire to be mislaid, forgotten, or ignored; the person being interviewed would be the one most likely to have the information needed for accuracy in reporting employers' views; and each could talk over with the reporter the use of the information. Personal contact would permit additional and more complete comments; and an oral interview by a person interested in both the employer and the school might help public relations of both groups. The number of interviews planned and those completed could be equal, instead of having incomplete or unreturned questionnaires, because alternates could be interviewed if necessary.

Appointments were granted in a spirit of interest and helpfulness in most instances. A few people answered questions doubtfully, and some asked that their names or the names of their organizations be withheld.

Method of Tabulation

The interview schedule provided various methods of tabulation, varying with the types of questions. Thirteen questions which could be answered quickly were answered by always, usually, sometimes, seldom, or never. One question could be answered by often, or sometimes, and
the remaining four questions called for subjective answers, personal comments, or opinions by the person being interviewed as a representative of his office.

To tabulate the results from pages 2, 3, and 4 of the schedule (Appendix A, pp. 66–68), interviews were numbered for vertical listing, and questions coded horizontally. The symbols A (always), US (usually), ST (sometimes), S (seldom), and N (never) were placed within the box thus created for each answer. The scores thus tabulated provided figures for tables and discussion of findings.

A slight variation of this type of tabulation was used on questions 5 and 15. The former had skills listed vertically, and the degrees always, usually, sometimes, seldom, and never listed horizontally across the top of the page. Numerical scoring was completed by counting like symbols. This allowed tabulation and percentages, and showed how each skill was ranked in importance by employers. The same type of tabulation was used on question 15 to determine the importance of personal traits.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Office Size

The number of people working in an office determines its size. The first question asked of personnel interviewers was designed to find the number of office employees within the organization studied. Some individuals seemed reluctant to disclose figures, but gave approximate totals. The approximate number of office employees represented by these twenty-seven offices is over 4,500.

On the next question, few firms had or wanted to release statistical information showing the division by numbers of young men and young women doing office work, or in revealing the ages of office employees. It was learned, however, that more boys than girls do office work in railroad and heavy machinery industry offices.

The purpose of asking the number of office employees between 17 and 21 years of age was to find the extent to which each firm had recent high school graduates currently employed. It was found that county civil service and a few others do not take applications from those under 21 years of age. Several personnel directors said that since only well-experienced applicants were considered, recent high school graduates might be eliminated. Others said that their salary scales started too high to allow training of inexperienced applicants. Firms with lower beginning
salaries had younger applicants and employees.

**Job Titles and Descriptions**

Although figures were not available, respondents indicated that the eight most common job titles within offices are: Typists, stenographers, clerks with varying degrees of responsibility, receptionists, switchboard operators, cashiers, bookkeepers, and machine operators. There were many interpretations to the word "clerk." The words trainee or aide were added to many of the eight main job titles to indicate jobs for those with limited experience. Messengers differed from clerks in some offices, for although they have some clerical duties, messengers move about over a greater area.

In general, employment managers in Portland do not depend upon formal job descriptions when filling office vacancies or in explaining employee duties. Some considered that the title of the job constituted its description. For example, in five offices, a typewriting speed of fifty words per minute was considered the minimum standard of skill expected of typists, but there was no description of the material to be typed, such as manuscript, statistics, forms, straight copy, or correspondence. Four firms set stenographic rate at eighty words a minute, and two wanted more than 100 words a minute; but none described the type of dictation,
machine or personal, or the production rate expected. They assume that "typist, 50 wpm" or "stenographer, 80 wpm" describes the job.

Two firms announce vacancies to the office staff before interviewing new applicants, allowing present employees to change jobs if qualified. The person who is leaving then describes the details of the position to the employee bidding for that job.

In most offices, standards vary according to the job. For example, the typewriting speed expected from an experienced stenographer would be higher than the typewriting speed expected from a bookkeeper or clerical aide whose typewriting is limited to short forms. This may account for the answers from 89 per cent of those responding who affirmed that they use job descriptions, standards of skill, or specific requirements to describe vacant positions. They apparently considered any kind of preliminary screening of applicants to be "job description".

Civil service office jobs at all levels--city, county, state, and federal--have definite standards on skills. Job announcement forms outline necessary qualifications, and applicants take examinations to prove their skills. Because requirements vary, departments needing office workers specify the level of achievement that is needed, aide, junior level, or senior level. Persons receiving
high scores in tests are then sent to the individual
departments for further interviews and job descriptions.

It was found that 63 per cent of the employers will
accept non-typists for positions requiring little or no
typewriting skill. The purpose of the question was to
find if there is a trend toward having all office workers
possess typewriting skill, since office duties are so
varied. However, only 7 per cent asked that all office
employees have typewriting skill. Twenty-nine per cent
seldom employ non-typists. Sixty per cent often or
sometimes employ non-typists for special clerical jobs.

Employment Interviews

Neither the size of the office nor the type of
business appears to determine the method used in inter-
viewing applicants. Rather, the techniques seem to be
determined by the individual personnel managers. These
directors often have many duties relating to personnel,
with employment interviews being a part of a larger job.
If they have been professionally trained, they may use
scientific methods and formal procedures.

If the employment manager's position has been a
reward or promotion for outstanding personal qualifi-
cations or work done in another department, that person
may conduct interviews on an informal, friendly basis,
or he may use formality and dignity as his method.

The personnel manager may be assigned to his position with the understanding that he will continue certain company policies regarding employment and applicants. Or, he may be given the job and told to do the best he can.

All these variations were found in Portland employment offices. These differences may account for the confusion of some applicants when comparing their preparation for job interviews with their experiences when job-hunting.

Personnel interviewers were questioned regarding the use of rating sheets, check lists, or notes while interviewing applicants. The question was included to get an indication of interview objectivity and general practices of interviewers. Some persons objected to the question, explaining that their experience enabled them to conduct interviews without notes. Eighty-one per cent said they seldom or never use notes while interviewing applicants.

Testing and Verifying Qualifications

It was found that pre-employment tests were common and that employers expect applicants to be prepared for testing. Eighty-five per cent of the firms participating give tests, and only eighteen per cent seldom or never give any kind of pre-employment tests. The types of tests varied. Among the better known tests were the
Thurston Clerical, Kuder Preference, Minnesota Clerical, Wonderlic Personnel, SRA (Science Research Associates) Clerical, and Kopas Office Battery. Many firms design their own tests instead of using standardized ones. Sixty-six per cent request information from the high schools regarding applicant ability. A few consider the accumulative grade point average as revealing evidence of ability.

Sixty-six per cent never or seldom have the Oregon State Employment Service or other agencies test applicants for them. Thirty-three per cent use outside agencies sometimes for testing applicants. Many firms do not use testing programs but do rely on recommendations of former employers or school records to indicate well-qualified and well-experienced applicants.

The verifying of qualifications differs from testing. Interviewers may rely upon the application form to reveal grammar, spelling, and ability to follow instructions. They may observe the applicant's personal appearance, grooming, conduct in the reception room, and attitude during the interview to verify certain qualifications.

Table I indicates that employers verify skill in spelling, vocabulary, grammar, handwriting, and typewriting more than in the other skills. Few firms tested
finger dexterity because machine operators would be experienced before being considered for employment.

One firm tests periodically for accuracy of tabulating and computing machine operators. If an operator does not keep the level of accuracy professed upon employment, she is replaced.

**TABLE I**

**TABULATION OF RESPONSES OF TWENTY-SEVEN EMPLOYERS REGARDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TESTING OR VERIFYING OF NINE OFFICE SKILLS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill verified or tested</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finger dexterity</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typewriting</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorthand</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handwriting</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure writing</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office mathematics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These responses can also be expressed by percentages, as shown in Table II, page 40.
TABLE II

PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATIVE EMPLOYERS WHO DO
PRE-EMPLOYMENT TESTING OR VERIFYING
FOR NINE OFFICE SKILLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill verified or tested</th>
<th>Number of offices</th>
<th>Approximate per cent who verify or test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finger dexterity</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typewriting</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorthand</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handwriting</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure writing</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office mathematics</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III and Table IV give tabulation of responses received when personnel interviewers were asked which of 26 personal characteristics they investigated before employing office workers. More than 70 per cent inquired about accuracy, attendance, attitude toward rules, consideration, courtesy, co-operation, health habits, honesty, initiative, manner of following instructions, level of maturity, neatness, oral expression, punctuality, physical health, responsibility, reasoning ability, and ability to work with groups.

Fewer than 70 per cent inquired about concentration, hobbies, interest in environment, leisure time, reaction
to competition, sincerity, social activities, or organization of work.

All representatives--100 per cent--indicated that they attempt to determine accuracy, manner of following instructions, neatness, and physical health of applicants. More than 90 per cent watch for these same four characteristics plus consideration, courtesy, honesty, oral expression, punctuality, and manner of working with groups.

Some firms look for characteristics other than those listed on the interview schedule and the tables. Several mentioned quantity and quality of work, capability, subjects liked best in school, dependability, resourcefulness, family background, present family status, and emotional maturity. Several mentioned that the particular qualities necessary for a job vary, just as the level of perfection in skills depends upon the requirements of the job. Some interviewers said they did not make a special point of searching for personal traits because their extensive general testing program brought out the information they wanted.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward rules</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consideration; courtesy</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health habits</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in environment</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following instructions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure time</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of maturity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neatness (personal)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral expression</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization (work)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuality</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical health</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction to routine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction to competition</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincerity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social activities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with groups</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning ability</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table IV

**Percentage of Representative Employers Who Do Pre-Employment Testing or Verifying of Twenty-Six Personal Characteristics of Beginning Office Workers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal trait verified or tested</th>
<th>Number of offices sampled</th>
<th>Approximate per cent who verify or test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward rules</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consideration; courtesy</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operation</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health habits</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in environment</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following instructions</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure time activities</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of maturity</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neatness (personal)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral expression</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization (work)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuality</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical health</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction to routine</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction to competition</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincerity</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social activities</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with groups</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning ability</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personal Files and References

Employers often record the results of pre-employment testing and investigation in personal files for each employee. Personal files differ from payroll or time-keeping files. They may be used for evaluation at the time of possible promotion or at the end of a probationary period. They might record seniority, wage increases, job titles, home life, social life, community life, travels, hobbies, or educational pursuits; they might provide stories for the industry trade papers; they might be used to answer reference inquiries. The individual department supervisor may report on each employee to the personnel department, or he may keep records within his own department until the worker moves from his supervision.

One firm indicated that its very elaborate personal file system includes the employee's local reputation and attitude away from the job. That organization believes that the impressions given the public by employees reflect on the firm.

A personnel officer may ask individuals to complete a form indicating interests, and from this he may use the information to organize company sports teams, social activities, or educational opportunities.
Eighty-eight per cent of the respondents always keep personal record files about individual employees. The others usually do. Employees are not always advised of this.

All employers asked applicants for references. Eighty-five per cent asked for names of former employers; 55 per cent asked for personal references; 75 per cent asked for names of schools attended; 33 per cent asked for character references. Character and personal references were considered interchangeable in some instances, separate in others. (Table V)

**TABLE V**

**TABULATION OF RESPONSES OF TWENTY-SEVEN EMPLOYERS REGARDING SOURCES OF REFERENCE ASKED OF BEGINNING OFFICE WORKERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference source</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Some-</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former employers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character references</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal references</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the usual sources of reference, two firms check with the local police; one calls the retail credit bureau; two ask neighbors about the applicant.
The U. S. Civil Service asks for "those who have a knowledge of your qualifications and fitness for this position". Applicants may be asked to list names of relatives or friends working for the organization from which employment is sought. Interviewers stressed that former employers should be listed as references, even though previous jobs were not office work.

There seemed to be no uniformity of method used by local personnel interviewers in follow-up of references. (Table VI)

**TABLE VI**

**TABULATION OF RESPONSES OF TWENTY-SEVEN EMPLOYERS REGARDING METHOD OF FOLLOW-UP OF REFERENCES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of follow-up</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form letter or check list</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal letter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone call</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal visit</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eighty-one per cent sent some kind of check list or form letter to references. Most of these were on a self-addressed, postage paid form, with a perforated section having the name of the firm making inquiry, name of applicant, and request for information. The recipient
could tear off the letter or instructions, use the remaining portion to answer specific questions, fold it within its own envelope, and return it to the employer.

Twenty-nine per cent use personal letters asking for personal replies. The returns are sometimes slow on these. Sixty per cent of the personnel directors use telephone inquiries to follow-up on references. Some interviewers say they get more questions answered than they ask when using telephone follow-up. Many prefer this method to verify the existence of skills and personal characteristics they seek in office workers.

On-the-Job Orientation and Probation

Applicants and teachers who help place applicants might wonder what help the firms offer a newcomer who has the desired skills and qualifications. What if she did not do so well in the test as she might on the job? What if the test went well, but once on the job she could not adjust to new responsibilities?

Questions were asked of employers regarding orientation and probationary period for new employees. The results showed that 74 per cent always, and the remaining 26 per cent usually offer a program of indoctrination by a training department or an immediate supervisor. Local
employers believe in aiding beginning office workers in understanding intra-office relationships, communications, and protocol. Some have printed manuals, instruction books, policy manuals or similar material. Others offer verbal guidance.

Eighty-five per cent of the offices have a definite probationary period for new employees. Others use screening and pre-employment investigations to eliminate the need for a probationary period.

Usually the decision to train a person on-the-job for a certain position comes after the person has become an employee and therefore has met requirements of desirable personal traits and some skills. Fifty-eight percent of the employers sometimes employ office workers for specific clerical or machine work, to be learned on-the-job. Typical examples are teller training, machine bookkeeping, clerical duties, blue printing, photostating, offset duplicating, credit interviewing, billing, and operating new equipment as it is added to the office.

The following are typical comments of employers, noted on the interview schedules, regarding on-the-job training of beginning office workers:

Our mail boys get up-graded to duplicating room.
Book repair clerks learn on-the-job.
File clerks and messengers learn on-the-job.
Sometimes we teach machines to people already employed in other capacities.

We prefer doing our own training on specialized jobs.

Only messengers and summer part-time people come in as inexperienced workers.

Miscellaneous office tasks are learned on-the-job, but we still employ after personal interviews and after the applicant passes company-developed tests.

If a person employed for one job has time and wants to learn a new machine, and someone else has time to do the teaching, then we have on-the-job training.

We encourage typists to learn to operate our voice duplicating machines.

Termination of Employment

A consistent reticence by personnel interviewers impeded recording of answers to the question, "What common causes of employment termination (voluntary or by your request) do you find among office workers aged 17–25?" It was difficult to ascertain whether employment managers had no records from which to answer, did not wish to indicate reasons, had never considered exit interviews, or were just too busy to record reasons.

Most personnel directors considered that pre-employment investigations eliminated unskilled workers. Therefore they felt that few terminations resulted from inadequate skills. They used the same reply when asked
if people leave because of health habits, personal appearance, attitude, lack of initiative. Employers felt that applicants not desirable for one or more of these reasons would not have been employed.

All who took part in the study agreed that in Portland at present 61 per cent of the young office workers who quit the job are young women who do so for reasons of marriage, pregnancy, or family obligations of some kind. Fewer than 20 per cent leave because of inadequate skills. Both young men and young women leave for other reasons, such as leaving the city, higher pay elsewhere, or different type of work. A few are terminated because change in the job or management necessitates elimination of a position, for the good of the (civil) service, lack of interest, falsification on application, or daydreaming.

None of the employers felt that absenteeism or tardiness alone were causes for termination, yet several said that the sick benefits program is very difficult to administer. Subjective comments regarding this matter included:

We stop it before it is habitual or excessive.

Our emphasis on absenteeism and tardiness eliminates it.

We give fifteen minutes leeway.

We watch it because of office morale.
An inconsistency appeared regarding personality conflict. Only 7 per cent reported that personality conflict caused job termination; yet at a later time during the interviews, several persons quoted figures to the effect that 80 per cent of all job turnover results from personality conflict.

Employer Opinions

Subjective answers were solicited on two questions. One asked if the individual personnel interviewer predicted changes in employment requirements because of office automation. Forty per cent do not anticipate such changes within the next ten years. Twenty-five per cent think it too soon to predict. Three per cent thought that automation may put more emphasis on personality as more people are released from routine work to do customer service. Eleven per cent anticipate the possibility of enlarging training programs with the individual company. Several mentioned that during the changeover into full automation, large offices will use present employees, but may not replace those who retire or quit. Others thought they might need more employees because of increased volume of business. One personnel manager said that this area has a good labor market, that people in Portland have high intelligence so should
be able to adapt to changes, and not become unemployed because of automation.

The other question answered by personnel interviewers from their own experience and observation was: "What recommendations would you make that high school teachers or counselors could incorporate into class instructions which would help students to be better applicants and employees?" Replies could not be tabulated but the general trend of comments was duplicated often. The following comments are from the interview schedules:

More interest in their work...background in SKILLS! Need to WORK; not always want an easy job.

Not to chew gum! Second, appearance; third, more evidence of real interest in the job.

Spelling; good grooming, especially clothes.

Learn to READ the questions and fill in ALL blanks on application forms; watch posture and walk; courtesy; attitude, not just job.

Individuals must reach out; need to study and promote self outside of office; should definitely study on their own; learn both on and off the job.

Tell them about work attitudes; manners.

Additional accent on 'three R's'.

Kids think they're smart! So try to teach them RESPECT, humility, and willingness to WORK. They should have SKILLS to list and offer an employer, plus sincerity and eagerness to learn!
Don't take unfair advantage of sick benefits. Have respect for boss's secretary as a person of influence; have top skill in typing; be careful when filling out application form.

Number one is SKILLS, especially spelling, but DO be able to DO something.

Learn to get along with people.

Do something useful in the summer to prepare for job later.

Learn English usage.

Have them ALL take more bookkeeping, ESPECIALLY BOYS. Emphasize penmanship; how to fill out forms; and how to PRINT.

Watch attendance, grades, and English. It's probably all taught, but they don't believe it! Career Day should be for juniors and seniors only.

Willingness to accept responsibility—it's more than just younsters who need help here. We can't seem to make advancement attractive! Maybe it's our fault?

I think the figures on turnover because of personal reasons is 79% and because of skills 21%.

Attitude. How to apply for a job. Handwriting. Too many want a secretarial position. They should realize that they must PROVE themselves on the job. Be willing to do filing and typing.

Can't generalize on this; all teachers differ; some teachers pooh pooh our (business men's) opinions. The situation today does not require standards, so teachers don't stress them.

Stress maturity; emotionally. Also, ability to ADJUST from high school to employment situation. Emphasize SPELLING, GRAMMAR, AND GOOD TYPING.

Simple addition and spelling, please!
Self-discipline, attitude, ability, rules, regulations are all stressed here. These are more important than courses they took in school... They can always go to night classes... Need to keep up and adapt. Basically they must have self-discipline and ambition.

Career Day is good, but it lacks the point you are trying to bring out. The students are more interested in finding out what the business offers them than what they can offer to the business. They should ask 'what should we do to prepare for jobs?' High school graduates should have some idea of what they plan to do—especially the fellows—not just the college people. They should try to find out 'how can I improve myself further?'.

Ability to get along with others should be stressed. Don't expect too much on the first job.

Summary

Points of view regarding the desirable skills and personal characteristics appeared to depend upon policies practiced within individual personnel departments rather than on parallel criteria in like organizations. Representative offices apparently shared no uniformity of policy regarding job descriptions, standards of office skills desired from beginning office workers, application procedure, interview method, testing programs, follow-up of references, orientation, or probation on a new job.

There was great duplication of thought among personnel interviewers. The same suggestions for young
people and for the classroom teachers were repeated so often that their sincerity and validity seems established. They asked for more emphasis on spelling, grammar, English usage, development of technical skills, and a real interest in the job. They also indicated that they do not find evidence that high school graduates know how to apply for a job, how to complete an application form, or how to take a part in an employment interview.

Employers expressed the hope that these opinions would be useful in preparing high school graduates for pre-employment experiences.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This thesis has been prepared for the purpose of learning more about the qualifications of beginning office workers as desired by employers in Portland, Oregon. The material gathered has revealed some interesting statistics and situations which should be valuable to each of the three groups involved--teachers, students, and employers.

Perhaps all three groups have assumed that standards for a passing or good grade in school would be identical with the standards expected in that subject outside the school situation; that school testing programs prepare students for other types of tests; that a pleasing personality offsets skill deficiencies. These beliefs have been upset when related to the status of beginning office workers in Portland and in communities where studies have been made bringing together office job requirements and school curricula. (14,19,25)

Teachers can help high school students to understand and to prepare for the pre-employment situation by informing them of the qualities and skills desired by employers and the routine requirements for good job placement. Teachers in this connotation refers not only to individual teachers but also to supervisors
and those who determine course content. After reviewing the candid opinions of employers, teachers can evaluate classroom situations. They may be confronted with these questions: Should schools have follow-up studies to discover what happens to graduates applying for positions? Should teachers of English, Social Studies, and Speech relate some of their units to job preparation? Are basic skills receiving the emphasis that employers desire?

Portland teachers and employers have shared responsibilities in programs such as Distributive Education, Career Day, and Business-Industry-Education Day even though the reasons for participation have varied. Some organizations co-operated as a matter of public relations; others did so with a spirit of concern for the vocational training of students. Therefore a program promoting realistic office job preparation based on existing employment practices, shown in studies such as this or those sponsored jointly by employers and school administrators should be equally useful.

Students anticipating office employment receive great advantages toward their goal by enrolling in business education courses. Many can achieve the typing speed of sixty words per minute and the shorthand speed of one hundred words per minute which are often minimum rates acceptable in offices.
All students, however, should learn well the basic skills of spelling, grammar, handwriting, vocabulary, and typewriting. They should all try to develop desirable personal traits of accuracy, neatness, ability to follow instructions, oral expression, and good physical health. All students should learn how to write letters of application, conduct themselves during interviews, complete application forms, and prepare for pre-employment tests, regardless of their vocational goals. Students may be interested in knowing that few changes in job requirements within the next ten years are predicted although offices may become more "automatized".

Recommendations

Suggestions made by employers might be incorporated into classroom teaching in various ways. Business education departments might institute testing for clerical aptitude and set up standards of competency for office skills, followed by a certificate to each who completes the recommended courses satisfactorily. Classes could be conducted as if the students were working in an office instead of a business education classroom. Office terminology and discipline could be used.
Social studies classes could include with their studies of economics and social institutions some panel discussions on salary budgeting, working with heterogeneous groups, receiving criticism, office protocol, grooming and behavior, and types of intra-office communication.

Drama and speech departments could include creative effort to understand typical office situations. They could dramatize the problems of applicants, personnel interviewers, beginning and experienced office workers, and employers. They could present these scenes at all-school assemblies.

Schools having a diversified occupations program should continue it. This is similar to the better known distributive education program except that it includes office occupations as well as selling and service.

Ideally, all Portland high schools would have the "D.O." program since it gives seniors a chance to do part-time work in offices, and at the same time allows supervision by school co-ordinators working with employers. It serves not only as a placement service for office trainees, but also provides certificates of experience which the students can use when applying for full time work.

Large organizations in Portland are to be congratulated upon their extensive screening and pre-employment
programs, yet many of them ignore beginning office workers. Some accept no applications from those under twenty-one or from those with no previous work experience, in spite of the possibility of aptitude and training. They might profit by following the example of civil service offices, where provision is made in job descriptions and salary scales for beginning aides and trainees. Orientation and probationary periods could be altered in many firms to include lower paid beginners who would work with planned guidance toward promotion, and thus be experienced to fill vacancies as they occur in the higher status jobs.

Management cooperation with the schools should include giving advice regarding beginning job requirements and of occupations within the field other than professional ones or those requiring specialized training. Although a Career Day Committee may request an organization to send an engineer, a buyer, or a junior executive, the vocational speaker will be of great service to students, teachers, and employers if he puts his advice on a practical, useful level. Information that teachers have tried to emphasize may become clear or vital with the aura of influence from an outside speaker.
Students should offer proficiency in skills and pleasant personal characteristics in exchange for job opportunities. They should try to have future goals in mind, and be prepared to make individual effort for improvement and promotion.

Summary

A thorough foundation in the skills and personal traits desired by employers of office workers can help most high school graduates to apply and qualify for office jobs. All high school graduates should be prepared for pre-employment interviews, requirements, and testing programs. Teachers, businessmen, and high school students will find it profitable to work together to establish pre-employment training programs that will be useful to students adjusting from school to vocations.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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34. Weeks, John H. Getting the right job. Cleveland, Ohio, Glidden company, 1956. 16 p.
APPENDIXES
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE USED WHILE TALKING TO PERSONNEL INTERVIEWERS WHO EMPLOY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES AS BEGINNING OFFICE WORKERS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine the desirable technical skills and other qualifications that employers in business, industry, and government offices in Portland, Oregon ask of beginning office workers.

It forms a part of the research toward a master's degree by Louise Fies, 4534 N. E. 32 Avenue, Portland.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of firm</th>
<th>Type of business</th>
<th>Person interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Number of office employees at present: Women _____
   (Include trainees and supervisors, but not executives.)
   Men _____
   Total _____

Which of the following job titles do you include in these figures?

- Typists
- Stenographers
- Clerks
- Receptionists
- PBX operators
- Cashiers
- Bookkeepers
- Machine operators
- Other: _____

Number of female office employees aged 17-21 _____
Number of male office employees aged 17-21 _____

2. Do you have formal job descriptions, standards of skills, or specific requirements designated for the jobs in your offices? Yes _____ No _____

Comment:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Do you give pre-employment tests? (If given by name, list here; otherwise see #5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always Usually Some- Seldom Never times</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Do you have state or other agencies test for you?</th>
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<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Do you verify or test these skills before employment:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>spelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>grammar</td>
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<tr>
<td>finger dexterity</td>
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<tr>
<td>typewriting</td>
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<td>shorthand</td>
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<tr>
<td>handwriting</td>
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<tr>
<td>figure writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>office mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others, or comments:</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Do you ask for applicant information from high schools?</th>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| 7. Do you ask for references from:                                       |
| school                                                                  |
| former employers                                                       |
| character references                                                   |
| personal references                                                    |
| Others, or comments:                                                   |
|                                                                           |
8. Do you check references by:
   - form letter; checklist
   - personal letter
   - telephone call
   - personal visit
   - other

9. Do you keep individual personal files about each office employee?
   If yes, what purpose?
   - promotion
   - future inquiries
   - house organ
   - company policy
   - other

10. Do new employees receive office orientation? If yes, by:
    - training department
    - immediate supervisor
    - printed manual
    - other

11. Do new employees have a probationary period?
    If yes, how long?
    - 6 months
    - 3 months
    - less than 3 months

12. Do you use checklist or notes during interviews?

13. Do you employ non-typists?

14. Do you employ people to do specific clerical or machine work taught on-the-job?
15. Which of the following personal characteristics or qualifications do you attempt to determine before employment—by interview, testing, references, application form, or other ways?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitude toward rules</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consideration; courtesy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-operation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health habits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest in environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Following instructions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leisure time activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of maturity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neatness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization of work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Punctuality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaction to routine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaction to competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sincerity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working with groups</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reasoning ability</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Other personal traits your firm considers important:
16. What common causes of employment termination (voluntary or by your request) do you find among office workers aged 17-25?

Inadequate skills

Absenteism
Attitude
Different type work
Health habits; health
Higher pay
Lack of initiative
Marriage or family obligations
Personal appearance
Personality conflict
Pregnancy or care of children
Return to school
Tardiness
Unreliability

Other: ____________________

17. What changes do you predict in employment requirements within the next ten years for office workers because of automation coming to your office?

18. What recommendations would you make that high school teachers or counselors could incorporate into class instruction which would help students to be better applicants and employees?
APPENDIX B

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Portland Gas and Coke Company
U. S. National Bank
State of Oregon Civil Service
City of Portland Civil Service
County of Multnomah Civil Service
United States Government Civil Service
Lipman Wolfe and Company

Fred Meyer, Inc.
Meier and Frank Company
Southern Pacific Railroad Company
Hyster Company
"Communications" (name withheld by request)
"Newspaper" (name withheld by request)
"Newspaper" (name withheld by request)

Crown Zellerbach Corporation
Pacific Power and Light Company
General Petroleum Corporation
Montgomery Ward and Company
Portland General Electric Company
Standard Insurance Company
Iron Fireman Manufacturing Company

Safeway Stores
Western Union
Pendleton Woolen Mills
Federal Reserve Bank
Jantzen Knitting Mills
Portland Public Schools