MOBILITY OF RURAL TEACHERS AND SCHOOL CHILDREN IN OKLAHOMA

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Farm moving involves not only the problem of meeting the direct cost of moving, but it involves numerous re-adjustments—economic, social, religious, educational and otherwise. The results of moving and the problems growing out of it are many and complex.

Moving as related to our school and educational problems is, therefore, only one aspect of the involved problems arising out of farm mobility.

Dean Herbert Patterson of the School of Education of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College discussed last year before this section of the Academy the mobility of superintendents of schools in this state. The annual turnover in the administrators of our schools was shown to average around 40 per cent. Figures which I have recently collected from 23 counties scattered widely over the state indicate that there is a greater annual change in our rural teaching force than there is in the superintendency. Approximately 50 per cent of all the teachers in rural schools in these 23 counties were new in their community in 1926, likewise this was true in 1927 and again in 1928.

A summary of the results of this investigation is found in the following table I. It will be noted that in the one room rural districts from 53 to 56 per cent of all teachers were new in their districts; in consolidated districts from 45 to 53 per cent; and in all other country schools from 51 to 54 per cent. One striking fact shown by these figures other than the surprisingly large turnover is that various types of schools differ but little in the mobility of teachers. Certainly one should expect consolidation to make some headway on the reduction of mobility of teachers. Evidently those in charge of the employment of teachers view with abandon the granting of divorce to the teacher and the school. Evidently little effort is made to make the tie binding or the efforts avail but little.

THE MOBILITY OF RURAL SCHOOLTEACHERS IN OKLAHOMA AS SHOWN BY THE PROPORTION OF ALL TEACHERS IN DIFFERENT CLASSES OF RURAL SCHOOLS THAT WERE NEW TEACHERS IN THEIR DISTRICT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 1926, 1927, AND 1928 FOR 23 COUNTIES (1)

Class of Rural School	1928 (2)		1927		1926	
	Total Number of Teachers	Percentage Teaching in district first time in 1928	Total Number of Teachers	Percentage Teaching in district first time in 1927	Total Number of Teachers	Percentage Teaching in district first time in 1926
Consolidated Country or Village Schools in Towns of less than 2500 population	894	45	593	53	569	48
One Room Country Schools	749	53	729	56	721	53
All Other Country Schools	510	51	437	51	434	54
All Schools in County Not Classed as Independent Schools	2342	47	2199	48	2149	45

(1) Data for this table are based on information from Beckham, Major, Carter, Murray, Osage, Grant, Kiowa, Beaver, Caddo, Custer, Washington, Seminole, Pawnee, Noble, Woodward, Dewey, Oklahoma, McIntosh, Tillman, Craig, Canadian, Harper, and Okfuskee Counties. County superintendents in these counties kindly furnished these data, for which favor acknowledgement with thanks is here made.

(2) The data are not as complete for all counties in the earlier years as for 1928, hence the number of teachers involved is less.

This degree of teacher mobility becomes doubly significant when considered along with the extent of the mobility of the rural school children. Investigations which we have made at the Agricultural College reveal the fact that approximately one-half of the 115,000 tenants in Oklahoma took over the operation of their farms first in 1924. These new operators on our tenant farms were not all movers for some were beginner farmers on their parents' farms. Nevertheless, there was an enormous amount of moving. It is estimated that over three hundred thousand Oklahoma farm people were on new farms in 1924. About 31 per cent of the entire farm population of the state over ten years of age were included in this moving throng; while over 36 per cent of all those under ten years of age were estimated to have been among the moving throng. In other words, the young children of the farms were involved in greater proportion than were the older people. The details of these facts are given in the following Table II on farm moving. This put an added significance to those interested in rural education on farm moving. It was found that almost half of all moves made resulted in a change of school. Thus half of the moving children or 18 per cent of all farm children under ten years probably are moved out of the school district annually.

But this is the average of the situation and some sections are far worse than this. In the counties that have around a 20 per cent change in farm operators the proportion of all population under ten years of age is about 32 per cent. The percentage of young children rises rapidly as percentage of moving increases in the various counties of the state so that in counties where 45 to 50 per cent of all farms change hands we find that children under ten constitute about 45 per cent of all farm people.

Thus if there are educational evils resulting from moving these are accentuated by an increase in the proportion of school children involved as the total amount of moving increases. If the families addicted to moving have the larger families in a given community, which is likely the case, the disproportion of school children to the older population becomes greater than the estimates here given which are based on averages. There is little doubt that in some of the counties in the southeastern part of the state, where nearly a half of all farms change hands annually, that there are numerous schools which have a net shift of a third of all students.

Thus to get a complete picture of the mobility of teachers and children in our schools we must take a composite picture of a superintendency that has an annual turnover of 40 per cent, a teaching force with an annual change of around 50 per cent and a mobility of school children that varies from 15 to 35 per cent. It is difficult to imagine all the adjustments that must take place between teachers and students that remain in the district to the 40 per cent of incoming new superintendents; none the less difficult to visualize are the adjustments that must be made by the remaining chil-

dren and superintendent to the 50 per cent new force of teachers; finally one can only surmise of the great adjustment that must be made to the body of students who shift out of the community and are replaced by incoming new children to the extent of about one-fifth to one-third of all children in attendance. The worst of this shift is that our investigation shows that in the greater portion of the state about 90 per cent of the shift takes place in the midst of the school term, around the New Year holidays.

The retarding influence of this composite mobility of our rural schools can never be translated into concrete figures. Furthermore, the dull impact of it will be expended only after our school children of tomorrow have lived out their life of citizenship in this or other states. Certainly the retarding influence that comes from using up the energy and time of the teacher and child is costing the state large portions of its school funds in the form of reduced educational results.

Some light on the association of retarded education and mobility of farm children is shown by the fact that tenant children, whose parents had moved on an average each two years, had averaged making slightly over one grade per school age year for those under ten years of age; whereas children of tenants whose parents had an average stay on farms of eight years or over, had progressed at the rate of 1:30 grades per school life year. Similar comparisons for tenant children over ten and under sixteen years of age showed the frequent moving tenant child making an average of .81 of a grade per year; while the more stable child made an average of 1.04 grades per year. In short, in the first case the more stable child made 23 per cent more educational progress, and in the second case 28 per cent more educational progress, measured in terms of grade promotion, than did the the child of the frequent moving tenant. Granting that part of this difference is difference in inherent abilities of the children compared, we still have a fact here of retarded educational accomplishment, probably resulting from mobility, which should challenge our best school workers. Does it not seem plausible that many of our rural school problems are traceable directly or indirectly to the composite mobility of teachers and children?

AVERAGE GRADE MADE FOR EACH SCHOOL YEAR LIFE OF TENANT CHILDREN IN SELECTED AREAS OF OKLAHOMA, CLASSIFIED ON BASIS OF MOBILITY OF PARENTS AND AGE OF CHILD

Average of all past Stays of Parents on Farms	Children whose ages were			
	10 Years or under		11 to 15 Years	
	Aggregate School Life Years	Percentage of Grade made per Year	Aggregate School Life Year	Percentage of Grade made per Year
2 Years or less	145	1.06	431	.81
2 to 4 years	460	1.07	1163	.87
4 to 6 years	128	1.07	489	.89
6 to 8 years	40	1.20	167	.84
8 years or more	37	1.30	107	1.04