

Teacher Recruitment and Retention: An Essential Step in the Development of a System of Quality Teaching

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the (a) perceptions held by high school business education department chairpersons regarding the characteristics of individuals entering and remaining in the teaching profession and (b) characteristics of schools that have been successful in recruiting and retaining business education teachers. The findings revealed that women are more likely to enter the teaching profession than men; attrition is higher for beginning (first 3 years) and near-retirement business education teachers; and schools with higher levels of minority, low income, and low-performing students experience higher business education teacher attrition rates. Recommendations for policy and future research are provided.

Introduction

In addition to the difficult task of finding teaching methods that ensure learning effectiveness (Bok, 2005; Kendall, 2006), the American educational system is facing other significant challenges. These challenges have been identified in various reports developed by The Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy (2006) and The Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education (2006). They include keeping college affordable, expanding college access for low income and minority students, increasing accountability for educational outcomes, preparing secondary students for higher education, increasing opportunities for lifelong education and workforce training, and internationalizing the student experience (American Council on Education, 2006). Embedded in these challenges is the teacher recruitment and retention problem. Schools struggle to maintain standards for high quality teaching while constantly engaging in the recruitment of new highly qualified teachers and the retention of new hires and veteran teachers (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006). The same struggle is experienced by individuals involved in the preparation of business teachers (United States Department of Education, 2006).

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Several factors have contributed to the teacher recruitment and retention problem including (a) changes in class size, partially due to increased immigration

led by the Hispanic population in the United States (National Education Association, 2006; United States Department of Commerce, 2004); (b) retirement of a significant percentage of teachers; (c) higher birth rates between the years 1995 and 2000; (d) movement of teachers from school to school (Ingersoll, 2001); (e) the fact that about 20% of new teachers leave the profession within the first three years (Tamberg, 2007); and (f) 50% of new teachers resign within five years (Lambert, 2006; Tamberg, 2007).

Educators and policymakers have designed strategies to respond to the teacher recruitment and retention problem, including revision of certification requirements and the funding of mentoring programs. However, educators and policymakers do not have a complete understanding of teachers' concerns about the profession and their places of employment (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Adding complexity to this issue is the fact that business teacher preparation programs in the United States face increased demands for accountability by state and federal organizations, parents, and the community at large. That is, educational institutions offering these programs are increasingly being held accountable for the graduates they produce (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2006).

Increased accountability has a direct impact on the teacher recruitment and retention problem, as secondary business education teachers leave the profession partly because they feel overwhelmed with all of the pressures and lack of support from school administration (Gaytan, 2005; Lambert, 2006). Additionally, the revised accreditation standards focus on demonstrating candidate impact on K-12 student learning (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2006). This higher level of accountability that involves the linking of instructional practices to student outcomes, poses many challenges for business teacher educators throughout the nation. Some of these challenges include finding appropriate measures of student learning, dealing with a wide array of issues related to student discipline, experiencing a lack of test standardization among schools, and tracking candidates and their employers to obtain their perceptions of the quality of education delivered. Other challenges include the use of alternate measures of student learning (e.g., whole school scores) by some schools and the wide range of teacher behaviors found in a given learning environment (Darling-Hammond, Berry, & Thoreson, 2001; Wenglinsky, 2002). Regardless of the difficulties experienced when attempting to respond to the challenges, business education teachers are held accountable for demonstrating the impact of candidates on student performance (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2007). Changes in class size, teacher retirement, higher birth rates, teacher mobility, school administrators' lack of understanding of teachers' concerns about the profession, and revised accreditation standards have contributed to the business teacher recruitment and retention problem.

Perhaps more than ever, it is essential to recruit and retain highly effective business teachers because "while many U.S. citizens are too poorly educated to gain employment in the new economy, high-tech firms must import workers with science

and technology training from other parts of the world. And while the U.S. has sent many of its low-skilled jobs abroad, it is falling behind other nations that once supplied cheap, unskilled labor, who are now developing a highly educated workforce that will soon direct the work of others” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 15). In summary, American educational institutions must prepare for this type of tough competition by constantly and consistently engaging in self-assessment and strategic planning to achieve continuous improvements (Bok, 2005; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005; Scanlan, 2006). The work of Guarino et al. (2006) was used as the framework for this study, as they focused on the struggles that schools experience to maintain standards for high quality teaching while constantly engaging in the recruitment of new highly qualified teachers and the retention of new hires and veteran teachers. Aggressive strategies must be developed to respond more effectively to the business education teacher recruitment and retention challenge.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions held by high school business education department chairpersons with respect to the characteristics of individuals entering and remaining in the teaching profession. It also examined schools that have been successful in recruiting and retaining business education teachers. Specifically, the following research questions were posed in this study:

1. What are the perceptions held by high school business education department chairpersons regarding the characteristics of individuals entering the business education teaching profession?
2. What are the perceptions held by high school business education department chairpersons regarding the characteristics of individuals remaining in the business education teaching profession?
3. What are the perceptions held by high school business education department chairpersons regarding the characteristics of high schools that have been successful in recruiting and retaining business education teachers?

The study’s findings will assist educational stakeholders, including business teacher educators, to gain a better understanding with respect to the characteristics of individuals entering and remaining in the teaching profession, and the schools that have been successful in recruiting and retaining business education teachers.

Methodology

Population and Sample

A list of high school business education programs was obtained from the State Department of Education. Letters and e-mail messages were sent to the business education department chairpersons. From a total population of 954, a simple random

sample of 250 high school business education department chairpersons in a southeastern state was selected for this study. The respondents' anonymity was guaranteed in the study. A response rate of 68% (170 of 250) was achieved. Most respondents were female ($n = 119$, 70%); White, non-Hispanic ($n = 141$, 83%) or African American ($n = 26$, 15%); held an Educational Specialist degree ($n = 75$, 44%), Master's degree ($n = 75$, 44%), or Bachelor's degree ($n = 20$, 12%); and were between 41 and 50 years of age ($n = 66$, 39%), 31 and 40 years of age ($n = 53$, 31%), and 51 and 60 years of age ($n = 39$, 23%). The respondents had between 10 and 14 years of experience ($n = 41$, 24%), between 15 and 19 years ($n = 37$, 22%), and between 20 and 24 years ($n = 26$, 15%). Finally, while 44% ($n = 75$) of the survey respondents worked in urban schools, 56% ($n = 95$) worked in suburban schools. Complete demographic characteristics of the survey respondents are displayed in Table 1.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The survey instrument completed by the business education department chairpersons consisted of (a) six questions soliciting demographic information; (b) 10 five-point Likert-format items, with response options along a continuum of strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree; and (c) 15 open-ended questions. The survey instrument was designed to examine the perceptions held by high school business education department chairpersons regarding the characteristics of individuals entering and remaining in the teaching profession. Additionally, it intended to examine schools that had been successful in the recruitment and retention of business education teachers. A pilot test was conducted two months prior to the full-scale administration of the survey to estimate the reliability and validity of the instrument. Data were collected from seven high school business education department chairpersons who were not included in the sample. Based upon this input, the instrument was revised to enhance its content and face validity. The internal consistency of the revised instrument was determined to be .81, computed by procedures described by Cronbach (1951). Internal consistencies greater than .70 are generally considered acceptable for research instruments (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006; Nunnally, 1978).

Data Analysis

The responses from the business education chairpersons were used to determine their overall perceptions regarding the characteristics of individuals entering and remaining in the teaching profession, and the characteristics of schools that had been successful in recruiting and retaining business education teachers. The MANOVA analysis method was used to determine the extent to which differences might be present in the responses as a function of demographic variables.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Survey Respondents (n = 170)

Item		Percentage (%)	<i>f</i>
Gender	Female	70	119
	Male	30	51
Ethnicity	White, non-Hispanic	83	141
	African American	15	26
	Other	2	3
Academic degrees	Educational Specialist	44	75
	Master's	44	75
	Bachelor's	12	20
Age	21-30	7	12
	31-40	31	53
	41-50	39	66
	51-60	23	39
Years of experience	1-4	17	29
	5-9	13	22
	10-14	24	41
	15-19	22	37
	20-24	15	26
	25-29	9	15
Type of school	Suburban	56	95
	Urban	44	75

Findings

Characteristics of Individuals Entering the Business Education Teaching Profession

The survey respondents indicated that 78% of the individuals entering the business education teaching profession were: female, 68% White, non-Hispanic; 22% African American; and 8% Hispanic. Compared to the demographic characteristics of individuals entering the teaching profession within the last two decades, racial minority participation has increased which may lead to more diversity-sensitive classrooms. Minority student enrollment has also increased drastically from 17% in 1991 to 39% in 2000 (Guarino et al., 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

In regard to the perceptions of the quality of teachers entering the business education teaching profession, the MANOVAs indicated that statistically significant differences were present between urban ($n = 75$) and suburban ($n = 95$) schools, $F(4, 170) = 4.72$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Table 2 indicates that the survey respondents from urban schools ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.25$) were perceived to have less qualified teachers

than those working in suburban schools ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 1.41$). It appears that there is a gap between wealthy and poor schools in terms of effective and equitable business education teaching and learning. The problem is that minority and low income students have the least qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

This study found that women were more likely to enter the business education teaching profession than men (Broughman & Rollefson, 2000; Guarino et al., 2006; Henke, Chen, Geis, & Knepper, 2000). This gender imbalance may be related to the fact that women have had fewer employment choices than men throughout history. Perhaps “women continue to bear a greater share of child-rearing responsibilities than men and find teaching to be more compatible with these constraints; thus narrowing their choice set” (Guarino et al., 2006, p. 184).

In terms of perceived measured ability of individuals entering the teaching profession, 63% ($n = 107$) of the survey respondents agreed that individuals entering the business education teaching profession at their schools had lower ACT or SAT scores than those individuals in nonteaching jobs. This finding is supported by several studies (Ballou, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Gitomer, Latham, & Ziomek, 1999; Guarino et al., 2006; Henke et al., 2000; Podgursky, Monroe, & Watson, 2004). Individuals possessing higher opportunity costs in the form of attractive alternatives to teaching would be less likely to enter the teaching profession. It is possible; however, that hiring personnel might not have considered academic ability, measured by ACT or SAT scores, as the main or most important trait found in a new teacher (Guarino et al., 2006).

The respondents were asked to discuss the desirable qualifications and personal attributes of business education teachers entering the profession. Generally speaking, the following characteristics were reported: (a) prior successful teaching experience, (b) excellent personality and attitude, (c) knowledge of cooperative education, (d) good classroom management skills, (e) highly committed to diversity in the classroom, (f) love and passion for teaching, and (g) knowledge of a wide array of instructional strategies. Further, the study’s participants were asked to cite the various reasons that attracted business education teachers to the teaching profession. They reported love for teaching, increased family time, and making contributions to society. This finding is consistent with the work of Gaytan (2005). Finally, when asked about the reasons why many individuals do not enter the business education teaching profession, the respondents stated low salary, lack of safety particularly in urban areas, lack of professional growth opportunities, and the blame placed on teachers for the many problems that exist in education. Although the lack of support from administration was not cited by chairpersons, it has been found to play a major role in business education teachers’ perceptions of the teaching profession (Gaytan, 2005).

Table 2
*Business Education Department Chairpersons' Perceptions of the Quality of
 Business Teachers Entering the Teaching Profession.*

Item	Function I		Suburban Schools		Urban Schools	
	Funct.	r_s	M	SD	M	SD
Least qualified teachers	-.245	-.251	3.79	1.41	4.15	1.25
Lower attrition rates	-.081	-.294	3.85	1.39	4.04	1.26
Teacher gender	-.063	-.218	4.32	1.26	4.10	1.27
Teacher ability	-.476	-.092	4.26	1.25	4.36	1.24
Desired teacher traits	.284	.039	.30	1.27	4.23	1.26
Reasons entering teaching	-.110	.028	4.75	1.07	4.70	1.13
Retention rates based upon certification route	.120	.036	4.41	1.24	4.35	1.25
Attrition for men and racial minorities	.398	.101	4.40	1.34	4.29	1.38
Working conditions	-.053	-.197	3.89	1.39	4.04	1.28

Note. r_s = Spearman correlation

Characteristics of Individuals Remaining in the Business Education Teaching Profession

Eighty-seven percent ($n = 148$) of the respondents indicated that attrition is higher for beginning (first 3 years) business education teachers (Guarino et al., 2006; Lambert, 2006; Tamberg, 2007), and for near-retirement business education teachers (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004). The MANOVAs indicated that statistically significant differences were present between urban ($n = 75$) and suburban ($n = 95$) schools, $F(4, 170) = 4.51, p = .001, \eta^2 = .03$. Table 2 shows that the respondents from urban schools ($M = 4.04, SD = 1.26$) reported higher attrition rates than those working in suburban schools ($M = 3.85, SD = 1.39$). It appears that the working conditions of business education teachers must improve to increase teaching effectiveness and reduce teacher attrition.

Ninety-three percent ($n = 158$) of the respondents reported that business education teachers prepared through alternative certification programs had a higher retention rate (Clewell & Villegas, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Guarino et al., 2006). It appears that alternate certification programs often recruit nontraditional students seeking a career change, generating higher teacher retention rates (Clewell & Villegas, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Guarino et al., 2006). Furthermore, 72% ($n = 122$) of the respondents perceived higher attrition rates in the teaching profession than in other professions. This finding is consistent with those found in Ingersoll's (2001) study.

Eighty-five percent ($n = 145$) of the respondents reported that men and racial minorities had lower attrition rates than women (Guarino et al., 2006; Ingersoll, 2001). Perhaps pregnancy and family issues were the reasons for women leaving the business education teaching profession (Trotman, 2006). Conversely, 87% ($n = 148$) of the survey respondents suggested that older teachers, not close to retirement age, had a higher retention rate than young or new teachers (Guarino et al., 2006). The respondents were also asked to compare the ability of business education teachers leaving with those remaining in the teaching profession. Seventy-four percent ($n = 126$) of the respondents reported that business education teachers with higher measured ability were more likely to leave the teaching profession. This finding is consistent with previous research (Guarino et al., 2006; Podgursky et al., 2004).

Characteristics of Schools that Successfully Recruit and Retain Business Education Teachers

The respondents cited the characteristics of schools that had been successful in the recruitment and retention of business education teachers. Ninety-two percent ($n = 153$) of the respondents stated that business education teachers engage regularly in the evaluation of their profession in terms of working conditions (Guarino et al., 2006); 86% ($n = 146$) believed that poor working conditions have a negative effect on teacher retention (Gaytan, 2005). It appears that schools must improve the overall working conditions of business education teachers to improve teaching effectiveness and increase retention rates (Gaytan, 2005; Guarino et al., 2006; Kelly, 2004).

Ninety-one percent ($n = 155$) of the respondents indicated that business education teachers located in low income areas with high levels of minority and low-achieving students were more likely to leave the teaching profession (Guarino et al., 2006; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). This finding has a negative, direct impact on student achievement because high minority schools are forced to hire inexperienced, uncertified, or inappropriately certified teachers who are less effective than fully certified beginning teachers (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005). A student having “three such teachers over the course of elementary school could lose a full year of achievement” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 16).

In this study, 74% ($n = 126$) of the respondents believed that large or well financed schools have lower business education teacher attrition rates. This finding is consistent with the findings of other studies (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001). Wealthy districts become wealthier and economically disadvantaged children continue to be marginalized from valuable resources. For instance, “There is a 10-to-1 ratio in spending between the highest-spending and lowest-spending schools in the nation, and a 3-to-1 ratio within most states” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 13). Finally, 96% ($n = 163$) of the respondents agreed that the higher the quality of business education professional preparation programs, the lower the attrition rate.

This finding is supported by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003).

In summary, schools with higher levels of minority, low income, and low-performing students experience higher business education teacher attrition rates. In fact, research has shown that teachers prefer a school with good working conditions (e.g., supportive parents) than higher salaries "by a margin of 3 to 1" (Public Agenda, 2000, p. 46). The more difficult the working conditions are in a given school, the less attractive the school becomes to teachers (Guarino et al., 2006).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Business education teachers engage regularly in the evaluation of their profession with respect to comparing the intrinsic rewards and compensation levels in teaching with those of other professions. Because working conditions are essential to teachers' satisfaction with teaching and their careers, it is crucial for school administrators to gain a thorough understanding of their concerns. Otherwise, educational stakeholders will continue to implement what they believe to be promising recruitment and retention strategies, leading to the ineffective treatment of the problem, and new teachers continuing to leave the teaching profession (Gaytan, 2005). Based on the findings of this study and previous research, the following policies are recommended for implementation by educational stakeholders at various levels.

1. Increase business education teacher retention. "Increasing the number of teachers prepared without addressing these high attrition rates is like pouring water into a leaking bucket" (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 21). The costs associated with teacher attrition are exorbitant. The cost for Texas alone ranges from \$300 million and \$2 billion per year (Benner, 2000). These funds could be invested in education. The following five strategies for lowering teacher attrition rates should be implemented:

- A. Design high quality alternative business education teaching certification programs because, as research has shown, these certification programs often recruit nontraditional students, seeking a career change, generating higher teacher retention rates (Clewell & Villegas, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Guarino et al., 2006).

- B. Improve the overall working conditions of business education teachers to improve teaching effectiveness and increase retention (Gaytan, 2005; Guarino et al., 2006; Kelly, 2004). This is not a simple task because it involves ensuring that new teachers have appropriate assignments and manageable workloads, sufficient instructional resources, appropriate curriculum and assessment models, advice and support from colleagues, and a stable and dynamic working environment (Gaytan, 2005).

C. Provide a high level of autonomy and administrative support to business education teachers to obtain a positive effect on teacher retention (Gaytan, 2005; Guarino et al., 2006; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

D. Engage in constant and consistent assessment of teaching effectiveness to reduce the number of students performing at low levels and who display higher rates of behavioral problems which, in turn, have a negative impact on business education teacher retention (Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Diaz, 2004; Stockard & Lehman, 2004). Schools with high achievement levels have the following critical components: high quality teaching of content knowledge addressing the needs of a diverse group of students (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005); access to a challenging curriculum (Oakes, 2005); and well-organized classes that support student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

E. Increase the quality of programs involved in the professional preparation of business education teachers since preparation is linked to attrition. The better the preparation, the lower the attrition rates (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003).

2. Reduce the gap between wealthy and poor schools by developing policies for effective and equitable business education teaching and learning. The problem is that minority and low income students have the least qualified teachers, limited access to intellectually challenging curriculum, and are most likely to be placed in large classes (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Instead of increasing incentives to teaching, many states have lowered their standards to fill teaching vacancies which, in turn, has had a negative effect on student's access to highly qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Proposed policies for effective and equitable business education teaching and learning, designed to reduce the gap between wealthy and poor schools, must address the professional preparation of teachers and the governmental aspects involved in such preparation.

A. Professional preparation: it must be based upon standards set by professional constituencies rather than by state governmental agencies. The standards must be based on performance-based assessments of teaching ability rather than passing a series of tests that have minimal impact on teaching ability. For instance, it is more appropriate for business educators to follow standards established by the National Business Education Association (NBEA) than to follow those designed by state constituencies; the process of developing and disseminating the business education knowledge base is more effectively managed by the profession itself. This process reflects that of other professions such as medicine. Research has shown that teachers lacking sound professional

teacher training: (a) possess little knowledge related to learning and child development, (b) use more ineffective teaching methods, (c) use more autocratic classroom management strategies, (d) use inadequate teaching strategies when deeper understanding is required, (e) possess little knowledge related to the various learning styles and needs of students, and (f) blame their students when learning is poor (Darling-Hammond, 2003). High quality programs responsible for the professional preparation of teachers engage their candidates in the following areas: learning theories, child growth and development, effective and challenging curriculum, cultural diversity, effective methods related to the delivery of instruction, and effective student internships hosted by teachers able to model outstanding teaching practices addressing the needs of a diverse group of students (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

B. For professional preparation policy to become effective, it must be coupled with appropriate governmental policy which includes the following strategies:

- a. Establish higher teacher salaries because research has shown that better pay reduces teacher attrition (Guarino et al., 2006; Kelly, 2004; Podgursky et al., 2004; Stockard & Lehman, 2004) and it may increase teacher quality (Figlio, 2002; Loeb & Page, 2000).
- b. Create monetary incentives and bonuses for highly qualified teachers as well as those educators teaching in low income, high minority schools and teaching in critical shortage fields (Humphrey, Koppich, & Hough, 2005).
- c. Raise standards to ensure teachers have more content and pedagogical knowledge and are better equipped to support students with special needs (Guarino et al., 2006; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).
- d. Develop mentoring and induction programs linked to performance assessment because they lower teacher attrition rates (Guarino et al., 2006; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).
- e. Create professional development plans for teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006).
- f. Create a system of quality business education teaching by developing centers for teaching and learning, for the professional preparation of business education teachers, giving priority to educators teaching in critical shortage fields and to minority and low income students. “Virtually all of the positions currently filled by unqualified teachers could be filled in this way for only

\$800 million a year less than what the United States currently spends in a single week in Iraq” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 20).

3. Business education teachers in the U.S. must have time to network with colleagues to engage in productive dialogue that may lead to the development of more effective curriculum and assessment methods. Assessments must “require students to construct and organize knowledge, consider alternatives, apply what they are learning and present and defend their ideas, rather than focusing largely on multiple-choice tasks” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 21). Coaching each other in these and other areas is essential.

4. Schools must become attractive places for teachers to ensure that highly qualified individuals enter the teaching profession. To accomplish this goal, sufficient funding must come from state and federal governments. Problems associated with systematic funding inequalities must be resolved, and low income and minority students must have access to high quality teachers and schools.

5. Students and schools are held accountable to the government for achieving a certain performance as indicated by test scores. However, the government is not being held accountable to American students, families, and schools for providing a sound educational system that ensures the right to learn. This study recommends policies that will assist educational stakeholders, including business teacher educators, in their transition to a high quality educational system. As Darling-Hammond (2006) stated, “no society in a knowledge-based world can long prosper without supporting a thinking education for all of its people....or we will, within a short time, witness the contemporary equivalent of the Fall of Rome” (p. 15).

This study included business education department chairpersons from only one state. Therefore, it should be replicated using business education department chairpersons from across the nation with a larger, stratified sample. While the survey instrument used in this research study included both open-ended and multiple-choice items, more in-depth qualitative research including interviews and observations should be conducted. Observing and analyzing schools that have been successful in the recruitment and retention of business education teachers may provide useful information to more effectively respond to the recruitment and retention challenge, an essential step in the development of a system of high quality teaching and learning.

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