

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION AND
JOB SATISFACTION AMONG TEACHERS

by

PATRICIA JEAN GRAY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the general hypothesis that because they desire more control over their occupational activities in the school system more professionally oriented teachers will be less satisfied with their influence on the decision making structure of the school system than will their less professionally oriented colleagues. This hypothesis is based upon the assumption that the increasing professional status of teachers involves an increase in the desire for power over their occupational activities not recognized as legitimate by school officials.

The conceptual framework, taken from Johnson's essay Professions and Power (1972), focuses on the source of the control exercised over the practitioner/client relationship as being the characteristic by which professions can be classified. Two of Johnson's three categories in his typology were utilized--mediative control and collegiate control. Teachers are seen as working towards collegiate control in which both the needs of the client and the manner in which they are met are determined by the teacher practitioner. Teaching has been characterized by mediative control where the practitioner/client relationship is controlled by a third party. This movement towards collegiate control is preceeded and supported by the development of a "professional orientation" amongst teachers. This was defined as the adoption by the

group of those characteristics deemed to be part of the public image of "a professional".

For the purposes of analysis a professional orientation was operationally defined in terms of teachers' self-reported adherence to professional standards rather than school rules; their self-reported exercise of discretion in relation to pupils rather than following school rules; and their self-reported involvement in professional activities. Satisfaction was defined in terms of the discrepancy between the influence teachers felt they should have, and the influence they felt they did have over decisions relating to three aspects of school administration--system wide changes; the hiring, firing and assignment of teachers; and autonomy in the classroom.

Three specific hypothesis were generated to test the general hypothesis. These were -

A professional orientation is inversely related to satisfaction with class room autonomy.

A professional orientation is inversely related to satisfaction with influence on administrators regarding colleague assignments.

A professional orientation is inversely related to satisfaction with administrative decisions regarding organizational change.

A professional orientation is not significantly related to satisfaction with the work setting.

The study was a secondary analysis of data collected in a survey of the St. Boniface School Division, Winnipeg, Manitoba. The operational hypotheses were tested using zero order, and first and third order partial correlations controlling for teachers' sex, education, and experience.

The results shown a statistically significant negative correlation between teachers' professional orientations and their satisfaction with their influence on decision making relative to system wide change, and to their classroom autonomy, the first and third specific hypotheses were therefore accepted. However the variances explained (3.6 per cent and 2.25 per cent) were very small.

The general hypothesis was accepted, and the conclusion drawn that more professionally oriented teachers are less satisfied with their influence on the decision making structure of the school system than their less professionally oriented colleagues, though the relationship was not a strong one in the school district studied. The implications of this conclusion for the education system and for future research were also considered.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

A notable trait of our society is the degree to which occupations are attempting to become professionalized. The occupation of teaching is no exception to this trend. It is the general purpose of this thesis to explore, to a limited extent, the effects of professionalization upon teaching. More specifically the purpose is to consider, both conceptually and empirically, the effects of a professional orientation upon work satisfaction amongst teachers.

While a great deal has been written about professionals, and separately about work satisfaction, relatively little attention has been paid to the effects of a professional orientation upon work satisfaction. This is particularly true for the teaching occupation where professionalism has only recently begun to become a significant factor in determining the nature of the teachers' occupational role (Corwin 1970). Accordingly, in the following pages of this chapter, an overview of the problem of the nature of professionalization in teaching as well as teacher satisfaction, will be considered. From this discussion, a general hypothesis to guide the subsequent development of this study will be set forth.

Professionalism and Teaching

While teachers generally regard the occupation of teaching as a profession, acceptance of their status as professionals is not as clearly established in the larger society as is that of the older professions (medicine and the law are usually regarded as the archetypes). Nor is the normal work context of teaching, which is almost exclusively within the formal organization of the school system, conducive to professional control of teaching activities. The process of increasing professionalization of teachers is therefore likely to involve some conflict with existing structural arrangements in the occupational field and some dissatisfaction on the part of teachers.

Several analysts have advanced evidence to suggest that teaching cannot be regarded as a fully professional activity. Etzioni (1964) describes teachers as semi-professionals on the grounds that their occupational lives are firmly based within the school organization. Wilensky (1964) describes them as marginally professional because this organizational context threatens the autonomy and service ideal he sees as the hallmark of the professional. Purvis (1973) sees the concept of a career as being an integral, essential component of a profession and argues that school teaching cannot be considered a profession because of the absence of this component.

Purvis elaborated the basis for her conclusion as resting upon both structural and attitudinal considerations.

Specifically, the structural limitations include the near absence of any vertical ladder for promotion. There are no higher positions open to teachers, with the exception of a few in administration, and these involve leaving active classroom teaching. Secondly, the authority structure of the school system, while it provides some autonomy for the teacher in the classroom, does not allow for involvement in important decision making--in this respect the teacher is treated more like an employee than a professional.

Attitudinal limitations noted by Purvis reflect the consequences of a heavy preponderance of females in the occupation and the concomitant social attitudes regarding women's employment. Purvis' views parallel those of Prather (1971), Coser and Rokoff (1971) and Blake (1974) in this regard. While male teachers also tend to lack a sense of commitment (leading them to consider alternatives to teaching if the opportunity arises) this, according to Purvis, appears to be more related to the structural variables (the lack of a professional ladder) than to attitudinal variables.

The question of occupational commitment was also considered analytically by Geer (1966). Her general conclusion was that teaching as an occupation has little to create a permanent sense of commitment to the occupation as a career. The training is (relative to other professions) not that arduous, and there is little opportunity to acquire extra skills through work. The teacher's clientele (the pupils and their parents) is mediated by the school administration and involuntary on both sides, the clients

are low status and do not belong uniquely to one teacher so the teacher can make no exclusive claim to successes. Further, according to Geer, teachers lack the opportunity to establish useful, prestigious relationships in their daily work, there is no audience for the teacher to adjudicate their performance and teachers lack opportunities for promotion.

These analytic arguments find a measure of support in the interpretations of the results of major studies on teaching by Corwin (1970) and Simpson (1969). Corwin, in his study of teachers, sees professionalization as a militant process attempting to gain occupational control from both administrators and the lay public. The lack of such control implies, for Corwin, the non-professional status of the teaching occupation (Corwin 1970:8). Simpson, in an exhaustive study of teacher professionalism, came to the general conclusion that, although teaching is not a profession mainly because it is a predominately feminine occupation (which carries many implications for teachers' professional orientations) teaching does offer opportunities for professionalism if teachers are professionally inclined (Simpson 1969:xii).

It is clear that the above analysts deny full professional status to the occupation of teaching because they are implicitly, or explicitly comparing teaching with some "ideal" profession, i.e. a trait model. This approach tends to be a-theoretical in that it defines a

profession by its distinguishing characteristics (Greenwood 1966) and points to the process by which an occupation becomes a profession through the acquisition of these characteristics in an orderly sequence (Wilensky 1964). The underlying assumption of this model is that occupational expertise is built on a base of systematic theoretical knowledge, which is subsequently used by members of the occupation for claiming professional autonomy. Such a sense of occupational autonomy and expertise is strengthened by the development of training schools and by professional associations which enforce professional norms. Subsequently, as seen from this perspective, these perceptions are encouraged by a professional culture and the concept of a professional career. Such norms include a belief in self regulation and colleague control. Professionals are also seen as characterized by a service ideal and dedication to work (Wilensky 1964:144; Scott in Etzioni 1969:82; Greenwood in Vollmer and Mills 1966:103; Millerson 1964:6).

The trait model however is subject to criticism on several grounds, including the major criticism that there is no tight logical reason why one trait or characteristic should be included or eliminated from the list of those characteristics assumed to typify a "professional occupation". Such a model implies a comparison with some "ideal" profession and suggests that the process of professionalization is a clearly recognizable progression towards some uniform end state. Finally, as a means of explaining professionals in

interaction with the rest of society, the trait model does not seem useful in pinpointing what are the key factors in that interaction because no one trait logically can be shown to be of prime importance.

Given the above limitations, it is reasonable to suggest that an alternative conceptual approach to the problem of professionalism generally, and the professional orientation of teachers specifically, may be more fruitful. Such an approach is hinted at by Wilensky, who suggested that the recent history of professionalization can be viewed as a means of gaining power or control over an occupation by its practitioners. In examining the process of professionalization he noted that occupations do not follow one course of development and that often "the whole effort seems more an opportunistic struggle for the rewards of monopoly than a natural history of professionalism". (Wilensky 1964:157). Perrucci, citing Wilensky, pointed out that "regardless of any model used to understand the professions, a basic resource that is necessary for the occupational group seeking to transform itself into a profession is power" (Perrucci 1971:495). Perrucci sees the basic source of the power commanded by the profession as found in the knowledge its practitioners have, and in the utility of that knowledge as it is applied to specific problems. This is the source of the power of the occupational group. The continuation of the power depends on the nature of the target group or users of the profession (Perrucci 1971:496). More recently in an essay

Professions and Power (1972) Terence J. Johnson also suggested that the key towards understanding those occupations generally regarded as professions is to look at them in terms of their power relations in society, their sources of power and authority and the ways in which they use them (Johnson 1972:18).

Viewed from this perspective, wherein professionalization is seen to be primarily the process by which an occupation gains control over its role performance, the results of the previous analyses and studies cited can be interpreted to suggest that the process of teacher professionalization, although of limited success, is an integral part of the contemporary occupational milieu of teaching. One major structural factor that thwarts the "full" development of teachers' professionalism is that their work is entirely within the school system. The organizational structure of that system has been termed bureaucratic (Katz 1964; Corwin 1967), and involved in this mode of organization is the designation of power to a hierarchy of offices. Teachers as a group within this organizational structure lack access to the decision making offices, and, therefore, lack the power to control their own occupational activities because of the control exercised over them within the organization. Additionally, given the preponderance of women in the teaching occupation, with their inherent role conflicts and relatively lower career commitment, the success of the occupational members in gaining control over their work setting is limited.

While other factors may also be important, these two appear to explain in some degree the limited success of teachers in attaining full professional status in the larger society.

Turning to the concept of power as it is involved in this view of professionalization, Weber defines power as "...the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (Weber 1947:152). Weber is careful to distinguish power from authority which he sees as "the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons" (Weber 1947:152). Authority then is power institutionalized, that is contained and controlled by the social structure (or organization) within which it is exercised. As Hage and Aiken note, within such a setting power is never a one way street but more appropriately can be seen as an "equation" in every set of social actions which must account for the differential power of all participants in the setting (Hage and Aiken 1970:19). Seen in this perspective the process of professionalization refers to the efforts on the part of a specific occupational group (teachers) to gain control over their occupational activities (teaching) by altering the power equation in the work setting (schools); that is they want the distribution of legitimate power, or authority, over decision making to be changed in their favour.

If the above interpretation of the nature of the thrust towards professional status within the occupation of teaching is correct then it is reasonable to assume that a potential exists for conflict within any school system--a conflict focusing upon a desire for control over work activities and on the basic nature of the authority structure within the educational bureaucracy. Furthermore, to the extent that teachers have a professional orientation, and are frustrated in the desire to realize it in their occupational role, it is reasonable to assume that dissatisfaction will increase.

Teaching and Job Satisfaction

The second major variable involved in this study is job satisfaction. The concept of job satisfaction appears in the literature to relate to two aspects which can be separated analytically. Satisfaction can be expressed in relation to the organizational, or structural, characteristics of the job (such as pay, hours of work, promotion prospects, decision making opportunities, supervision). Job satisfaction can also be related to the everyday opportunities and social relationships provided by the work setting.

Factors in the organizational structure which have been related to job satisfaction have been the level of supervision (Blau and Scott 1962:151; Argyle 1954; Likert 1961); the incentive conditions of pay, status, promotion and security (Argyle 1972); the possibility of promotion (Argyle 1972:232); the number of levels in the organizational hierarchy and the

consequent level of communication (Blau and Scott 1962:243); and the opportunities to make decisions (Katz and Kahn 1966: 370-371; Argyle 1972:235).

The degree of satisfaction in the work setting has been related to the routine sameness of work on the assembly line (Blau and Scott 1962:180; Walker and Guest 1952), and to the nature of the work group, its cohesiveness, size and opportunities for interaction (Argyle 1972).

Several studies have shown that work satisfaction or job satisfaction among the occupational groups in our society is highest for the professional group followed by the managerial occupations. Semi-skilled and unskilled are the least satisfied (Blauner 1960; Gurin, Veroff and Feld 1960). Blauner listed the prestige of the job and control of working conditions as two of the reasons for the fact that professionals head the list of satisfied workers. This is in line with the findings of the studies cited above because prestige is a term which can be considered an index for a variety of factors - skill, degree of education or training, amount of control or responsibility involved in performance of work, and pay. Also to be able to control the pace and organization of work, as professionals can, is felt by most workers to be desirable.

Studies that relate specifically to teachers and their job satisfactions are few. Carpenter (1971) found teachers in flat organizations (schools with few levels in the hierarchy) perceived a higher level of job satisfaction than their counterparts in tall or medium organizational types.