

https://dspace.org/

Some socio-cultural correlates of recruitment to the teaching profession

Davies, Edward Huw

2015-02-20
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/17035

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

There are, however, a number of factors which complicate the issue. Not the least of these is the fact that more working class children are now staying at school for longer, and that their qualifications are better. Whereas in the past working class children were attracted by teaching, owing to the difficulty of entering other fields, and constituted a large proportion of its intake as has already been seen, this is no longer necessarily the case. Floud and Scott maintain that

"broadly speaking...teaching has to compete on equal terms with other comparable professions for recruits from the sixth forms of the grammar schools. The traditional pull of the profession on working class children is no longer effective ... This shift ... will ... mean a gradual transformation of the background of the profession" (9)

After an examination of the social class background of teachers in different types of schools, Floud and Scott conclude that there tends to be a breaking down of the barriers between the social origins of teachers in different types of school, and that, since 1939 at any rate, recruits to teaching have come from a predominantly lower-middle-class background, tending to be drawn from non-manual families.

Other findings of the study reported indicate that women teachers in all types of schools, but particularly in grammar schools, have a higher social origin than men teachers.

Three significant points therefore emerge from this study: the first, that teaching may serve as an avenue of social mobility; second, that the

majority of teachers tend to be recruited in these days from the lower middle class; thirdly, that the social origins of the women in the profession tend generally to be higher than those of the men.

Jackson and Marsden have contended that teaching is, in fact, almost the only avenue open to the working class child who wants to improve his social standing: not because he has not the ability to undertake some other employment, but because he has not the social graces required for many other professions (10).

Some research has been carried out which concerns itself not so much with the social origins of teachers as with the status they enjoy in society. Banks (11) has stated the case in the following terms:

"The social origin of any group both reflects and is a reflection of the status of the group; and undoubtedly the social origin of teachers is a reflection above all of the ambiguity of their status, which needs to contain the two traditions: the teacher of the rich and the teacher of the poor."

From the literature it would seem that, while the grammar school teacher has a higher status than does the elementary school teacher, the influence of the elementary teacher seems to be strongest when the profession is looked at as a whole. It is significant to note, for example, that the occupation of teacher comes in the Intermediate class for census purposes, not in Category I, which is that of higher administrative and professional employés. The London School of Economics, in a study of social mobility, has found that the elementary

school teacher is classed with the news reporter and the commercial traveller, but below the traditional professions (12).

Tropp has shown (13) that in the nineteenth century there were at least as many unqualified women as there were qualified teaching in elementary schools, and that even in 1900 as many as 40 per cent of teachers were unqualified. Blyth (14) has shown that even today primary schools are staffed almost entirely by non-graduates, while the proportion of graduates in secondary modern schools is very low. There can be no doubt that the low qualifications of many of the members of the teaching profession have helped to contribute in substantial measure to its low social standing.

There are, in the United Kingdom, considerably more women teachers than there are men. Banks (15) maintains that about three quarters of teachers in primary schools are women, as are about half the teachers in secondary schools. There can be no doubt that, at this point in the history of Western society, an occupation which has a dominant percentage of females in it is likely to be a fairly low-status occupation (16,17,18).

There seems to be evidence, too, that the financial position of teachers in the United Kingdom compares unfavourably with that of professional people in other occupations (19), and that there tend to be broad differentials between the incomes of various types of teachers. It has been pointed out by various writers (20,21,22) that, viewed historically, the financial position of teachers has varied considerably. It would be true to say,

however, that the teacher in the United Kingdom is paid comparatively little by comparison with other professional groups, and that his salary often compares unfavourably with those of other less well qualified groups.

3.3 A Summary of Points arising from the Literature

It seems possible to gain a reasonably accurate picture of the situation in the United Kingdom from the literature which has been referred to above (23). The following points emerge:

3.3.1 Teaching has served as an important avenue of social mobility, and may still do so

3.3.2 Teachers recruited to the profession tend to be drawn from the lower middle class

3.3.3 The social origins of women teachers tend to be higher than those of men teachers

3.3.4 There are many more women teachers than there are men

3.3.5 There is a status differential among teachers, depending on the type of school in which they teach

3.3.6 There are very many fewer graduates than non-graduates who are teachers

3.3.7 Teachers as a group are worse paid than are persons in occupations such as engineering, law and medicine, and are sometimes worse paid than some tradesmen.

A number of writers have enlarged at some length on some of the reasons for the phenomena mentioned above. As the reasons for the phenomena are of less concern, for purposes of this dissertation, than are the phenomena themselves, it is proposed

merely to give a list of references at which elucidatory arguments can be found (24).

3.4 A Survey of the Literature in the United States of America

A good deal of research has been carried out in the United States of America, but much of it is less well known in this country than is that carried out in the United Kingdom (25). It will be expedient, for purposes of comparison, to consider the literature in the same order as was the case in the previous section. For this reason a consideration of literature relating to the social origins of teachers in the United States appears first.

It is less easy to gain information of this sort about the United States than for other countries. It has been contended that

"most studies of the social class background of teachers do not provide us with a foundation for generalisations about teachers across the nation" (26).

Nevertheless it would seem that certain generalisations can be made. Those studies which are available suggest that the largest group of teachers are drawn from the lower middle classes, with a fairly sizeable minority drawn from the working class. It has not been possible to relate the social class of teachers to the type of school in which they teach. A study by Carlson (27) has suggested that the highest social origins are to be found in female elementary school teachers, and the lowest among male

secondary school teachers. Carlson maintains that as many as 48 per cent of male secondary school teachers are from the lower middle class, or the working class, as compared with 23 per cent for female elementary school teachers (28). Even if this study does not have general applicability to the whole of the United States, it would seem to indicate that there is less of a stigma attached to elementary school teaching than is the case in the United Kingdom.

It would be of interest to try to establish to what extent teaching can constitute an avenue of social mobility in the United States. There are two studies which provide some interesting data in this connection. The first of these (29) indicates that one major career pattern of the Chicago public school teacher consists in moving from the lower class school, in which teaching begins, to a school with a higher proportion of middle class pupils. While this is not in itself an index of mobility, it seems to be related to the degree of social acceptability of a given teacher, which may relate in some way to mobility. A fairly recent volume by Herriott and St. John (30) seems to indicate that there may be a relationship between the social class background of a given teacher and that of the pupils in the school at which he teaches. There is not, however, any sort of extreme difference between teachers in the different types of schools. Only in factors relating to the type of community and father's occupation were there any statistically significant differences. In the case of father's occupation 43 per cent of teachers in schools of low socio-economic status, and 30 per cent of teachers in schools of high socio-

economic status, had fathers of 'blue-collar' occupation. Thus even in schools where the majority of pupils came from low-status families, the majority of teachers had come from white-collar homes (31,32).

In addition to the fairly overt evidence that teachers of a specific kind of background tend to be placed among pupils of the same type, Brookover and Gottlied have contended that

"there is a tendency for Negro teachers to be placed in schools where there are strong concentrations of Negro youth" (33).

It would seem, therefore, that teaching may serve as an avenue of mobility in the United States, but that the way in which it works could be different from that in the United Kingdom, because of the great differences which exist between the two societies.

The social status of teachers in the United States has been dwelt upon by a number of writers (34), and in particular by Lieberman. Lieberman has contended that

"teachers are finding it more difficult than ever to maintain their present intermediate status, let alone raise it to the level of such occupational groups as doctors and lawyers" (35).

This statement is surprising in the light of the contention by Stiles that in the United States at the present time a bachelor's degree representing four years of training is almost universally required. This would seem to represent a relatively high degree of education on the part of the occupational group at large (36), and to indicate an all-graduate, or nearly

all-graduate occupational group.

The position is not as straighforward as that, however. In the last century there was in the United States a large group of elementary school teachers whose educational qualifications were low, and the rapid expansion of education at the turn of the century led to additional problems. In fact, Krug (37) has pointed out that the development of high schools had probably outrun the supply of trained teachers by the latter part of the nineteenth century, in any case. Although a developmental pattern, requiring increasingly more adequate qualifications of the teacher, can be discerned, the shortage of teachers in the United States remains chronic, with the result that there are still many teachers who fail to measure up to the academic standards which seem to be required.

An additional problem is the fact that, within the framework of American higher education, a bachelor's degree has not the same significance as it has in the United Kingdom or South Africa. Folger and Nam have concluded that the present status of teaching as an occupation tends still to be based on what were the educational requirements for teachers forty years ago, rather than on present requirements for the occupational group (38).

A further characteristic of teaching in the United States is that

"the proportions of women in elementary school teaching in the United States are so high that it can reasonably be described as a woman's occupation" (39).

Approximately 75 per cent of all teachers in the

United States are women, and it has been suggested that this is one of the reasons why teaching has a lower status in the United States than in Britain and Europe generally. There seems also to be reason to suppose that once a specific occupation becomes accepted as a 'woman's job', it becomes less and less attractive to men, and that fewer of them are attracted to it.

3.5 A Summary of Points arising from the Literature

A picture of a kind can be gained from the literature cited above. The points which emerge below are also reinforced by reports which have not been cited in the text (40), and seem to be fairly accurate as a reflection of the situation in the United States of America:

3.5.1 Teaching may serve as an avenue of social mobility

3.5.2 Teachers recruited to the profession tend to be drawn from the lower middle class

3.5.3 The social origins of women elementary school teachers are the highest; those of male secondary school teachers are the lowest

3.5.4 Women teachers predominate in American schools to the extent that teaching has become typified as a 'woman's occupation'

3.5.5 While entrance and final qualifications for the job are now much higher than they were, there is still a large body of teachers whose qualifications are not very high

3.5.6 Teachers are finding it difficult to

retain their present occupational status, let alone compete with the established professions like law and medicine.

3.5.7 There is a tendency for teachers from a specific social group to teach amongst children from a socio-economic group similar to their own.

The reasons for these phenomena are complex and varied, and are of no direct concern at this stage. Elucidatory arguments will be found listed in the notes at the end of the chapter. (41)

3.6 A Survey of the Literature in South Africa

A substantial amount of literature has been produced, both in and about South Africa. Because the South African system is not a unified one, it is proposed to ignore what has been written about educational systems other than White education (42) and to devote attention only to White education, which is the area of concern of this dissertation.

It is proposed as far as possible to follow the same pattern as that followed in sections 3.2 and 3.4 above, although this will not always be possible for reasons which will become apparent as the section proceeds.

Possibly the most comprehensive research which has been carried out in South Africa has been that of the National Bureau of Educational and Social Research, which has investigated fairly comprehensively the following areas:

Wastage of Teachers
Recruitment of Teachers
Selection of Teachers
Interest of School Pupils in Teaching.

Not all of this literature is relevant at this stage of the discussion, however, and will be commented upon at a later stage in this dissertation.

An exhaustive survey of the available literature on South Africa reveals, first of all, that there has been no research published on the social origins of the teaching body (43). One of the aims of this present research is, in fact, to attempt to establish to what extent generalisations can be made about the origins of the teaching body. Because there is no material available on the social origins of teachers, it is also not possible to comment on the extent to which teaching may be seen as an avenue of social mobility for white teachers. Research in the field of Bantu education (44) has shown that for the African, at least, teaching is an important avenue of improving social standing in the community. On the basis of research in other areas, however, certain tentative conclusions might be drawn. These conclusions will be more fully discussed in chapter four, as they have a close bearing on the present research.

An examination of the available statistical data for each of the four provinces (45) reveals that more women than men are engaged in teaching as a career. While there is a predominance of women in the primary schools, there are more evenly-balanced groups of men and women in the secondary

schools. Significant differences are to be observed between the English- and Afrikaans-speaking groups in regard to the number of men. While men are substantially outnumbered by women in both English and Afrikaans medium schools, there are more men pro rata in the Afrikaans schools than there are in the English schools (46).

An examination of literature published with regard to the qualifications of the teaching group reveals a pattern which has already been discerned among teachers in other countries (47). Teachers employed in primary schools are almost universally non-graduates. With few exceptions (48), however, all primary school teachers have matriculated at school, and have then acquired a professional diploma awarded on the basis of at least two years post-school training. For a number of years (49), however, teachers qualifying for primary schools have been required to train for at least three years post-school and recently (50) four-year courses for primary schools and nursery school specialists have been introduced. While women are still permitted to choose whether or not they will undertake a three or a four year course of training, men are obliged to undertake a four year course of training in a College of Education if they wish to become teachers in primary schools.

The secondary schools are found to be staffed by more graduates than are the primary schools, but even there non-graduates constitute a significant percentage of the over-all numbers of secondary school teachers. Those teachers who are graduates are normally in possession of a three-year degree, followed by a single year's professional training,

and they constitute the largest percentage of those teachers who resign in search of more lucrative employment (51). Non-graduate staff are normally in possession of a three- or four-year diploma, and in terms of the requirements of the 1967 Education Act, all secondary school teachers are now required to have been trained at a University (52).

Comparatively little has been written about the occupational status of teachers in South Africa, and those who have expressed themselves on the topic seem to feel that teaching is, in fact, a profession. Perhaps there is more idealism present among teachers in this country than elsewhere (53,54). One parameter of professionalism which has been used in other countries is that used in the national censuses which have been taken from time to time. As has already been seen (55) teachers in the United Kingdom and in the United States are classified as 'Intermediate' for purposes of census. The position in South Africa is different. Occupational categories for purposes of census are based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations, modified to suit South African conditions (56).

A number of occupation categories are utilised (57), the most relevant one for our purposes being that of Professional, Technical & Related Worker. Within this category are mentioned a number of occupational categories commonly acknowledged to be professional (58), as well as some which are not professional. That category which is of the greatest interest is that which is called 'Professor, teacher, etc.' The problem which arises

is that of establishing whether the occupation of professor is considered to have the same force as that of teacher or not.

There can be no doubt that the University teacher is, in every sense of the word, a professional (59). As has already been seen in the previous chapter, Etzioni and others have pointed out that certain occupational groups may be called 'semi-professions'. Katz (60) has considered nursing as a semi-profession, while at the same time admitting its connection with the medical profession. In the general census category being used, the over-all title is 'Professional, Technical and Related Worker'. One might expect nurses, therefore, to appear in this category (as being related to professional work) on their own, rather than as a sub-section of the category which includes doctors. As appears from note 58 this is, in fact, the case. The sequence given is as follows:

"Medical Practitioner, Dentist, etc.
Nurse, Midwife, etc."

It is clear, then, that nurses are not considered to be in the same category as are doctors, although they are related to the category.

This clear distinction has not been made in the case of teachers, however, as one category is used both for University and for school teachers. The conclusion to which one is driven is therefore threefold: it is possible that both University and school teachers are considered to fall in the 'Professional' category; that University and school teachers are considered to fall in the 'related' category (i.e. something akin to

Etzioni's 'semi-professions'); or, finally, that insufficient thought was given to the creation of the category.

While the last of these conclusions is possible, it seems to be most unlikely, not least because this is the only area in which this type of problem appears. The second of the conclusions is equally unlikely, as the status of University teachers is acknowledged to be high throughout the world, and no less so in South Africa. This leaves the first conclusion, which was that, for census purposes at least, teachers fall into the 'Professional' category, unlike their counterparts in the United Kingdom and the United States. (61)

An examination of statistical data available for the various provinces reveals another phenomenon which may be typically South African, although data available for Belgium, Canada and Wales (62) suggest that it may not be. There is a tendency for Afrikaans-medium schools to be staffed almost entirely by native speakers of Afrikaans, while English-medium schools are staffed by both English and Afrikaans-speaking teachers (63).

Whether this phenomenon is in any way related to that reported by Herriott and St. John (64) is not clear. They found that there tends to be a relationship between the social class origins of the pupils taught and that of the teacher. Whether the connection in the Transvaal is one of class, or merely one of cultural and language background, is not clear at the present.

3.7 A Summary of Points Arising from the Literature

Owing to the paucity of work done on teachers

actually practising in South Africa, what statements have been made have very largely been based on government reports and statistical information. This means that the categories used are very often used without explanation, and extrapolation from them is rather difficult. Nevertheless, the following factors seem to have emerged:

3.7.1 There is at present little information available about the social class origins of White teachers

3.7.2 It is not clear as to what extent teaching constitutes an avenue of social mobility for teachers

3.7.3 Women outnumber men in the teaching profession

3.7.4 There are more Afrikaans than English-speaking teachers in South Africa

3.7.5 There are more non-graduate than graduate teachers in State schools

3.7.6 Teachers are considered - at least by officialdom - to be professional.

3.8 A Survey of Literature relating to Recruitment to Teaching

The general patterns outlined in 3.7. above can be considered, in some measure, to be related to over-all patterns to be found amongst recruits to teaching. It would be useful, therefore, to establish to what extent the phenomena mentioned above evidence themselves among those who are recruited to the teaching profession.

An important study has been carried out at the

University of Natal by MacMillan and Grieve (65) with the purpose of finding

"a clearer picture...of some aspects, at least, of the kind and quality of student entering teaching in Natal".

This survey was longitudinal, and ran from July 1965 to December, 1969. A number of important findings emerge from this survey, most of them consonant with the general picture which has already emerged. It was found, for example, that men were in a considerable minority, and that their general academic standard was lower than that of the women. The data produced in this connection make interesting reading.

During the period 1965 to 1969 the number of students who had a Matriculation exemption certificate (66) dropped from 55,9 per cent of the total intake to only 42 per cent (67). While this figure in itself is somewhat disconcerting, it becomes even more so when the writers point out that of the 58 per cent who failed to gain Matriculation exemption in 1969, 16 per cent had passed only the O-level examination (68), and that the majority of these were men, many of whom subsequently failed their courses of study.

Although the general level of academic achievement of the men is shown to be lower than that of the women, the level of achievement of the women recruited to teaching is also below standard. Basing their findings on aggregates obtained by men and women in their school-leaving examinations, MacMillan and Grieve conclude that the majority of students recruited to teaching are what they

call 'D' and 'E' students. In the case of women, 60 per cent rate a 'D', nearly 23 per cent an 'E'; while in the case of men, nearly 56 per cent rate a 'D' and 36,6 per cent an 'E' (68).

One of the national patterns one might have expected to be repeated was that of the ratio of English-speaking to Afrikaans-speaking teachers (see 3.7.4). This was not the case, however. During the four and a half year period of the survey, 334 Afrikaans-speaking teachers were trained out of a total of 2 638 trainees (69). The reason for this is that there are far fewer Afrikaans-speaking persons in Natal than elsewhere in South Africa and for this reason many of the prospective Afrikaans-speaking teachers go elsewhere for their training. This situation will since have altered as a result of the opening of the Afrikaans College of Education in Durban (70).

MacMillan and Grieve also established that there were fewer graduate trainees than non-graduate, another phenomenon which seems to be characteristic of the national group of teachers.

An important survey, results of which were published in 1966, was carried out under the direction of Haasbroek (71) with a view to establishing what was the motivation of prospective teachers who, when the survey was carried out, were still at school in their final years of study.

The reasons given for taking teaching as a career were then classified, and the following national picture was obtained (72):

Reason for teaching	Over-all % responses
Service to nation & country	58,7
Holidays	58,6
Length of working week	50,9
Length of working day	49,7
Working conditions	40,9
Bursaries, etc. at colleges	40,0
Teachers' salaries	25,7
Teachers' prestige & leading rôle in community	19,4

As these data were obtained by the questionnaire method, and as the questionnaires are not published with the report of the research, it is difficult not to be critical of the findings, quoted as they are. The totally opposed concepts implied by the first two categories, and the almost identical response to them, indicates that the questionnaire might have been more selective. Haasbroek does point out that if boys and girls are viewed separately, more girls than boys have the service ideal, while more boys than girls are attracted by the holidays. Whether or not one can generalise about the type of male attracted on this basis is not clear. If a less conscientious attitude is implied by these findings, they seem to tie up with what MacMillan and Grieve have established with regard to the academic performance of male recruits as a group.

The survey under discussion has provided some material - not a great deal - about the social origins of prospective recruits to teaching. This material was not cited earlier on for the simple reason that it does not relate to teachers who have actually qualified, but rather to school pupils who had not yet embarked on a course of

study which would qualify them ultimately to be teachers. On the matter of social origins, Haasbroek reports as follows:

"It appears that...the parents of almost half of the prospective teachers as a group (49,2 per cent)...fall under the lower administrative occupational group. This group is followed by the teachers whose parents fall under the semi-skilled occupational group (14,2 per cent) and the professional occupational group (12,5 per cent). The remainder of the group are scattered over other minor occupational categories" (73: writer's italics).

While direct comparisons with overseas studies are not possible, there can be no doubt that the predominant occupational categories of the fathers of trainee teachers as reported in this study would fall into the lower-middle and upper working classes.

The findings of Haasbroek closely parallel those of MacMillan and Grieve in the area of academic achievement. Haasbroek reports that

"the school performance of the largest group of prospective teachers is 59 per cent and less, and the prospective teachers with a school performance of 40-59 per cent are in the majority. It therefore appears that prospective teachers with an outstanding performance constitute a small group" (74).

The research under consideration has also established that the national pattern of relationship between numbers of English- and Afrikaans-speaking teachers seems to be maintained among pros-

Author Davies E H
Name of thesis Some Socio-cultural correlates of recritment to the teaching profession 1975

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg Library website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the Library website.