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Some socio-cultural correlates of recruitment to the teaching profession

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SOME SOCIO-CULTURAL CORRELATES OF RECRUITMENT TO THE TEACHING PROFESSION

EDWARD HUW DAVIES

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Education
University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg
for the Degree of Master of Education

Johannesburg 1975

D E C L A R A T I O N

I HEREBY DECLARE

(i) *That this Dissertation is my own work*

(ii) *That this Dissertation has not been submitted to any other University.*

E H Davies

A B S T R A C T

The research prosecuted had two main aims: first, to assemble certain basic information about student teachers of the English and Afrikaans language groups as a starting point for comparisons between them; and second, to establish to what extent, if at all, student teachers exhibit characteristics similar to those discerned amongst practising teachers in the U.K. and the U.S.A. An attempt was made to establish the social class origins, social mobility, attitudes to teaching and reasons for taking teaching of each of the groups and, in addition, a good deal of demographic material was obtained. Most of this material was utilised in the attempt to compare English and Afrikaans students, and smaller sub-groupings (such as males and females) within the two main groups. No hypothesis for confirmation or refutation was set up, as the paucity of information in this area about the South African situation renders difficult any adequate hypothesis.

The sample consisted of 790 student teachers. These were drawn from two teacher training institutions in Johannesburg - the Johannesburg College of Education, which in the main trains English-speaking teachers, and the Goudstadse Onderwyskollege, which trains Afrikaans-speaking teachers. The sample from each College consisted of males and females, and also included first- and third-year students, Senior Primary and Junior Primary students. 474 students from the English College were used, 316 from the Afrikaans one. The composition of the sample was adequate in terms of the polling device used.

The questionnaire method was used for data collection. A questionnaire was constructed in terms of basic categories outlined by Veness, Strong, Pieterse and others, and was administered to pilot groups of fifty students in each College. Parallel versions of the questionnaire in English and Afrikaans were administered. On the basis of the pilot survey, additional incorporations and modifications were made. The questionnaire

was finally administered to both groups of students by the researcher, so that administration techniques can for all practical purposes be considered to have been identical. Data obtained have been tabulated and analysed, and appropriate statistical tests for significant differences have been applied where necessary.

The attempt to isolate differences between sub-groups in the English- and Afrikaans-speaking samples was not very satisfactory. It was possible to establish that there are significant differences between English- and Afrikaans-speaking teachers in certain major areas.

- English-speaking students tend to be drawn from higher social groupings than Afrikaans students, if occupational category, educational level of parents and size of family are taken as influencing factors
- English-speaking students are less idealistic about teaching than Afrikaans students, who see teaching as an avenue of service to God and country
- Significantly smaller proportions of English school-leavers take teaching than is the case amongst the Afrikaans school-leaving group
- The religious commitment of the Afrikaans student, as well as his involvement in student affairs, is much greater than that of the English-speaking student
- Attitudes to, and expectations of teaching, are significantly different in the two groups.

The following general trends parallel tendencies in the U.S.A. and the U.K.:

- Composition of the student group is predominantly female
- Many student teachers are drawn from social groupings which correspond to the lower middle class overseas

- Student teachers tend to be academically sub-standard by comparison with other professions

- There is some evidence that student teachers may be socially isolated.

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C H A P T E R O N E

1.1 General Introduction

At the outset of this study it must be stressed that the study is not intended to be an experimental research study. The present study aims to be entirely descriptive in scope. No attempt is made to set up hypotheses for confirmation or refutation. One of the reasons for the lack of an hypothesis or hypotheses is that there is comparatively little information available about the area to be studied - at least in its South African context - and it is hoped that the present research may provide certain factual information which could form a basis for subsequent experimental work.

Educational research in South Africa in general, and in the Transvaal in particular, may be said to be in its infancy. This statement is especially valid when used in the context of the Sociology of Education. While it is true that research has at various times been prosecuted in this field, it has usually had an accidental connection only with the Sociology of Education (1). Other research has often been ignored or forgotten, or has had to be abandoned because of a lack of funds.

In Europe and in the United States of America there has been for some time a systematic and concerted enquiry into all aspects of education - among them, the sociological. Such enquiry has ranged from an examination of the social origins of teachers to the analysis of the organisation of the school; from the role of the school in the particular community to the effects of a school system on the economy of the nation. In short, a fairly comprehensive system of factual information has been amassed during the past thirty years and more.

The same cannot be said to be true of South Africa. It is true that studies have been carried out which might have

implications for the sociologist. A vast number of reports and volumes of statistical information exist - many of them compiled by government departments. But most of this information has been assembled by persons whose interest is primarily historical or philosophical - or plainly political - rather than by educational sociologists.

There is therefore a need for more information about many of the sociological aspects of education. Such information is not easy to acquire, however. This is hardly surprising when the complexity of the educational situation in South Africa is borne in mind.

There are separate education systems for Whites, Blacks, Indians and Coloureds. There is a system of state education on the one hand - and private schools on the other. The latter almost always have some religious connections which further complicate the issue.

There are different systems and policies in the four provinces, as well as in the emerging Black Homelands. Primary, Secondary and post-school education all constitute a diversity of content and approach. Arising out of this complexity are a plethora of educational problems, most of which might fruitfully be investigated.

1.2 Current Research in South Africa

In the light of the above paragraphs, it is clear that a good deal of fact-finding into many aspects of education is called for. It is also clear that not the least of the problems of the investigator is the very complexity of the system with which he has to deal. Consequently, research into a variety of disparate areas is required to enable a reasonably comprehensive picture to be built up.

Current educational research in South Africa has tended to be comparative - that is, comparisons have been drawn between educational provision for various ethnic groups, attempts

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