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THE SYSTEMATIC ALLOCATION OF TEACHER TO TASK
IN EDUCATION SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the issues associated with the systematic allocation of instructional personnel resources to tasks within education systems and develops a conceptual framework to organize knowledge and direct research in this area of enquiry. An evaluation of the current status of the field of enquiry concludes that existing mechanisms for the matching of teacher to task on a system-wide basis are manifestly inefficient, educationalists have paid scant attention to the problem and there is no recognizable body of knowledge relating to it. The basic elements of a rational system, the reward structure, selection criteria, and selection procedures are examined and a rational system, based on a consideration of the issues raised in that examination, is outlined. An approach to the analysis and comparison of systems is discussed and some suggestions on the modification of staffing arrangements to bring them more into accord with the 'realities' of the situation are made.

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INTRODUCTION

This study examines the issues associated with the systematic allocation of instructional personnel resources to tasks within education systems and develops a conceptual framework to organize knowledge and direct research in this area of enquiry. Justification for such a study is twofold: the issues are both important and neglected. The ability of those persons attracted to teaching and the way in which their ability is distributed within an education system will exert a profound influence on the extent to which the system achieves the objectives entrusted to it by the society it serves. Existing mechanisms for the matching of teacher to task on a system-wide basis are manifestly inefficient. Examination of relevant literature reveals that educationalists have paid scant attention to the topic and that there is no recognizable body of knowledge relating to it.

The present study was precipitated by my involvement in the implementation of the Teaching Service Act of Papua New Guinea. I was seconded to the Teaching Service Commission (April 1972) to assist in the development of the procedures and criteria for making appointments to positions within the teaching service. While engaged in this task I became acutely aware of the lack of readily accessible guidelines. When full-time study provided the opportunity for a more thorough search I discovered that no such guidelines were available. The data assembled for analysis and organization is derived from an examination of the relevant aspects of a number of education systems, particular attention being given to the education systems of Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and the Australian state systems. This examination was aided by the unusual opportunity to study a system (Papua New Guinea) from the inside, first as one subject to the operation of the mechanisms which allocate teacher to task and later as one assisting in the development of such mechanisms.

The first two chapters are basically concerned with an evaluation of the current status of the field of enquiry. Chapter one indicates the scope of the search for relevant literature, examines the findings of relevant studies and assesses the value of available information. Chapter two evaluates three major facets of the field of enquiry: substantive issues, theoretical background, and the conception of the problem. It then discusses the implication of current inadequacies for the development of an effective approach to the investigation of the field of concern. The next two chapters (three and four) are concerned with theoretical issues. They are intended to provide a firm foundation for the remainder of the study and an explicit statement of the author's position with regard to a number of fundamental and controversial questions.

The basic objectives of a rational system for the allocation of teacher to task on a system-wide basis, and the constraints they impose are discussed in chapter five. The basic elements of such a system, the reward structure, selection criteria, and selection procedures, are examined in chapters six, seven, and eight, respectively. Chapter nine outlines a rational system based on a consideration of the issues raised in those chapters, which it attempts to intergrate and complete. Appointments procedures are outlined and variations discussed. It is important to note that where a specific procedure or approach is recommended the details have been thought out, even if they have not been included in the text: there will be at least one way in which it could be implemented. The final chapter (ten) discusses an approach to the analysis and comparison of systems and looks at a number of improvements that could be made to bring staffing arrangements more into accord with what might be called the realities of the situation.

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CHAPTER ONE

REVIEW

A brief comment on the scope of the review is followed by a look at the studies which relate to the movement of teachers into, out of, and within education systems. Recruitment, resignation, the imbalance between supply and demand for particular categories of teachers, the relationship between level of training, occupational commitment and the notion of equity are discussed. This is followed by an examination of a study by Becker which focuses on horizontal movement within an education system and another by Griffiths which focuses on vertical movement. Comments are made on Dreeben's review of occupational careers in teaching and Matthews and Radford's description of the career and salary structures of teachers in Australia. A consideration of the nature of official documents and their value as a source of information is followed by some concluding remarks on the literature and research relating to the topic under review.

The search for literature relating to the systematic allocation of instructional personnel resources to tasks within education systems began with a survey of ERIC DESCRIPTORS. The titles listed under all descriptors which appeared even remotely relevant were examined. Use was also made of the Encyclopedia of Educational Research and the Review of Educational Research. Other indices were consulted but added nothing of importance.

None of the descriptors described precisely what was sought. Some which looked promising led to articles that were disappointing because of their marginal relevance. 'Teacher Promotion' for example leads one to 'Developing Administrative Leadership' and 'Career Planning' refers to student rather than teacher career planning. Indeed the review revealed nothing in the literature that addressed itself directly to the topic under consideration. Extensive studies of a number of related issues have been reported and do have an important bearing on the topic.

Considerable attention has been given to discovering the motivation and characteristics of those who enter, or intend to enter, teaching. The high proportion of a community's well educated people engaged in teaching has implications for recruitment to teaching that are frequently overlooked. In New Zealand, for example, less than five percent of the national workforce have tertiary qualifications: of these more than forty percent are teachers. There are practical limitations on the level of salary that can be offered to such a large group and the numbers required prevent recruitment being confined to the same narrowly defined group upon which other professions draw.

Nevertheless teaching does attract a high proportion of the most able. A study of the table Dreeben (1970) has adapted from Davis (1964) reveals that although a much greater proportion (42.1%) of those who enter medicine are likely to come from the top fifth of college graduates than those who enter education (13.6%) the proportion of the top fifth that enter education (18.8%) is greater than the proportion that enter medicine (7.2%). Clearly, a modest increase in the proportion of teachers drawn from this group would result in a substantial reduction in the proportion that other occupations could draw from this group. This strongly suggests that measures designed to retain talented recruits in teaching are more likely to succeed than measures designed to increase the total number.

Indeed, perhaps for this reason, the movement of teachers out of teaching has been a major area of study. The proportion of teachers who leave teaching is very high in comparison with the proportion of doctors who leave medicine or lawyers who leave law. A small, but significant, part of this difference is probably due to the difference between what is meant by 'remaining in' medicine or law and what is meant by 'remaining in' teaching. A medical consultant may teach medicine or carry out research into medicine and still be counted as remaining in medicine. To remain in teaching is to remain in the classroom which, because of current conceptions of teacher role and the career structure of the profession, generally precludes the teaching of teaching or research into teaching.

Even so the number of teachers who leave teaching is very high and this is a source of serious concern to educationists. This has prompted many researchers to try and discover the reasons for which teachers leave the profession. Foster's review of Teacher Supply and Demand in the Review of Educational Research (June 1967) considers some of these effort under the

heading of 'teacher withdrawals'. Many reasons have been listed: some by those who have gone, others by those who observed their going. Nelson and Thompson (1963) listed nineteen factors. The list emphasised money, discriminatory loads on new teachers, extra-duty assignments and inadequate supervision. Thomas (1964) reported that administrators felt that teacher retention could be increased by raising salaries, lowering pupil/teacher ratios, obtaining classroom help and placing teachers in major teaching fields or preferred grade levels.

For men the most common reasons for leaving teaching are economic, whereas for women they relate to family responsibilities (Metz 1962, Stewart 1963, Blaser 1965). A substantial number of the relatively high proportion of teachers leaving teaching is explained by the relatively high proportion of women in the profession. It is therefore important to note that many women who leave teaching do so, not because they are dissatisfied, but to fulfil a culturally defined role. A high proportion of teachers who leave teaching do so before their fifth year of service (Charters 1970). Included among them will be women who leave teaching to bear children. Measures designed to retain these teachers in the profession would clearly have to be quite different to those measures designed to retain those who leave because they are dissatisfied and any such attempt would have wider social implications. Difficulties faced by beginning teachers are widely acknowledged. White (1966) notes the effect of negative pupil attitudes on the turnover of beginning teachers and suggests that socioeconomic differences are important in the assignment of beginning teachers. The literature suggests that far from receiving support in these vulnerable years, the beginning teacher is subjected to a number of unpleasant discriminatory practices including assignment to difficult classes and unpopular locations.

Teacher shortages may be acute for some categories of teacher while there may be more than enough teachers available in other categories. This problem of selective teacher shortage is dealt with in a number of NEA reports (1964a, 1965a, 1966e). There is considerable specialization within teaching. Elementary and secondary teachers frequently form two distinct groups. Among secondary teachers further specialization is usually in terms of subject area taught whereas among elementary teachers it is more often in terms of grade level taught. Foster (1967) noted a tendency toward an oversupply of teachers in the secondary area and an undersupply in the elementary. Bartels (1964, 1966) reported an imbalance of supply and demand

according to grade level. Despite the great influx of younger men reported in 1963 (NEA 1963) both Earp and Peterson in 1966 noted that there was a limited supply of male teachers for the elementary area. In the secondary area there appears to be a more or less continual imbalance in supply and demand in relation to the various subject areas. Missassignment, the assignment of teachers to tasks other than those for which they were prepared is seen as one of the consequences of selective teacher shortages (Ford & Allen 1966).

In most professional occupations there is a positive correlation between the level of training and commitment to the occupation. Becker (1960) has proposed an investment process explanation for the development of occupational commitment. However a number of investigators have found that for men there is an inverse relationship between level of training and commitment to teaching (Mason 1959, Walker 1961, Wyllie 1966) and Selby Smith reports a higher resignation rate among graduates than non-graduates. Apparently better educated teachers tend to regard themselves as scholars rather than teachers (Kob 1961). Charters (1964) observes that it may be the potentially best teachers who leave, a view that is consistent with Hunter's observation that men who left teaching increased their earnings almost twice as much as those who remained.

Failure to receive what is seen as an equitable reward for personal investment (which includes education) appears to lead to dissatisfaction (Planz & Gibson 1971). Kirkpatrick (1964) reports a relationship between job satisfaction and the perception of promotional opportunity. It appears that promotional opportunity is seen as part of current reward. In teaching the basic qualifications required for entry are commonly considered sufficient for appointment to higher level positions: qualifications do not confer the protection from unqualified competition in teaching that they do in other professions. This reduces the promotional opportunities of well qualified teachers in comparison with similarly qualified persons in other professions. The nature of any relationship between job satisfaction and teacher effectiveness remains unclear, however it does appear that dissatisfaction can provide a motive for leaving teaching while good qualifications provide the opportunity.

Attempts to differentiate between salaries of individual teachers on the basis of quality of service, as opposed to qualifications, have met with

little success (Wilson, Kerr & Wilson). The North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction (1965) concluded that a statewide merit plan was neither practical or feasible. Link (1965) concluded that most rating systems tend to have adverse effects on the teacher-supervisor relationships and were of little value in improving instruction. The lack of an acceptable method of evaluating teacher effectiveness is seen as the crucial difficulty. There has been a vast amount of attention given to discovering the relationship between teacher characteristics and teacher effectiveness but the result has been disappointingly inconclusive. Flanders (1969) claims that research permits cautious optimism and indicates that the tools long needed for the analysis of the teaching-learning process are gradually being developed.

A number of interesting insights into how and why teachers move from one position to another within an education system are to be found in a paper by Becker (1951) 'The Career of the Chicago Public School Teacher'. His analysis is based on interviews with sixty teachers (probably all women) in the Chicago system. The movement examined was horizontal, that is at one level of a hierarchy. The motivation for movement appears to be the search for the position in which the configuration of basic work problems presented are least aggravated and most susceptible of solution. The most difficult problems were seen to arise from teacher/pupil interaction and to be related to the social-class background of the students.

The same study reports that teacher movement is accomplished under the Chicago Board of Education rules governing transfer, which allow a teacher, after serving in a position for more than one year, to request a transfer to one of as many as ten other positions. Movement to one of these positions is possible when an opening occurs for which there is no applicant whose request is of longer standing, and transfer takes place on the approval of the principal of the new school. Knowledge as to which schools are 'good' is typically acquired through the 'grapevine'. The wise teacher is patient enough to wait for transfer to the right school and careful enough not to cause the principal to use his power of rejection. Becker's study makes it abundantly clear that in 1951 the mechanism for the allocation of teacher to task used by the Chicago Board of Education showed no evidence of being designed to place teachers in the most appropriate position having regard to the teacher's skills and the requirements of the particular position. In fact there would be a tendency for the most competent teachers to occupy the least demanding positions.

A more recent study 'Teacher Mobility in New York City' (Griffiths et al 1963) suggests that once a teacher begins seeking vertical mobility (promotion) one kind of personalistic behaviour is vital - gaining the attention of superiors, or as they call it GASing. The essence of GASing is doing a particular job to the satisfaction of one's superior. The job need not be difficult to do, but will be a job that few can do successfully, or one that few would be prepared to undertake. It will be non-teaching, time consuming, rateable by the superior and important to him. The study also refers to the examinations that must be passed at every stage of advancement in the New York City system and the system of coaching that has developed in association with it. It stresses the importance of being coached by one's principal or chairman (especially if that person has been an assistant examiner) and the importance of developing contacts with those who have passed the examinations and those who are assisting or have assisted in writing the examinations.

Griffiths and his colleagues give considerable attention to the problems of recruitment of teachers to the New York City system. They discuss the advantages and disadvantages for both the school and the teacher of the employment of substitute (casual) teachers. Some principals favour employing teachers as substitutes in the first instance in order to assess them for future regular employment. In 1962 substitute teachers comprised about 75% of teachers entering secondary and about 33% of teachers entering elementary school positions in New York City. Although the Griffiths study focuses on vertical mobility rather than the horizontal mobility that was studied by Becker, again there is little evidence to suggest the existence of a mechanism for effectively matching teachers with particular skills to tasks which require the exercise of those skills.

Under the heading 'Occupational Careers in Teaching', Dreeben (1970) reviewed the literature relating to: the characteristics of teachers, recruitment to the occupation, stages of the work career, problems of promotion, commitment to teaching, and the problems of professionalism. In those areas with which this present review is concerned he relies heavily on the Griffiths study referred to above. Dreeben provides considerable opinion, which appears to be very well informed, but nothing to dispel the impression that there is little in the way of hard data and nothing in the way of major recent studies in the area under review.

The publication 'Career and Salary Structures of Teachers in Government Schools in the Australian States' (Matthews & Radford 1972) provides a useful illustration of progress and problems in this area of investigation. It shows the positions available, some of the qualifications required to occupy them, the method by which suitability is assessed and the ways in which the positions are filled. The authors do not claim to compare the structures, only to have set them down in as parallel a way as possible. They point out that it was not possible to provide for all states, information on all the same points as procedures differ from state to state and a procedure, position, or organization applying in one state may have no place or relevance in another. It is a very useful document in its own right but it also indicates how far we are from being able to make proper comparisons between systems.

Official documents relating to a particular education system can provide a source of information concerning the operation of that system. Such documents fall into two main categories. The first are those intended to ensure that the system operates in a particular way and include legislative acts, regulations made and delegations exercised under such acts and directives issued by system executives who have the authority or power to do so. They indicate what is intended to happen rather than what does happen, are not always consistent one with the other and can be difficult to obtain.

The second category includes those documents designed to monitor the functioning of the system and consist of various types of report required by legislation. Most systems are required to prepare an annual report which deals with the operation of the entire system. They can provide a useful introduction to a system but tend to superficiality. Less common, but more useful, are the special reports some systems require to be made on the functioning of a particular aspect of the system. The report of the Central Advisory Committee on the Appointment and Promotion of Teachers which must be submitted to the New Zealand minister of education every five years is a good example of such reports and is one which relates to the topic under review. Difficulties in obtaining such reports lead one to suspect that they are only printed in small numbers, or distributed only within the system concerned, or both.

From time to time circumstances arise that precipitate, even compel, a major review of the organization and practice of an education system. Documents resulting from such reviews can provide valuable descriptions of the system concerned and give useful insights into the kind of research on which decisions to modify systems are based. The report of the Advisory Committee on Education in Papua New Guinea (1969) and 'Teachers for Commonwealth Schools (1973) are good examples. The investigations on which such reports are based are usually carried out in haste by a small group of eminent people nominated for the task by the authority concerned. They typically review relevant published material, visit other education systems which they examine by consulting key personnel, and consult with representatives of the major interests concerned with the effects of the proposed changes. They also comment on the inadequate time and statistics available to them for their investigation. Sometimes special reference material is compiled for the investigation such as the description of career and salary structures by Matthews and Radford discussed above. Modifications to the system are then based on the opinions formed by the committee during the course of the investigation.

This current review revealed no recognisable body of knowledge relating to the systematic allocation of instructional personnel to tasks within education systems. A feature of the literature is the prevalence of opinion rather than research. Furthermore, much of what passes for research consists of little more than the collection of opinions and intentions. The field of study lacks an appropriate theoretical orientation: studies have been topical rather than systematic, with findings related to narrow hypotheses rather than a broad theoretical framework. There is also a lack of adequate statistical data. The hard data that does exist has been obtained in an almost random manner from different systems at different times; thus inferences resting on comparisons are tentative at best. What little evidence there is suggests that the mechanisms currently used to match teacher to task are primitive, highly inefficient and have many unintended and undesirable consequences. What the field of study lacks above all is a proper conception of the problem and an adequate conceptual framework to organize knowledge and direct research.