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PROFESSIONALISM AND SECONDARY TEACHERS  
IN NEW ZEALAND

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Arts  
in Education at  
Massey University

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1969

ABSTRACT

"From the economic and social standpoint a country's educational system is its main means both of perpetuating the values and skills of its population and preparing it for the changes which progress requires".

(Phillips 1964)

One of the mainstays of a country's educational system is its teachers and therefore much of the responsibility for the future welfare of a society rests on their shoulders.

From such a basis this study attempts to examine a group of teachers from a segment of New Zealand's teaching force with the aim of contributing to a more empirically based analysis of secondary teachers in this country. As this investigation is concerned with teachers in their occupational roles, rather than with teaching, the concept of professionalism is used as the main structuring element in the research.

An attempt is made to justify the basic premise that all teachers should be professionally orientated. Such an orientation is conceived as having three basic elements; technical competence, autonomy and service ideal. A professional teacher is seen as one who has a feeling of expertise in his occupational role (competence); wants the freedom to do the job the way he thinks it ought to be done (autonomy); and considers his basic loyalty to be to his pupils rather than the institution (service). An index of professionalism is calculated for each respondent on the basis of the answers to items in a composite question-set (see question 33, Appendix).

The sample comprised one hundred and eighty-six teachers from ten schools situated in and around a light industrial and servicing centre in the lower half of the North Island. This number represented a response rate of

just over fifty percent. Responses were coded on to I.B.M. cards for analysis, and calculation of statistical significance (using chi-square) was done by computer. The more specific purpose of the research is to examine some of the possible background correlates of a professional role perception in teaching by investigating the relationship between professionalism and sex-role, socio-economic background, advanced training and occupational position.

A further intention is to see what possible consequence professionalism has on other elements of the teaching situation by looking for relationships between it and teaching style, extra-curricular activities, perceptions of aims of education, external examinations, emphasis in education, teacher satisfaction and participation in professional associations.

Much of the value of this research is in terms of the lack of significant findings, pointing to one or all of the following:-

(i) the methodical inadequacies in the operationalisation of the concept of professionalism; (ii) the inappropriateness of the concept for teaching; (iii) the distinction which must be made between a professional role perception and professional behaviour.

However some significant findings do emerge in relation to sex-role and marital status, emphases in teaching style, emphases in other elements of education, outside examinations, interest and activity in the Post Primary Teachers' Association and satisfaction in teaching. Most of these results are consistent with the concept of a professional role orientation (especially the service element), but some point to the disparity between a professional orientation and professional behaviour.

Although only limited generalisations can be drawn from the data, this study has value in that it begins research in an area of New Zealand education so far little investigated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful for the help given to me by Dr.G.S.Fraser not only in terms of the reading of drafts and discussing of material but also for his personal encouragement at all times.

Thanks are also due to Professor C.Hill and Dr.R. Adams who kindly read sections of the draft and offered many helpful suggestions.

To all the teachers who co-operated by completing a questionnaire I acknowledge a debt of gratitude.

In constructing my questionnaire I used items from John L.Colombotos' study (1962) and the International Study of Teachers.

Finally I am grateful to my wife for her extraordinary patience and support.

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PART I

THE BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

This Part comprises four chapters which give the general background of the study.

Chapter I outlines the aims of the study and the reasons for its undertaking.

Chapter II is a theoretical consideration of the major concepts of the investigation, these being professionalism and role perceptions.

In Chapter III the major hypotheses are outlined and

Chapter IV is a survey of the methodology.

## CHAPTER I

### THE AIMS AND PURPOSE OF THIS INVESTIGATION

"Mass education is one of the major revolutionary forces of the Twentieth Century".

(Dewey 1943)

Few would deny the truth and force of the above statement, therefore it is incumbent on governments, educational administrators and teachers to ensure that this revolutionary force is channelled in the right direction. While recognising that the overall statement of educational policy is a philosophical and social question and therefore outside the range of this investigation, the operationalisation of such a statement in the classroom is the direct responsibility of the teacher.

Teachers are the educators in our schools and therefore interpret for the benefit of their pupils the educational policy as laid down by the educational bureaucracy, government and society as a whole. Thus the occupational attitudes and role orientations of teachers are likely to have considerable influence on the way they put into practice a society's educational policy. Further it is argued that teachers themselves, as educational practitioners, should have a great deal of influence in the establishment of educational policy.

The underlying proposition of this research is that teachers should perceive their occupational roles in a professional way. The concepts of role orientations, professionalism, as well as the underlying proposition above, are discussed fully in Chapter II and it suffices in this brief introduction to simply set the problem in its context.

The main purpose of this investigation then is to see to what extent a sample of teachers perceive their occupational roles in a professional manner. Although the question could be asked of any section of the teaching body the present research specifically examines a sample of secondary teachers. In addition to professionalism, other variables examined are some of the background correlates of a professional role perception and the implications of the latter for selected teaching operations and certain teacher attitudes.

The general purpose of this study is to examine the professional characteristics of a sample of secondary teachers. Specifically :-

- (i) to analyse the relationship between certain background correlates (namely, sex-role, socio-economic background, advanced training and occupational position) and professionalism, and
- (ii) to investigate possible relationships between a professional role perception and teaching style, extra-curricular activities, perceptions of the aims of education, external examinations, emphases in education and teacher satisfaction, and participation in professional associations.

Many statements, usually without the benefit of supporting data, have been made about secondary teachers in this country and people outside teaching have an idea of a teacher stereotype which could well be inaccurate. Apart from the question of professionalism, the present research should contribute to a more empirically-based analysis of secondary teachers in New Zealand.