

Teacher Retention and Satisfaction: A Comparison of M.A.T. and B.S./B.A. Graduates in Teacher Education

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Career satisfaction among teachers is directly related to their initial level of preparation and locale of the school district. Teachers who initially completed an M.A.T. were more satisfied in suburban than rural schools. Teachers who initially completed the traditional undergraduate program were more satisfied in rural than suburban schools.

In the past four years four national reports were issued which focused upon reform in teacher education. The initial report, *A Call for Change in Teacher Education* (National Commission for Excellence in Teacher Education, 1985), was followed by the report, *Tomorrow's Teachers* (Holmes Group, 1986); then, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986) and finally, *Time for Results*, (National Governors' Association, 1986). Implicit in these reports is the belief that the preparation of teachers needs to be structured around graduate education. It is asserted that graduate studies will provide the basis for the attainment of "professional status." The attainment of this "professional status" will enable education to recruit and retain academically talented teachers. There is one glaring omission in much of this furor over the preparation of teachers. There are few facts to support the assertions that characterize many of the reports and, certainly, most of the reactions to them, both pro and con. There is a basic substitution of assertions; pronouncements, and faith for fact. This is particularly poignant since there is so little need for it. Students of educational history would recognize many of the recommendations. For example, the recommendation that prospective teachers complete an academic subject major before seeking professional preparation in graduate school is not new.

Over two decades ago Conant (1963) created a controversy in teacher education with suggestions quite similar to ones being made today. Even then it was noted (Duffy, 1967) that what Conant was offering as innovative suggestions had already been established at his own institution, Harvard, in 1936. The program is generally known as the Master of Arts in Teaching or the M.A.T. Coley and Thorpe (1986) completed a comprehensive study of the M.A.T. model at selected universities. Although the authors reported on selected characteristics

of those completing the M.A.T. they did not report on the relationship between career satisfaction, retention, and the level of initial preparation as a teacher. This study gives little insight into the very concerns addressed in the national reports. These dimensions are integral to many of the reform proposals yet little attention is given to previous efforts to improve teacher education through the M.A.T. What lessons may be learned from examination of M.A.T. graduates?

There are data (Schlechty & Vance, 1981) reporting that a disproportionate number of academically talented individuals leave the profession after a short period of time. It is suggested that the conditions for professional practice need to be improved (Goodlad, 1985; Lieberman & Miller, 1978; Sykes, 1983) to ensure the retention of academically talented individuals. The issue of career satisfaction and retention of teachers is the focus of numerous recent studies (Chapman, 1980; Chapman & Green, 1984; Chapman & Hutcheson, 1981; Matthes & Carlson, 1986). Attrition among teachers might be more directly related to the conditions for professional practice than the level and quality of preparation. Whether increased academic preparation will enable teachers to function more effectively than colleagues who complete a traditional teacher education program is unclear. Whether those with more academic preparation are more satisfied and will remain in the classroom longer is also unclear. None of the studies cited reported a comparison between those completing an M.A.T. degree and those completing the traditional B.A./B.S. teacher education program on the dimensions of career satisfaction and retention. In fact, there are no reported studies comparing M.A.T. and B.A./B.S. teacher education graduates on any dimensions. This study focused on the following questions: 1) What differences exist among teachers completing an M.A.T. program versus those completing a B.A./B.S. program on selected dimensions

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of career satisfaction? 2) What differences exist among teachers completing a M.A.T. program versus those completing a B.A./B.S. program in career patterns?

METHODS

Subjects

The subjects in this study completed degrees at the University of Iowa during the period 1966-1976. All individuals completing a M.A.T. (N=175) and a ten percent random sample of those completing an under graduate preparation program in secondary education during the period (N=180) were sent a questionnaire. For the M.A.T. graduates 77% of the questionnaires (N=136) were completed and returned while 73% of the questionnaires (N=133) sent were completed and returned by the B.A./B.S. graduates.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section requested demographic information, while the second section requested information pertaining to career pattern. The third section consisted of items representing dimensions of career satisfaction. The respondents rated each of the career satisfaction items on a Likert-type scale from extremely satisfied [4] to not at all satisfied [1]. These items represented those factors identified by Chapman and Lowther (1982) as related to career satisfaction. The items revolved around three basic characteristics of a profession: status, autonomy, and rewards. In addition, the respondents were asked to rate degree of satisfaction with present position as well as satisfaction with their progress in the profession.

Procedures

The subjects were identified through the University of Iowa Office of Alumni Services. The questionnaire was mailed during May, 1986. A reminder was sent four weeks later. This was followed by a letter and another copy of the questionnaire being sent to the non-respondents five weeks later. Of the initial 175 questionnaires sent to the M.A.T. graduates 12 were returned for the lack of a forwarding address while only four of the initial 180 questionnaires sent to the B.A./B.S. graduates were returned for the same reason.

RESULTS

Characteristics

The differences in mean age between the two groups, M.A.T. ($\bar{X}=42.6$) versus B.A./B.S. ($\bar{X}=37.3$), was significant ($t=-8.304$, $df=266$, $p<.001$). This would be expected given the M.A.T. graduates would have completed undergraduate degrees. The mean years taught

also differed significantly (B.A./B.S. $\bar{X}=7.63$ vs. M.A.T. $\bar{X}=10.16$) ($t=3.325$, $df=233$, $p<.001$) between the two groups. The distribution of graduates by sex across degree was significantly disproportionate; a higher percentage of males completed M.A.T. degrees than females and a higher percentage of females completed B.A./B.S. degrees. The distribution of graduates by specialization across degree was significantly disproportionate. The greatest differences were found in science and language arts. Significantly more respondents with B.A./B.S. degrees completed a major in language arts than other areas, whereas a disproportionate number of those completing an M.A.T. completed a specialization in one of the sciences. The differences in type of school district; urban, suburban, rural, the respondents were presently teaching or last taught in by degree were not significant.

Career Pattern

From the data in Table 1 it appears that more graduates with M.A.T. degrees remained as teachers than those who initially completed an undergraduate program in teacher education. Those completing an undergraduate program assumed other positions in education with greater frequency than those completing an M.A.T. degree during the same period of time.

TABLE 1
Summary of Career Patterns for Teacher Education Graduates 1966-76 By Degree

Pattern	M.A.T.	B.A./B.S.
Teachers: taught since graduation	54.4% (N=74)	37.4% (N=49)
Leavers: taught but left	21.3% (N=29)	21.4% (N=28)
Never Taught: chose another career	7.4% (N=10)	11.5% (N=15)
Educator: taught and pursued another education career (i.e., administration, counseling)	5.1% (N=7)	11.5% (N=15)
Other	11.8% (N=16)	18.3% (N=24)
$X^2 (4, N=267) = 10.518$		$p > .05$

Career Satisfaction

The respondents were asked to rate 11 dimensions of teaching on a four-point scale from Extremely Satisfied [4] to Not At All Satisfied [1]. Given that the respondents were rating satisfaction with teaching, only those with teaching experience were included in the analyses presented in Table 2. The data were analyzed by a 2 x 3 ANCOVA. The two factors were degree completed (e.g., M.A.T. or B.A./B.S.) and career pattern (e.g., teacher, leaver, or other educator). The covariate was years of classroom teaching experience. Although Chapman and

Lowther (1982) had not found a relationship between years of classroom teaching experience and career satisfaction there is some indication that years in the classroom may have a negative impact on the teacher (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978) and therefore should be controlled in any analysis of career satisfaction.

There were significant differences among the three career patterns used in the analyses, reported in Table 2, on seven of the 11 dimensions of career satisfaction. Differences were reported between the respondents with an M.A.T. degree versus B.A./B.S. only on Item A: *Opportunity to learn new things*. Those individuals with an M.A.T. rated this item significantly higher ($\bar{X}=3.17$) than those with a B.A./B.S. ($\bar{X}=2.91$). The level of degree for initial preparation as a teacher did not account for any of the differences on the other ten dimensions of career satisfaction.

TABLE 2
Results of Bonferroni Post Hoc Comparisons of Differences Between Adjusted Cell Means for Teachers, Educators, and Leavers on Selected Career Satisfaction Items

14. Recognition from administration
*Leavers ($\bar{X}=1.925$) vs. Teachers ($\bar{X}=2.347$)
*Leavers ($\bar{X}=1.925$) vs. Educators ($\bar{X}=2.411$)
17. Leadership opportunities in your field
*Leavers ($\bar{X}=2.05$) vs. Educators ($\bar{X}=2.636$)
19. Salary/benefits
*Leavers ($\bar{X}=1.545$) vs. Teachers ($\bar{X}=2.139$)
*Leavers ($\bar{X}=1.545$) vs. Educators ($\bar{X}=2.090$)
21. Recognition from peers
*Leavers ($\bar{X}=2.41$) vs. Educators ($\bar{X}=3.032$)
22. Sense of professional effectiveness
*Leavers ($\bar{X}=2.2$) vs. Educators ($\bar{X}=2.818$)
*Leavers ($\bar{X}=2.2$) vs. Teachers ($\bar{X}=4.62$)
25. Satisfaction with progress in profession
*Educators ($\bar{X}=3.05$) vs. Teachers ($\bar{X}=2.413$)
*Educators ($\bar{X}=3.05$) vs. Leavers ($\bar{X}=2.441$)

*p<.05

The differences among the three career patterns; teacher, educator or leaver, on seven of the dimensions of career satisfaction used in this study were significantly different. Bonferroni post hoc comparisons (Hays, 1981) were calculated to determine which adjusted mean scores were significantly different. The adjusted mean scores by career pattern and item are reported in Table 2. Those individuals classified as 'leavers' rated five dimensions of career satisfaction lower than 'teachers' or 'educators.' There were no significant differences between the 'teachers' and 'educators' on any of the dimensions of career satisfaction. It should be noted that the post hoc comparison did not identify the difference on two of the seven dimensions of career satisfaction.

In addition to the eleven items related to dimensions of career satisfaction the respondents were asked to rate the following more general items related to career satisfaction:

L. Satisfaction with present position

M. Satisfaction with progress in profession

There were no significant differences between the adjusted mean ratings given by 'teachers,' 'educators' and 'leavers' on the item dealing with satisfaction with their present position. The differences in the adjusted mean ratings on 'satisfaction with progress in the profession,' however, were significantly different. Those respondents classified as 'educators' indicated greater satisfaction ($\bar{X}=3.05$) than those classified as 'teachers' ($\bar{X}=2.41$) or 'leavers' ($\bar{X}=2.44$). The difference between the 'teachers' and 'leavers' was not significant. Those respondents in education but not teaching were more satisfied. There were no significant differences between those with a M.A.T. and those with a B.A./B.S. degree on those two items.

Whether or not the school locale; rural, urban, and suburban, is directly related to career satisfaction is unclear. To determine if the locale of school might account for some of the differences between M.A.T. and B.A./B.S. graduates on the 11 dimensions of career satisfaction, a $2 \times 3 \times 3$ ANOVA was calculated controlling for career pattern (*i.e.* teachers, educators, and leavers). The results indicated that seven of the 11 had a significant interaction effect between the factors of type of school and the degree. To examine further the interactions, the mean ratings for the respective cells are presented in Table 3. The mean ratings of respondents in rural settings with M.A.T. degrees were lower on all seven dimensions of career satisfaction than those with a B.A./B.S. degree in rural settings. The significant interaction effect can be explained from the Table 3 when one examines the mean ratings of respondents in suburban schools. Those respondents with an M.A.T. degree indicated higher satisfaction on five of the seven dimensions than those with a B.A./B.S. degree. Differences in career satisfaction appear to be directly related to the locale of school; rural, urban, and suburban, and the entry level of preparation as a teacher.

The preparation and retention of qualified teachers are major concerns of the reform movement. At first glance the results of this study indicate that there are no differences between those who received initial preparation as teachers through the M.A.T. program and those who completed a teacher education programs as part of a B.A./B.S. program. Those individuals who chose other employment after teaching for a number of years indicated less satisfaction with teaching on five of the 11 dimensions of career satisfaction than either the teachers or educators. On those factors which appear to be related to a sphere of influence (*e.g.*, leadership opportunities in your field) and sense of being valued (*e.g.*, salary/benefits, recognition from administrators/supervisors) the 'leavers' indicated significantly less satisfaction than either the educators or teachers. One would expect the 'leavers' to be less satisfied and thus choose another career. Such a distinct pattern

TABLE 3
Cells Means on Career Satisfaction Items
by Degree Type and School Locale

Item	Type of School					
	Rural		Urban		Suburban	
	M.A.T.	B.A./B.S.	M.A.T.	B.A./B.S.	M.A.T.	B.A./B.S.
c. Increased job responsibility and autonomy	2.0 (N=20)	2.5 (N=20)	2.29 (N=56)	2.31 (N=45)	2.7 (N=30)	2.87 (N=23)
e. Leadership opportunities in your field	2.0 (N=21)	2.5 (N=20)	2.29 (N=56)	2.31 (N=45)	2.37 (N=30)	2.35 (N=23)
f. Approval from family/close friends	2.71 (N=21)	3.25 (N=20)	2.91 (N=55)	2.6 (N=45)	2.7 (N=30)	2.96 (N=23)
h. Chance to contribute to important decisions	2.0 (N=21)	2.45 (N=20)	2.25 (N=55)	1.96 (N=45)	2.17 (N=30)	2.09 (N=23)
i. Recognition from peers	2.43 (N=21)	2.85 (N=20)	2.8 (N=55)	2.58 (N=45)	2.8 (N=30)	2.57 (N=23)
j. Sense of professional effectiveness	2.33 (N=21)	2.85 (N=20)	2.75 (N=56)	2.73 (N=45)	2.79 (N=30)	2.35 (N=23)
k. Recognition from the community	2.29 (N=21)	2.65 (N=20)	2.5 (N=56)	2.02 (N=45)	2.23 (N=30)	2 (N=23)
m. Satisfaction with progress in	2. (N=16)	3. (N=17)	2.55 (N=54)	2.35 (N=43)	2.41 (N=29)	2.57 (N=21)

in the level of satisfaction between the 'leavers' and the other two categories, teachers and educators suggests the career satisfaction items on the questionnaire may have validity. That there were no significant differences between those who completed an M.A.T. program and those who completed a B.A./B.S. program on 10 of the 11 dimensions of career satisfaction was striking. One might expect teachers with more extensive preparation to be more dissatisfied with the conditions in the schools and yet no differences were apparent.

Of particular interest was the relationship between the type of school; rural, urban, and suburban and the level of initial preparation; M.A.T. versus B.A./B.S. On seven of the 11 dimensions of career satisfaction there was a significant interaction effect found between degree and locale of school. Those with an M.A.T. in rural schools were less satisfied than those with B.A./B.S. in rural schools. However, the respondents with an M.A.T. in suburban schools were more satisfied than those with a B.A./B.S. in suburban schools. The locale of school is apparently related to the career satisfaction on selected dimensions. It is difficult to interpret the relationship given the lack of information about the schools.

The appropriateness of the teacher preparation model for rural schools recommended by the various reports (Carnegie Forum on Education and Economy, 1986; Holmes Group, 1986) needs to be considered carefully. If we prepare teachers in a manner similar to the M.A.T. we might be creating a situation which will foster dissatisfaction among teachers. The individuals completing such a program may stay in teaching but their level of dissatisfaction might be greater than those with only

undergraduate preparation. The policymakers might focus more on the conditions faced by teachers in rural school districts rather than calling for reform in teacher education. If the achievement of career satisfaction is the goal of policymakers and reformers, one might seriously question many of the present recommendations.

Of particular note in this study was the item on the questionnaire which asked the respondents to indicate degree of satisfaction with the progress in the profession. There were significant differences among the career patterns. Those classified as 'educators' were significantly more satisfied than those respondents classified as 'teachers' or 'leavers'. Furthermore, there was no difference between the 'leavers' and 'teachers' in the degree of satisfaction with the progress in the profession. One develops a sense that there is a group of teachers "trapped" by what is referred to as an "opportunity squeeze" in education (Kanter, 1981). Teachers were just as dissatisfied with their progress in the profession as those who left.

In addition, there was an interaction effect between locale of school; rural, urban, suburban, and initial level of preparation; M.A.T. versus B.A./B.S. on the item related to degree of satisfaction with progress in the profession. Those respondents with an M.A.T. in rural schools indicated the least amount of satisfaction. The differences are of such a magnitude that one wonders why those respondents remained in rural schools. Are there no options available to these respondents? Finally, it is worth noting that the three basic characteristics of a profession—status, autonomy, and reward (Chapman & Lowther, 1982) are precisely the areas in which the respondents are most dissatisfied. And it is particularly

ironic that attempts both by administrative groups and legislators to improve the reward area, at least monetarily, largely ignore both status and particularly, autonomy as stated goals.

SUMMARY

Career satisfaction among teachers is directly related to their preparation and the locale of the school district. This relationship necessitates a closer examination of the conditions for professional practice that exist in the schools than the data in this study allows. What can schools do to attract and retain the academically talented teacher?

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