PERSONS WHO WERE INFLUENTIAL IN ONE'S CHOOSING OF
EDUCATION AS A PROFESSION

BY

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The education profession is talked about often—sometimes with approval and sometimes not. It may help to improve the profession if more is understood about the people involved and their choice of vocation.

Statement of Problem

The answers to the following two questions are being sought:

1. Which people were most influential in helping personnel now teaching in the National Union of Christian Schools decide to enter education?

2. What types of interpersonal communications were involved?

This is not an investigation of a person's subjective reasons for entering education. Neither does this purport to be a study of unconscious motives for entering education. What is being studied is a person's subjective recall of those individuals who were important in his choosing of a vocation, in this case, education.

Review of Related Literature

It might be well to point out more clearly some differences between this and other related studies. The sample for this study was entirely within a national private school organization. The related studies reviewed were conducted among public school personnel only.
The study conducted by Stern\(^1\) and others at Syracuse University was a project done to work out a valid instrument for determining which motives, conscious or unconscious, cause a person to enter, and later, remain in teaching. Twenty-nine teachers were tested and given a depth interview in order to find out what types of people teach. From these data a seemingly valid and reliable check list was made. On it there are ten life roles listed. If given to a prospective or actual teacher, he would be asked to identify himself with one or more roles. From this the tester infers why the person desires to teach.

Best\(^2\) in a study using 214 questionnaires returned by senior education students tried to find out the reasons individuals had for choosing teaching as a career. Best's study reports something about the various factors involved. Among personal factors, a senior high school teacher ranked first with men and women.

Fielstra\(^3\) worked with 230 students; he analyzed both personal and impersonal factors which had influenced the decision to become a teacher. It turned out that "an inspirational teacher"\(^4\) ranked highest.


\(^4\) Ibid., p. 667.
Fox in a similar but shorter work involving 173 juniors in college said that 48% gave former teachers credit for influencing their vocational choice to a significant degree.

The three studies by Best, Fielstra, and Fox all sampled coeducational students, that is, those not yet in the profession as such. Further, these studies were conducted each at a given institution—not country wide.

Lang conducted a study more like the one done by the Stern group in that he was searching for motives. He did this by testing preferences and attitudes. His subjects were 198 women teachers. Why only women were sampled is not explained.

All of the works mentioned had as a major part of their efforts an inquiry into the reasons or motives which people gave for choosing education as their profession.

Procedure

This paper is based on the author's observations, inferences, calculations, and conclusions resulting from a survey of personnel in the National Union of Christian Schools, (hereafter NUCS). The survey was conducted by way of a questionnaire sent out and returned through the mail.


The items on the questionnaire were drawn up by the author after extensive research and study. The instrument was then twice revised after interviews with a faculty member at Montana State College.

The sending of this questionnaire was an attempt to have the participants reflect, delve into their memory, and subjectively determine—in so far as this is possible—by whom and with what type of influence they were guided on into education. Admittedly more valid results (absolutely considered) might be obtained by way of hypnosis, but the problems involved in administering a "hypnotic questionnaire" are solveable only beyond the resources of this writer.

The data provided by the questionnaire was analyzed and the results are presented later in the paper.

Some Basic Assumptions Necessary to the Study

Man is a social, a dependent, a not wholly rational, but a responsible creature. The author believes that though man is influenced by social factors, he is not determined by them. For example, in one's living he acquires ideas, values, attitudes (feelings) from others. These things affect but they do not effect his life. He is a responsible as well as a responsive being.

Men are dependent creatures, that is, they are not self-sufficient. During the maturational process they receive direction,

These convictions were gradually built up in the author's years of training. One person who especially helped in giving them realistic, concrete form was a psychology teacher at Calvin College, namely, Dr. John T. Daling.
information, and even values from their associates. When a person chooses his occupation, he must of necessity be influenced by others. Without the influence of others he could not even fill a role in society. To pursue any course at all a person will likely be acting by imitation, on suggestion, or upon accepted reasons. Therefore, whatever goals a person selects must have been chosen because of ideas or facts gathered from or observed in other's lives. Who, then, were these people in the background?

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CHAPTER II
THE INSTRUMENT: CONSTRUCTION AND USE

Description and Validation of Questionnaire

In drawing up the questionnaire the idea was to get something brief enough so that the person receiving it could complete it without spending too much time or effort. After the revisions, following the helpful comments and criticisms of Dr. Milford Franks, MSC, the entire body of the questionnaire proper could be typed on one side of a standard sheet of paper. When a researcher is dependent upon the good will of fellow but distant teachers to fill out a questionnaire, size can be important. With a longer form, such as the Tatso,9 many people likely would not take the time to make all the hair-splitting judgments involved in filling it out. And, as Dr. Franks mentioned, the first purpose of a questionnaire is to get answers!

That the nature of this study may be kept in focus, it may be well to mention that the Tatso questionnaire attempts to delve into the personal feelings of those questioned. The present survey should be thought of as a search for subjectively-recalled individuals and interpersonal experiences which helped one to decide to enter education.

The title given to the questionnaire "Why Does a Person Enter Education?" was chosen so as to make a striking or arresting first

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9 The Tatso Questionnaire, Form A., Copyright 1962 by Benjamin Wright, Graduate School of Education, University of Chicago.
impression. A letter stating the intent and scope of the survey was included with each questionnaire.

The following facts were asked for as background information: age, sex, area where participant grew up, years of college, and years in profession. Item number 1 lists eleven categories of people. The person receiving a questionnaire was asked to put a numeral 1 before the person who was most influential in helping him choose education as his work. If two classes of people were equal in influence, then each was to receive a 1. If there was a class second in influence, it should be rated 2.

In item number 2 a respondent was to rank in a similar way the types of interpersonal experiences involved in imparting this influence. Five such possibilities were listed.

If the lists in items 1 and 2 did not include the person or kind of influence important in a person's life, then an addition could be made in a space provided. Item 3 was optional; here a person could state whether or not his impressions of the profession had changed since he began teaching.

Selection of Sample

The sample was taken entirely from schools listed in the Christian School Directory, 1962-1963. Schools rather than individuals were chosen for the sample. This was done to facilitate mailing.

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Schools were selected so that various types of schools would be represented—elementary, high school, a junior college, and a school for the mentally retarded.

Another criterion for selection was professionalism. This was intended to be a study of those who are in the teaching profession. It is not easy to define who are the real professionals. However, the criterion used here aims in the direction, at least, of the ideals expressed by two writers associated with the NUCS. Van Bruggen\textsuperscript{11} says that 35\% of the full-time teachers in the NUCS do not have the minimum amount of education necessary for a teaching certificate. In selecting schools for the sample an attempt was made to include only schools having at least one person with a bachelor's or master's degree. This is a negative type of criterion.

In a positive way, the researcher used the ideas of Okkema. In an article\textsuperscript{12} subtitled "The Christian Teacher as a Professional, and National Culture" Okkema suggests some ideals or standards. He says that teachers should consider an M. A. degree as the minimum amount of training; an administrator should consider a sixth year essential.

Now, one indicator of intent is past achievement. Schools having a large number of people with bachelor's or master's degrees would tend to have higher standards. It was assumed for sampling purposes that schools having a larger percentage of people with master's


\textsuperscript{12} Okkema, Milo, "Christian Education and American Culture," The Christian Home and School, XLI, No. 7 (March, 1963), p. 7.
degrees (or other advanced degrees) would tend to have a higher percentage of professionally-minded people. This was a factor in selecting the sample. Thus it was intended that this work be based on a sample of professionally-minded people in the NUOS.

Collection of Data

Part of each questionnaire was a letter of introduction stating briefly the nature of the survey, directions for filling out the questionnaire, and directions for returning it to the sender. Also in the introductory letter was a promise saying that each school which cooperated would receive a summary of the study. Further, there was described a method whereby individuals could obtain a summary.

The questionnaires were distributed to twenty-one schools in twelve states. Most of the administrators used the addressed and postpaid return envelope provided.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Discussion and Tables

When collecting data for one's main line of research, some subsidiary or even incidental facts may be gathered. In a sense the introductory items of the questionnaire (dealing with the background of the participant) provide this type of information. However, the personal data is used in the analysis of the response to items 1 and 2, the items central to the study.

There were 306 questionnaires sent out; 165 were returned. Table 1 gives a summary of the returns comprising the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaires</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Men in sample</th>
<th>Percent of total that were men</th>
<th>Women in sample</th>
<th>Percent of total that were women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number sent</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number returned</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>97*</td>
<td>58.0%*</td>
<td>65*</td>
<td>48.0%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number used</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* On three returns the sex was unspecified.

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Only the questionnaires which were filled out as directed were used. This was done to achieve a higher degree of reliability, for only a conscientious filling out of the questionnaire could be reliable. A similar technique has been used by other researchers.\footnote{Lang, op. cit., p. 102; See also: Peterson, R. A., "A Technique for the Detection of Blind Checking in Questionnaire Research," Educational and Psychological Measurements, XXI, No. 2 (1951), pp. 361-362.}

A total of 123 questionnaires were filled out correctly. This is 40.2\% of those sent out and 74\% of the ones returned. This usable 40.2\% of the total sent out is similar to the percentage of return (42\%) which the Stern group\footnote{Stern, Masling, Denton, Henderson, and Levin, op. cit., p. 18.} experienced with a mailed questionnaire. Among the useable questionnaires 40.5\% of the total group of men and 39.9\% of the total group of women are represented.

Table 2 summarizes the background information of the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2. PERSONAL BACKGROUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of ages in years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range in years of college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean years of college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean years of experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The median age of the participants is about 32. The mean amount of college for the group is 4.5 years. It is of interest to see how similar the averages of both age and experience are for the two sexes.

Because of the way in which items 1 and 2 were to be ranked, the total of first "choices" was more than the total of the people responding. This simply means, for example, that if an educator believed that his father and his mother each equally and primarily influenced his decision to enter education, then they each would be ranked 1. When tallying these rankings the scores were totaled as read from the questionnaires.

In the interest of showing conclusive trends, only the categories of people and types of influence which were given a rank of 1 more than once or twice are included in the following tables and discussions.

Of the entire sample, 44% of the educators gave a former teacher credit for being the major personal influence in their career choice. This trend was consistent in all five breakdowns, that is, a former teacher was always ranked first in influence.

Table 3 gives the percentages of first rankings given to the different categories in item 1.
TABLE 3. PERCENTAGES OF FIRST-RANKED CATEGORIES FROM ITEM 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eight main categories of people influential in career choice</th>
<th>Entire sample</th>
<th>Below median age</th>
<th>Above median age</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relatives</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Men gave "teacher" a rank of 1 nearly 15% more often than did women. Women, however, gave their parents a rank of 1 about twice as often as the men did.

The older members too, of either sex, gave their parents a rank of 1 considerable more times than the younger ones did. Those above the median age of 32 apparently were influenced (with respect to their careers) more often by their pastors than those below 32 years of age.

Below the median age, educators gave "teacher" and "friend" a rank of 1 many more times (14% and 10% respectively) than the older group did.
In Table 4 one can see how the sample as a whole and its subdivisions ranked the five most-frequent types of influence, or, interpersonal experiences involved in forming a choice of career.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five most frequent types of influence</th>
<th>Entire sample</th>
<th>Below median age</th>
<th>Above median age</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exemplary life</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken suggestion</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal discussion</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise of reward</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter, book</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All five columns of Table 4 show that an exemplary life was the primary influence most often. When the questionnaires were studied, it could be seen that many times participants who ranked "teacher" first also ranked "exemplary life" first. This was not exclusively true, however.

The younger teachers, evidently, were drawn into education by way of a promised reward (satisfaction, spiritual gain, security, prestige, money) more often than the older ones.

The women entered the profession by way of a spoken suggestion more often than the men did; in fact, the percentage for women is approaching twice that for the men.
Summary

This research was an attempt to find out which people in the past were most influential in helping educators now in the NUOS decide to teach. Also, the types of communication involved were investigated. The data was obtained by means of a questionnaire.

The men and women in the sample have some interesting similarities and differences. Both sexes have nearly the same median age and the same amount of teaching experience. Men, however, appear to be entering at a faster rate than women. Suggestion seems to be a more effective influence among women than among men.

The people most effective in attracting people into the education profession within the NUOS are the teachers themselves. The people second in influence are the parents, with the mother being slightly ahead of the father.

An exemplary life followed by a suggestion appear to be the more successful ways of imparting this influence.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

When one studies the data some interesting things are noticed. It appears that men are more careless than women in filling out questionnaires, that is, a greater proportion of men's than of women's returns had to be thrown out.

More men appear to be entering the profession than women. The mean age of the men is 0.4 year lower than that of the women. This mean age is lower even though the men have spent 1.3 more years in school, and very likely much of this 1.3 years of training is gained before beginning to teach. Conversely, if the women teach with less training, their mean age should be lower if they were entering at the same rate. Therefore the rate of men entering education in the NUCS must be greater than that for women.

From the sample studied it appears that teachers are having more influence over the career choice of beginning teachers than was formerly true. An alternative explanation might be that the younger members of the teaching profession recall their own teachers more clearly, whereas the older members have long forgotten their own teachers but remember their own parents better. This would seem to be logical since one often returns to his parental home after leaving school, but his former teachers are seldom seen again.

From the sample studied it appears that the clergy is not the
force it once was for recruiting teachers.

A rather common maxim to the effect that "actions are more effective than words" appears to be substantiated by the data in Table 3. At least, "exemplary life" was ranked first about as often as the next two types of communication combined.

With respect to "promise of reward," either the older teachers entered the profession with more selfless idealism than the younger members, or, possibly with the passing of time, a bit of rationalization may have set in.

There is some evidence that women are more susceptible to suggestion than men. It appears that before committing himself a man may want to discuss the merits of the matter first.

Recommendations

In view of the fact that in the NUOS teachers have been the most influential group "recruiting" people into education, it would seem that they should exhibit the essence of the profession. It should continually be evident that education both in a general and in a professional sense is worth while.

It would probably be of interest to find out if further research will show comparable forces at work in the backgrounds of those in other professions or in different branches of the teaching profession.
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Riccio, A. C. "When Do They Decide to Teach?" Peabody Journal of Education, XXXIX (September, 1961), 94-95.


Wright, Benjamin. The Tatso Questionnaire, Form A, University of Chicago: Graduate School of Education, 1962.
Appendix A

Letter to Administrator
Dear Mr. [Name]:

Would you please help me distribute and collect the enclosed questionnaires? I shall be pleased if you will pass these out to the teachers in your school at your earliest convenience.

Then in approximately a week, if you will, collect as many completed questionnaires as you can, put them in the envelope provided, and mail it.

Be sure to fill one out yourself too!

Thank you,

Chester Vander Zee
Appendix B

Letter to Teacher
Dear Educator:

This is a questionnaire being sent to a sampling of teachers in our National Union of Christian Schools.

The scope of this survey may be stated as follows: This is an attempt to find out from where the teaching personnel in the NUCS came; and, especially, we wish to learn something about the origin of the desire in these people to enter the teaching profession.

Please remember that the answers we are seeking are subjective answers—that which you think is true in your case. Ultimately the answers might or might not be different. Because truly subjective answers are desired, please fill out the questionnaire before discussing it with anyone.

Each school which cooperates by returning a number of these questionnaires shall receive a summary of the survey. An individual may receive a summary of the results by forfeiting anonymity and writing his name and address on the questionnaire, or he may retain anonymity and later send a postcard requesting a summary.

Sincerely yours,

Chester Vander Zee
Rt. 1, Box 38
Manhattan, Montana

P. S. You need not return this sheet.
Appendix C

Questionnaire
Please enter the following personal information: Your age ___ Sex ___

State of U. S. or foreign country where you grew up ________________

Number of years of college training ____

Number of years (including present) in profession ______

Item 1. Please put a numeral 1 before the person who most influenced your decision to become an educator (teacher, administrator, etc.). If you feel that two persons equally influenced you, put a 1 before both of them. Or if two people influenced you but one less than the other, then put a 1 by him who influenced you most and a 2 by him who was second in influence. In case you were influenced by someone not listed, please add to the list.

  __ father  __ other relative  __ physician
  __ mother  __ friend  __ school board member
  __ brother  __ teacher  __ author-writer
  __ sister  __ minister  __ (other) ______

Item 2. What was the nature of this influence? Please rank these types of influence by putting a 1 before the most vivid type in your case, a 2 by the next most prominent, and so on. If you were influenced in a way not listed, please write it in.

  __ a spoken suggestion  __ an informal discussion
  __ an exemplary life  __ letter, essay, or book
  __ promise of reward (satisfaction, spiritual gain, security, prestige, money)
  __ (other) __________________

Item 3. After being in a profession for a time, one's impressions of it may change. For example, one may have entered teaching simply because he had to do something to earn a living; but after five years that same person may see education as a challenge that he would not miss!

Now, if your reasons for staying in education are different from your reasons for entering it, feel free to discuss such changes.

Please return this questionnaire to your principal or send to Chester Vander Zee, Rt. 1, Box 38, Manhattan, Montana.