ABSTRACT
            This paper outlines contexts, features, and trends of
contemporary educational environments and educational change, describing
findings from an international study that explored, benchmarked, and compared
teacher and administrator career satisfaction, motivation, and mental health.
The Teacher 2000 Project identified sources and strength of factors
contributing to teacher satisfaction/dissatisfaction in England, Australia,
New Zealand, and United States, distinguishing general patterns in teacher
and administrator satisfaction, motivation, and health from contextual
factors in each country. In 1990, former teachers and administrators
completed a study about: reasons for entering teaching; their perceptions of
preservice training; the nature of their early experiences; what they found
satisfying and dissatisfying about teaching; circumstances around their
resignation; and their thoughts on education. Overall, they were highly
satisfied with student achievement and teacher accomplishment and
dissatisfied with school and system related factors. In 1994-95, 57 teachers'
partners completed interviews about how teaching influenced family
relationships. Findings indicated that systematic and social pressures
significantly affected teachers' work and lives. Results highlight the
crucial importance of societal factors that are largely outside the control
of teachers and schools yet have a growing influence upon teachers' and
administrators' work satisfaction. (Contains 17 references.) (SM)

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*'Teachers' Work and the Growing Influence of Societal Expectations and Pressures'*

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*Teachers' Work/Teachers' Unions AERA SIG*

## THE STATE OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND ISSUES

# 'Teachers' Work and the Growing Influence of Societal Expectations and Pressures'

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## Abstract

This paper serves as the introduction to the symposium 'The State of the Teaching Profession: International Perspectives and Issues'. In it we outline the contexts, features and trends of contemporary educational environments and educational change and describe the origins and current findings of an international study designed to explore, benchmark and compare teacher and school executive career satisfaction, motivation and mental health.

To date, a common series of instruments have been utilised with samples of teachers and those holding promotions positions in schools in Australia, England, New Zealand and the USA. Further replications are currently taking place in a number of countries, including Malta, Israel, Romania, France, Morocco, and other sites in Australia.

The broad aims of the Teacher 2000 Project are to identify and quantify the sources and relative strength of factors contributing to teacher satisfaction/dissatisfaction in the countries under study and to distinguish general patterns and trends in teacher and school executive satisfaction, motivation and health from contextual factors in each country, and to account for these differences.

A key outcome of the project has been the development of a 'three domain' model of teacher career satisfaction which highlights the growing yet variable influence and importance of societal based factors and forces which are acting to influence teacher and school executive career satisfaction, dissatisfaction and stress.

## ORIGINS OF THE TEACHER 2000 PROJECT

### The Macro Level: The Rush To Reform Education

The 1980s was characterised by 'a rush of simultaneous, educational reconstruction in many countries around the world' in the context of 'consistent concerns across the globe to improve schooling outcomes and school performance' (Beare, in Harman, Beare & Berkeley, 1991: 13).

As Beare notes, these 'reforms' did not begin as curricular changes but were largely imposed from 'outside' and seemed 'to hone in very quickly on the control and

governance of both schools and schools systems, at who makes the decisions, especially those decisions relating to what is taught in schools. In short, the reforms are overtly political, and they tend to target the *management* of education.' (13).

In countries such as the USA, Australia, the United Kingdom, Japan, Canada and New Zealand, there was a succession of reports which served to provide the 'evidence' that schools were 'failing' and that large scale educational bureaucracies were ineffective and in need of restructuring and reform. The most influential and well known of these publications was probably 'A Nation at Risk' which appeared in the USA in 1983.

Intervention was seen to be necessary to 'shake up' and 'shake out' educational systems. Teachers' unions were believed to be too powerful and were perceived as 'blockers' of educational change. Political leaders such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher helped to drive a 'free market' 'economic rationalist' approach to educational reform which contrasted markedly with the 'social justice' paradigm of the 1970s. Partly, this was ideological, but partly it was forced by the global economic recession of the time which saw major corporate and public sector 'down sizing' and the 'flattening' of organisational hierarchies.

Beare (20- 24) has drawn upon the literature on the international context of educational restructuring to derive common trends and themes which emerged in the 1980s which have acted to shape the current state of education:

- *A common vocabulary has emerged* - e.g., excellence, quality, school effectiveness, equity, efficiency, accountability, revealing a consistent mind-set about schooling;
- *There is an almost universal trend towards school-based management*;
- *Restructuring usually means devising a new administrative format to govern the way state and federal departments and school systems are configured* - ... One of the abiding problems is that schools and school systems are being remodelled according to a managerial pattern found in *business* firms operating in the *private* sector of the economy ... there is a fairly bland assumption that, if schools are to be remodelled, then the *public* schools ought to be made to look like the *private* schools ... Education has become part of the movement to sell off government assets, to force public institutions to operate in a kind of free market, to force on to public institutions the patterns favoured by the private sector of business, and to advocate excellence at the expense of equity;
- *The reconstructions have uncovered the dilemmas arising from the setting up of school-site councils*, usually to govern or manage the local school. It is not always clear why these councils are being created, who wants them, and what political purpose, either overt or covert, they are intended to fulfil.
- *The reconstructions highlight clashing values in the political forces* ... [of] liberty, equality and fraternity ... Thus, at any one time, it is possible to predict the trend in educational reforms by asking whether freedom and choice (liberty), or equity and social justice (equality),

or community and national priorities (fraternity) are being given priority;

- *The reconstruction is being driven by political rather than educational considerations* – the reforms do not originate with educators or with the schools or with the systems ... they are mandated from outside by political actors. In a sense, educators have lost control of the political agenda ... the signals are clear that educators are not trusted;
- *Economic factors pattern the nature of restructuring* ... a post-industrial economy can be sustained only by education.
- *National governments are now the most powerful actors in education* even though in [some] federal systems ... the national government has no constitutional authority to intervene in education ... National governments are becoming involved because the health of national economies depends on how well educated the workforce is;
- *Restructuring appears to be aimed at the way schools and school systems are run* – There is a consistent thread in the reforms to remove the policy making about education from the grip of educators ... business is tending to impose upon education the kinds of structures which allow firms ... to be resilient and to survive in post-industrial economies;
- *It is obvious that countries are learning from each other* adopting ideas and models from elsewhere with a speed which has never been seen before ... Education too now operates in an internationally competitive setting;
- *The economic imperative is also providing a new rationale for education and, more narrowly, for schooling;*
- *There is a surprising lack of curriculum reform* in the restructuring movement;
- Finally, *the restructuring is not over yet* ... simply because the forces which produced the current spate – economic competitiveness, the recession, the interdependent international economy, the re-aligning of political forces, the emergence of new national alliances, and widespread values disequilibrium – will produce policy turbulence for some to come.

These are the major forces, trends and influences acting upon education at the macro level since the 1980s. The key question from all of this emphasis on reform, restructuring, managerialism and politicisation is the degree to which these pressures and forces have influenced classroom teachers and teaching. For an answer to this question, we turn to a series of related research projects.

**The Micro Level: A Series of Related Studies**

We have seen how education was hit by waves of change during the 1980s. A key question arising from this context of imposed, comprehensive, often contradictory change, is what effects, if any, it has had upon individual teachers and schools carrying out the 'business of education' at the 'chalk face' and whether these effects have been positive or negative in nature in respect of educational outcomes for students and teacher well being generally.

3

A Study of Teacher Resignation and Persistence

In the early 1990s, an interview study was conducted with 57 former teachers, school executive and educational officials who had resigned from the New South Wales (NSW) public school system in Australia (Dinham, 1992). This was a qualitative study designed to explore why these people had decided to enter teaching, their perceptions of their pre-service training, the nature of their early teaching experiences, what they found most satisfying and dissatisfying about teaching, the circumstances leading up to their resignation, and their thoughts on education and teaching and the time they were interviewed. It should be noted that around 60% had remained in some form of education role following their resignation from the public system.

The open-ended structured interviews revealed a high degree of consensus as to sources of satisfaction. The greatest source of satisfaction was clearly pupil achievement, and thus teacher accomplishment. Such achievement ranged from the child who mastered a simple task or concept for the first time to the student who achieved success at the end of secondary schooling and in later life. Many of those interviewed spoke of a 'light going on', and of the sparkle of wonder in a student's eye when something became clear for the first time. There was a clear preference for the facilitation of pupil learning rather than mere instruction or the transfer of knowledge, teachers gaining more from 'leading' and 'facilitating' than 'telling'.

Changing pupil behaviour and attitudes were also significant sources of satisfaction, many of those interviewed noting how troublesome students or students not interested in school had 'come around' over time due to their efforts.

Recognition from others was a strong source of satisfaction, whether the recognition came from parents, other teachers or superiors. More experienced teachers gained satisfaction from recognition for out of class activities and whole school roles, although many maintained, even at the highest levels of the Department, that their greatest satisfaction had come from classroom teaching rather than administration or higher duties associated with promotion.

Self-growth and the mastery of both subject content and teaching skills were also sources of satisfaction. Less experienced teachers gained satisfaction from achieving a satisfactory learning environment or from successfully undertaking a task such as organising a field trip, while more experienced teachers gained satisfaction from wider roles such as whole school activities and responsibilities such as running a department, or completing a higher degree . Thus, less experienced teachers were very classroom centred, while more experienced teachers tended to be more school centred, in their sources of satisfaction.

Good relationships with students, parents, and other teachers were also commonly recognised sources of satisfaction, as was later contact with former students who spoke favourably of the contribution the teacher had made to their development

Overall, teacher satisfaction was found to be tied up closely in what could be termed the human or affective domain and centred on achievement, both of pupils and of themselves, and of recognition for this. In this respect, the study confirmed the

findings on career satisfaction from other writers (see below) who have developed 'two-factor' models of teacher and occupational satisfaction.

Sources of Teacher Dissatisfaction

In the interviews, teachers and school executive were also asked what they had found most dissatisfying about teaching. Again, strong commonalities emerged which tended to support the findings of the literature, although some of the sources of dissatisfaction identified related more to the particular context and 'reforms' to education carried out by the NSW state government during the 1980s.

Sources of dissatisfaction identified by the respondents tended to be school and system centred and related to factors more extraneous to teaching, whereas sources of satisfaction tended to be classroom centred and more related to the actual task of teaching and working with children. Relationships with superiors and educational employers , along with the standing of teachers in society, were found to be common sources of dissatisfaction. Systemic changes to staffing ratios, promotions procedures, changes to school responsibilities and management, were all found to be dissatisfying, particularly given the pace of change at the time. Implicit in many of the public pronouncements about educational change was that schools and teachers were in need of 'reform' from outside, and were incapable of either seeing the need for change or managing it themselves.

At another level, isolation in small schools and towns, the 'culture shock' of an unfamiliar socio-economic environment, and unwanted transfers were also common sources of dissatisfaction, as were the increased expectations placed by society on schools and teachers to solve the problems society seemed unwilling or unable to deal with. Principals and other school executive spoke of the role conflict inherent in the need to provide educational leadership while managing and marketing schools in a climate of devolution of responsibility and competition between schools.

Broadly speaking, the sources of dissatisfaction for those interviewed could be said to be structural, administrative and societal.

Where the findings of this study diverged from the literature was in the area of dissatisfaction.

The work of Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959), Sergiovanni (1967), Holdaway (1978), Kaufman (1984) and others had suggested that career satisfaction and dissatisfaction were the results of largely separate sets of factors - although others have disputed this – with satisfaction grounded in the work itself and dissatisfaction grounded in the conditions of work. These findings are partly an artefact of the methodologies used in the studies, e.g., both Herzberg, et. al., and Sergiovanni employed a 'critical incidents' design where workers were asked to nominate key incidents in the workplace which had given rise to either satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

However, with the resignation study, respondents were asked, as noted above, to reflect on what had given rise to their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with teaching – not just at their school - and in doing the so , provided a mass of comments about

matters outside the school in the realm of society, politics and 'the system' which they obviously felt very strongly about.

Thus, there was evidence in the study findings of a 'third factor' in teacher satisfaction, apart from the work itself and the conditions of work, i.e., the school. This third factor, for which those interviewed revealed their most trenchant criticism, was found outside the school, and included such things as teacher status, imposed educational change, and the portrayal of teachers in the media.

## A Second Study: The Influence of Teaching on Teachers' Families

The interview study of teacher resignation had revealed how broader societal forces were intruding into and influencing teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction. There were many comments made by those interviewed in the study about how teaching was increasingly 'spilling over' into teachers' personal lives and that teachers and school executive were finding it difficult to 'switch off' due to the 'open-endedness' of teachers' work. A number of those interviewed expressed regret about how they had neglected their own families as a result of the increased demands teaching was making upon them. For some of those interviewed – particularly women – there were problems cited concerning jealous or non-supportive partners. In some cases, breakdown in relationships was attributed to the pressures of teaching.

For these reasons, it was decided to explore the impact that teaching can have on the families of teachers in a more purposeful fashion through interviews with the partners of teachers (Dinham, 1997). To this end, interviews took place in 1994-95 with 57 partners of teachers from government and non-government schools in the state of New South Wales. Once again, open-ended interview questions were used with a self-selecting sample.

As well as demographic items, a series of questions designed to induce reflexivity were utilised to explore such matters as how realistic a view of teaching the respondents and their partners held and how each thought teaching might influence their relationship at the time it commenced, how having a teacher as a partner might have enriched the relationship, the pressures and demands teaching might have placed on the relationship and the effects of these, methods used by teachers and their partners to cope with these pressures, demands and effects, any patterns of changes in these demands and pressures over time, and for the 26 respondents who were teachers themselves – teachers have a propensity to marry teachers – any additional problems or benefits flowing from having two teachers in a family. Finally, there was a question which asked those interviewed about overall effects of teaching on relationships and family life.

How Teaching Influences Teachers' Family Relationships

Broad conclusions drawn from the study (Dinham, 1997: 84-86) included:

- Teachers' partners who were non-teachers and who lacked close relatives who were teachers, were clearly unaware of the demands that teaching would make upon their partner, their relationship with their partner, and family life.

- 'Culture shock' was a common response when teachers and their partners had to deal with working and living in communities with which they had little initial familiarity, such as isolated rural towns and schools with high proportions of non-English speaking students and community members.

- The major concern for both teachers and their partners centred on workload. Virtually all underestimated this and noted its increase in recent times. Executive teachers found their increasing administrative workload problematic, as did their partners when this spilled over into and detracted from family life.

- Younger partners of teachers in particular felt that the pre-service training their partners received was inadequate to prepare them for the multi-faceted role and context of teaching today.

- Shared interests, particularly where the respondent was also a teacher, were a significant factor in enriching relationships. This resulted in empathy, understanding and support. Complementary working times and holidays, where available, were also found to be a positive aspect of relationships.

- The major benefit in being in a relationship with a teacher was found to be the positive effect this could have on one's own children, through having a parent(s) committed to education and learning, and in some cases the opportunity for shared holidays and activities. Teaching was thought to make one a better parent, other pressures and demands aside.

- Non-teaching partners found being in a relationship with a teacher to be educationally enriching, on the whole, and also found the recognition their partners received to be personally rewarding.

- In commenting on the pressures and demands of teaching over time, workload, as mentioned previously, predominated, while difficult relationships with others such as superiors, parents and students were also cited by teachers' partners interviewed. Teaching was seen to disrupt family life, both from the commitment required and from the stress and distraction from family concerns that resulted. Extra-curricular obligations were seen to impinge upon family life. It is acknowledged that many other professions no doubt experience similar pressures, demands, and consequences. However, teachers in particular do seem to find it difficult to 'switch off' and leave their concerns at school, due to the open-endedness and 'intensification' of the role (Hargreaves, 1994: 117-138).

- There were particular problems experienced in country areas, such as isolation, lack of facilities, expectations on partners to be involved in school life, scrutiny of private lives, and being 'always on duty'.

- There was a clear feeling that community expectations had increased in recent times and concern for the additional burden of the 'social welfare' burdens that teachers and schools now have to carry.

- Support structures for teacher welfare were considered to be lacking in schools and educational systems.

- Coping mechanisms employed by the respondents and their partners centred on offering moral support, better organising home and family commitments and 'tuning out' through shared or individual activities or interests.

- Finally, there was a clear feeling that having a teacher as a partner had impacted negatively upon the family lives of those interviewed. There was significant commonality with the previous study undertaken with resigned teachers (Dinham, 1992, 1995) in regards to the sources of teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction and the generally more difficult and demanding context of teaching today. The community was perceived as being more critical and less appreciative of teachers and schools, while expecting them to increasingly solve society's problems. Concurrently, system demands and pressures have increased considerably. These concerns were shared across public and private educational systems.

## THE INTERNATIONAL TEACHER 2000 PROJECT

Both the study involving resigned teachers and the follow up project with partners of teachers confirmed the phenomena of the growing influence of systemic and societal based pressures and forces impacting on the work and lives of teachers and school executive.

As noted, previous studies of teacher (and career) satisfaction and dissatisfaction have tended to confirm that the factors giving rise to each are largely mutually exclusive, 'core business' or the job itself giving rise to satisfaction, while the 'conditions of work' tend to give rise to sources of job dissatisfaction, a phenomenon originally noted by Herzberg et. al., (1959), Sergiovanni (1967) and others.

Matters such as teacher satisfaction, teacher stress and teacher motivation can be highly emotive and contentious, with various parties such as governments, teachers' unions, the general public and teachers themselves all having strong and often conflicting views.

As we have seen in the introductory section of this paper, public interest in education in many countries has been intensifying for several decades. If there ever was an 'ivory tower' of education, it has well and truly crumbled in recent times as various pressure groups and stakeholders have attempted to shape what happens in schools, particularly state schools.

Like all change, educational change has brought with it intended and unintended consequences. Some of the new expectations and responsibilities placed on schools and some of the changes wrought have been reasonable and overdue, while others – in the views of many teachers - have been intrusive, unreasonable and potentially damaging.

The International Teacher 2000 Project sought to address the issue of how teachers and school executive feel about their work today through investigation of a number of key questions:

- Why do teachers enter teaching?
- How do teachers feel about teaching?
- How do teachers feel they are regarded by their employer and society generally?
- What aspects of their role do teachers find to be satisfying
- What do teachers find to be dissatisfying?
- Are satisfaction levels changing?
- Is teacher pre-service and in-service training adequate to meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's teachers?
- How are teachers coping with change and the pressures being placed upon them?

The Teacher 2000 Project arose because of a desire to find answers to the above questions and to benchmark teacher and executive satisfaction and mental health levels so that more informed decision making could occur.

The initial Australian study under the banner of the Teacher 2000 Project sought to test and quantify previous findings and relationships in this area with larger groups of teachers utilising purpose built and standard instruments (see Dinham & Scott, 1996b) and involved teachers and school executive at government schools in Western Sydney and was completed in 1997 (Dinham & Scott, 1996a; 1996b; 1997; 1998b).

As a result of interest in this work and the desire to obtain comparative data, replications were launched in 1997 in England through Nottingham Trent University, and in New Zealand through Massey University, while another replication began in 1998 in the USA through Rowan University in New Jersey, with a further US replication beginning in St Louis in 1999. Further replications are either under development or occurring in countries such as Malta, Israel, Romania, France, Morocco, and other sites in Australia.

**Confirmation of the 'Third Domain'**

Statistical analysis and model building with each of the samples surveyed to date – Australia, England, New Zealand, USA - has confirmed that there are in fact three broad domains of teacher satisfaction (see Dinham & Scott, 1998b; 2000):

- the 'core business' of teaching (centred on student achievement, teacher efficacy and personal and professional self-growth) which respondents found highly satisfying,
- extrinsic aspects of teaching (such as the status of teachers, educational change and social expectations on schools), which respondents found uniformly dissatisfying, and
- a central domain of satisfaction factors (conditions of work) which were either neutral or moderately satisfying/dissatisfying (such as school leadership and decision making factors, community relations, school communication) and which showed most variance from school to school and with leadership being a key factor.

When the Teacher 2000 Project was replicated in New Zealand, England and the USA, it was found that the extrinsic or societal factors which are largely outside the control of teachers and schools, vary in their intensity and therefore their influence within national, state and system contexts, with the amount and nature of educational change and restructuring, media and public criticism of teachers and schools and the status of teachers being critical inter-dependent factors in the dissatisfaction teachers feel with their occupation.

Further, it was found that the more turbulent, difficult and demanding this outer 'third domain', the more it will 'erode' teachers' satisfaction with both their conditions of work and what they see as their 'core business' (Dinham & Scott, 1999).

## CONCLUSION

Implementation of the Teacher 2000 Report has highlighted the crucial and growing importance and influence of 'third domain' factors which are largely outside the control of teachers and schools, and which have growing yet variable influence upon teachers and school executives' satisfaction with aspects of their roles.

Knowing the nature, features and intensity of different educational contexts is thus potentially of great value in understanding how teachers and school executive regard their world of work and in predicting how successful or deleterious proposed educational change is likely to be.

The papers that follow further explore the key findings of the International Teacher 2000 Project and introduce complementary research which throws additional light on the contemporary educational environment and how teachers and school executive are interacting with it.

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http://www.nepean.uws.edu.au/teaching/tea2000/tea2.html

For publications and conference papers arising from the project, see:

http://www.nepean.uws.edu.au/teaching/staff/sd.html

14

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