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AS ONE COMMUNITY SEES GOOD TEACHERS
AND GOOD TEACHING

AS ONE COMMUNITY SEES GOOD TEACHERS
AND GOOD TEACHING

A Thesis
presented to
The Faculty Of
Eastern Illinois University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by

James R. Beck

August 1958

This paper has been approved by the following
members of the faculty of Eastern Illinois
University:

PREFACE

The purpose of this study has been to find out what lay people and persons employed by a school system consider important in evaluating the effectiveness of teachers in their schools. Can good teachers - the best teachers - be identified? If so, do members of the school staff and lay people agree on the characteristics of good or superior teachers?

While these and similar questions will not be conclusively answered in this study, it is believed the results of this study may point to better answers to these questions.

I am indebted to Doctors Emma Reinhardt, Hans C. Olsen, Verne A. Stockman, Curtis R. Garner, Louis M. Grado and Gerhard C. Matzner for the development of the Research on Good Teaching project, of which this study is a small part. I am especially indebted to Doctor Gerhard C. Matzner for his inspiration, suggestions and patience; to Doctor Verne A. Stockman for his support and encouragement; and to Mr. John R. Jones and Mrs. Prudie Hudson for technical assistance.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As a result of a letter from the Illinois Council on Educational Administration inquiring whether any staff members at Eastern Illinois University were interested in undertaking a research project, a committee in the Department of Education submitted a proposal for a study which was approved by the executive committee of that organization. The committee making the proposal included: Doctors Emma Reinhardt, Hans C. Olsen, Verne Stockman, Curtis R. Garner, Louis M. Grado and Gerhard C. Matzner.

The entire study will include at least ten districts which will represent as wide a cross section of the kinds of districts found in Illinois as possible, within the limitations of working in a relatively confined area of the state. The purpose of this work is to examine one of the several districts in the study. The district which will be examined is the community unit at Albion, Illinois. This district lies in a relatively poor economic area of the state. The main industry of the area is farming. In this district are five attendance centers, two high schools, and three elementary schools. The number of teachers is seventy-nine; the enrollment is fifteen hundred and forty one, with four hundred and ten of these in the two high schools.

The purposes of the study are probably best defined by the basic assumptions underlying the entire project as they were set forth by

Dr. Gerhard C. Matzner in reference to a similar study of this same total project.

The basic assumptions underlying the study are:

1. That characteristics of a good teacher can be described.
2. That when different groups of people define these characteristics there will be reasonable agreement.
3. That superior teachers can be identified as individuals and that there will be reasonable agreement among observers on who these teachers are.
4. That when different groups of individuals look at a faculty, some teachers from the total faculty will be selected by significant numbers of respondents from each group.¹

The forms used to secure information in the study were placed in the hands of people in seven categories. These seven categories included high school teachers, elementary teachers, school administrators, non-certified employees of the district, district board members, P.T.A. officers, and a random sample of parents of pupils enrolled in the schools.

Respondents were asked to identify themselves according to one of the categories mentioned above. Then they were asked to list the names of the teachers whom they considered best in the district and, in a sentence or two, give the reasons for their choices. They were requested to seal the envelopes and to return them to the school or, if they preferred, to send the responses directly to the campus at Eastern Illinois University. One hundred and six persons responded. A breakdown of responses by respondent groups, appears in Table 7.

The reasons which respondents gave for identifying good teachers were analyzed and categorized into general and specific areas of

¹Matzner, Gerhard C., "Can Good Teachers Be Identified?" Caldron, The Illinois Council on Educational Administration, Vol. III, No. 3, Spring Issue 1958, p. 4-9.

response. These general categories included ten areas associated with characteristics of good teachers.²

These were:

1. Professional Attitudes.
2. Teacher-Pupil Relationships.
3. The Teacher As A Person.
4. The Teacher's Objectivity.
5. The Teacher And Subject Matter.
6. The Teacher's Concern With Spiritual And Moral Education.
7. The Teacher's Experience.
8. The Teacher's Relations With the Community.
9. The Teacher's Room Housekeeping.
10. Miscellaneous

After the information was categorized, it was coded and punched on I.B.M. cards to facilitate tabulation.

²The ten major categories and the specific categories within each were worked out by Dr. Gerhard C. Matzner after a study of responses from an earlier project. These categories have been used in later studies to facilitate handling the information and to provide for the highest possible degree of uniformity of information within the different studies.

CHAPTER II

RESULTS FROM TABULATIONS OF REASONS
RESPONDENTS GAVE

Reasons respondents gave for considering teachers outstanding seem to give some support to the first two basic assumptions underlying the study: that characteristics of a good teacher can be described, and that there will be reasonable agreement among different groups describing these characteristics.

As Table 1 shows, Teacher-Pupil Relationships accounted for 32.9 per cent of the reasons respondents gave for their choices, while Professional Attitudes accounted for 23.8 per cent. The Teacher As A Person accounted for 18.4 per cent and The Teacher And Subject Matter accounted for 13.8 per cent. All other responses accounted for only 11.1 per cent.

TABLE 1
RESPONSE PERCENTAGES BY
MAJOR CATEGORY

| | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| Teacher-Pupil Relationships | 32.9 |
| Professional Attitudes | 23.8 |
| Teacher As A Person | 18.4 |
| Teacher And Subject Matter | 13.8 |
| Teacher's Objectivity |) |
| Teacher's Concern With Spiritual And Moral Values |) |
| Teacher's Experience |) |
| Teacher's Relations With the Community |) 11.1 |
| Teacher's Room Housekeeping |) |
| Miscellaneous |) |

It is significant that when the responses were broken down by respondent groups, the patterns remained virtually the same as the pattern for the entire group. As shown by Table 2, the way the teacher behaves and gets along with students, accounts for fifty per cent, or over, of the reasons respondents of every group gave for considering teachers good.

TABLE 2
PERCENTAGES OF MAJOR CATEGORIES OF RESPONSE
AS GIVEN BY INDIVIDUAL RESPONDENT GROUPS

| | Elementary Teachers | High School Teachers | Administrators | Non-certified School Employees | P.T.A. Officers | Citizens | Board Members |
|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------|---------------|
| Teacher-Pupil Relations | 28.4 | 30.0 | 17.9 | 28.4 | 26.9 | 39.7 | |
| Professional Attitudes | 23.3 | 30.0 | 30.7 | 30.8 | 26.9 | 21.3 | |
| Teacher As A Person | 21.6 | 21.7 | 43.5 | 23.4 | 30.8 | 12.8 | |
| Teacher And Subject Matter | 15.2 | 10.5 | 5.1 | 6.2 | 7.6 | 15.5 | |
| Teacher's Objectivity) | | | | | | | |
| Teacher's Concern With) | | | | | | | |
| Moral Values) | | | | | | | |
| Teacher's Experience) | 11.5 | 7.8 | 2.8 | 11.2 | 7.8 | 13.4 | |
| Teacher's Community) | | | | | | | |
| Relations) | | | | | | | |
| Teacher's Housekeeping) | | | | | | | |
| Miscellaneous) | | | | | | | |
| Teacher-Pupil Relations) | | | | | | | |
| And Teacher As A Person) | 50.0 | 51.7 | 61.4 | 51.8 | 57.7 | 52.5 | |
| Professional Attitudes) | | | | | | | |
| And Teacher And Subject) | 38.5 | 40.5 | 35.8 | 37.0 | 34.5 | 34.1 | |
| Matter) | | | | | | | |
| TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES | 338 | 133 | 39 | 81 | 78 | 459 | |

NO RESPONSES FROM BOARD MEMBERS

For every group, in second place in the rank of importance, were the teacher's professionalism and the related category of the teacher's method and subject matter. The range of response percentages for all other categories was from 2.8% for the administrator group to 13.4% for the citizen group. The percentages referred to, up to this point, were tabulated from the number of total responses in the ten broad categories only. However, a percentage tabulation of the specific sub-categories show that no significant difference exists between the percentages of broad category response and the percentages of specific category response.

TABLE 3
PERCENTAGES OF SPECIFIC REMARKS FOR EACH
GENERAL CATEGORY AS COMPARED TO PERCENTAGES OF
GENERAL CATEGORY CLASSIFICATIONS

| | <u>Percentage of Total Specifics</u> | <u>Percentage of Total General Category Classifications</u> |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Professional Attitudes | 23.5 | 23.8 |
| Teacher's Method and Subject Matter | 12.3 | 13.8 |
| COMBINATION TOTAL | 35.8 | 37.6 |
| Teacher-Pupil Relations | 34.0 | 32.9 |
| Teacher As A Person | 20.4 | 18.4 |
| COMBINATION TOTAL | 54.4 | 51.3 |
| Teacher's Objectivity | | |
| Teacher's Moral and Spiritual Values | | |
| Teacher's Experience | 19.8 | 11.1 |
| Teacher's Community Relations | | |
| Teacher's Housekeeping | | |
| Miscellaneous | | |

All this indicates, of course, is that respondents, on the average, had about the same number of sub-reasons for each primary reason in one

category as in another, with the exception of a slight tendency for respondents to use more adjectives in stating approved characteristics of teachers.

Table 4 shows some of the most frequently mentioned specifics as they appeared in their respective general categories. It may be interesting to note that the specific factor, Has Good Class Discipline, mentioned most often, is commonly recognized by school and lay people alike as evidence of good teaching. The second specific, Well Qualified, might be interpreted as a respect for formal preparation and experience. On the other hand, there may be reason to question just what it does mean. To some, Well Qualified, might refer to other things, such as behavior traits or temperament.

TABLE 4
COMMENTS MOST FREQUENTLY MADE BY
MAJOR CATEGORY OF RESPONSE

| <u>General Category</u> | <u>Specific Remarks</u> | <u>Times Mentioned</u> |
|--------------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Professional Attitudes | Well Qualified | 99 |
| | Gives Extra Time | 44 |
| | Knows Subject | 29 |
| | Is Dedicated To Students and Profession | 27 |
| Teacher-Pupil Relations | Has Good Class Discipline | 115 |
| | Unusual Interest in Children | 50 |
| | Is Well Liked By Children | 50 |
| | Has A Way With Children | 46 |
| | Has Respect of Students | 38 |
| Teacher As A Person | Has Fine Personality | 45 |
| | Is Kind | 37 |
| | Is Understanding | 33 |
| | Is Patient | 32 |
| Teacher's Methods and Subject Matter | Gets Results | 42 |
| | Gets Beginners Off To A Good Start | 38 |
| Teacher's Experience | Has Experience | 16 |
| Teacher's Relations With Community | Cooperates With Parents And Community | 25 |

CHAPTER III

A THIRTY PER CENT SELECT GROUP

For purposes of analyzing the characteristics of those teachers mentioned most frequently by the respondents as superior, a so-called select group was recognized. Those teachers who were identified as outstanding by at least 10% of the total group of respondents make up this group.

TABLE 5
TEACHERS RECEIVING MENTION BY TEN PER CENT
OR MORE OF THE RESPONDENTS

| | <u>Number of Mentions</u> | <u>Years in System</u> | <u>Total Experience</u> | <u>Education</u> | <u>Job</u> | <u>Sex</u> |
|----|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | 28 | 15 plus | 25 plus | Less than B.S. | Elem. | F |
| 2 | 26 | 15 plus | 15 plus | Less than B.S. | Elem. | F |
| 3 | 25 | 25 plus | 25 plus | Less than B.S. | Elem. | F |
| 4 | 23 | 25 plus | 25 plus | Less than B.S. | Elem. | F |
| 5 | 22 | 20 plus | 20 plus | B.S. Degree | H.S. | M |
| 6 | 21 | 20 plus | 20 plus | B.S. Degree | Elem. | F |
| 7 | 19 | 10 plus | 15 plus | Less than B.S. | Elem. | F |
| 8 | 18 | 10 plus | 25 plus | M.S. Degree | Principal | F |
| 9 | 18 | 15 plus | 25 plus | M.A. Degree | H.S. | M |
| 10 | 17 | 15 plus | 25 plus | B.S. Degree | H.S. | F |
| 11 | 15 | 5 plus | 25 plus | Less than B.S. | Elem. | F |
| 12 | 14 | 5 plus | 15 plus | Less than B.S. | Elem. | F |
| 13 | 14 | 10 plus | 10 plus | B.S. Degree | H.S. | F |
| 14 | 14 | 5 plus | 20 plus | Less than B.S. | Elem. | F |
| 15 | 14 | 25 plus | 25 plus | Less than B.S. | Elem. | F |
| 16 | 13 | 25 plus | 25 plus | Less than B.S. | Elem. | F |
| 17 | 13 | 5 plus | 5 plus | Less than B.S. | Elem. | F |
| 18 | 13 | 5 plus | 25 plus | M.S. Degree | Principal | M |
| 19 | 13 | 5 plus | 25 plus | M.S. Degree | Principal | M |
| 20 | 12 | 5 plus | 5 plus | B.S. Degree | Elem. | M |
| 21 | 12 | 5 plus | 25 plus | B.S. Degree | Elem. | F |
| 22 | 11 | 10 plus | 25 plus | M.S. Degree | H.S. | F |
| 23 | 10 | 5 plus | 20 plus | Less than B.S. | Elem. | F |
| 24 | 10 | 20 plus | 25 plus | Less than B.S. | Elem. | F |

As Table 5 indicates, the three teachers receiving most frequent mention are women who teach in the elementary level, have taught over fifteen years in the community and have no degree. The education pattern is different, of course, for the total select group, which comprises approximately 30% of the faculty. In breaking the group down, by educational level, it can be seen that 38% of the total group of teachers in the school holding the Master's Degree are on the select list. Of the teachers holding the Bachelor's Degree, only a little over 20% of the group appear on the select list, while 35% of the teachers having no degree appear. The reasons why more, and a greater per cent as well, of the non-degree teachers appear on the select list than do the Bachelor's Degree holders, are not clear. However, there are three possibilities as to why this is so. First, in the light of the fact that the average time in the unit for all holders of the Bachelor's Degree is 8 years, while the average time in the unit for those teachers not having a degree is 15 years, the possibility is that some of the holders of Bachelor's Degrees are not as well known in the community as are the teachers with no degree. Further, it is likely that many of the non-degree teachers have lived in the community for a period of time longer even than that shown by the years of teaching experience in the unit. Some of the non-degree teachers may have lived in the community for several years, having taken time out of teaching for raising families. Information about the marital status of the teachers is not available to the author at present, but from the limited experience of the author, it seems to be a rather common practice for districts in this area to hire married women from the community to teach, particularly to teach in the

elementary school. The second possibility is that since the district studied lies in an area where salaries are comparatively low, some of the better teachers, having the bargaining power which a degree makes possible, have moved to areas where they have obtained, what they consider to be, better positions.

Of the total group of teachers in the unit, 13 hold the Master's Degree, 29 hold the Bachelor's Degree and 37 hold no degree at all. Since there are more degree teachers in the system, yet less, proportionally, on the select list, the third possibility is that the non-degree teachers may simply be better teachers.

As indicated in a preceding paragraph, time in the system appears to be a factor for teachers in gaining community recognition. However, turning it around, in many cases community recognition is undoubtedly an important factor in long teacher tenure.

TABLE 6

YEARS OF TEACHING SERVICE FOR THE SELECT
AND NON-SELECT GROUPS

| | <u>Number of Years In Present Unit</u> | <u>Total Years Experience</u> |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Select Teachers With Degree | 11.9 | 24.5 |
| Select Teachers Without Degree | 17.3 | 24.4 |
| Non-Select Teachers With Degree | 8.5 | 12.3 |
| Non-Select Teachers without Degree | 11.5 | 18.6 |

The average time in the unit for degree teachers on the select list is almost 12 years, as compared with an average of 8½ years for degree teachers not on the select list.

For non-degree teachers on the select list the average time in the unit is over 17 years while for the non-select group the average time in the unit is only 11½ years. It may be noted also on Table 6 that while the average number of years in the unit is considerably higher, for the select non-degree teachers than for the select degree teachers, the average total experience among those on the select list is slightly greater for the degree teacher group. This might tend to indicate that in this community extended tenure in the district is more important in achieving recognition than is total experience and education combined. Yet more probably, this long average tenure for the select teachers represents a kind of indirect selection of teachers by the community over a period of time. The ones who have remained longest are for the most part probably those who have been recognized as superior by the community and have found the job and the community more satisfactory.

TABLE 7

TOTAL NUMBER OF REASONS GIVEN FOR IDENTIFYING
TEACHER AS SUPERIOR BY RESPONDENT GROUPS

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Elementary Teachers | 338 |
| High School Teachers | 133 |
| School Administrators | 39 |
| School Board Members | none |
| Non-Certified Employees of the District | 81 |
| P.T.A. Officers | 78 |
| Citizens | 459 |
| TOTAL: | <u>1138</u> |

As Table 7 shows, the teacher group tends to be weighted toward the elementary situation with 338 mentions by the elementary teachers and with only 133 mentions from the high school teachers. It has not been determined whether or not the citizen group, with 459 mentions, is

weighted toward the elementary situation.

Although the evidence shows a relationship between tenure in the district and recognition, a tabulation of those on the select list with less time in the unit than the average for their education group shows that over 36% of the select group of degree teachers had less time in the unit than the average for the non-select group of degree teachers, and over 38% of the non-degree select teacher group had less time in the unit than the average for their corresponding non-select group. This would tend to indicate that recognition frequently occurs relatively early in tenure and that recognition may be an important factor as a cause of long tenure.

In a survey of those teachers mentioned by the administrator group, it was found that nearly 75% appear on the select list. Of those mentioned by administrators who did not appear on the select list, the average time in the unit was about $7\frac{1}{2}$ years as compared to an average of 15 years for the total select group. Another factor affecting the accuracy of the administrator's responses is the fact that there are five separate attendance centers.

All teachers in the unit except five were mentioned at least once. These five probably were not considered teachers by the respondents, since two were administrators and the other three worked in special type services not directly associated with classroom teaching.

CHAPTER IV

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

One basic, original purpose of this study was to help school leaders better understand the personnel and public relations problems of their district. Of course, it was hoped that understandings which would apply to most situations could be obtained also, since many of the problems faced by the individual districts studied are common to nearly all districts. For the individual district focused upon in this study, there are possibly three general implications which may be of worth, of consideration for maintaining a good educational program and one which will be regarded as an effective program by the community.

First, there is a relationship between tenure in the district and recognition that the average time in the unit is 35% longer for the select group teachers than for the non-select teachers. This tenure-recognition relationship may have a "human element" in it in that some teachers may have been recognized as superior because they were well known in the community. Certainly, because a teacher is familiar, it does not necessarily follow that she is effective as a teacher. Yet it may be that respondents have ample basis to differentiate between the effective teacher and the one who is simply well known and well liked. To determine whether this differentiation can and does take place further research would be necessary. Possibly some kind of follow-up survey consisting of classroom observations of some select and non-

select teachers by persons skilled and experienced in teaching evaluation might be of value.

The second implication is that, to a great extent, the effect upon others that a teacher has determines in large measure the respondents' estimate of her as a teacher. This factor, too, may contain a "human element" since a teacher can conceivably be a wonderful person to be around, but yet be lacking in skills to give children the things society expects of them. On the other hand, the person who affects others favorably over a period of time, generally is the one who likes people and who may have the capacity to do the most effective work with children. Probably a high percentage of the teachers who are highly respected as persons are also effective in the classrooms, since many skills in the area of human relations are common necessities both to attaining peer respect and to teaching effectively.

The third factor of possible value to the district studied is that the teacher must possess experience, subject matter mastery and skill in teaching method.

Of the reasons given for considering teachers superior, over 35% were in the related categories of Professional Attitudes and Teacher's Method and Subject Matter. Probably these factors are more significant in teacher tenure and recognition than the percentages show, since these factors probably account for a considerable degree of the quality of the teacher-pupil relations which a teacher can maintain. These qualities of professional attitudes, teaching method and subject mastery, particularly the latter two, are qualities usually considered to be most effectively developed through formal training and education. Yet in this district it appears that in attracting and keeping the good, formally

prepared teachers, there has been only a limited degree of success. Another basic, original purpose for the study, was to obtain results which might help clarify some aspects of the current issue of merit-rating for teachers. A goal in respect to this purpose was to determine, as indicated in third and fourth assumptions underlying the study, if superior teachers, as individuals, could be identified. The evidence found in the study shows that there is a minority of teachers who are regarded as superior teachers. The possibility is that these teachers have benefited the educational program more, on the average, than have the teachers who were not regarded as superior by a significant number of survey respondents. Obviously, these teachers who have been recognized as superior, have benefited the educational program in the area of public relations, and undoubtedly they have contributed to student's welfare significantly. The question, then, at this point is: Should they receive financial award for their apparently superior service? Of course, this is the point at which the study ceases to contribute, except to point the way to further research.

The major question remaining is twofold. First, can a program to objectively and fairly recognize these superior teachers from year to year, be worked out? Certainly, if the administration does the rating there will be a considerable area of conflict if their judgements do not come closer to public opinion than the 75% agreement shown in this one case. If the rating is done by a joint staff-administration committee, can the committee avoid the disgust-provoking red tape or the petty politics which can develop out of such proceedings? Would the teacher morale, and the instructional program in general, be improved if a smooth merit rating method were developed? These are parts of a question on

which there is little common meeting ground among people in the education group who hold opposite views. Only trial and research can answer them.

The second broader question is: How can the education group if they do not accept merit rating, answer those who, rated in their work themselves, have pressed for a rating system for teachers? Since ultimately the strength and prestige of the teaching group is dependent upon the respect it receives from the public majority, the teaching group must answer effectively this pressure and all others or else continue to wonder why professional recognition eludes them. Leadership in a democracy means loyalty to principle and to sincere follower desire. The degree to which the leadership is effective depends on the understandings the leadership has of the two factors which underlie democratic leadership itself. These understandings come through thought, observation and research.

The purpose of this work has been to examine in one district, some attitudes and opinions relating to the qualities of superior teachers. It is hoped that some understandings may become, in a small way, more complete.

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