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ABSTRACT

A description is given of the perceptions and attitudes of 10 teachers currently working in the Dade County (Florida) schools. The paper examines the extent to which changes over the past two decades have affected the ways in which they perceive their work and the teaching profession in general. These teachers entered teaching primarily for intrinsic rewards and a desire to help young people learn. However, frustration was consistently felt as a response to numerous external forces interfering with the teaching-learning process. These forces included the "school system" with all of its various bureaucratic components, uninterested parents, the students themselves, and, for some teachers, the union. In a general sense there was a marked difference in the ways that individual teachers responded to and coped with external forces. The data for this study were gathered from interviews with 10 teachers randomly selected from a sample of 42 teachers. The interviews covered a wide-range of subjects including: (1) teachers' reasons for entering the profession; (2) their views of the conditions under which they worked; (3) the rewards and incentives available to them; and (4) their attitudes concerning major social and educational movements. The subjects represented a cross-section of teachers working in urban, suburban and rural schools, and in regular and special education settings at the elementary and secondary levels. (JD)

"TALKS WITH TEACHERS": A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

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BACKGROUND

Dan C. Lortie in his classic study Schoolteacher (1975) begins the final chapter with a discussion of the role of change in education. As he explains:

> Change is inescapable in education today. Constant discussion of change has methodological implications; It can create the impression that fundamental alterations have already taken place, particularly when journalists announce the arrival of an educational "revolution." The parameters of any such revolution, to say the least, are clouded. What is changing and in what direction is it moving? It is paradoxical that although in recent years millions have been spent on educational development, the quality and quantity of reporting on school actualities remain seriously inadequate (Lortie, 1975, p. 214).

This statement was written over a decade ago. It remains relevant--perhaps even prophetic--in light of the current movement for educational reform. One assumption underlying this essay is that the "quality and quantity of reporting on school actualities" is still inadequate. In particular, it is our position that, despite major efforts to change the schools over the past two decades, there has been little or no attempt to understand the ways in which external forces and demands have affected the work lives of teachers.

We focus on the period between 1964 and 1984. It was in 1964 that Dan C. Lortie collected the majority of the data for Schoolteacher. Since 1964, extraordinary changes have taken place in American society that have had profound impacts on the schools. As part of an attempt to address the problem of inequity in the society, the schools have been subject to major judicial and legislative reforms (Ravitch, 1983). These include desegregation and busing, mainstreaming, and bilingual education. More recently, demands for excellence in addition to equity have resulted in movements such as "back to basics" and accountabilty. These and similar efforts to legislate reform have profoundly redefined the context in which teachers live and work (Wise, 1979).

The purpose of this essay is to describe the perceptions and attitudes of teachers currently working in the schools and to examine the extent to which

changes over the past two decades have affected the ways in which they perceive their work and the teaching profession in general.

METHOD

The data employed in this study were drawn from our ongoing research project "The Profession of Teaching: A Twenty Year Perspective, 1964-1984" (Provenzo, Cohn & Kottkamp, 1983-1985). Ten randomly selected interviews, taken from 42 completed interviews of a projected total of 100 interviews, were the basis for this article. The interviews were conducted with teachers from the Dade County Public Schools during the Summer and Fall of 1984. They ran from one to two hours each, and covered a wide-range of subjects including the teachers' reasons for entering the profession, their perceptions of themselves as professionals, their views of the conditions under which they work, the rewards and incentives available to them, and their attitudes concerning major social and educational movements of the past two decades. Because the Dade County Public Schools include urban, suburban and rural settings, as well as a teaching population with highly diverse regional origins, it is a particularly good site for studying teacher attitudes and concerns, a fact noted by Lortie when he chose Dade County as one of the two main research sites for Schoolteacher (Lortie, 1975, p. 246)

Although the research reported in this article represents only ten percent of the total set of 100 projected interviews, they represent a cross section of the teaching population in Dade County. Within the sample of ten were teachers working in urban, suburban and rural schools, and teachers in regular and special education settings at the elementary and secondary levels. Included in the sample were six women and four men of Black, Hispanic and Anglo American background. The years of service of the teachers ranged from a maximum of twenty-eight years to a minimum of two years.

ANALYSIS DURING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS: EMERGING THEMES AND IMPRESSIONS

Louis M. Smith in his essay entitled "An Evolving Logic of Participant Observation, Educational Ethnography and Other Case Studies," (1979) discusses the cognitive processes involved in doing qualitative research. With regard to analysis, Smith suggests that the analytical process begins during data collection and continues throughout the project. This notion seems an appropriate starting point for our analysis because while we were involved in the interview process, we were struck by several themes and impressions. Our first impression was that there appeared to be an incredible range of cognitive levels and verbal skills among the interviewees. On the one hand, the majority of teachers we talked with appeared insightful and articulate, with a few being exceptionally self-reflective and analytical. On the other hand, several teachers stood out because they had difficulty in understanding and responding to specific interview questions and in expressing themselves more generally.

The first substantive theme to emerge was that teachers today, like their counterparts two decades ago (Lortie, 1975), entered teaching primarily for reasons that disposed them to seek intrinsic or psychic rather than extrinsic rewards from their work. Among the teachers we interviewed, there was a consistent desire to help young people learn and to see the results of their personal work investments reflected in student growth. For each of the teachers in our study, to a greater or lesser degree, "a good day" was one that was smooth enough to allow them to focus on instruction and to "reach" one or more students.

A second theme involved the frustration that our teachers consistently felt as a response to numerous external forces interfering with the teaching-learning process. These external forces included "the school system" with all

its various components, parents, the students themselves, and, for some teachers, the union.

Finally, there was, almost from the very beginning, a general sense that there was a marked difference in the ways that individual teachers responded to external forces. Some of the teachers clearly seemed to possess special qualities and to develop strategies that made it possible for them to overcome the external forces that intruded upon them and their work with students. Others seemed to be almost completely overwhelmed and defeated by these forces.

Thus our initial reading and analysis of the interviews was guided by four search warrants which arose during the interview process itself: (1) evidence of differences in ability and conceptual breadth gleaned from responses to the various questions, (2) evidence of the ability of classroom teachers to garner desired psychic rewards, (3) categories of external forces which teachers perceived as interfering with the process of teaching and learning and with their abilities to achieve desired rewards, and (4) strategies or characteristics which facilitated coping with external forces. A preliminary analysis of the transcripts confirmed many of the impressions formed during the interviews themselves. We will now present evidence and analysis which resulted from application of the four search warrants to the responses of the ten teachers included in our sample.

VARIATION IN VERBAL AND COGNITIVE ABILITY AMONG INTERVIEWEES

Of the ten teachers in the random sample, two had considerable difficulty expressing themselves. The problems were multiple and included grammatical errors, reliance on cliches and rote phrases, and difficulties with vocabulary.

Consider the following excerpt from the interview with a teacher who had taught for only two years:

> I*(nterviewer): As a beginning teacher who's struggling with what knowledge and skills you need to be a good teacher, do you have any ideas about what kind of knowledge and what kind of skills and what kind of attitudes a teacher needs to do a really good job?
>
> T*(eacher): Needs a positive attitude first of all. She needs to, I don't know, I don't know how to put it--you know.
>
> I*: Do you have maybe an image of what a good teacher does?
>
> T*: Examines, observes, analyzes, prescribes--you know.
>
> *I: Okay, have you had a teacher that you thought was really outstanding yourself? Can you think of one?
>
> *T: Yes.
>
> *I: Could you tell me a little bit about what that teacher was like or what made that teacher outstanding?
>
> *T: Back in elementary school, a Spanish teacher, she was just out of sight. She was the hardest teacher I had, but she was really good. Just the way she carried herself and her activities that--you know--that she had in her classroom. I mean, they were just dynamic--you know--and when I think back--you know--I'm just saying what a good teacher she is. But then I didn't think that way. But now since I'm a teacher, I think that way.

As we "listened" once again to this teacher, we perceived a definite inability to talk about the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for teaching or to express a clear image of a good teacher. This teacher appeared to retreat into using rote terminology that she apparently recalled from an educational text or workshop. There seemed to be no personal meaning or substance associated with her list of "examining, observing and prescribing." She seemed more articulate, however, when she recalled an elementary teacher who was "outstanding," but it was not entirely clear what "out of sight" really meant.

Other parts of the interview also showed this teacher to be less articulate than we would desire of a teacher.

> I*: I guess what you're saying is that you are still working out your own philosophy of teaching.
>
> T*: See what things will work and what things won't work--you know--sort of like changing--you know. If this doesn't work, I'm using this technique, this doesn't work--you know.
>
> I*: Isn't there something here called The Beginning Teacher Program?
>
> T*: I was into that. I finished up but ...
>
> I*: It wasn't helpful?
>
> T*: It was okay, but it's just not really--it didn't help me--you know--a great deal. The things that--you know--they want you to do, prepare you with these courses and things like that, but it's still--it's not the real thing that's going on--you know. The things that they give you to work with, the strategies--it just don't work.

Sometimes the substance of the teachers' comments suggested a concrete rather than an abstract level of thinking. Consider, for example, the following excerpts from a teacher with a master's degree about to start her fifth year of working as a kindergarten teacher. When asked to describe a particularly outstanding teacher, she cited a college professor in her graduate program at Nova University who "really taught me a lot." When asked "what made the teacher particularly good and able to teach you a lot", she replied:

> Her method that she used. Not only would she have you read the materials, but she would write it out ... she used different visual aids, and it was enjoyable. She wrote it out on the board for you; she explained it to you; and when she gave you a test it was the same thing.

The same teacher talked of her undergraduate experiences at Florida Atlantic University where "some of the professors wasn't good, but some were."

These excerpts stand in considerable contrast to the statements of most of the other eight teachers. The following dialogue involving one of the more

articulate teachers regarding the same subject, recalling an outstanding teacher, illustrates the difference.

> *T: Yes, I remember several. I think the most important teacher that ever had an influence on my life was my junior high school social studies teacher, Leona Lovejoy. She was absolutely the greatest.
>
> I*: Can you recall what made her so outstanding?
>
> T*: I think she was genuinely interested in seeing people develop to their fullest potential, and she tried as hard as she could to get the best out of everybody. She was a very warm person; she was very understanding, an absolute tyrant in the classroom though, and I can remember that we were not permitted, boys were not permitted, in her class or homeroom without a white shirt and a tie and a jacket.
>
> I*: In a public school?
>
> T*: Yeah, public school. And she had class—she had class rules that you had to follow absolutely to the letter. Everything was structured, but I think she taught us that there was a time and a place for everything, and she was interested in seeing that you became the best that you could. She did everything for the students. In some ways she was a tyrant, but in other ways she was a pussycat.
>
> I*: That's a wonderful combination.
>
> T*: She knew when to be strict and when to be mellow. She, I think, gave all of her students a thirst for intellectual curiosity; her classes were excellent. I remember I had American History in one of her classes; and I also had ancient history in one of her classes; and she made the things come alive. She had a good balance between reading and writing and class discussions and debates. She did much for the students; and I can never forget she would have little special things for her top students. She would set a goal and say, "Alright anyone who receives an A in my class at the end of the year, I'll take out for dinner." And one of the highlights of the year was going to dinner with Miss Lovejoy at the end of the year, and everyone who had an A she would just take. If there were 50 children, she would take them out to dinner, and she would pay for it. And she kind of watched us like a mother and a father. I can never forget her. My junior high school days, I think, were a wonderful experience mainly because of Leona Lovejoy. I had her for homeroom for three years, and I had her for two history classes.

We were struck by major differences in language use and cognitive ability during the interviews themselves. Analysis confirmed the wide variations in the

ten teachers. Even the length of the responses to the same questions by the various teachers seemed consistent with their individual overall verbal levels. Most of our interviewees were articulate. We were troubled by the two whom evidence indicated fell below the verbal facility we would hope to find in teachers.

THE CONTINUING PRIMACY OF PSYCHIC REWARDS

While much has changed in the twenty years since Lortie conducted his research on teachers, the way teachers talk about satisfactions emanating from their work clearly has not. When asked, "What are the major satisfactions you get out of teaching?" both the articulate and the inarticulate teachers in our sample expressed essentially the same sentiment. One teacher put it in these terms:

> I think I'm basically a trainer. And I say that because I have trained horses and I loved it. I like to see accomplishment, and I think this is my greatest satisfaction. Seeing something grow. I'm also into plants. I love to see plants grow. I like to see people grow, and that's just my nature, to see things grow, start with nothing and develop it, and end up with a finished product. I think this is my attitude and I think this is why I still like teaching and I think this has made me a better teacher....

A second teacher expressed her feelings in the following way:

> I've got literature for sale, okay. I present it, and I'm selling it to the kids, and then when I'm successful I think it's the greatest. I feel very rewarded when the kids say to me. "You know, you're the only teacher that really gets into it."

One of the "inarticulate" teachers described rewarding outcomes this way: "The kids, and them learning."

Psychic or intrinsic rewards which "consist entirely of subjective valuations made in the course of work engagement" (Lortie, 1975, p. 101) are today, just as twenty years ago, the most frequently sought rewards among teachers from the most to the least articulate. Our survey data from this

project, in fact, show that 87% of the 1984 respondents chose "times I know I have "reached" a student or group of students and they have learned" from among six possible psychic reward reponses. Further, 70% of the survey respondents indicated that psychic rewards were more important to them than extrinsic or ancillary rewards (Kottkamp, Provenzo, Cohn,in press). However, as indicated in the following section, teachers today also perceive more barriers to receiving desired psychic rewards than they appear to have experienced twenty years ago.

EXTERNAL FORCES INTERFERING WITH THE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS

Just as each of the ten teachers described satisfaction in terms of seeing students learn or grow, each of the teachers in our sample was frustrated by external forces that interfered with the teaching-learning process in the classroom. The sources of frustration were numerous. We describe some, but not all, of the sources consistently indicated.

The School System as an External Force

According to the teachers included in the sample, "the school system" in its various facets often thwarted rather than facilitated learning. We found that there were both generic frustrations and frustrations related to specific situations and conditions of work. One of the most concrete of the generic frustrations centered about paperwork. The following comments were typical:

> A tremendous amount of paperwork. The paperwork is just overwhelming. Not the paperwork having to do with teaching *per se* but all of the rest--there is just so much time spent and wasted, some of it, with tremendous amounts of paperwork. It's unreal.

A second teacher expressed the feeling that whether or not she had "a good day" depended in part, upon the amount of paperwork that she had to do.

> When I have a good day I don't have a lot of paperwork crossing my desk that's garbage.... For example, I can see taking roll as legitimate, but trying to chase down why

> this kid or that kid wasn't there, is he cutting, or is he really sick? I shouldn't have to worry about that. Either a kid is in my classroom or he's not in my classroom. Why should I have to call parents and check. If attendance wants to do that great...but there again am I there to police the children or am I there to teach the children--what are you paid to do, keep records or teach? I personally would rather spend my time getting the material across to the students than sitting at the desk filling out forms.

Another teacher expressed how the paperwork seemed to increase more and more each year.

> Increasingly, each year it seems I get more kids and I'm expected to do a little more paperwork, a little more everything... I find myself writing between 60 and 70 Individual Education Plans (I.E.P.s) and then having to call all the parents and try to write lesson plans and teach the kids and write on their folders.... Your I.E.P.s are filed in the cumulative folder, and then you keep a copy with you... I never look at them again. Lesson plans I use. Okay, you keep a copy, and you give a copy to the assistant principal.... But noboby else looks at the I.E.P.s. If they have an audit or something like that, then they look at them.

In the case of one teacher, paper work was seen as an ineffective means of trying to improve the quality of teaching in the school system.

> The department head has to go through lesson plans every week, and I guess they have their directions from above. Our lesson plans have to meet criteria which are cited by the board...this coming year we're going to have a new type of lesson plan which has to do with personal objectives and behavioral objectives, weekly and daily. It just adds to the paperwork. I think they're trying very hard to make great teachers out of some people who are not great teachers, and I don't think paperwork is the way to do it.

Paperwork is seen by this same teacher, who works in physical education, as cutting into and interfering with the time alloted to instruction.

> The more paperwork you give a teacher to do, especially classroom teachers, means that they have less time to teach. Going back to English, because it's the one area I know the best because my wife teaches it--she keeps a folder on each kid and a sheet on each kid and all these things--she spends more time on paperwork than actually what she's supposed to be doing. Mountains and mountains of it. And every time there's something in the paper that says our kids are not graduating with a good enough education, we just get a few more forms to fill out.

Beyond the fact that paperwork takes away from instructional time, completing paperwork is seen by many of the teachers as being an exercise in futility--at best a game that must be played with the administration. A department head, who theoretically is supposed to examine lesson plans, make suggestions about their content and report to the principal when they are inadequate, suggests that the process is essentially a meaningless one. He explained:

> I have gone to the principal and shown her a scribbled out lesson plan, which was terrible, and her response was, "I've seen worse." To myself, I said, "Well I won't bring you anymore." Yet she was right. What could she do about it basically?

According to this teacher, the principal had no practical means by which to make teachers ultimately produce carefully thought-out and developed lesson plans. He continued:

> The principal realizes that there is nothing she can do about it. Sometimes the principal will try by asking the assistant principal to come around and sort of, how shall we say it, needle the teacher a bit. Usually, this means that the next two or three times the teacher would use a little bit more care, but not much, and then go back to the old way again....So the way it works is that we only require them to make it appear that they have had a good lesson plan. In reality, by negotiating with the union, they have allowed them to be watered down to nothing. From a practical standpoint, they ought to do away with them. They serve no purpose except they make administrations, school boards and the public think they exist. Its a game. It shouldn't be, you understand. I believe in lessons plans.

There are other games that are played with paperwork besides "lesson plans". Among the most interesting involves "covering one's behind with paper". As the previously quoted department chair explained:

> The principal I used to have was an old military man, and he said: "We cover our behinds with paper." And he meant that pretty literally. We did such ridiculous things as saving all of the papers from the students' folders--for one year--in case they wanted to challenge us on a grade. We went ahead an labelled the grade (in the grade book). It wasn't enough to say this was a test; but we had to say

> what the test was on. Of course there wasn't any room to write it in the grade book, but somehow we were supposed to put it there anyway. We were also required to send home failure notices and to call the parents because they would not get the failure notices, and then have conferences with parents.... According to board policy, if a Senior has not received a failure notice, you can't fail him. So what do some teachers do? They make them out by the carload to cover themselves. Isn't that ridiculous. I think that's a pressure on teachers which causes them to use a lot of time which could be more effectively used in teaching. But if you don't cover yourself by crossing all the "T's" and dotting all the "I's", you will get in trouble. If you don't do a good job teaching, the chances of your getting in trouble are infintesimal, but the chances of getting in trouble if you don't dot an "I" or cross a "T"--they're great.

Some of the more concretely oriented teachers are particularly bothered by the mechanics of record keeping. One teacher is mystified by central office mandates to record conferences in the teacher plan book. In her words:

> Its strange. They send a lot of memos--you know--little notes from downtown, and they want us to do different things--like in the plan books this year, they wanted us to jot down the conferences we have with the parents, what type of conference. But this had to be in the plan book. I don't know if you ever looked at a plan book and seen how small--I mean they wanted this in the plan book. I couldn't believe it--you know--not on another piece of paper, but inside the plan book! I says, I know they were teachers at one time--you know--and they know what a plan book looks like, and the things that they require of it--its like they forget they were in the classroom at one time.

Paperwork is a generic, ritualized complaint of teachers. It is also, to some degree, cyclical in nature, being heavier when I.E.P.s are being written or at times when failure notices are sent out. Objectively, the amount of form filling has grown considerably in the last twenty years. What is so galling from the teacher perspective is that the real importance of completing paperwork seems to lie in the process and appearance, rather than the substance it involves.

One line of inquiry we intend to pursue involves the relationship between paperwork and reinforcement of the isolated nature of teachers. Paperwork certainly does not prevent collegial interaction, but enough of it may consume

sufficient time--in isolation--to reduce what seems an already low likelihood of collegial interaction about core teaching issues.

While paperwork was a universal frustration voiced by all the teachers in the sample, each also expressed particular frustration over perceived barriers that existed in their specific teaching settings. A high school physical education teacher, for example, talked about how a curriculum that makes no sense is imposed upon him and his colleagues:

> We have a dance unit in P.E. that is completely outdated. The kids go into this unit with some kind of enthusiasm because here is something that they can do, and then they are told to do square dances from 1920. It turns these kids off. They want to go out there and boogey, and we say line up kids and "dosie do". And we have to do the Fox Trot too.

This teacher expresses concerns that go far beyond specific curriculum units such as dance. He questions the overall goals of the physical education program, because he maintains that the competitiveness of team sports works against the goal of teaching young people how to become physically fit and to maintain a personal training program for fitness as an adult. According to him, the kids who are not the "stars"--i.e. the vast majority of students--get completely "turned off". Although he has definite ideas about how the physical education program could be improved, he is convinced that as a teacher in the school system he is powerless to bring about curricular change.

> Once you get into the system you become part of the system. The problem is the system. It has been in effect for so long, and the people who are now running the system have come up through the system and that's basically the system that they know, that they believe in, and that they continue to use. When you try to change it, you meet a lot of opposition. When you first get into teaching you are the low man on the totem pole. You absolutely have no power. Therefore, what happens is either you are moved out or you conform, and once you conform you become part of the system and its continues on.... Even when we do object, and a number of us have complained about the dance unit, nothing ever happens. Nothing ever comes back, it gets lost.

An elementary school teacher voiced concerns over the specificity of curricular guidelines that provided her with little control over instruction:

> I believe that we have to have some kind of guidelines, but we have taken the word guidelines and made them into specifications. A guideline is one thing, but we don't need "On Tuesday do this, on Wednesday do this, and Friday don't forget to give a test." And it keeps getting worse and worse. I think that on the first teacher workday last year they handed me about four notebooks of guidelines.

In addition to the external control of curriculum, many of the teachers discussed other external forces perceived to interfere with their classroom teaching. One teacher, for example, talked about the implementation of a new teacher evaluation system that was being adopted throughout the school system. In his opinion, the new system posed serious problems for teachers. One drawback he emphasized was that the system required the teacher to complete a lesson even when it was not working as planned and might be better redirected or abandoned.

> I feel that if you are in a lesson and its not working, by all means go on to something else even though it is not on your lesson plan. Also, there are times when a student will ask an absolutely brilliant question, and that is the time to investigate and answer it, not at a later time. But according to the new system, you have to follow through with what you are doing, but then you have lost...a golden opportunity.

According to this teacher, within the new evaluation system if a teacher deals with a student question, a "teachable moment," that is not specifically and sequentially related to the objectives of the lesson plan, the observer will rate the teacher negatively. Another drawback cited by this same teacher is that the evaluation system has a hundred and twenty item check list, and observers go into a classroom and attempt to rate a teacher on all 120 items within a single class period. If a teachers fails on any of the items, he or she cannot pass the evaluation. The teacher's frustration with this new evaluation policy can clearly be seen in the following statement:

> I think a rating scale with 120 items is very dangerous. I would like to know how any individual can go into any classroom and rate an individual about 120 items in 40

> minutes. I think it is impossible. I think that you have to guess at some of them. Also, the worse thing, is if you miss on one item you are marked substandard and fail the evaluation... If one student puts his head down and sleeps—perhaps the best thing that I can do is let him do that in that particular situation--but if one student does that we are off task. I am rated down, and I do not get the rating. I'll be written up, and unless I can defend my actions, which sometimes might be hard to do, I will be in trouble.

The same teacher talked about fundamental decisions being made affecting his life and work as a teacher over which he had little or no control. He described a situation in which another English teacher had done absolutely nothing for her students in the area of basic skills, while he had carefully taught and remediated all of his students in the basic skills. Without being consulted this teacher was called into the principal's office at the beginning of February and was told that he would have to switch classes with the other teacher so that he could teach her students basic skills. His anger at being forced into this situation is readily visible in the following quote:

> I had absolutely nothing to say about the situation. I was told "This is final, whatever you say cannot alter the situation. This is what will happen." Now I took it. I took all of those classes, and it was hard in the middle of the year taking those new classes, and taking them through the basic skills. If I had been smart, I should have gone to the union and should have refused to do that, because it was not my resposnsibility... If he had called me in, I could have figured out an alternative plan where I could have worked with that teacher or maybe one day a week we could have gotten together and combined our classes... There are many other alternatives, but I was never consulted and I was just told...

Frustration over questions related to the physical handling of students were also expressed a number of times. Teachers, for example, told us that they now hesitate to take a student home because of the possibility of being accused of child molestation. Even in the process of breaking up a student fight, a teacher risks the possibility of being inappropriately accused of improper behavior. As a junior high school teacher explained:

> Last year I broke up a fight between two girls, and in the process of breaking up the fight I was bitten and hit by one of the girls. If in the process of breaking up the fight, I had hit or pushed against the wall the girl who bit me, my job could have been in jeopardy. Even in protecting yourself, you can get into a great deal of trouble. The restrictions that have been placed on teachers today have really changed things.

A fear of legal action on the part of parents and students against teachers is a theme that is repeated over and over again in the interviews. Clearly teachers feel inhibited and restricted in terms of what actions they can take in their classrooms. Some circumstances are simply threatening to teachers.

Throughout the interviews other aspects of the school system were mentioned as impeding instruction and interfering with the development of psychic rewards for teachers. Two threads ran through the teachers' discussions of external forces in the school system that negatively affected their work. The first thread suggested that increasingly teachers have been losing control over the classroom environments and conditions under which they work. As we have seen in the comments included above, the teachers in our sample feel a great push toward external direction and control. They are told what to teach, when and how to teach it, and are strictly regulated through detailed record keeping and evaluation systems.

This first thread can also be stated in terms of traditional bureaucratic-professional conflict. The essence of this conflict is most clearly seen when uncertainty arises in organizational life. The bureaucratic response to uncertainty is to demand disciplined compliance with policies and solutions generated at higher levels of the organization under the assumption that both greater expertise and a broader view needed for coordinated effort reside at those levels. The professional response to uncertainty is to demand that professionals individually or collegially exercise discretion in generating solutions under the assumptions that only they possess the expertise to do so, and that only they are capable of critiquing solutions so generated (Hoy &

Miskel, 1982). In the world described by our teachers, it is clear that they are being directed toward disciplined compliance with policies centrally derived rather than toward the exercise of individual discretion as uncertainty continues to increase.

A second thread that emerged from the interviews was that many of the teachers saw the regulations and procedures passed down to them by the central office as being meaningless and often absurd. Frequently, in their discussions the teachers used terms such as "outrageous" and "ridiculous" to describe their experiences. Often they would begin a description something to the effect of "I can't believe it, but..." What really impressed us the most, however, in terms of the teachers' comments, was the tone of mystification and disbelief that many of them felt as to the policies with which they are expected to comply. Although they do not use the specific word, we got the sense that the teachers saw the writing of lesson plans that were not seriously questioned if poorly done, the teaching of Square Dancing and the Fox Trot in an era of Break Dancing and Michael Jackson look alike contests, and the evaluation of teachers on 120 different items supposedly performed in a single class period as being absurd. It was this theme of absurdity that most pervaded the interviews as the teachers talked about forces external to the classroom but within the school system that interfered with their work and the likelihood of garnering psychic and personal rewards.

As researchers it is important to add some distance and interpretation to what our teachers are experiencing and saying. What Lortie (1975) discovered about the primary focus of teacher attention remains true today. They are primarily concerned with events <u>within</u> the classroom. The source of the rewards they desire is within the classroom rather than within the larger organizational context. Many teachers simply lack the proclivity and conceptual frameworks to push for understanding of the larger context as an explanation of

much of what they experience as "the system" and other "absurdities" impinging upon their work within the classroom. They tend to coin very generalized and negative phrases about the "theys" and "the system" that keep doing things which affect them negatively.

From the distance that the role of researchers gives us, we do not see the world and the school system as filled with men and women of evil intent. Most likely the actions taken and policies formulated by the school board and administration are undertaken with good intentions and the best information available within the time frame given to generate them. Any decision, however, will have unintended and unanticipated consequences. To the degree that the assumptions of decision makers made with the best intentions, do not match the realities of organizational life and to the degree that detailed, fully descriptive feedback from the level of policy implementation does not reach the policy makers at higher levels of the organization, unintended and unanticipated consequences of decisions and policies will be magnified. It is these unintended and unanticipated consequences that our teachers view as absurd. They are miffed, mystified, and ask "Don't they remember from when <u>they</u> were teachers?"

Another level is also operating which teachers do not "see". At least some of the policies formulated by the local school district are in direct response to mandates passed down to the district from the state legislature and state department of education. Policies and mandates from this higher level also have unintended and unanticipated consequences when visited upon local districts. Teachers likely do not see this reality because they do not focus on these levels of schooling.

In one of his speculations on change, Lortie (1975) developed a scenario of a trend toward centralization. One of his arguments ran:

> If the number of districts continues to dwindle, it should become easier for states to grasp effective control over operations; it is simpler to control a smaller number of units.... The two kinds of centralization might ultimately link up, producing a considerably more unified system of school government than currently prevails. (p. 227)

The argument then proceeds to project the status of teachers as becoming increasingly bureaucratic. Florida may be an advanced example of this scenario, for in this state the school districts are county-wide, fewer in number, and following the argument, perhaps easier to control from the state level. Teachers, however, who focus on classroom level issues are unlikely to see or understand this issue as well as the more distant source of much of their discomfort.

The recognition that teachers do not always see "the bigger picture", however, does not mitigate the fact that teachers today are being controlled to a much greater degree than in years past. Teachers' particular complaints might be dismissed as resulting from tired, disillusioned people. However, the overwhelming consistency and breadth of complaint--especially when seen through the eyes of those who remember "a different day"--leaves us with the view that external imposition has been considerably escalated. Moreover, teachers report that the cumulative effect has been negative rather than positive.

Darling-Hammond and Wise have very recently argued that policy makers are imposing external mandates on classroom teachers to the likely peril of the teaching profession and the general quality of education. They see the high likelihood of policymakers being engaged in self-fulfilling prophesies producing a downward spiral in both teacher quality and educational outcomes:

> While these prescriptive policies may or may not achieve their intended effects, they always have other unintended, cumulative consequences. These additional effects must be weighed as one assesses the costs and benefits of a specific policy. In particular, attention must be paid to the collective impact of policies on the role of classroom teachers--policies that in the aggregate may make teaching

> less attractive, thus lowering the quality of the teaching force, which, in turn, causes policy makers to regulate in an effort to improve education (1985, p. 335).

STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS AS EXTERNAL FORCES

While various aspects of the "school system" loomed large as barriers to psychic rewards, teachers also talked at length about disturbing changes in students and parents which play havoc with their ability to feel successful in the classroom. One common perception is that students are less motivated and less disciplined and that changing values among parents and the larger society and culture are responsible for this.

A teacher who has been in the classroom for twenty-eight years and who currently teaches a diverse population of junior high school students talked in the following way about changes that he has observed:

> I am not so sure that the kids are more difficult for the parents to handle, but I think that some of the situations are more difficult for the parent to handle. When I first started teaching, there was no drug problem. There was an alcohol problem but there was no drug problem. There seems to be more openness today on the part of the children. I think that the role of the child in childhood has changed extensively today. One thing that is absent are opportunities for children to work.... Also children...have a tendency to be very rude with strangers, but this is probably a product of our times. We are living in a world of strangers. When I began teaching 28 years ago in these small rural towns, everyone knew everyone else, and if John did something wrong the entire community knew about it, so you had the community pressure. You had peer pressure to do the right thing. Today I don't feel that you have peer pressure or community pressure to do the right thing, and I think that many of the students feel that they can remain anonymous.

In his view, much of the problem also stems from the failure of parents today to assume responsibility and exercise some control over their children when they do "something wrong":

> Years ago when I first began teaching, if a student did something wrong, if you ever had to contact a parent, the parent would be furious with the student...in 99% of the cases the students would be in trouble at home.You have

different reactions from the parents today. Some parents have told me that they aren't interested--"You handle it whatever way you can." Many of the parents are completely cooperative and will talk to the students or punish them and take some type of action. Sometimes, however, some of the parents will throw up their hands and say "I don't know what to do with this person." I never heard that 25 or 28 years ago. I think that the role of the parent has changed and this has made it a lot different for the teacher or the schools who want to contact the home. Some parents are belligerent. When you talk about their children being trouble, they want to blame you...

A Kindergarten teacher in a lower class community who has been teaching for five years in the same school she had attended as a child also cites dramatic changes in terms of the behavior of children and parental responsibility for children. As she recalled her own school days, she explained that:

> Parents were involved--there wasn't a day that you didn't turn around that your mother wasn't trying to find out what you were doing. You didn't do anything wrong because if you did, you knew what would happen.

Today, however, she describes parents who send their children to school without being potty-trained—parents who have many children but who are never at home to supervise or help them with homework, parents who are "on the streets...prostitutes, out mixing with other men, partying," parents "who don't care." At the same time, she describes kindergarteners who come to school without manners and a basic sense of hygiene, kindergarteners who use marjiuana they have been given by their parents. Her only explanation is that parents have changed:

> Their values have changed. They just don't care. They don't know what respect, what a role model is.

A high school English teacher who works in the same community as the Kindergarten teacher finds a similar lack of parental concern at the secondary level. He explains, for example:

> I called up a mother this year, so help me God, and I said: "Ma'am, you know your son didn't do his first book report for the year, and if he keeps on not doing them he is going

> to fail." She said to me: "Heck, my son, he aint never read a book in his life. I aint read too many myself, and I aint got no problem living." Well, how do you deal with that?

Even in the more affluent areas of the county, teachers express attitudinal problems on the part of parents. Reacting to the "A Nation at Risk" report (1983), which criticizes "a rising tide of mediocrity in the schools," a teacher from an upper middle-class suburban high school counters with the following:

> There are an awful lot of mediocre parents too. I don't think that the whole blame falls on the teachers or the schools. I think the mediocrity is due to a bunch of lazy, uncaring parents.

She too observes a lack of caring that manifests itself in a lack of parental involvement. These parents may not be "in the streets", but many, according to her, are neither up before school nor home after school. In her words:

> If they could see the kids go to school they would be appalled...If they were home when the kids came home, if the kids came home, they would be shocked to see the waste of time and a lot of other wastes that are going on...a lot of these kids are doing nothing, nothing constructive.

To further substantiate her point she cites the case of one of her students who is either consistently late, absent or unprepared. One day, after he brought an absence note signed by himself, which she would not accept, he simply said, "What do you want me to do? I am living by myself. I am on my own."

For most teachers, this general pattern of parental irresponsibility is incomprehensible. The teachers interviewed see their efforts as closely tied to and dependent upon the support of parents and of the public at large. Without it, the teachers told us that they could not function. More importantly, without it the teachers told us that students could not function. The following comment reflects a conviction widely held among many of the teachers in our interview sample.

> Frankly, I don't think that the public gives a damn as a whole. I don't think that the majority of people out there realize that we are doing something that the kids

> desparately need. We are preparing them for their whole future and society is getting more and more complex. I think that the parents are so busy worrying about how they are going to make their next boat payment, or if there is going to be an opportunity to take a trip or depending upon the socio-economic situation are we going to have enough food on the table, that they don't realize exactly how much of a hassle that their kids are going to go through if they don't get what they need in school.

Throughout the interview sample, teachers clearly perceived that parents lacked sufficient involvement with their children. This theme was consistently repeated no matter what the economic or educational level of the parents with whom the teachers worked. It was a also a theme that came to light in the discussion of parents who had children with special needs. One special education teacher, for example, explained:

> I think my satisfaction is going down hill. Each year I get fewer and fewer motivated students. At the end of this year, I actually cried because I felt that I was losing the cream of the crop and realized what I was going to have when I got back in the Fall. I don't seem to have as many kids who are motivated, who really want to learn, as I had the first year of my teaching...

The reason for the shift? According to her:

> ...their parents are leaving it basically up to the school system to handle what they should handle...Most kids do not learn any discipline at home. There is no structure in the home...I can come in and say you do not use this type of language in here, or you don't talk to me like that, and they feel that they do it at home, they do it wherever, then why can't they do it here?

Closely related to these comments on parents and students are others from teachers that suggest that significant numbers of students today see little meaning or intrinsic value in school. One teacher describes the reality in these terms:

> Teachers meet opposition from the kids themselves. They walk in feeling—Here is all the information that I have got for you. I am going to educate you, make you a better person and get you a job. The kids listen and say, "Nah, I don't want to do that. I want to stay home and watch T.V."... This kind of attitude brings teachers back to earth. With these kinds of kids you have to work a lot harder. You have to put your nose to the grindstone. You

> have to constantly be there, after them, trying to show them why they have to do it. Its funny, but these kids don't know why. Why do I have to go to school? Why do I have to do anything?...they would rather be out working the supermarket stacking boxes and making a couple of bucks to buy themseleves a big radio or something.

According to our teachers, the problem is not only that it is difficult to reach those who don't see any reason for being in school, it is also that unmotivated students disrupt the teaching learning environment for those who are interested in learning. As a case in point, a teacher describes a high school science class in which the majority of her students saw little purpose. Clearly, it was and still is a painful situation for the teacher.

> Three quarters of that class did not want to be there. For the one fourth that was left, I struggled to cover the material so that they could learn. Now, the others were mentally able to keep up and pass so I did not have a lot of F's in that group, but I feel that there was one kid who failed directly as a response to what happened because I simply was not able to direct my energy to helping him. I spent my time saying, "Hey kids, sit down, shut up, be quiet, listen,"... I know you are not supposed to tell anyone to shut up, but it got to the point where I was at my wit's end. I won't say that I lost all control, but I lost all sense of well-being with that class. That one disturbed me. It still disturbs me.

One final factor that demands attention in the area of student disinterest is the impact of television. A number of teachers told us that television has made students "intellectually passive" and "bored with the classroom." The following comments are typical of this sentiment:

> I think that television has had a very detrimental effect on the make-up of the children. Many children will complain that what you are doing is boring. Its not as exciting as what they see on television. Of course, my answer is that there are many boring things that happen in life, and I am not here to entertain you...

Other teachers concurred with this point of view:

> I don't like to have to compete with Mr. Wizard and television. Twenty-five years ago I didn't have this feeling because television hadn't made its impact... Now they expect bombs and explosions. They are not concerned with learning so that they can protect themselves. I am trying to teach them something so they will have an idea of

> what it means to be cautious. You don't throw a pound of sodium in a pond and say "Hey guys, look at the fireworks!" But this is what they want to see happen... accidents have occurred in the classroom and these have been the things that have brought the greatest joy to the kids... I don't think that they were being malicious, but the fact is that they were delighted to see things go wrong that would erupt in fire. This is what they are looking for. Entertainment no longer comes from a quiet corner for reading with a fire burning.... Down here, I think they may know about burning fires, but they don't know about the quiet corner for reading. This has carried through to the classroom. So you have got some of these vibrant teachers who can entertain. I am sorry, my entertainment days are few and far between.

As can be seen in the interviews above, teachers view the behavior of students and parents as impediments to their work. This is not a new situation. Lortie in Schoolteacher documented similar complaints. Lortie found that one major source of complaint involved interpersonal relationships with students and parents as well as administrators and fellow-teachers. It is, therefore, tempting to dismiss the statements made by the teachers in our sample as just more of the same or as just part of the ritualistic complaint to be expected from teachers. If there had only been one or two respondents who described these conditions, or had the complaints been confined to only one social class of student, they would indeed be easier to dismiss. But the fact is that all ten teachers saw their world and their ability to achieve the core tasks of their profession being encroached upon by these social forces. There were changes--"trouble"—with parents and children across the total socio-economic spectrum. In a strange sense, the problems were simply "appropriate" to the level of the parents on the status scale.

Moreover, the nature of the problems described—children on drugs, "parents in the streets"--seemed to give a new and more serious dimension to the complaints. Thus, we sense that problems stemming from parents and children have in fact escalated considerably and moved in different directions over the last two decades.

INTEGRATION AND SYNTHESIS

As we have listened to ten teachers talk about some of the external forces--within the school and without—that obstruct their instructional purposes and impede their psychic rewards, we have concluded that teaching has become an increasingly complex task in recent years. At the same time, we have recognized that our ten teachers are responding to this increased complexity in a variety of ways. Most importantly, as we have thought about what they have said about themselves and their work, we have begun to see patterns emerge in terms of who has been able to cope with the increasingly complex demands made by the profession and who seem to be overwhelmed by the demands of the profession. These patterns, in turn, suggest problems and questions that need to be pursued in order to understand better what it means to be a teacher in contemporary society.

Patterns of Teacher Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

The starting point for our analysis is teacher satisfaction. We asked teachers how they felt about their decisions to become teachers and what thoughts they have for those who are considering entering the profession. Their responses reveal significant differences. At the lowest end of the teacher satisfaction continuum are those who have serious reservations about having become a teacher. One teacher told us "I don't want to be in the classroom in the next five years. I am thinking about going into counseling." Her advice to those thinking about becoming a teacher was "Don't do it, its a headache."

Another teacher told us that she felt "terrible" about her decision to become a teacher, and has been thinking about quitting for some time.

> ...a lot of times I think about getting an office job. I have thought about it--you know--and every time I pick up the paper and I see an office job that I can apply for, and

> it's paying just more than teaching—you know—and I say no, I'm going to stick with teaching, I'm gonna—you know—stick it out and sees what happens.

Still another teacher who has taught for nine years, but has experienced increasing dissatisfaction, plans to teach no longer than fifteen years. She told us she should have chosen something different—perhaps child psychology where she might have had her own practice. When she leaves teaching, she will look for a career in which she can be "independent."

At the other end of the continuum are teachers who, despite all of the current pressures, are satisfied and stimulated by their work. One teacher told us:

> I like teaching—I just feel that it has added a marvelous dimension to my life. I love what I am doing and I hope that I am healthy enough to continue doing.

Another teacher maintained that he would definitely choose teaching again and that he would recommend the profession to others. As he put it:

> I'd tell them [those considering teaching] how tough it is but I'd also tell them how many rewards there are. Sometimes I go home and say I can't believe I got a day's pay for today. It's great!

Still another teacher, the veteran of 28 years told us:

> I still get a thrill out of seeing a student learn something—as I see the class go through the year and remember what they were like at the beginning of the year and what they're like at the end of the year I get a great feeling.

These teachers stand on the ends of the satisfaction continuum and the others interviewed can be placed at varying points in between. If, however, we focus on just a few of the teachers at the extremes, we begin to see some interesting patterns.

At the low end, we find the teachers who tend to be concrete rather than abstract thinkers, and who are lacking in verbal skills. These are teachers who report little or no success in the classroom and who therefore experience few satisfying encounters with students. When asked to describe a good day, one of

these teachers couldn't think of one. She reported instead "a lot of bad days." On a bad day:

> you have a disruptive child all day long and you send him to the office and nothing's done about it—you know—it discourages you. I don't ever send a child to the office.—It's like you make a fool of yourself. That just tears my whole day up and I had a child all year long like that. No help.

She painfully suggested that the days were also bad ones for the children:

> At 2:45, they have their pocket books ready. We don't leave until 3:05 but when the chidren go they are ready, they are walking the hallways until it's time to go with their pockets or whatever.

For another teacher, there were some good days but they were few and far between. In her words:

> On a good day, the kids respond. You say "Oh wow--they're learning something and they're good." It happens. Not too often, but it happens.

Clearly teachers at the low end of the continuum experience considerable failure in the classroom. What is even more striking, however, is that these teachers see this failure as completely out of their control. As noted earlier, each of the ten teachers in our interviews saw external forces in terms of the school system, the student and parents as barriers to success and satisfaction. What distinguishes the teacher at the low end for the rest is their belief that they as individuals are powerless to confront and overcome these barriers.

For one of these teachers, bad days are those in which "the kids do not respond at all and <u>there is nothing you can do</u> [emphasis added]. In her view, the responsibility and blame lies with the principal:

> I'm getting less satisfaction now because of discipline. Because before when I came, the principal was firm,---but now with this lady they don't learn. When they go to the office, she isn't firm--the kids can't learn--the classroom isn't quiet or settled--you have to have discipline in order to learn. You can't teach with children yelling.

For another of these teachers the fault lies with the deficiencies of the children: "It's a Chapter One class and that's the next thing to special education so, I mean, how much can you do, you know [emphasis added]."

With both teachers at the extreme low end and those approaching it, the locus of control was consistently outside rather than inside the individual. Richard deCharms (1968) in his research on motivation and personal causation describes "pawns" as individuals who feel controlled by outside forces and "origins" as individuals who can initiate and exercise some control over their lives. Teachers at the low end of the satisfaction continuum express themselves as pawns.

Another interesting pattern among teachers at the low end of the continuum is the tendency to express goals for students of relatively narrow, instructional terms. One teacher, for example, told us--"I'm just trying to lay the foundation. Just the basic things that they should know to move on to the next level." Another told us: "To make them literate when they leave." Still another put it this way: "I want my students to achieve--with what they are doing. Especially all of their studies, I want them to really achieve."

A final characteristic of those at the low end of the satisfaction continuum is a sense of being overwhelmed by expectations. The following statement captures the essence of this feeling.

> It's like every year they implement something new. This year I think they have some language program or something. There's just so many different programs that we have to do or you have to teach this and this and this. It is really complicated, you know, you have to do your planning. It's like you learn one area and then you have to keep up with the different programming.

In sum, the teachers who definitely regretted their decision to become a teacher held a number of other characteristics in common. They were the least verbal and abstract, they consistently attributed their classroom failures to

others, they phrased their goals for students in narrow instructional terms and they expressed a sense of being overwhelmed by what was expected of them.

While it is disturbing to think that there are teachers in the schools today who experience so much frustration and failure, our spirits are lifted every time we think or talk about those near or at the high end of the satisfaction continuum. These teachers were among the most articulate, insightful and self-reflective we have encountered anywhere. They expressed with enthusiasm and energy their successes despite the acknowledged existence of frustrating external forces. What was most striking about these teachers, however, was their assertive quality. The message that they consistently conveyed in one way or another was "I am successful because I will it so." For example, one satisfied English teacher describes a good day as follows:

> All the kids have their homework because they wanted to--otherwise they wouldn't do it. The kids feel good about what they have read and if they have come in feeling bad about what they have read and I turn them around and then they feel good about what they have read, that's a pretty good day. [emphasis added]

In another context this teacher adds:

> You do see a change in attitudes in high school students, there's no question about it.... I see a change in attitudes from the beginning to the end of the year--I already see a change in the two weeks that I have been teaching these two groups in summer school. I'm a molder. I get them to do what I want....

Clearly this teacher is confident of her ability to influence student attitudes and exercise some control over what happens in her classroom.

Another highly satisfied teacher talks in similar terms. He, however, sees himself as a "mold breaker" rather than as a "molder."

> I think attitude is more important than knowledge and skill. I think you have to be a mold breaker more than an educator. If you can motivate kids to want to do it, they will do it, and I think that's what makes successful teachers and what makes teachers who are not so successful. It's an attitude in the classroom and if you can get these

> kids motivated by your own attitude, by the way you go in there and act, I think you'll be a lot more successful than if you just go in there and throw facts at them.

In addition to feeling that they have the power to motivate and shape students, the teachers who were highly satisfied with teaching tended to express goals that went beyond the confines of the prescribed curriculum. Berlak and Berlak (1984) in the book The Dilemmas of Schooling describe the dilemma of "whole child" versus "child as student." The Berlaks maintain that teachers simultaneously feel pulled in two directions. On the one hand, they believe that their role is to focus only on intellectual development or "the child as student". On the other hand, they believe that the role of the teacher is to focus upon all facets of the students' development--the intellectual, moral, physical, social, and aesthetic--or "the whole child". We found it interesting that each teacher who expressed a high level of satisfaction in teaching also expressed a "whole child" orientation in their statements of goals for students.

> I really am interested in teaching them literature and getting them interested in wanting to read, you know. Having a curious person--a curiosity for the rest of their lives and having the ability to satiate that curiosity really. I want them to be able to go to a library if they have an interest, know where to find what they're looking for and be able to satisfy that, whatever the need--whether it's research or whether it's a thought, or an idea. That's really the first uppermost thought in my mind of teaching English. But I am very big about being a good person. Also I am very big about keeping a good self image so you think well of yourself. I take care of kids who come not dressed properly and don't look well groomed. I manage to get them looking like people.

A Physical Education teacher expressed very different goals, but they too went beyond the traditional curriculum.

> Well, I 'd like them to leave P. E. with a different train of thought as far as physical education and personal fitness is concerned. A lot of these kids come in here and they've never ever done anything to improve their fitness and I want them to leave here with a knowledge of personal fitness, hygiene, what's good for you, diets. In our football team, we try to talk to them about diet, what's

> good to eat, what's not good to eat. I like to see kids come out of here and maybe decide that maybe they want to be P. E. teachers, and get into this field, because we've motivated them or we've shown them something they didn't realize was there. I'd like to see some of our football players go on to college and do something with themselves and come back in a couple of years from now and say, "Hey, here's my diploma. I'm a doctor or a lawyer because I got the chance through a football scholarship."

Finally, the highly satisfied teachers conveyed a clear sense of being able to cope with the external forces that overwhelm others. For example, an English teacher who was working under Title I guidelines that made no sense to her simply ignored them. Her response in this specific instance seen to grow out of a more generalized confidence in her own judgment and her strong conviction that she as teacher is in a better position than anyone else to make intelligent classroom decisions. She, however, puts the matter much more simply:

> State and federal mandates--we have them but I don't pay much attention to them--I still do what I want to do in English. I do what I feel is necessary to do--They want you to do something, I do it, but I also do what I want to do.

In our view, this teacher exuded a fighting spirit and a willingness to take risks in order to be true to one's professional self. This attitude was typical of the several teachers who appeared to be successful in their work. The P. E. teacher in our sample, for example, also expressed a genuine fighting spirit with this comment:

> There are some teachers who are idealistic until the end. They continue. And I think, eventually, those teachers are the ones that actually find some kind of success. Because there are teachers who are a lot more succesful than others, and I think the ones that just keep banging against that wall start making dents after a while and then they do something. They do a little bit of what they thought they were going to do. You never get to the point that you wanted to reach but I think they start building after a while, a lot better than others who are ... just give me the paycheck....

The image that he leaves us with is that to be a successful teacher one has to be a fighter. The fighter, however, has to be idealistic enough to have

a cause and practical and persevering enough to keep banging on the stone wall until he makes a dent.

Thus in our random sample of ten teachers we found two extremes in the way in which teachers responded to the external forces or "stone walls" they encountered in teaching. At each extreme, there were, from our point of view, two pure types and one semi-pure type. The remaining four were somewhere in between, with two appearing to respond by being rather dispassionate or removed. They seemed to be surviving but with minimal investment and minimal satisfaction. One of these was a woman who had gone back to teaching because the family needed the income while the other was a veteran who had become somewhat cynical over the years but still enjoyed his subject field. He has considered leaving the profession but feels he is too old to change. The other two could be loosely characterized as "up and down" in terms of satisfaction and behavior. While they really enjoyed students, they, at times, got highly frustrated with "the system". Some days they felt in control and others they clearly did not.

In our reflections upon what the ten teachers reported in terms of a growing number of external forces that reduce their psychic rewards and in our analysis of the patterns of teacher attitudes and attributes that seemed to go together, we begin to play with metaphor. Although we are not entirely comfortable with the notion, we began to think of the schools and the three subsets of teachers in military terms. Given the assault on teacher decision making regarding curriculum, instruction, recording keeping and the growing lack of student interest and parental support expressed, we began to conceptualize the schools as a battleground. Those who continue to keep "banging against the wall" or ignore "guidelines" that make no sense to them and continue to feel satisfaction strike us as guerrillas. The middle group who appear to do a credible job in the classroom but express little or only

periodic passion for their work strike us somewhere between foot soldiers using conventional strategy in a guerrilla war and uninvolved mercenaries whose interest fluctuates depending upon the activities of a particular day. The dissatisfied group who are unable to accomplish the basic tasks of teaching and therefore unable to feel the rewards of that accomplishment strike us as displaced persons. They have simply wandered into a campaign that was more than they bargained for and they have thrown up their hands.

It is important to note, however, that these military images arise out of a preliminary analysis of ten interviews. The transcripts are filled with other perceptions and perspectives that await further examination. Whether these images will hold up in light of other themes and issues remains to be seen. Further, even if these images hold up for ten teachers, they may get washed away in the analysis of the large number of interviews that remain. Still, they seem a useful and interesting starting point for raising some initial questions and issues.

To begin with, we ask ourselves, "Can the profession of teaching survive if it is dependent upon 'guerrillas' who are persevering and strong enough to keep 'banging against a stone wall' until they 'make a dent'?" Are there, in fact, enough guerrillas out there willing to enter this battle? Do teachers today have to be trained to wage war with the system or to engage in what has been described in the school administration literature as "creative insubordination"? While the idea of training teachers either to subvert or directly fight the educational system in which they have chosen to work seems, at one level, abhorrent, at another level, it seems preferable to letting the profession collapse from a lack of committed professionals. The scenario that Darling-Hammond and Wise (1985) project is a sobering one. As they see it, a cumulative increase of unintended and unanticipated consequences of policy interventions from external decisionmakers could result in driving out better

teachers. As the better teachers leave and the less able enter, the educational system suffers, and more and more destructive policy intervention will occur. It is a downward spiral that is disturbing to contemplate, but our preliminary data gives some credence to the possibility.

Another set of questions, however, arises from our recognition that guerrilla warfare by individual teachers even if it could be encouraged and sustained is both a naive and unrealistic strategy. Are the issues we are raising teaching issues or are they organizational issues? Are the problems described above the result of an enemy force out to destroy the teaching profession or are they the result of well-intentioned, if misguided, efforts to improve teaching in America? In the end, we believe that the issues we are grappling with in this paper are systemic in nature. They reflect back to the very nature of the way in which we organize to accomplish purposes, the political nature of that organization, and the stasis or change in that organization given constant environmental changes. There are no real villains or demons at work. There are only more or less complex understandings of how to bring together multiple perspectives to reformulate a system fraught with difficult dilemmas and critical challenges. What is becoming increasingly clear, however, is that there are no "quick fixes" to be brought to us by outside educational "experts". Any reformulation of the system must take into account the inside perspectives and perceptions of the critical constituency--teachers. Only when we understand "school actualities" from the teacher's point of view, as well as others, will we be able to conduct an informed dialogue as to viable directions for change in the teaching profession and the educational system as a whole.

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