

A SURVEY OF PHILLIPS UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ATTITUDES ON TEACHING AS A PROFESSION

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Teacher recruitment is a grave problem in the United States today, and will probably continue to be so for a period of at least ten years, according to estimates of competent authorities in the field.

Public attitudes, such as appreciation, evaluation, contempt, derision, respect, etc., towards a vocation or profession is an important determining factor in the problem of recruitment in that field.

The purpose, therefore, of this study was to secure a sampling of Phillips University students' reactions to a number of statements derived from articles in current periodicals on teaching as a profession. About fifty articles were surveyed as a basis for the fifteen statements submitted to the Phillips students. No copyright or patent is claimed for these statements, from either a qualitative or a quantitative consideration. Many other similar statements could be made from current literature on the subject; and doubtless a list could be compiled that could give a truer picture of attitudes in this field. Below is a copy of the survey blank used in this study.

ON TEACHING AS A PROFESSION A SURVEY OF PHILLIPS UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ATTITUDES

Dear Phillipian: This study will be a part of the Oklahoma Academy of Science program to be held in our new science building in December. May we count on your help? Please *check* to show your classification and sex, and give your choice of vocation, if any. Also please *circle* a number on the scale at the right to indicate your reaction to each item of the survey. If you agree with the statement in the item, encircle the plus 1; if you strongly agree, the plus 2. If you disagree, show the amount of disagreement on the negative side of neutral.

(Male____, Female____, Freshman____, Soph____, Jr____, Sr____
Grad____, Vocation____)

	AGREE		NEUTRAL		DISAGREE	
	28%	45%	9%	15%	3%	
1. A person who wishes to make a contribution to world peace could do no better than choose teaching as a profession.	2	1	0	-1	-2	
2. Petty annoyances in teaching are enough to deter most people from the profession.	8%	25%	10%	43%	14%	
	2	1	0	-1	-2	
3. If the average teacher's pay ranged from \$2500 to \$4000, I might choose teaching as a profession.	19%	20%	24%	19%	18%	
	2	1	0	-1	-2	
4. Youth are justified in avoiding teaching because of personal and social restrictions on the teacher in the community.	7%	17%	7%	38%	31%	
	2	1	0	-1	-2	
5. I would prefer teaching over law and medicine because I would deal with normal, growing people rather than sick or evil ones.	16%	18%	11%	26%	29%	
	2	1	0	-1	-2	
6. The woman was wise who said: "I didn't raise my son to be a teacher."	4%	2%	10%	32%	52%	
	2	1	0	-1	-2	
7. Long vacations, permanent tenure and retirement security in most states make teaching preferable to most professions and vocations.	10%	27%	17%	30%	16%	
	2	1	0	-1	-2	
8. I think preparation courses and training requirements are too long in the teaching profession.	3%	6%	14%	39%	38%	
	2	1	0	-1	-2	
9. I object to teaching as a profession because teachers become victims of warped personality.	3%	6%	9%	37%	45%	
	2	1	0	-1	-2	
10. Youth should be attracted to teaching because his work reaches all areas of human endeavor.	29%	44%	15%	9%	3%	
	2	1	0	-1	-2	
11. I object to being a teacher because he is considered a servant of the community on evenings and weekends.	4%	14%	14%	39%	29%	
	2	1	0	-1	-2	
12. The title "Great Teacher" might be applied to anyone who awakens another to a new way of life.	22%	34%	17%	17%	9%	
	2	1	0	-1	-2	

13. I would hesitate to be a teacher because I object to being the butt of all the jokes leveled at teachers.	1%	3%	7%	41%	48%
	2	1	0	-1	-2
14. I object to being a teacher because he never really becomes a "bona fide" citizen of the community.	2%	5%	9%	40%	44%
	2	1	0	-1	-2
15. All things considered, teaching ranks up to or above any other profession or vocation.	25%	36%	16%	16%	7%
	2	1	0	-1	-2
16. Please use the reverse side of this sheet to make any further comments you wish on teaching as a profession.					

About 450 blanks were filled and returned to the office. After screening out the defective and incomplete ones, four hundred were used in this study. They included one hundred freshmen, one hundred sophomores, seventy juniors, eighty seniors, and fifty graduate students.

The results of the master tabulation are shown in percentages along the scale opposite each statement.

It may be noted that there is a tendency for the answers to pile up at the positive or negative end of the scale, with relatively few responses in the neutral position. For example, 73% of the students agree with statement number one, while 18% disagree, about a four to one ratio. In statements two and three the responses are more evenly distributed along the scale. Number three, however, is of special interest, indicating that a large percentage of the students are indifferent to the factor of salary as related to teaching.

The responses to statement six, namely, "I didn't raise my son to be a teacher," indicate that relatively few of Phillips students agree with the contempt for teaching implied in this statement. Their vote shows a ratio of 84% to 6%, or 14 to 1, disagreeing with the statement.

In view of the history of teacher training in America, the responses to number eight are of interest. There are about nine negative responses to one positive. Future teachers in even greater proportions voted negatively on this statement.

There is a popular notion, also voiced in periodical literature on teaching, that large percentages of teachers become neurotic and warped in their thinking as they grow older. This view is repudiated by Phillips students, as is indicated by responses to statement number nine. Eighty-two per cent disagree with the statement, while nine per cent agree, a ratio of nine to one, against the statement.

Number ten is of interest. The responses here show that Phillips students, by a ratio of about six to one, accept the statement that teaching is an attractive profession, because it gives a wide scope of opportunity to render service in this vocational field.

Another indication that Phillips students do not, in very large numbers, object to the service side of teaching as a profession, is shown by the results in number eleven, in which about four times as many disagree with the statement as agree.

The responses in number thirteen indicate that Phillips students either do not share, or choose to ignore, that peculiar sense of humor and ridicule which existed in "Sleepy Hollow", and vented itself upon the hapless teacher, Ichabod Crane. You will note that they respond with a resounding "No", reaching a ratio of twenty-two to one vote of disagreement with this statement.

Whatever may be the reasons that cause an overwhelming majority of American youth not to consider seriously the choice of teaching as a profession, the prevailing lack of entire integration into the community as a citizen

does not seem to be one of them. This is indicated by responses to statement number fourteen, in which they disagreed with the statement by a vote of twelve to one against it.

In general, there was a surprisingly small sex difference among Phillips students in attitudes towards teaching as a profession. In most cases where there was a preponderance of responses at one end of the scale, the percentage of girls exceeded that of the boys by only about seven to ten per cent. However, statement number ten shows this trend in greater emphasis. Here the approval of the girls exceeds that of the boys by twenty-one per cent.

When the responses of future teachers are compared with those of other vocational groups, the trends of both are in the same direction; the emphasis, however, is much greater among the future teachers. This is shown by a positive vote of 94% to 4% by the teachers on statement 14 and a vote of 73% to 2% by those of other vocations; also by a negative vote of 90% to 2% by teachers on statement six and a 78% to 8% vote by others; and by a negative vote of 94% to 2% on statement fourteen by teachers and a vote of 81% to 6% by others. These results are in line with what one should expect.

Another most interesting, as well as important, observation may be made from this phase of the study, namely, that 41% of students listing vocations other than teaching, voted yes on statement three. That is, they said that they might choose teaching as a profession if the teacher's salary ranged from \$2500 to \$6000! Most of the students were, probably, responding on the basis of the low pay of teachers in the past, rather than the present status of the teacher's salary. Anyway, this emphasizes how important a factor salary is in the recruitment of teachers to meet the continuing emergency in this field.

A comparison of attitudes of freshmen and sophomores with those of juniors and seniors, in general, shows trends in the same direction. However, responses in statement number seven are an exception to these trends. Here the lower classmen give a positive vote by the narrow margin of 46% to 40%; while the upperclassmen vote negatively by a majority of 56% to 26%. No good reason has occurred to the writer that might account for this difference. In statements twelve and fourteen the responses of upper and lower classmen go in the same direction, but the lower classmen seem much more emphatic in their responses. This is shown by a positive vote of 72% to 18% for freshmen and sophomores on statement twelve and a vote of 46% to 32% for juniors and seniors; while on statement fourteen freshmen and sophomores vote negatively by a wide margin of 90% to 0% and the juniors and seniors by a vote of 86% to 8%. Again no good reason occurs to account for this difference between the responses of upper and lower classmen.

Under item number sixteen of the blank, a number of interesting student comments were made. However, nearly all of their ideas are included in one or more of the fifteen statements, the results of which have been presented and discussed.

Only a few of the typical comments are given here. This comment is by a girl, freshman, whose chosen work is religious education. "A teacher should be proud to be called a teacher. It is a wonderful thing to be able to teach youth, not only required curriculum, but to teach them to become good citizens. A good citizen makes a good Christian. Christians help to make world peace."

Here is a boy, a sophomore, a geologist. "I think that teaching as a profession should pay just as well as the doctor's or lawyers profession, and I believe it should be just as hard to break into."

This is a boy, a graduate student, a minister. "Teaching has become too narrow, confined and restrained by reactionary cultural forces and political bigots who determine what should be taught and education is no longer free from the scientific search and advancement toward truth. It must conform to state beliefs—nonprogressive intellectually."

Here is a girl, a sophomore, no professional choice given. "I have a great respect for the teaching profession because of the number of fine teachers I have had throughout my school life. However, I would not choose the work for my own, because I think I will fit in better in some other work or business."

This is a girl, a senior, whose chosen work is religious education. "Teachers with warped personalities exist, not because the profession made them so, but because warped personalities turn to teaching as a last resort."

It would be interesting to know to what extent the attitudes on teaching as a profession expressed by Phillips students coincide with attitudes of other college students throughout the country. If Phillips students' attitudes are a fair criterion for other colleges and universities, teacher recruitment ought to have easier sailing in the near future.

If this study should stimulate others to make evaluative studies of the problem, it will have served its purpose.
