

**Bruce M. Shore and Esther Strauss**

# **What Happens to Graduate Education Graduates?**

Educational systems are being asked to provide more effective programs and more competent teachers. One result of this phenomenon has been an increasing demand for individuals with postgraduate training in Education. Such credentials are often seen as a prerequisite for securing teaching positions. However, an American researcher, Ivan Berg, argues that level of education is positively related to frequency of job turnover.<sup>2</sup> He presents data indicating that both elementary and secondary teachers are more likely to change jobs within the schools as they acquire further training and higher degrees; that teachers with M.A. degrees are more likely to express a desire for other teaching jobs or for positions out of Education entirely. Berg contends that teachers at both the elementary and secondary level are less likely to stay in teaching as they receive advanced academic training. He does not, however, indicate the number of teachers who leave the classroom, nor does he specify the nature of the positions taken by those individuals who have. If teacher turnover is positively related to educational achievement, as Berg suggests, then the advisability of postgraduate training for teachers is open to question.

The purpose of the present study was twofold: first, to examine the career course of postgraduate recipients of M.A. thesis degrees in Education and second, to explore further the nature of teacher turnover.

## **procedure**

A brief questionnaire and pre-paid envelope were sent to 171 individuals who received M.A. thesis degrees in Education from McGill University. The sample extended over graduates from the past sixty years (1914-1974).

We were interested in the following questions:

1. Did teachers with postgraduate training remain within the classroom?
2. What kind of positions were taken by those teachers who did leave the classroom?
3. How many of those individuals with postgraduate training pursued Doctoral degrees in Education?
4. Was the manner of study (part-time or full-time) related to the career pattern?
5. Was locale related to career pattern?
6. How did teachers themselves regard the relevance of their postgraduate training?

The present study did not distinguish between the specific M. A. programs (Educational Psychology, Physical Education, etc.) because the specialization of the old M. A. (Education) did not occur until after 1967. Such further analysis would be appropriate in a few years.

## **results**

Of the 171 questionnaires sent, 53% were returned. In order to verify the representativeness of the sample, a decade-by-decade comparison between the mailing list and the returns was performed. Return rates of 31%, 50%, 68%, 45% and 45% were obtained from the 1930's on. No earlier graduates responded. Age of respondents alone could account for these discrepancies; for example, there were only nineteen graduates in the 1950's, but ninety-nine in the 1960's. Overall, the returns appear to be representative. The research questions were answered as follows.

### *1. Did Teachers Remain in the Classroom?*

The analysis indicated that 48% of the sample remained within the classroom and 52% left. There was no significant difference between those who enrolled in full-time or part-time studies. (Three respondents are omitted from the data in Table 1 because their replies were incomplete. This causes a 2% shift from the above percentages to 50% and 50%).

### *2. Where Did the Teachers Go?*

When we examined the positions taken by the teachers who left the classroom, we found that the majority (40 of 48) were working full-

TABLE 1

FULL - OR PART-TIME STUDIES AND REMAINING OR LEAVING TEACHING				
	<i>Remained in Teaching</i>		<i>Left Teaching</i>	
<i>Full-time</i>	13	(16%)	14	(18%)
<i>Part-time</i>	27	(34%)	26*	(32%)
<i>Total</i>	40	(50%)	40	(50%)

\*One of these returned after 12 years

or part-time in a community college, university faculty, or post-secondary administrative position. The remainder were distributed among military, government and business agencies, all but one of these agencies related to education.

Similar findings were reported in a recent survey by the Harvard Graduate School of Education. That study revealed that one-fifth of the Harvard Ed.D. graduates were employed as teachers in elementary or secondary schools and 44% as full-time administrators at the elementary and secondary levels. As in the present survey, educators who left school positions (of all types) worked in higher education, government, and education-related organizations.<sup>3</sup>

Another survey (internal report, unpublished) undertaken at Columbia University, also with doctoral graduates, noted with surprise that more Ed.D. than Ph.D. graduates ended up in full-time research positions.<sup>4</sup> No distinction was made in the present survey between Ed.D's and Ph.D's for those M.A. graduates who went on to earn higher degrees. We refer to the Columbia survey because it also indicates that advanced graduate training in Education can lead to career lines away from the classroom or the school, even for students receiving a supposedly "professional" degree. The Columbia survey, however, only covered graduates in Philosophy and the Social Sciences of Education.

### 3. *Doctoral Education*

A fraction over 25% of those who responded pursued doctoral studies in Education. Studying full- or part-time for the Master's degree was not related to such further Educational endeavors (chi-squared less than 1 and therefore clearly non-significant; formal testing not required).

TABLE 2

FULL- OR PART-TIME STUDIES AND LATER DOCTORAL STUDIES				
	<i>Went on to Doctorate</i>		<i>No Doctorate</i>	
<i>Full-time</i>	6	( 8%)	22	(29%)
<i>Part time</i>	13	(17%)	34	(45%)
<i>Total</i>	19	(25%)	56	(75%)

4. *Locale*

Locale failed to reveal any meaningful differences in the patterns of career shifts for our sample. Graduates left or remained in teaching in the same proportions, and the same was true for further studies and types of non-teaching positions. The graduates lived across Canada, U.S.A., U.K., Australia, Asia and Africa. This is representative of the origins of students in the M.A. programs.

5. *Evaluation of the Program*

The responses were primarily affirmative. Analysis of the content of the replies revealed that those which were affirmative stressed two themes: a perspective-broadening experience and a good preparation for doctoral work. Negative remarks were generally that the program was not helpful in any specific way. Whether the student pursued the degree program part- or full-time proved to be unrelated to the evaluation. (We hesitate to assume how non-respondents might have replied to this particular question.)

TABLE 3

(a) FULL- OR PART-TIME STUDIES AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAM REGARDING TEACHING				
	<i>Positive Evaluation</i>		<i>Negative Evaluation</i>	
<i>Full-time</i>	16	(24.5%)	5	( 7.5%)
<i>Part-time</i>	35	(54%)	9	(14%)
<i>Total</i>	51	(78.5%)	14	(21.5%)

TABLE 3 (cont.)

(b) FULL OR PART-TIME STUDIES AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAM REGARDING RELATED ACTIVITIES				
	<i>Positive Evaluation</i>		<i>Negative Evaluation</i>	
<i>Full-time</i>	10	(19%)	8	(15%)
<i>Part-time</i>	31	(57%)	5	(9%)
<i>Total</i>	41	(76%)	13	(24%)

## discussion

The study in part supports Berg's contention that teachers with postgraduate training tend to leave primary or secondary classrooms. Approximately 50% of our sample did not remain within the classroom. That such a large number of teachers leave indicates the necessity of reassessing the needs of the educational system in both the long and short term. Further research is required to determine a. both the positive rewards and the negative aspects of teaching in the elementary and secondary schools, b. the rewards expected by teachers and how to deliver such anticipated rewards, and c. the factors motivating some individuals to stay in the classroom and others to leave it.

Our data further indicate that those who do leave remain predominantly in Education, whether in community colleges, universities, or in related agencies such as government departments. The fact that 25% of the M. A. graduates went on to pursue doctorates in Education suggests that the M. A. programs have succeeded in their aim of providing basic research skills and preparation for doctoral studies. No significant relations were discovered between career pattern and manner of study. Finally, replying to questions of relevance of their postgraduate studies, the M.A. graduates stressed intellectual stimulation, career appropriateness, and preparation for doctoral work, and offered more positive than negative assessments of their programs. This might indicate that graduates felt that the M. A. did help them achieve their own personal goals. An important question which remains unanswered is how well these programs achieve their own goals, and whether or not these goals are sufficiently articulated in terms of graduates' future contributions to the school system.

## footnotes

1. We are grateful to Paul Schnall and Mary Cerre of the Centre for Learning and Development, McGill University, for their assistance in carrying out this survey, to the former Director of Graduate Studies in Education, Professor L. B. Birch, and his staff for permission and assistance in using their records, to the Graduates' Society of McGill University for their cooperation in compiling the mailing list, and to the graduates who took the trouble to reply.
2. Ivan Berg, *Education and Jobs — The Great Training Robbery*, New York: Praeger Publications, 1970.
3. Jerry Menikoff, *A Survey of Employment Patterns of Recent Ed.D. Recipients, Part A: Major Findings and Summary Data*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Office of Analytic Studies, 1974, Report 8.
4. *A Survey of Graduate Students 1960-1971*, New York: Department of Philosophy and the Social Sciences, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1974 (Internal unpublished report cited with permission).