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PREVIEW

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**Kluender, Mary McManus**

ATTITUDES OF SELECTED STATE POLICYMAKERS TOWARD ALTERNATIVE  
POLICIES AS THEY AFFECT TEACHER SUPPLY AND DEMAND

*The University of Nebraska - Lincoln*

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ATTITUDES OF SELECTED STATE POLICYMAKERS TOWARD ALTERNATIVE  
POLICIES AS THEY AFFECT TEACHER SUPPLY AND DEMAND

by

Mary McManus Kluender

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Under the Supervision of Professor Robert L. Egbert

Lincoln, Nebraska

August, 1983

**TITLE**

Attitudes of Selected State Policymakers Toward Alternative  
Policies As They Affect Teacher Supply and Demand

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the attitudes of selected education policymakers toward teacher supply and demand conditions and alternative policies or actions that might affect those conditions. Included as subjects in the study were selected members of boards of directors and staff members of seven education organizations in Nebraska.

#### Overview

Teacher supply and demand conditions are determined by a combination of controllable and uncontrollable variables. The basic uncontrollable variable is the number of students to be educated in a given time, which is determined primarily by shifts in births and birthrates, although changes in the rate of school retention may also affect the variable to some degree. The controllable variables are those policies and practices adopted at the national, state and local levels which affect the number of people who choose to enter and complete teacher education programs, accept teaching positions, and remain in the teaching profession.

Development of appropriate policies to respond to demographic shifts is a difficult task, however, Morrison (1980) noted:

Demographic change proceeds slowly, but on a massive scale. The problems it engenders are complex, and public awareness of its influence lags. Demographic reporting of on-going trends, including monitoring data and analyzing what has changed and what the changes mean, can help prod public recognition and political action. The debate can then become a little profounder and the decisions a little wiser. (p. 320)

Between 1930 and 1980, social scientists became increasingly interested in changes in demography and how those changes affect social institutions. In the early part of that period, researchers were primarily interested in fertility and birth patterns, why those patterns took place, and how one might project population trends based on those patterns (e.g., Easterlin, 1962; Ryder & Westoff, 1971). Beginning in the early 1960s, however, there was increased interest in the consequences of particular demographic events. This interest took two general forms. First, there has been an interest in the fate of particular cohorts based upon their demographic characteristics. This was the theme, for example, of Easterlin's most recent book, Birth and Fortune: The Impact of Numbers on Personal Welfare (1981). The second, related trend was to analyze the effects of demographic shifts on society and its institutions, including education (e.g., Egbert, et al., 1979; Boulding, 1975).

School districts, teacher education programs, state and federal programs and other facets of education have always had to adjust their goals, policies and procedures with the rise and fall of the number of births and the birthrate. Perhaps the best known effect of population changes on education was the "baby boom" that began in the late 1930s. Except for a short interruption during World War II, births in the United States increased dramatically until about 1959; they then began to decrease rapidly. In 1935, 2.38 million babies were born; by 1950, that number had risen to 3.63 million, and continued increasing to 4.27 million births in 1961. Births then began to decline. By 1965 the number of births had dropped to 3.76 million; they continued to decrease to



3.15 million births in 1975 (Statistical Abstract of the U.S., selected years).

Schools were forced to accommodate quickly to rapidly changing numbers due to changes in the numbers of births and the birthrate. From 1950 to 1965, school districts built schools, hired teachers, and expanded programs to accommodate ever larger classes. By the time they had fully adjusted to the larger numbers, the pattern of the birthrate and the number of births had reversed; each entering class was steadily smaller. During the late 1960s and the 1970s, educators have been trying to adjust to those smaller numbers, and to make decisions about how to use or eliminate a surplus of buildings, programs and personnel. Since 1975, however, the birthrate and the number of births have once more risen annually, both at the national level and in most states. By 1982, school districts were faced with a new quandary: is the increase a short-term one, that will be followed by a return to low numbers of births, or is it the beginning of a longer-term cycle of increased births?

Institutions of higher education also have had to adjust to increases and decreases in the college-age population, and the results of their adjustment affect the elementary and secondary schools. For example, in the 1980s colleges and universities are competing for a smaller number of available students. This means that teacher education programs must compete with high demand and high monetary reward areas such as science, engineering and business. If the number of births does increase, teacher education will be faced with the need to train more

prospective teachers, and to recruit them from a shrinking pool of college-age youth.

Economic conditions, particularly labor conditions, are also affected by demographic changes. Several economists predict that after a period of high unemployment that is at least in part an artifact of the "baby boom" of the 1940s and 1950s, the United States is moving into a labor-deficient economy (Weber, 1980; Purcell, 1980). One cause of this potential labor shortage is the decreased births and birthrates of the 1960s and early 1970s, which will produce a shortage of entry-level workers by the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Public education and teacher education will be particularly affected by such a labor shortage, due to at least three factors: (1) the increased number of births in the last half of the 1970s, which will require more teachers; (2) the limited ability within teacher education programs to compete for scarce students in a period of a labor and student shortage; (3) a general misconception about the nature of the teacher surplus of the 1970s and the reservoir of former teachers that might once again return to the teaching marketplace.

There are differing projections about teacher supply and demand conditions for the period of 1985 to 1990 and beyond. Edmonston and Knapp (1979) analyzed selected demographic data for the years 1934 to 1978, and concluded that the future supply of teachers will more than exceed demand, unless there is another sudden shift in the fertility rate. Several other researchers also have predicted a continued surplus for the next several years (Fishlow, 1978; Wilken & Callahan, 1978). On the other hand, there are several indications that the teacher surplus

may not be as extensive or as long-lasting as has generally been thought. The 1980 National Center for Education Statistics report on teacher supply and demand forecasted that a shortage of teachers may occur by the late 1980s (NCES, 1982); the Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasted an improved job market for teachers, particularly at the elementary level (Dillich, 1980).

By the early 1980s, there appeared to be increasing variations in supply and demand conditions by geographical region and by subject matter. In 1980, the Association for School, College and University Staffing (ASCUS) reported that there continue to be a surplus in elementary education and some secondary fields such as health education, physical education and social studies in most states, but that there were moderate to severe shortages in mathematics and the physical sciences, and wide variations among states in some other teaching fields such as life sciences and business education (ASCUS, 1980).

Beginning in the late 1970s, there was concern not only about the quantity of teachers available in the various teaching fields and regions of the country, but there was also increasing concern about the quality of individuals who were preparing to teach and entering the teaching profession. Some of this concern developed from research that indicated that those entering teacher education programs and remaining in teaching scored less well on college entrance scores than people in other academic fields (Weaver, 1979; Schlechy & Vance, 1982). College entrance scores of high school students had declined steadily between 1973 and 1981 and the test scores of those students intending to enter teacher education were even lower than the general college-bound

population (NCES, 1982). As a result of the concern, during the early 1980s, several studies were made which contained recommendations of policies or actions which might be quality of the teaching workforce (Chief State School Officers Report, 1982; Southern Regional Education Board, 1982).<sup>1</sup>

National policies have had some impact upon the supply and demand for teachers through such legislation as the National Defense Education Act and the Teacher Corps program, which have increased the total number of teachers trained for special fields or locations. Decisions on issues such as the education, certification, salary schedules, benefits and working conditions, which are more important in determining the teacher supply, are made at the state and local levels. In addition, because there are wide variations among states and school districts, policies and practices may also vary widely, and what is appropriate in one locale may not be appropriate in another. The extent to which education policymakers understand demographic trends and the implications of alternative decisions influences the development of appropriate policies for teacher supply.

#### Statement of the Problem

Because teacher supply and demand conditions vary among states and because those conditions are affected by policies and and actions taken

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<sup>1</sup>Between the time that the data for this study were gathered (August-October, 1982 and the completion of this study (July, 1982), a major policy statement of education was published by the National Commission for Excellence in Education. Appointed by Secretary of Education Terrel Bell and chaired by William Gardner, President of the University of Utah, the Commission produced a report, A Nation at Risk, which called for a national debate on many of the policy issues raised in this study.

at the state and local level, this study focused on the attitudes of state policymakers and influencers in a single state and on their attitude toward alternative policies that might affect those conditions.

### Research Questions

1. How do selected state policymakers and influencers perceive teacher supply and demand conditions in their state?
2. What projections do selected state policymakers and influencers make about teacher supply and demand conditions in their state for the period 1982-1995?
3. What factors do they perceive contribute to those conditions?
4. What policies do they advocate to affect those conditions?
5. What is their attitude toward selected policy alternatives?
6. Are there differences in attitudes toward teacher supply and demand conditions, projections, and selected policy alternatives among board members and staff members in seven selected state education organizations which make or influence education policies?

### Procedures

James S. Coleman, in Policy Research in the Social Sciences (1972), distinguished between discipline research and policy research. Discipline research is intended to aid in theory construction and add to knowledge in a substantive area; policy research is designed to "provide information that is important for policy decisions that must be made" (p. 2). Coleman described several characteristics and ten principles that distinguish policy research from discipline research, as a result

of those distinguishing principles, the procedures used in each type of research will be quite different. He proposed that the design of research in social policy should follow these steps:

1. identify the parties interested in policy outcomes and with some power or potential power to affect policy;
2. determine interests of these parties;
3. find what kinds of information are relevant to their interests;
4. determine the best way to obtain this information;
5. determine how to report the results. (p. 16)

This research was designed to ascertain the knowledge and attitudes of selected education policymakers and influencers, but it is not a policy study in the sense that Coleman uses the term. The study does address Coleman's first three recommended procedures for the design of social policy studies; the parties identified have some interest and potential power over educational policy, their interests in issues relating to teacher supply and demand were determined in the design of the study, and one focus of the interviews was to discover the kinds of information they perceived as relevant to consideration of alternative policies in teacher supply and demand. This study does not, by design, recommend specific policy actions or evaluate alternative policies. Instead, the study was designed to provide a fuller understanding of the perspectives of several policymaking audiences within the state; as such, this study might be considered a precursor to a fuller, more formal policy study on alternative policies to alleviate teacher supply and

demand, and to increase the quality of the teaching workforce. The procedures used in this study were:

- (1) A review of the literature was conducted on demographic patterns in the United States between 1920 and 1982, teacher supply and demand conditions in the United States between 1920 and 1982, and policies and actions which were proposed or adopted in response to varying supply and demand conditions.
- (2) Representatives from seven education policymaking or policy-influencing organizations were identified in a single state (Nebraska) to participate in a semi-structured interview about teacher supply and demand conditions and policies which might affect those conditions in the state. For each of the seven organizations, four members of the board of directors, representing four regions of the state, plus the executive officer or staff member for the organization, were selected to participate in the interview.
- (3) An interview guide was developed to collect data about respondents' perceptions of teacher supply and demand conditions in their own state, factors they perceived as contributing to those conditions, and their reactions to alternative policies which might have an impact upon teacher supply and demand conditions. Each section of questions within the interview guide was preceded by a short background statement based on the review of literature, which the interviewer used to provide a common context for the questions.

- (4) The thirty-five subjects were contacted by telephone and agreed to participate in the study. All interviews were conducted in person and were tape recorded; no notes were taken during the interview. After each interview, the tapes were checked for clarity, and the rankings of alternative policies were transferred to a tally sheet.
- (5) Data were analyzed in three ways:
  - (a) responses to each of the interview sections were reviewed;
  - (b) responses were analyzed according to group represented and region of the state represented;
  - (c) the rankings of alternative policy statements were analyzed.

#### Organization of the Study

In Chapter I, the need for this research was described and an overview of the procedures was given. The remainder of this study is organized in the following manner:

Chapter II: A review of related studies.

Chapter III: A description of the research procedure used.

Chapter IV: A presentation and summarization of the data.

Chapter V: A summary of the conclusions and recommendations.