

**A Study Of Job Satisfaction Among Directors of Classified Personnel  
In Merit (Civil Service) Systems in California Public School Districts,  
County Offices of Education, and Community College Districts**

by  
**Donald R. McCann**

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICTS**

by

**Donald R. McCann**

**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements  
for the Degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
in  
EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION**

**A STUDY OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG  
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COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICTS**

A dissertation submitted

by

DONALD R. McCANN

to

BERNE UNIVERSITY

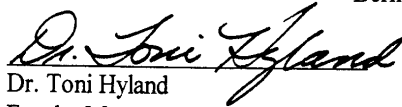
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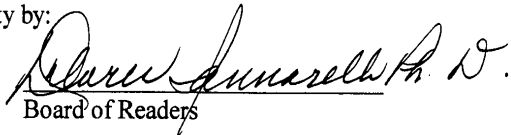
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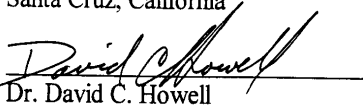
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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the general job satisfaction, intrinsic job satisfaction, and extrinsic job satisfaction levels of Directors of Classified Personnel in the 97 Merit (Civil Service ) Systems school districts in California that employ approximately 60 percent of classified employees. Also examined was the influence or relationship of job satisfaction to variables such as the Director's gender, age, highest degree (or equivalent) earned, years of Director experience, size of organization (district), responsibility for certificated only or both certificated (teaching) and classified (non-teaching) employees, and current minimum and maximum monthly salary amounts.

Data was collected by mailing a Demographic Survey Form (DSF) and a variant of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), short form, to 97 districts and offices that had adopted the Merit System in California school districts. There were 91 total incumbent Directors when the survey was conducted. The MSQ collected scores for 20 job satisfaction questions on a five-point scale ranging from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. The DSF solicited data on gender, age, degree, years of experience, size of organization, responsibility for employees, and salary.

Responses were received from 92.3% (n = 84) of the incumbent Directors. The data was examined to develop scores for general satisfaction, intrinsic satisfaction, and extrinsic satisfaction. Responses to the individual questions were tabulated, and mean scores and standard deviations were developed. Pearson correlation was used to determine the relationship between general, intrinsic, and extrinsic job satisfaction, and age, years of experience, organizational size, and minimum and maximum monthly salary. Additionally, t-tests were used to determine the relationship between degree attainment, gender, responsibility for employees, and job satisfaction.

It was found that Directors of Classified Personnel in California Merit System school districts were generally, intrinsically, and extrinsically satisfied with their jobs. No significant relationship was found between any of the job satisfaction measurements and gender, age, degree attainment, years of experience, size of district, responsibilities for employees, and salary levels.

Various demographic measurements for the responding 92.3% of the Directors were as follows: gender composition was 48.8% (n = 41) male and 51.2% (n = 43) female; mean age was 50.9 years with a standard deviation of 7.35 years; bachelor degree holders or equivalent based on education and/or experience was 39.3% (n = 33), masters 50.0% (n = 42), and doctorate 10.7% (n = 9); average experience was 9.77 years; average district size was 15,397 students; responsibility for classified employees only was 67.7% (n = 56), and for both classified and certificated employees was 33.3% (n = 28); average minimum monthly salary was \$6,426 with a standard deviation of \$1,297; and average maximum monthly salary was \$7,390 with a standard deviation of \$1,140.



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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As discussed by Harris & Levey (1975), the civil service is the entire body of those employed in the civilian administration of a governmental entity as distinct from the military and naval service and excluding elected officials. According to Skowronek (1982), in the late nineteenth century there was a pattern to create a civil career system in the leading modern nations. The chief characteristics of such systems included political neutrality, tenure in office, recruitment that required special training or competitive examination, and standard rules regarding promotion, discipline, remuneration, and retirement. Versions of these merit systems were instituted in countries such as Great Britain in 1870, Canada in 1882, Prussia in 1873, and continuously during this period in France.

As outlined by Jones, et al. (1984), as well as materials available from the Torrance Unified School District (1994) and Long Beach Unified School District (1996) Personnel Commissions, the “spoils” or patronage system continued to be the accepted method used to fill federal government jobs in the 1880s. It required the tragedy of the assassination of President Garfield in 1881 by a disappointed office seeker to concentrate enough attention on this practice to stimulate reform. Subsequently, the United States enacted into law the Civil Service Act of 1883 (the Pendleton Act), which was the first effective legislation to protect federal employees against the patronage system.

In later years, states, counties, and cities throughout the nation enacted local versions of the federal Merit System law. For example, in 1913 the California legislature established California's first civil service system in an attempt to combat the spoils system of political patronage concerning state employment (Pacific Legal Foundation v. Brown, 1981). According to the case, by the 1930s, the 1913 system was failing for three principal reasons: approximately half of the 23,000 full-time state employees had been exempted from civil service law; gross misuse of the three-month temporary employment rule by having more than a third of all state employees being hired as temporary workers; and widespread newspaper publicity about allegedly numerous politically motivated appointments by the incumbent governor. The case also noted that in 1934, during the Great Depression, the people of California adopted a state constitutional amendment that enacted a civil service system that provided: employment in the classified service based on merit and efficiency principles; a nonpartisan Personnel Board; prohibition against exemptions from the merit system of employment; and correction of the temporary political appointment evil.

It was during this time, some 50 years after the Pendleton Act, that school systems first adopted the Merit System approach (Torrance, 1994; Long Beach, 1996). As is frequently the case with things new, California led the Merit System trend for school districts. This came about because the large Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) Board of Education members were up for election in 1933. Four of the incumbent candidates promised jobs to voters in exchange for political support. These candidates, who had a majority vote on the seven member Board, dismissed without cause

about 700 non-teaching employees before the election – the teachers were protected by tenure and could not be dismissed. Nevertheless, according to California School Personnel Commissioners Association’s Personnel Commissioners Manual (1999) nearly 2,000 people came to the LAUSD business offices after the election to claim their jobs. The police had to be called out to control the throngs of people that crowded the headquarter facilities and nearby streets.

The above described events helped set the stage for development of a legislative remedy. The effort to craft a solution was led by Dr. Schuyler Joyner who was hired by the LAUSD as the District’s Business Manager in 1935 and later served as the District’s Deputy Superintendent from 1955 to 1964 (PC Manual, 1999; McKay, 1999). Dr. Joyner and a team of employees developed a proposal, based on the Pendelton Act, that eventually became the “Civil Service Bill” (California Assembly Bill 999). This law, which has remained virtually unchanged in its general concepts, became effective on September 15, 1935. Starting in 1936, eligible California school districts and community college districts adopted Merit (Civil Service) Systems for classified (non-teaching) personnel (Ford, 2000). In the mid 1960s, county offices of education started adopting Merit Systems for classified employees. When a Merit System is adopted, an independent, three-person Personnel Commission is created in the district. The Commission in turn appoints a personnel director, who in most districts is known as the Director of Classified Personnel.

According to portions of the modern California Education Code (E.C.), the Merit System may be made applicable in California to any school district, which for purposes of

this study includes any district having grades Kindergarten through 12 (K-12), a county office of education, or a community college district. For example, in a K-12 type district having an Average Daily Attendance (ADA) of 3,000 or more students, either the classified employees may petition for an election to have a Merit System voted in by such employees (E.C. Sections 45221 and 4522); or, if no petition has been received, a majority of the governing board may vote to have a Merit System (E.C. Section 45224); or a majority of the voting electors in a district may assent to having a Merit System (E.C. Section 45224.5); or if the district has an ADA of less than 3,000 the governing board may vote to adopt a Merit System (E.C. Section 45223). It is noted that E.C. Section 45100 also makes the above-referenced K-12 provisions applicable to the 58 county offices of education.

For community college districts with an ADA of 3,000 or greater, either the classified employees may petition for an election to have a Merit System voted in by such employees (E.C. Sections 88051 and 88052); or, if no petition has been received, a majority of the governing board may vote to have a Merit System (E.C. Section 88054); or a majority of the voting electors in a district may assent to having a Merit System (E.C. Section 88057); or if the district has an ADA of less than 3,000 the governing board may vote to adopt a Merit System (E.C. Section 88053).

A Merit System may be terminated, after two years, if 10 percent of the electors (voters) or 40 percent of the classified employees petition the board of education to let either the voters or employees vote to terminate the Merit System in the district. (E.C. Section 45319 for K-12 districts, and E.C. Section 88138 for community college districts.)



The Merit System for classified employees is generally contained in E.C. Sections 45220 through 45320 for K-12 districts and county offices of education, and E.C. Sections 88050 through 88139 for community college districts. These two sets of statutory provisions describe parallel or similar Merit System requirements for the three types of educational entities. To put the number of school districts in perspective, it is noted that in 1998-99 there were 1,026 school districts of the types noted above in California, of which 997 were K-12 type districts (Educational Demographics Unit of the Department of Education, 2000), 58 were county offices of education, and 71 were community college districts (California Public School Directory 1999). In the June 1999 edition of the Directory of the California School Personnel Commissioners Association, 97 of the above 1,026 school districts adopted the Merit System, of which 77 were K-12 type districts, 14 were county offices of education, and 6 were community college districts.

However, as noted in the Los Angeles County Office of Education's Personnel Commission Annual Report for 1997-98, almost 60 percent of all classified employees in school districts and offices in California work under the framework of a Merit System. This percentage is due to the larger districts having adopted a Merit System. From information provided by the California Department of Education (2000) for K-12 type districts and county offices of education, and the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges (1999), it is estimated that there were 653,000 full time equivalent employees in such organizations in the school year 1998-1999, of which 294,000 or 45 percent were classified employees. Of the 294,000 classified employees, approximately

257,000 were in K-12 type districts, 22,000 were in community college districts, and 15,000 were in county offices of education.

According to An Orientation Handbook For Personnel Commissioners (1993), a Merit System is a method of personnel management designed to promote the efficiency and economy of the service and the good of the public by providing for the selection and retention of employees on the basis of merit and fitness; a career service offering in-service promotional opportunities; equal pay for equal work; a way to correct inadequate performance and separate those whose inadequate performance cannot be corrected; impartial hearings of appeals from disciplinary action; fair treatment of all applicants and employees; and a method to protect employees against political coercion and the use of official position to affect an election or nomination for office.

Central to making the Merit System work in a school district is the Director of Classified Personnel. The California School Personnel Commissioners Association (CSPCA) is a statewide organization composed of Personnel Commissioners of the school districts, county offices of education, and community college districts that have adopted the Merit System. The CSPCA also has four regional associations: Southern California Personnel Commissioners Association (PCASC), School Personnel Commissioners Association of Northern California (SCPCA/NC), Orange County School Personnel Commissioners Association, and San Diego County Personnel Commissioners Association (SDCPCA). According to the CSPCA's An Orientation Handbook for Personnel Commissioners, "The legal relationship of the superintendent to the governing board is similar to that of the personnel director and the commission." (1993, p. 16.) The Director

of Classified Personnel serves as the executive officer of the Commission and is responsible for carrying out all procedures in the administration of the classified personnel program. This includes supervising support staff and directing technical functions such as recruitment, selection, position classification, and salary analysis. The Director also acts as secretary to the commission, prepares an annual budget for commission approval, and is responsible for the preparation of the annual report to the commission and governing board.

Since the performance of the Director has a tremendous effect on the personnel programs in the district, Commissioners want to search for the right combination of technical knowledge, interpersonal relation skills, and managerial ability in a candidate. Performance of the Director will depend to some extent upon his or her job satisfaction. As noted above, the relationship of the Director to the Commission is similar to that of the superintendent to the board of education. This relationship suggests the research on one position may shed light on the other regarding job satisfaction matters.

Compounding the above considerations of performance and job satisfaction are the number of vacancies in the Director positions. For example, CSPCA information indicates that approximately 6 out of the 97 Merit System school districts in California have Director of Classified Personnel vacancies in any given year. The Directory of the California Merit System School Districts, published by the CSPCA in August 1996 and June 1999, show such typical vacancy rates. “Where Will New Directors Come From?” is a continuing issue at meetings of the PCASC membership. This was the topic of one of

six seminars at the Spring 1999 Mini-Conference of the PCASC held in Palm Springs, California from May 14 - 16, 1999.

The concern was also addressed in a seminar titled "Hiring a Personnel Director" at the Annual Meeting of CSPCA, held in San Jose, California from January 13 -16, 2000 (Weinstein & Caldecott, 2000). In the seminar, it was pointed out that there appears to be a diminishing pool of qualified directors. Three main reasons cited were: longtime directors retiring, small promotional pools of personnel analysts and technicians, and compensation not in line with the high cost of housing in some urban areas.

There have been many articles regarding the current and future shortage of teachers and school administrators in the nation (Houston, 1998; Cooley & Shen, 2000; Tallerice, 2000), in California (Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998), and of faculty and senior administrators in the approximately 1,000 community colleges in the United States (Anderson, 1997; Ebbers et al., 2000). Little information is available, however, regarding the shortage of classified administrators.

In a more general way, O'Malley (2000) reports that senior management ranks will be impacted by the changing demographic landscape in the United States. For example, coincident with the aging baby boom generation, there is a projected 15 percent decline in the 35 to 44 year-olds over the next 15 years. Persons in this age group are the traditional reservoir of managers and executives. In summary, continuing recruitment and retention issues are facing those who hire Directors of Classified Personnel. Job satisfaction should shed light on issues such as those noted below.

Job satisfaction studies have drawn the attention of educators, philosophers, psychologists, industrial organizations, businesses, and natural and behavioral scientists. Davis (1977) observed that “historical studies on job satisfaction could be traced back to about 175 years ago when modern industrial organizations needed improved and effective production.” Davis concluded that the requirements of improved and effective production brought about “the research undertaken by different educators and researchers which emerged as early as 1935 -- Hoppock, 1935; Maslow, 1954; Argyris, 1957; Herzberg, 1959; McGregor, 1960; Likert, 1961; Vroom, 1964; Dubin, 1964; Locke, 1969; Wood, 1973; Kaufman, 1976; and Mason, 1980.” Job satisfaction has been defined by Locke (1976) as how employees feel about their work, and low job satisfaction has been linked to undesirable outcomes in the workplace.

The undesirable outcomes come in many forms. For example, higher levels of turnover are related to dissatisfied workers (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Herzberg, 1993; Vroom, 1995). Additionally, Mobley (1982) commented that there was a “consistent” relationship between job satisfaction and turnover, but not a particularly strong one. He stated that “There is undoubtedly a consistent negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover” (Mobley, 1982). Also, low job satisfaction has been linked to lower worker productivity and performance (Dawis, 1992; Herzberg et al., 1993). Further, Gice (1995) indicated that workers who are dissatisfied with their jobs are more likely to be injured than those who report a positive degree of job satisfaction. Moreover, higher levels of job satisfaction have shown to be related to positive outcomes. For example, Fisher and Locke (1992) cited five studies that show a correlation between job

satisfaction and behaviors such as compliance, citizenship, pursuit of excellence, and loyalty. Also, negative outcomes noted above can be reduced in impact when workers are satisfied. Roznowski and Hulin (1992) noted that “scores on well-constructed measures of job satisfaction are the most useful information organizational psychologists or organizational managers could have if they were interested in predicting a variety of behaviors of organizational members.” Spector (1997) commented that, among managers, job satisfaction is considered an important influence on employee behavior and organizational effectiveness.

This dissertation will draw upon the fundamental theory for job satisfaction established by Frederick Herzberg – “The Two-Factor Theory of Motivation.” Herzberg’s theory consisted of hygiene factors and motivators. The hygiene factors were the dissatisfiers and were preventive and environmental in nature. They were associated with the job context and consisted of items such as company policy and administration, technical supervision, salary, interpersonal relations, and working conditions. The motivators were the satisfiers and were associated with job content. They included such factors as achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement. Both the hygiene factors and the motivators, taken together, made up the composite of items for job satisfaction.

Various research studies have been conducted in the area of job satisfaction and are briefly noted below. Weissenberg and Gruenfield (1968) discussed the relationship between job satisfaction and job involvement concerning civil service workers. They

investigated the relationship between motivator and hygiene satisfaction variables, as they related to job involvement. Herzberg's theory was somewhat upheld in the study.

Maidaini (1991) studied "Herzberg's two-factor theory of job satisfaction among public and private sectors." The purpose of this study was to identify how Herzberg's theory of job satisfaction applied to two different working populations using a questionnaire based on Herzberg's classification scheme. A t-test analysis showed that employees' motives for work in both sectors tended to emphasize intrinsic or motivator factors of employment, while those who worked in the public sector tended to value the extrinsic or hygienic factors significantly higher than those in the private sector.

In the field of education, beginning in the mid-nineteen-sixties and continuing, job satisfaction studies have been done that investigate teachers (Sergiovanni, 1967; Grady, 1985), elementary principals (Weiss, 1968 ; Hull, 1974; Atteberry, 1976), senior high school principals (Smith, 1976), guidance counselors (Kirk, 1990), school administrators (Billups, 1972), chief student personnel administrators (Bowling, 1976), and superintendents (Manning, 1976; Penn, 1985). Findings suggested that when results are compared across these various positions, there are similarities as well as differences in how people in the field of education perceive their jobs. Additionally, throughout the literature, studies reveal that variables pertaining to school demographics and personal data (e.g., size of school, age, length of service, salary, and gender) can influence these perceptions.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study will investigate three areas of job satisfaction. First, the study will investigate the general level of job satisfaction among Directors of Classified Personnel in Merit System districts in the California public school system as measured by the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. For purposes of this study, the term “districts” refers to a district composed of any grades K-12, a county office of education, or a community college district. Second, the researcher will investigate the level of intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. Last, the study will determine the relationship of the variables gender, age, degree attainment, years of experience as a Director of Classified Personnel, district size, type of employees responsible for (teaching and/or non-teaching), and monthly salary to general job satisfaction levels.

### **Significance of the Problem**

As previously noted, central to making the Merit System work in a district is the Director of Classified Personnel. His or her role in relation to the personnel commission is similar or parallel to that of the superintendent to the board of education. However, this unique group of school administrators has not been studied in the recent literature.

The Director of Classified Personnel’s job satisfaction, and the relationship of various factors to such job satisfaction, would appear to require study so that personnel commissions could address working conditions, attract candidates, provide incentives for long term employment of effective school leaders, and enhance organizational effectiveness. The approximately six percent chronic vacancy factor for positions may be linked to various conditions or public policies over which personnel commissions or



school boards have control. Srivastva et al. (1977) showed a significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and turnover, which is represented by a vacancy factor.

Additionally, this study contributes to the field of job satisfaction for a career segment of the school community that apparently has not been specifically investigated, or like school administrators (Thompson, et al., 1997) and public sector professionals in general (McCue and Gianakis, 1997), have largely been neglected in job satisfaction research.

### **Scope and Delimitations of the Research**

Delimitations include the fact that the study was conducted in California only and was limited to those who held their positions in the 2000-2001 fiscal year. The results of similar studies in other populations may differ, and thus the results should not be over generalized.

Further, the study used a self-report measure (questionnaire) and may have a self-report bias. For example, a respondent may feel ashamed to report failure related to a career choice that they have continued for several decades. Also, questionnaires do not offer the opportunity to probe deeply into feelings or opinions, nor can items be clarified if there is any confusion as to what an item is intended to mean.

Moreover, other factors not considered in this study may have influences on the respondents that are more important for job satisfaction measurements. For example, home life, previous work experiences, personal economic factors, and work locations may have substantial or significant impacts on job satisfaction.