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Job Satisfaction of Financial Aid Administrators in Illinois

by Robert J. Clement and Gordon W. White

Various legislative proposals in Washington in 1982 have caused a great deal of concern in the financial aid community. Add to these concerns the ones faced by financial aid professionals with their state and institutional programs and you have a profession beset by many challenges. It seems that each year the financial aid profession must devise new ways to meet new challenges. Is this constant flux having an effect on the profession? Is job satisfaction suffering?

The construct of job satisfaction is both important and elusive. Industry, especially, has made many attempts to study it. Recently educators have begun the study of job satisfaction, but confusion still exists as to its nature and the best method to use in studying it. Definitions are abundant. A widely accepted one defines job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience" (Locke, 1976).

Studies involving job satisfaction per se in the financial aid profession are, for all practical purposes, nonexistent. As dollars tighten and the enrollment picture dims, financial aid becomes increasingly important in students' educational plans. Will the money be there? Will I be able to attend the college of my choice? These are some of the questions commonly asked by students and their parents. The question concerning college choice highlights the struggle between private and public institutions themselves for scarce dollars. They compete for funds in both Washington and the statehouses. There is renewed interest in how the dollars are spent. In Illinois, for example, attendance the past two years at the regularly scheduled meetings of the Illinois State Scholarship Commission (ISSC) has increased dramatically. Even the presidents of institutions are attending! Decisions are being made which have far reaching implications for all sectors of Higher Education. Who will receive what part of the available dollars?

With budget cuts occurring at all levels, Illinois financial aid professionals are facing many frustrations. How can they meet all the students "need" with ever dwindling resources? How can they keep up with professional developments as travel budgets are slashed? Do other offices on the campuses really understand what financial aid staffs are going through? For example, a recent study (Bender, 1980) indicated that student affairs staff (financial aid is usually found in the student affairs or student services divisions) did not feel that student affairs was considered important at their institutions. How frustrating is it really? Are Illinois financial aid professionals satisfied with their jobs?

Each year the Illinois Association of Financial Aid Administrators (ILASFAA) holds an annual conference to address the current issues in the profession. The theme for the 1982 Conference was "Accepting the Challenge: Starting Over." It was held in Springfield, the state capitol, and emphasized the role of the political

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process in financial aid. The ILASFAA Research Committee felt that, given the theme of the conference and the tenor of the times, it was an opportune time for the study of the job satisfaction of its membership. It was decided to examine three areas: type of institution, job title, and years on the job.

Method

The Porter Need Satisfaction Questionnaire (PNSQ), also known as the Porter Management Questionnaire (PMQ) (Eran, 1966), was used in this study. The instrument, developed by Porter, has been used to assess management job satisfaction in industrial institutions and business. The questions are based on the hierarchy of human needs as developed by Maslow, (1943). The specific need categories ranked from lowest to highest order with their particular components follow:

- A. Security Needs
 - 1. The feeling of security in my administrative position.
- B. Social Needs
 - 2. The opportunity, in my administrative position, to give help to other people.
 - 3. The opportunity to develop close friendships in my administrative position.
- C. Esteem Needs
 - 4. The feeling of self-esteem a person gets from being in my administrative position.
 - 5. The prestige of my administrative position inside the college (that is, the regard received from others in the college).
 - 6. The prestige of my administrative position outside the college (that is, the regard received from others not in the college).
- D. Autonomy Needs
 - 7. The authority connected with my administrative position.
 - 8. The opportunity for independent thought and action in my administrative position.
 - 9. The opportunity, in my administrative position, for participation in setting goals.
 - 10. The opportunity, in my administrative position, for participation in the determination of methods and procedures.
- E. Self-actualization Needs
 - 11. The opportunity for personal growth and development in my administrative position.
 - 12. The feeling of self-fulfillment a person gets from an administrative position (that is, the feeling of being able to use one's own potentialities).
 - 13. The feeling of worthwhile accomplishment in my administrative position.
- F. Item specific to two or more need categories:
 - 14. The feeling of being in-the-know in my administrative position.

For each of the 14 items, the subjects were asked to answer two questions by circling a number on a rating scale from 1 to 7, where "low numbers represent low or minimum amount, and high numbers represent high or maximum amounts." Thus, a typical item appears on the questionnaire as follows:

The authority connected with my administrative position.

a. How much is there now? (min) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (max)

b. How much should there be? (min) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (max)

Weber and Hudd (1974) discussed the widespread and persistent use of the PNSQ in job satisfaction research and re-examined the internal structure of the instrument itself. They found the communalities for the individual items generally quite high, suggesting that item reliability is respectable. They go on to conclude that the grouping of items into Maslow need categories as originally postulated by Porter is

generally supported by their present analysis. The construction of scale scores from the PNSQ is therefore appropriate for research on job satisfaction.

Hypotheses

Five types of institution were represented in this study. They included: private schools (both 2 year and 4 year), community colleges, four-year public, proprietary schools, and other. The "others" were primarily composed of schools of nursing. The categories of positions studied included: directors, associate directors, assistant directors, counselors, and other. The "others" encompassed those with different titles and those working for agencies.

Eighteen hypotheses were tested. They were as follows:

- H₁: There is no significant difference among the five *types of institution* on security.
- H₂: There is no significant difference among the five *types of institution* on socialization.
- H₃: There is no significant difference among the five *types of institution* on esteem.
- H₄: There is no significant difference among the five *types of institution* on autonomy.
- H₅: There is no significant difference among the five *types of institution* on self-actualization.
- H₆: There is no significant difference among the five *types of institution* on being in-the-know.
- H₇: There is no significant difference among the five *titles* on security.
- H₈: There is no significant difference among the five *titles* on socialization.
- H₉: There is no significant difference among the five *titles* on esteem.
- H₁₀: There is no significant difference among the five *titles* on autonomy.
- H₁₁: There is no significant difference among the five *titles* on self-actualization.
- H₁₂: There is no significant difference among the five *titles* on being in-the-know.
- H₁₃: There is no significant difference by *years of experience* on security.
- H₁₄: There is no significant difference by *years of experience* on socialization.
- H₁₅: There is no significant difference by *years of experience* on esteem.
- H₁₆: There is no significant difference by *years of experience* on autonomy.
- H₁₇: There is no significant difference by *years of experience* on self-actualization.
- H₁₈: There is no significant difference by *years of experience* on being in-the-know.

For each of the 18 hypotheses, a one-way analysis of variance was calculated. Significance was tested at the .05 level.

Since an overwhelming majority of ILASFAA members usually attend the annual conference, and 1982 was no exception, the instruments were administered during the conference.

The instruments were distributed in the conference registration packets. The membership was reminded several times during the conference to complete the instruments. One hundred and thirty-two (132) conferees (out of 220 registrants) completed the survey before leaving the conference. In an attempt to obtain a better percentage of respondents, an additional 49 surveys were mailed to members not attending the conference. Thirty-two additional surveys were obtained as a result. Consequently, a total of 164 instruments out of a possible 269 were available for

analysis, or 61% of the total ILASFAA membership.

Results

The eighteen hypotheses were tested according to the statistical treatment described earlier. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to calculate the statistical results.

Table 1 presents the observed F statistic and the mean score of the differences between what exists and what should be for each of the six dependent needs variables by each type of institution. Self-actualization was the only significant variable reported by type of institution.

Table 1
Job Satisfaction
By Type of Institution

	Responses	F	Private	4-Yr. Public	Comm. Coll.	Proprietary	Other
Security	Is	1.57	5.52	5.11	5.00	4.67	4.50
	Shou'd be	1.08	6.10	5.98	6.13	7.00	5.67
	Diff.	1.96	0.58	0.87	1.13	2.33	1.17
Social	Is	0.26	5.47	5.31	5.45	5.00	5.33
	Should be	0.72	6.05	5.87	6.27	5.92	5.96
	Diff.	0.45	0.58	0.56	0.82	0.92	0.63
Esteem	Is	0.94	4.65	4.37	4.56	4.00	4.89
	Should be	0.23	5.97	5.97	6.06	6.33	5.87
	Diff.	1.54	1.32	1.60	1.50	2.33	0.98
Autonomy	Is	2.34	4.67	4.35	4.89	3.83	5.50
	Shou'd be	2.19	5.86	5.66	6.19	5.00	6.27
	Diff.	0.48	1.19	1.31	1.30	1.17	0.77
Self-actualization	Is	2.68*	4.52	4.14	4.95	3.28	5.28
	Should be	1.37	5.95	5.93	6.56	5.78	6.47
	Diff.	1.16	1.43	1.79	1.61	2.50	1.19
In-the-know	Is	1.99	4.34	4.04	4.56	3.33	5.42
	Should be	0.44	5.92	5.98	6.18	5.83	6.58
	Diff.	1.00	1.58	1.94	1.62	2.50	1.16

* $p < .05$

Table 2 shows significance in five of the dependent variables and job type. Socialization does not demonstrate a significant difference. There is an inverse relationship between job type in the organization and discrepancy in need fulfillment; that is, as one moves higher up in job type, he or she will tend to experience less discrepancy between actual and perceived need fulfillment. This would seem to substantiate Porter's findings (1963) that higher-level managers tended to regard higher-level needs, i.e., autonomy and self-actualization, as more important to them in their jobs than did lower-level managers. Generally speaking, directors and associate directors reported less difference in their response to what "is" and what "should be" than did the other positions surveyed.

Table 2
Job Satisfaction and
Job Type

	Responses	F	Director	Assoc. Dir.	Asst. Dir.	Counselor	Other
Security	Is	3.81*	5.75	5.33	4.97	4.88	4.33
	Should be	1.10	6.24	6.00	6.27	5.98	5.56
	Diff.	1.66	0.49	0.67	1.30	1.10	1.23
Social	Is	1.48	5.45	5.61	5.40	5.50	4.75
	Should be	1.61	6.21	6.25	5.89	6.06	5.53
	Diff.	0.44	0.76	0.64	0.49	0.56	0.78
Esteem	Is	3.33*	4.91	4.89	4.36	4.20	4.22
	Should be	1.35	6.12	6.07	5.93	6.07	5.46
	Diff.	2.17	1.21	1.18	1.57	1.87	1.24
Autonomy	Is	6.73*	5.24	5.26	4.44	3.95	4.39
	Should be	2.36	6.19	6.15	5.78	5.59	5.51
	Diff.	2.31	0.95	0.89	1.34	1.64	1.12
Self-actualization	Is	6.05*	5.21	5.17	4.17	3.81	4.13
	Should be	0.17	6.35	6.22	5.91	6.09	5.74
	Diff.	4.57*	1.14	1.05	1.74	2.28	1.61
In-the-know	Is	4.02*	4.98	4.78	4.20	3.65	3.94
	Should be	0.35	6.24	6.00	6.07	5.93	5.72
	Diff.	2.92*	1.26	1.22	1.87	2.28	1.78

* $p < .05$

Table 3 shows significance in all the variables measured and years of experience. It appears that as one gains more experience he or she reports less job dissatisfaction in that actual and desired fulfillment of needs are closer together.

Table 3
Job Satisfaction and
Years of Experience

	Responses	F	Less Than 1	1-5	6-10	10
Security	Is	6.90*	4.50	4.73	5.62	5.93
	Should be	0.35	6.00	6.03	6.02	6.30
	Diff.	4.58*	1.50	1.30	0.40	0.37
Social	Is	1.94	5.42	5.15	5.69	5.57
	Should be	0.62	6.46	6.01	5.99	6.03
	Diff.	3.25*	1.04	0.86	0.30	0.46
Esteem	Is	9.73*	4.03	4.15	4.93	5.20
	Should be	1.52	5.64	6.05	5.81	6.27
	Diff.	8.45*	1.61	1.90	0.88	1.07
Autonomy	Is	5.62*	4.04	4.34	4.87	5.43
	Should be	0.61	5.90	5.78	5.88	6.13
	Diff.	4.19*	1.86	1.44	1.01	0.70
Self-actualization	Is	4.60*	4.39	4.08	4.81	5.31
	Should be	0.83	6.50	6.17	5.84	6.27
	Diff.	8.21*	2.11	2.09	1.03	0.96
In-the-know	Is	6.08*	3.33	3.96	4.67	5.30
	Should be	1.29	6.33	6.13	5.62	6.33
	Diff.	10.95*	3.00	2.17	0.95	1.03

* $p < .05$

Tables four through six list the number of respondents by institutional type, job title, and years of experience.

Table 4
Respondents
by Institutional Type

	No.	%
Private	62	37.8
4 Year Public	45	27.4
Community College	39	23.8
Proprietary	6	3.7
Other	12	7.3
	<u>164</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Table 5
Respondents
by Job and Title

	Job	Titles
	No.	%
Director	55	33.5
Associate Director	18	11.0
Assistant Director	30	18.8
Counselor	43	26.2
Other	18	11.0
	<u>164</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Table 6
Respondents
by Years of Experience

	No.	%
Less than 1	12	7.3
1 - 5	77	47.0
6 - 10	45	27.4
10	30	18.3
	<u>164</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Discussion

From the study we conclude that there are those working in the financial aid profession who believe their job frustrations are partially the result of the type of institution in which they work. The responses of the financial aid professionals in Illinois would suggest that there is not a real difference in their job satisfaction as a result of the type of institution in which they work; the only variable showing significance was that of self-actualization.

One might also suppose that the type of job which one has in the financial aid profession would affect the possible job satisfaction of the individual. This is borne out by the result of this study. Those in positions commanding more authority and prestige showed less discrepancy between their actual and perceived new fulfillment.

All the variables measured, except socialization, were significant by job type.

Years of experience was a significant factor for each of the needs variables. An examination of the means reveals that the discrepancy between what financial aid professionals' satisfaction was and what it should be increased as the needs were measured along the continuum of human needs. It may be concluded that for persons first entering the financial aid profession there is a wide discrepancy between what the individuals perceive as their actual job satisfaction versus what they believe that it should be. There are probably many variables involved in explaining this discrepancy, i. e., an unclear understanding of their role, uncertainties in funding (Hook, 1982), perceived unimportance of the office, etc. State associations may want to utilize their training committees to examine this area and help provide clarification of the role of the financial aid professional. The more experience a person gains, the less dissatisfaction with his or her position.

Implications

The Illinois Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators has listed as one of its goals for the 1982-83 year, the development of a mentor system in the state whereby experienced professionals would work with "new" professionals on a one-to-one basis. The "pro" would provide support to the "rookie" throughout the year in all aspects of financial aid. This would hopefully enable the new professional to adjust more readily to this ever changing profession. They too could feel "in-the-know." The new professional would draw on the years of experience of the mentor, as well as share new ideas with him or her.

This study has shown that job satisfaction is an area that needs further research by the profession. New persons in the profession are often overwhelmed by the mountain of paperwork and regulations and often overlook the positive benefits that occur as a result of their endeavors. We, as a profession, need to provide the support needed to new members, as well as experienced members, as we move forward in our goal — to assist students finance their education.

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