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**The role of the principal as viewed by North Carolina's assistant
superintendents for curriculum and instruction**

Schnuit, William Edward, Jr., Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992

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THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL AS VIEWED BY NORTH CAROLINA'S
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENTS FOR CURRICULUM
AND INSTRUCTION

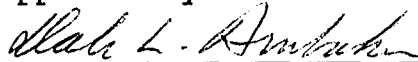
by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of the principal's role held by North Carolina's assistant superintendents. This investigation considered the independent variables of assistant superintendent's co-worker relationships with principals, the size of the school system where employed, the school system's involvement in state-mandated pilot programs, the length of service in the role of assistant superintendent, active involvement in professional organizations, prior experience as a principal, and the individual perceptions of self as described in Brubaker and Simon's (1987) five conception framework.

Data were obtained from surveys and open-ended interviews. The surveys were sent to 131 school systems in North Carolina on July 1, 1991, to be completed by the assistant superintendents who oversee curriculum and instruction. After two mailings and follow up phone calls, 98 were returned for a return rate of 74.8%. A chi square test was used to determine the significance of each independent variable at the .05 level.

The findings suggested that three independent variables resulted in significant differences between the expected and observed frequencies on a survey that measured the

perceptions of assistant superintendents for curriculum and instruction. These include the assistant superintendents' relationships with co-worker principals, active involvement in professional organizations, and their perceptions of their own role in curriculum leadership. Independent variables of prior experience as a principal, size of the school system and involvement in a state pilot project weren't found to produce significant differences in expected and observed frequencies.

Data collected from the free response items on the survey and in the open ended interviews were grouped, tallied and charted. The content analysis of these data resulted in the confirmation that there are significant pressures currently acting on the principal's role. Further study of the influences of pressures on the principalship and on the relationships between the assistant superintendents and the principals is warranted.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Background of the Problem

The state of North Carolina has been faced with a pivotal opportunity as its legislature deliberates the fate of several key reform measures. Each measure, when combined with demographic realities, has had an impact on the role that the principals are both forced and allowed to assume as the curriculum leader in their schools. This study displays differences in expected and observed frequencies of responses found to exist in a survey of the assistant superintendent's perception of the "current" role of the principal and each of seven independent variables. The use of the word "current" is important since the possibility exists that today's role for the principal has changed considerably in the last few years.

Choosing an approach most appropriate for a study of the principal's role in curriculum leadership has been difficult. The investigator's choice of a qualitative or quantitative methodology provided the first hurdle. Qualitative methods are designed to provide perspective, but their lack of concern for external validity can devalue their results in the eyes of many. Data that are derived qualitatively can help illuminate the dynamic nature of a

setting. However the information must be studied by an interpreter who is alert to areas of intersubjectivity. With the legislature as the potential audience, the chance that such care would be present is unlikely. In addition, as Sineath (1986) points out, a gap exists in the way our society values non-technologically derived data. These audience pressures are not always critical, but at this time in North Carolina's educational reform information resulting from this study may influence future legislative action. Faced with this reality a methodology less foreign to the legislature becomes increasingly attractive. The current format most often used to deliver legislative information is quantitative research. One quantitative methodology suited to yield this type of statistical information is survey/questionnaire-based research. The basic data was collected via an instrument developed by Brubaker and Simon (1987). It has been used to examine the principal's role in curriculum leadership from the perspective of teachers, parents, superintendents and central office personnel. In this study, the role will be viewed from the vantage point of the assistant superintendent for curriculum and/or instruction. The perceptions of these individuals are of extreme significance since the principalship is often a subordinate position under their authority.

One of the earlier users of this instrument, Briggs (1986), surveyed each of North Carolina's Local Education

Agency contact persons in the areas of curriculum and instruction. The responses came from persons with 22 different titles and sets of responsibilities. Unlike Briggs' work, this study surveys only assistant superintendents who are charged with responsibility in the areas of curriculum and instruction. The respondent population consists of individuals who share similar responsibilities, authority levels and hold a superordinate position in relation to the subjects of the study, the principals.

It is also significant that, since the time of Briggs' work, all teachers in North Carolina have been trained in "The Effective Teacher Training Model," a new evaluation model has been implemented, The Teacher Appraisal Instrument (TPAI), 16 pilot "Career Development Programs" (CDP) have completed their four year cycles, principals have been trained in the "North Carolina Effective Principal Training Program", and "Basic Education Program" (BEP) has been identified and partially funded. Without this last mandate the "Basic Education Program", this new study would not be feasible since many smaller systems didn't have assistant superintendency level positions before the state provided BEP funding. These five legislative mandates represent key reform measures that have been designed to change the educational landscape in North Carolina.

The information required for this study would not be complete if retrieved by survey methodology alone. The structure of the questionnaire limits respondents to the specific information requested. The data are therefore informative but sterile, with respondents unable to express themselves freely. Therefore follow-up interviews were held with four respondents to verify the free response items on the questionnaire. These interviews allowed a selected group of the questionnaire respondents the opportunity to supply some descriptive information that wasn't otherwise available.

Statement of the Problem

Purpose

This study examines the perceptions of North Carolina's assistant superintendents in the specific area of the principal's role as curriculum leader.

The purpose of the study is seven fold:

1. To determine the current role of the principal as perceived by the assistant superintendents.
2. To determine if significant differences exist between frequencies of survey responses with respect to the size of the school system and the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role in curriculum leadership.
3. To determine if a school system's involvement in the Career Development Plan (CDP) or the Lead Teacher

Project (LTP) results in significant differences in the assistant superintendent's view of the principal's responsibilities in the area of curriculum.

4. To determine if the length of service as assistant superintendent or prior experience as a principal results in significant differences in his/her perceptions of the principal as curriculum leader.

5. To determine if the assistant superintendent's active participation in professional curriculum organizations significantly affects the perceived role of the principal.

6. To determine if the assistant superintendent's view of him/herself as a leader in curriculum affects their perception of the principal's role.

7. To describe the key pressures and events that have helped shape the perceptions of the assistant superintendents in the area of the principal's role in curriculum leadership.

Specific Questions

Several specific questions will be addressed in the study:

1. What are the perceptions held by the assistant superintendents concerning the role of the principals with whom they work and their perception of the principals across North Carolina?

2. Does a significant difference appear in the perception of the principal's role in curriculum leadership when the assistant superintendent's is involved in CDP or LTP?

3. Does the size of the system seem to influence a difference in the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role?

4. Does a significant difference appear in the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role when the assistant superintendent's active membership in professional curriculum organizations is considered?

5. Does a significant difference surface in the assistant superintendent's perception of the role of the principals with whom they work when his/her own role in curriculum is considered?

6. Does a significant difference surface in the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role when length of service in his/her current position is considered?

7. Does a significant difference appear in the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role when the assistant superintendent's prior experience as a principal is considered?

8. What key events and pressures seemed to influence the perceptions of the assistant superintendents in the area of the principal's role in curriculum leadership?

Research Methodology

The first seven specific research questions, which have been listed above, were investigated via individual responses to a questionnaire distributed in July of 1991. One questionnaire was sent to each LEA in North Carolina to be distributed to an assistant superintendent. Any responses completed by those other than individuals with the title assistant or associate superintendent were disregarded. This control limits the study to those in a superordinate position in relationship with to the principal.

The total population surveyed was the 133 North Carolina school systems as of July 1, 1991. Of this total only Catawba County and Mooresville City School Systems didn't report the position of assistant superintendent. As a result, when the questionnaires were mailed the sample population was reduced to 131.

When this quantitative analysis was completed, the results were discussed in relationship to the descriptions and reactions received in follow-up interviews with four selected questionnaire respondents. Selection criteria for the interviews were designed to elicit contacts from a broader base of experiences. Four interviews were completed to provide follow-up data. Two were involved in pilot projects and the other two represent non-pilot systems. In the interviews the assistant superintendents had the

opportunity to provide additional information in answer to the eighth research question.

A more detailed discussion follows in chapter three.

Definition of Terms

Assistant Superintendent - For the purpose of this study the positions of assistant superintendent and associate superintendent will be considered synonymous. The key point for this study is that the position is subordinate to the superintendent while superordinate to the principal.

Curriculum - A course of study.

"Current" role of principal - The perceived role of the principal in the summer of 1991.

Perception - The articulation of one's view of reality.

Local Educational Agency (LEA) - May be used interchangeably with local school district and local school system.

Effective Teacher's Training (ETT) - A training module mandated by the North Carolina Legislature for all teaching personnel. To date, new educators must still be trained in the 30 hour ETT program.

Significant difference - A .05 significance level as measured by a calculation of chi square.

Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument (TPAI) - An evaluation instrument based on the principles of Effective Teacher's Training (ETT).

Career Development Program (CDP) - A differentiated pay scale based on successful implementation of ETT and successful observation based evaluations.

Basic Education Plan (BEP) - A North Carolina funding plan that was designed to insure a basic level of education experience throughout the state.

Subordinate - The term describes a position under the hierarchial line authority of another. (e.g. The principal is subordinate to the assistant superintendent.)

Superordinate - The term describes a position in hierarchial line authority over another. (e.g. The assistant superintendent is superordinate to the principal.)

Lead Teacher Project (LTP) - A project that provides funding to allow a teacher to be relieved of some classroom responsibilities so that they can provide coordinating leadership to small groups of six to ten teachers.

Principal - North Carolina statutes define the principal as "... the executive head of the school ..." (Dellinger, 1981 p.2)

Propositions and Limitations

Propositions

1. Assistant superintendents perceive the role of principals with whom they work differently from how they perceive the role of principals in general across the state of North Carolina.
2. Assistant superintendents in larger LEA's are more likely to perceive the principal's role to be that of curriculum leader than general manager.
3. Assistant superintendents from systems involved in CDP or LTP will view the principal's role differently than do assistant superintendents in non CDP or non-LTP systems.
4. Assistant superintendents who have held their current position for seven years or less will be more likely to view the principal in the role of curriculum leader than will their longer-term counterparts.
5. Assistant superintendents who are active in

professional curriculum organizations will view the principal's role differently from those who aren't active in professional organizations.

6. The perceptions of assistant superintendents toward their role in curriculum leadership will affect their view of the role of the principal.

7. Assistant superintendents with prior experience as a principal will be more likely to perceive the principal as the curriculum leader than as the general manager.

8. The results of this study will provide educators with important information on the developing curriculum role of the principal after North Carolina's investment in the BEP, CDP, ETT and LT projects.

Limitations

A key limitation of this study is that it focuses solely on the perceptions of North Carolina's assistant superintendents on the role of the state's principals. As a result, any effort to generalize the implications of this study to areas outside the state must be made in light of the specific reform measures that may make North Carolina's assistant superintendents' and principals' roles unique. Other limitations were found in the lack of information on the potential response patterns of the systems that did not complete and return the study. Follow-up was only provided in the form of a second mailing of the questionnaire.

Significance of the Study

The difficulty with the generalizability of this study is caused by the very same programs that make this study significant. The programs represent the most of North Carolina's reform approach, which has set out to structure a uniform language for all those who work in the state's education network. At the heart of the effort is the in-service work that has exposed all educators to a variety of training modules that make up the drive mechanism for reform. As a result, everyone in North Carolina who is involved in the education process was exposed to a common set of experiences. The design of this study assesses the influence of the various reforms on the principal's role in curriculum leadership as viewed by the assistant superintendent, an individual who has the advantage of watching as the plans have progressed.

Summary

This study looks at the current role of North Carolina's principals as perceived by the state's assistant superintendents. The state has, during the past five years, undergone a variety of reform efforts that are discussed as they relate to the principal's role.

Klein, (1989), stated that if any reform hoped to be more than simply cosmetic it must be initiated at the local school level. The efforts in North Carolina since 1985 have

definitely been addressed with Klein's advice in mind. Every school faculty despite their individual and collective reaction has been given the opportunity to engage in a dialogue built around the various pilots and state-mandated ETT practices. The educators have been exposed to a common-mandated curriculum. It is important to understand the influence of these approaches on the principal's role.

The study of the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role was accomplished via a study of the responses of assistant superintendents on questionnaires. Follow-up interviews with four those same individuals were conducted to supplement the responses to the free response segment of the questionnaire. The interviews included assistant superintendents from two districts that have participated in one of the pilot programs, plus two interviews with assistant superintendents of non-pilot systems.

A review of literature in Chapter Two describes the climate that currently exists in educational administration. The key indicators used are change, leadership and the principalship. The description of the population, design and methodology of this study follows in Chapter Three. Chapter Four provides a detailed report of the survey results and the analysis of those data. Final conclusions and recommendations for additional study are presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role. A delineated set of variables that can influence the development of these perceptions was given particular attention. This set included: the size of the school system, involvement in CDP and LTP, length of service as assistant superintendent, active membership in curriculum organizations, prior experience as a principal, and the individual's perception of his/her role in curriculum and instruction.

The key indicators selected to direct the review of literature pertinent to this topic are: (1) conservation and change, (2) leadership, and (3) the principalship. The discussion of the first indicator, conservation and change, will begin with Sarason's (1972) framework that describes an organization's capacity for change and concludes with arguments that support society's need for conflict and resolution. The second indicator, leadership, will draw on the contemporary work of Peters and Austin (1985), Bennis and Nanus (1985), Foster (1986), and others to establish a current construct for leadership. Historical perspectives

on leadership will provide the foundation for this portion of the review. The third indicator, the principalship, will discuss literature's view of the effective principal. This will allow comparison with the perceptions of North Carolina's assistant superintendents.

Conservation and Change

This topic was approached from three vantage points. The first vantage point concentrated on the need and capacity of organizations for change. In this section, leadership responsibilities for recognizing and directing the process of change are clarified. The second vantage point addressed several types and styles of change. The third will focus on the positive outcomes that are possible when change opportunities are confronted.

Need and Capacity for Change

Sarason's (1972) work is permeated with language that presents a view of organizational life based on a struggle between forces of change and conservation. He states that the dialectical relationship of change and conservation must receive attention. Organizations must choose to direct change as a process, or they will be controlled by the effects of the struggle between these two polar aspects. The course of planned change must be sensitively set since formal leaders are often the last to recognize the need for

change. It is not enough to choose to react when the need finally becomes painfully apparent. Far too frequently, evidence of the need for change is first visible to employees in an organization. The problem is compounded when the leader's view of reality defensively calls for conservation instead of change.

Sarason (1972) has delineated several symptoms of decline that can serve as signals for an organization in need of leadership attention to the change process. These include: feelings of powerlessness, power bases up for question, communication dysfunction, and inflexibility.

It is important for the leadership within an organization to approach these symptoms sensitively since they often relate to ". . . phenomena, which can only be understood in light of the recognition by participants that earlier efforts were of no avail." (p.145) History of failed change efforts needs to be clearly understood by appointed leaders. Confidence that change can occur must be created or recreated before the various levels within an organization will accept the risks related to change. Therefore, the leader must posture the organization for change. Mintzberg's (1973), six leadership responsibilities provide an example of posturing for change. Careful attention to these will help those working in an organization understand the leader's goals. The six are:

1. Attention to organizational purpose
 2. Maintenance of organizational stability
 3. Ensure that the organization adapts to its environment
 4. Ensure that the patrons are served
 5. Provide the information link between the community and other organization
 6. Maintenance of the status system
- (p.95)

Regularly addressed, these issues will help individuals feel less threatened by the leader's activities for change. This occurs because organizational stability is less threatened.

Brubaker (1982) offers a position that complements the multiple task focus applied by Mintzberg. He argues that it is important for leaders to emphasize that "... problems are part of larger dilemmas and we should focus on what is right in a setting as well as what is wrong." (p.79) Change processes that focus only on the difficulties of an organization tend to increase conservation pressures that can run counter to needed restructuring. When there are positive components of individual or group performance, they should receive attention and support. This can be encouraged via feedback from informal "neighborhood networks." (p.81) With the community metaphor in place to address the change and conservation needs both of individuals and of the organization, resistance and anxiety can be minimized.

Brubaker (1984) is careful to remind us that the distinction between issues that require posturing for change and/or conservation is not always clear. Misinterpretation of the needed direction could be very costly in the current situation and could serve as a future obstacle to the resolution of other situations. Just as it is important for leaders to consider that particular problems exist within the organization's larger reality, it is also critical for them to understand fully the values of the group before taking any action toward change. Sergiovanni and Carver (1980), spoke of the key importance that a variety of values can hold in an organization. Issues of change that impact the value systems can have a drastic effect both on the approach needed and on the potential success of the attempt. Examples of the types of value systems that exist and influence actions in our society include the sacred/secular, political, technical, scientific, aesthetic, and ethical. Sergiovanni and Carver (1980), were speaking specifically to school organizations and the implications are clearly stated. They say that by not weighing the values of any group prior to a given change posture, the capacity of the organization to accept a given position could be lost. The potential good of the change would have little worth unless the culture accepts it long enough for the good to surface.

An organization's capacity and need for change is more than a simple matter of the leadership selecting a

direction. Careful steps should be taken to insure the existence of informal networks. These networks will then monitor and support the members of the group. Sarason's work shows that symptoms of decline are discernable for organizations that have mechanisms in place to pick up the hints of dysfunction. Once perceived, informal networks can begin to approach problems fully aware of the internal value structures of the group. This is simple if the networks are a functioning part of the existing population. However, the early symptoms are often missed when the networks are not present thus leading to delays in action. When this occurs the resulting damage to the organization can be much more costly to correct.

Types of change

The work of Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch (1974) provide the conceptual base for the discussion of types of change. Their work divided the change process into two broad categories, first and second-order changes. First-order change describes an organization's efforts to enact minor changes in an existing system. Often, leaders who practice this order of change seize an idea, advocate and implement alterations in techniques or technology, and give little consideration for those who work in the organization. These leaders simply make the decision that the time for change is now and mandate it. Second-order changes, by

contrast, describe sweeping alterations that affect the very nature of the organizational setting. This order rewrites the view of the task, problems, and potential outcomes.

The field of education is most often found operating solely with first-order change. Brewer, Wynne, and Ainsworth (1987) label this style of change as manipulative and say it is the dominant style used by educational leaders. Eubanks and Parish (1987) express similar views. Their description has educational leaders acting under a basic error. ". . .If everyone just works and tries a little harder, things will get better. However, just working harder on something that doesn't work probably will not make it work any better." (p.614) Educational leaders, according to Eubanks and Parish, need to realize that the traditional approaches to change via workshops and release time for a few teachers will not and has not worked.

The education arena is not alone in its reliance on first-order change principles. From a business perspective, Mintzberg (1973) promoted a view of change that was clearly first order in nature. He delineated a rubric that outlined only two aspects of change. The first stated that it was the leader's function to figure out the need and direction for change. The second described the action phase of implementation as delegation of the work involved in the change process. Both aspects of Mintzberg's discussion of change focused on the behaviors of the leader. He makes no

mention of the roles in the process that would be required for the other individuals who work in the organization. Change mandated and carried out from the board room proves no more successful than efforts directed by the superintendent's office.

The short-comings of first order change attempts can be further illuminated by Goffman's (1959) discussion of the continuum of performer considerations. He saw on one pole the performer who worked as if the performance were real and his responsibility to the audience very high. At the other pole is the performer who was contemptuous toward the audience and the act as well. The task of the leader, in this example, was to build a performance team. The team then pulls together the performers from the various points of the continuum to present a unified front. This task is far from simple, but any effort to create a team without first addressing the variety of reality view points and agendas within the team is asking for difficulty. With the difficulties found in first-order style change, another avenue must be explored. Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch's (1974) second-order change provides such an approach. Their assumption is that those within the current setting need to be free to create a new set of agreements to govern organizational tasks. This style of change is much more tedious to plan and control, because all of the stakeholders are included in the process. The two aspects of change

offered earlier no longer even scratch the surface of the tasks of change, Mintzberg (1973). Hersey and Blanchard (1988) developed a leadership equation which could be built into a second order change plan. They view leadership as ". . . a function of an equation containing the leader, followers as variables." (p.68)

In the educational arena, change discussions of this type appear in literature that speaks of empowering teachers to become truly involved in decision making. Eubanks and Parrish (1987) described public educators as working as hard as possible. They saw the failures of many school reform efforts as proof that change must take a different direction. They called for school faculties that were serious about change to require ". . .regular time set aside during the work week to permit teachers and administrators to plan and implement effective change." (p.614)

Conflict and resolution

Despite the style of change that an organization's leadership takes, there is support for the idea that there is value inherent in the change process. Lightfoot (1983) stated that leaders were responsible for establishing the vision and ideological stance of any organization. The disagreement and discussion bred because of this stance will encourage friction that can reduce and/or remove complacency. Cawelti (1984) also reinforced this as he

pointed out the relationship between risk-taking behavior in leaders and that of their staff. Unless the leaders display an open mind toward change, employees will not often embrace proposed changes.

Ideas that do come from the staff will be shaped by the vision espoused by the leadership. It is important to control and guide the discourse within the organization toward positive outcomes. Foster (1986) advised that administrative decisions should be made and judged according to the kind of society that the action promotes. Consideration must be given then to the impact of each decision on the ideal culture one wishes to create.

Conservation and change concepts are continually acting on all organizations whether they choose actively to control the effects or not. The negative results of the symptoms of decline mentioned at the start of this section can be avoided. For this to occur, the leadership must establish mechanisms designed to keep in touch with all areas of the operation. Leaders need to accept the responsibility for establishing the organizational culture that Foster (1986) has declared critical.

Leadership

Leadership is a key component mentioned throughout the literature on conservation and change. To illustrate just how fundamental leadership is in an organization, it is

important to have a good working definition. During the process of ferreting out a definition it will become clear that leadership has been the subject of a great deal of discussion.

Many individuals and groups have attempted in the recent past to devise single approaches that would sum up the needed attributes of a strong leader. Foster (1986) and others have pointed out that no single definition has been able to stand up to the vast diversity of field applications. Appropriately then, this section will close with a framework that is situational.

Definitions

It is no small task to arrive at simple, yet comprehensive definition of leadership. Bennis and Nanus (1985) reported that they had identified over 350 definitions of leadership. Their definition dealt with an individual's ability as leader to involve all those in an organization in the pursuit of a shared vision. This definition requires an organization that has an active stake in shared decision making. A flaw found in this approach is that a definition of leadership should not be limited to any one type of environment.

While the Bennis and Nanus (1985) definition is simple and proves to a degree the importance of the organization's vision, Burns (1978) approached the idea from a totally

different perspective. Rather than attempt simply to define leadership as a single entity, he delineated two categories of leadership and defined each. He labeled the first category transactional, and described it as most often used in managerial or custodial situations. Here the leader exchanges desired behavior for a needed commodity. The second category carries the label of transformational leadership. In it, Burns described the leader as involved in establishing organizational direction through a commonly held vision. The assumption is that this development of vision will have a positive impact on the production of the organization. The recurrent relationship of vision to organizational success appeared frequently in current leadership material. Peters and Austin (1985) address the concept of organizational vision with an analogy between leadership and show business. They view the basic task of today's leader in terms of "shaping values." The leader's illuminated vision serves to direct organizational decision making. The details addressed by the leader help bring his/her vision to life for everyone in the organization. Therefore, leader behavior, as described here, involves the appointed leader choosing to focus his/her energy upon certain opportunities. This is what Peters and Austin call symbolic attention. The goal is for employees to learn to place value on what they know the leader will be concentrating.

Foster (1986) agreed that leadership must be closely linked with the communication of vision. Unlike Peters and Austin, however, he asserts the importance of empowerment and flexible leadership. He stated that

Leadership . . . is not simply management: rather it is a way of communicating a vision and an empowerment of others. Leadership lies not in the position given, but in the position taken. (p.15)

He takes the empowerment idea further by stating that it is a key ingredient. He feels that leaders must involve employees in the decision making portion of their work. Then, organizational leaders begin to engage in leading behaviors instead of manipulative behaviors. It is not enough to tell or give directions, organizational leaders must ". . . deal with followers' needs and requirements." (p.169)

In Hersey and Blanchard's early work (1982), he created a basic formula that posed that leadership was found in the activities of an individual or a group in effort toward goal achievement. This formula approach recognized the contributions of (1) the leader, (2) the followers and (3) the situation in any success or failure. It did not, unfortunately, produce a clear prescriptive guide for leadership that could be delineated, studied, and followed. It did point out that more was involved than the attributes of the individual in the appointed position of leadership.

World Book Dictionary defines leadership as "the ability to lead." This definition is very simplistic, but it does point out the conclusion that it is easier to find agreement on when leadership has been present than it is to find agreement on (1) the description of how to lead or (2) the key attributes of a leader. This has not completely stopped researchers' attempts to list specific characteristics or attributes. However, each of these attempts has been unable to capture comprehensively the essence of effective leadership.

The elusive nature of leadership

The discussion on the elusiveness of a clear framework for effective leadership has received almost as much attention as the attempts to grasp a definition. Bennis (1985), Stodgill (1974), Burns (1978), and Jago (1982) all describe past attempts to define leadership as efforts wasted on the trivial pursuit of behavior study. Perrow (1979) writes that

The research on leadership has left us with the clear view that things are far more complicated and 'contingent' than initially believed. In fact, they are so complicated and contingent that it may not be worth our while to spin out more and more qualifications. (p.107)

Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) had an article republished from 1958 that addressed clearly the very same issues that led Perrow to his position. Their thirty two

year old article reached the conclusion that, while there were basic forces that point to the leadership style that would be most successful, the number of variations in each leadership style and situation makes it impractical to attempt to delineate any one effective style. Each leader is in a position where he/she needs to evaluate every opportunity and act accordingly.

It should not be assumed, however, that Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) viewed the leader solely as a reactive creature. When given careful consideration, the organizational climate variables can be anticipated and, in a sense, controlled.

As the manager works with his organization on the problems that come up day by day, his choice of a leadership pattern is usually limited. He must take account of the forces just described and, within the restrictions they impose on him, do the best that he can. But as he looks ahead months or even years, he can shift his thinking from tactics to large-scale strategy. No longer need he be fettered by all of the forces mentioned, for he can view many of them as variables over which he has some control. He can, for example, gain new insights or skills for himself, supply training for individual subordinates, and provide participative experiences for his employee group.
(p.162)

This scenario clearly describes a leader who, considering the combination of forces unique to his/her environment, proactively anticipates and adjusts his/her approaches and style dependent upon the current needs of the organization and staff.

The fact that no one has identified a comprehensive set of descriptors should not be viewed as a failure for the numerous researchers who have studied leadership from almost every conceivable angle. Their efforts have prepared us for the reality that no simple answers are likely to prove adequate. They have shown that inquiries must continue to utilize the descriptive approaches used by Lightfoot (1983) and her contemporaries if clear definition of effective leadership is to be found.

Since leadership is dependent on ever changing variables, Perrow (1979), the elusive nature of the subject has reinforced current approaches. The findings of Tannenbaum and Schmidt over thirty years ago are no longer novel. Sarason (1972) expressed the same ideas as he addressed the complexity of the leadership equation. He stated that effective leadership involves far more "...than personality characteristics, degree of power, style and scores of other variables on which leaders differ." (p.183) Smith and Andrews (1989) concur, pointing out that the same situation rarely occurs twice in the same format.

A Situational Approach

Blanchard, and Zigarmi (1985) have developed an approach to leadership that, while not perfect, does pull together many of the premises of earlier theorists. Basic to their idea is still the guiding concept that a leader's

main task lies in the motivation and management of people. The novel component in their approach is what they call a life-cycle of leadership. They recognize that employees move through developmental cycles and need different approaches from their leaders at different times. The skillful leader needs to master each of Blanchard's and Zigarmi's (1985) four leadership styles as well as the ability to know which is appropriate and when.

The four styles: directing, coaching, supporting and delegating are each designed to provide the leader with approaches appropriate for individual circumstances.

Four Situational Leadership Styles

1. Directing: "The leader provides specific instructions and closely supervises task accomplishment."
2. Coaching: "The leader continues to direct and closely supervise task accomplishment, but also explains decisions, solicits suggestions and supports progress."
3. Supporting: "The leader facilitates and supports subordinates' efforts toward task accomplishment and shares responsibility for decision making . . ."
4. Delegating: "The leader turns over responsibility for decision making and problem solving to subordinates." (p.30)

An appealing aspect of this approach is that the subordinates who function at level three and four can assume responsibility for their actions freeing the leader to manage those who are lower functioning. A task to be

assigned to level four employees should be the coaching and directing of the efforts of other subordinates.

The last section of this review will focus the concepts of conservation/change and leadership on the principalship.

The Principalship

The role of the principal has faced a considerable degree of change during the recent past. Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) wrote that in the decade of the seventies we witnessed the rapid decline of the autonomous local school district with its entrepreneurial administration in favor of more complex, restrictive governance arrangements. Roe and Drake (1974) state that this change was responsible for the loss of prestige among principals. "Under present circumstances it is expected that the principal be primarily an administrator and manager. The . . . leadership talk is often lip service paid to create a greater self-respect within the professional group itself." (p.11) Rallis and Highsmith, also confirm this perspective. Prior to the 50's,

. . . principals concentrated their efforts on being educational leaders of their buildings. During the 1950's and 1960's, as schools became larger and more complex, the emphasis of administration shifted toward budget, personnel, and public relations. (p.302)

Roe and Drake (1980) cited the work credited to Davies as an appropriate approach for an investigation into the role of the principalship as it now exists. In the 1950's, Davies

as coordinator of the Cooperative Program in Educational Administration in the Middle Atlantic Region developed a "Tridimensional" concept of the principalship. His attempt to delineate the components of the position of the principal was critical in that it painted a picture that displayed the individual in the role but not separate from the conflicting pressures of the environment. His "Tridimensional" approach which consists of the person, the social setting, and the job, has provided an interesting framework for the discussion of the principalship.

Few attempts at describing the principalship have been successful when they avoid the reality that the principal doesn't work in isolation. Early approaches that drew list after list of characteristics never adequately described the successful principal definitively. DeBevoise (1984) stated that " . . .the uniqueness of each principal's situation makes generalizations about personal characteristics and leadership styles difficult. (p.18) Dwyer, Lee, Rowan, and Bossert (1983) say all principals operate in environments that are characterized combinations of positive and negative forces within the community. The personal style of the successful principal therefore only represents one dimension of the "Tridimensional" approach. The second dimension, the setting, is key in the above discussions since the various forces in each environment combine to make each setting unique.

Discussions of the principal's "job" in the literature have varied greatly during the past several decades. The current understanding of the Davies' "Tridimensional" labeling of the job has slowly evolved. Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) have divided the evolution in discussion of the principalship into three basic stages: art, science and applied science. Adherents to the art stage consider

. . .administration to be largely an intuitive enterprise. According to this approach, administrators are born, not made; and school administration is an art successfully practiced by those with an intuitive knack which is refined through experience." (p.4)

The second stage in the evolution revolves around the science of school administration. This stage

. . .is concerned with describing, explaining, analyzing and predicting organizational phenomena and human behavior as they relate to the accomplishment of organizational goals." (p.5) Consistent with this, ". . .interest in management by objectives, accountability systems and competence-based training, evaluation and in-service for teachers and administrators" characterize the positions of those supporting this scientific stage. (p.40)

Sergiovanni and Carver make the point that the discussion between the supporters of the art and science positions

. . .resulted in many problems for those who study and practice school administration. School executives, in particular, seem confused by the (scientific) emphasis and often seem disengaged from advocates of more scientific approaches. Many observers feel that the rift between theory and practice . . .(which lined up

on the art versus science argument) . . .is such that theoretician and practitioner--though attached to the same roots--form two virtually unrelated professions. (p.4)

To help solve this impasse the third stage of the applied science was generated.

In the applied science approach, the attempt has been made to integrate the two dimensions of art and science. In this process neither the ends nor the means of solving any problem are more important. Instead the approach is aimed at the study of the linkage between the ends and the means.

Fiedler's (1967) work lent support to the idea that efforts to define the one generic approach was of little value. He saw basic contingencies that, if given appropriate consideration, would result in positive leadership opportunities. His contingencies were:

1. The current relationship between the leader and the group
2. The structure of the task to be performed
3. The position power of the leader.

As situations arise these three contingencies were described as navigation buoys which directed leadership choices. When these contingencies are compared to Davies' "Tridimensional" concept all components are addressed. Davies' first concept, the job, is handled under attention to the structure of the task. His second, the social setting, is viewed in terms of the relationship between the

leader and the group. While his third component, the man, is addressed in the last contingency that evaluates the current status of position power issues.

The discussion of the "man" or "position power" issue is an essential difference between leadership as a science and leadership as an applied science. The short comings of the early art versus. science debate are pulled into perspective on this point. It is in the interaction between the art and science issues that a clear understanding of the dynamic nature of the role is defined.

Dewey's (1961) Rational Decision Theory is a prime example of a logical approach to the principal's leadership equation. However, because of its lack of a dynamic component, it falls victim to reality. His five step decision making model assumed that the principal had access to all the pertinent data plus the time to make a careful analysis of each possible alternative. March, James, and Simon (1958) expressed what they saw as the flaw in this prescriptive approach to decision making and the principalship.

...If the rational man lacked information, he might have chosen differently . . . At best he is subjectively rational, not 'objectively' rational. The notion of objective rationality assumes that there is some objective reality in which the 'real' alternatives, the 'real' consequences, and the 'real' utilities exist. (p.138)

If the view of March, James, and Simon (1958) is accepted

then an important role for the principal must be the balancing of the need for credible decisions based on the limited information available with the audience that will be affected by the conclusions reached.

During the decade of the 1980's it has been almost impossible to discuss the role of the principal without spending much time on the "Effective School's Movement." The work of Brookover and Lezotte (1979) and Edmonds (1979) has captivated professional attention. Their research has shown that the principal is key to the success of any school. They go as far as to say that an effective school which gets a non-effective principal will not remain effective for long. The principal must provide strong, consistent, and inspired leadership for the school to become and remain effective. Fairmen and Clark (1985) support the same view stating that the principal is the "foundation" of the effective school.

Similarly, Finn (1984) says that any school which wishes to be successful should establish as its priority the selection of the best principal available. In a summary of the effective schools research Manasse (1982) states that,

All of the factors consistently identified as characteristic of effective schools--strong administrative leadership, a school climate conducive to learning, a school-wide emphasis on basic skills, high teacher expectations for student achievement, and systematic monitoring of pupil performance--are either directly or indirectly related to the effectiveness of the principal. (p.10)

The "Effective Schools" view of the importance of the principalship coincides with Davies' Tridimensional concept of the principalship. The emphasis is placed on all three dimensions, the setting, the job and the man. The driving force in this approach is the academic effectiveness of the school which requires a successful union of Davies' components.

Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) explain that the most important issue is that the principal is not willing simply to keep the peace. Throughout their studies they found that effective schools had principals who were innovators, constantly seeking ways to effect school improvement. The "Effective Schools Movement" appears to have no interest in describing the package of qualities that make an effective principal. Instead it expends its energy on describing the qualities of the environments that the principal must create for the students in the school to learn effectively. As a result, principals with a variety of personal styles are seen as capable of building effective schools. At issue is the success built in the setting, not the particular qualities manifested in the principal.

Cohen's work (1982) clarifies the four basic issues of the "Effective Schools Movement". He contends that it is the task of the principal to drive for faculty consensus on these issues. The first issue for the consensus exercise is

for the staff to agree on the core of what they are about. Second, they must agree to work with the belief that all children can learn. The third issue for agreement revolves around the creation of a safe environment for learning. The last and fourth issue deals with setting aside time for reflection and program evaluation.

Current reflections:

The liberation of the study of the principalship from the early attempts at definition and delineation is allowing a broader concept to emerge. Brubaker (1989) wrote of an experience that changed his idea of the successful role needed. After several years of service as a professor of educational administration, he agreed to exchange roles and follow closely the days of six successful principals. While several of Brubaker's theoretical concepts were conserved, others were left open to change. His basic revelation was that even though all six principals were successful they approached their tasks differently. Some used formal advisory teams while others relied on informal conversations. Each had a vision for the school, but some displayed it by example rather than by any presentations that could be labeled as part of a package technique.

I (Brubaker, 1989) came way from my exchange experience sharing the principals' view that it would be a mistake to take research based directives too seriously, for to

do so would rule out the unique contribution that a unique principal can make in his or her school setting. (p.49)

He noted twelve similarities found in all six of the principals in the exchange.

1. They generally enjoy their work, find it interesting, and convey this to all at school.
2. They have high energy levels.
3. They make themselves visible throughout the school.
4. They are curious about how the school runs and how it can be changed to run better.
5. They converse frequently with faculty about curriculum in informal settings.
6. They are very effective in garnering community support.
7. They accept the fact that they will interact with people all day long.
8. They give and get necessary information in meetings that usually last less than two minutes.
9. They are very effective at nonverbal communication and recognize the importance of physical bearing.
10. They share a primary goal of getting students to accept responsibility for their own decisions.
11. They are willing to go the extra mile in order to make the school a better place for students, staff and themselves.
12. They use all resources available to make their schools a better place and aren't very interested in personal status. (p.49)

Brubaker (1989) is not advocating what Lindbloom (1959) described in his work titled The Science of Muddling Through. The actions of the principal should not be led solely by experience as discussed in Lindbloom's work. Instead the principal's work must be directed by current theory but not completely tied to it. This conceptual

approach is similar to Sergiovanni and Carver's (1980) "applied science" view for school leadership discussed earlier.

Principals must adapt a theory so that a match is made between it and the multifaceted needs of the school. Deal (1987) warns

. . .that the principal's responsibilities are multifaceted and that regardless of the 'Effective Schools' push for instructional leadership they must attend to all needs. (Truly), . . .effective schools meet human needs, get things done, negotiate an arrangement between existing factions, and create meaning for those who learn, study, support, or appreciate them. Effective principals are those who focus time and attention on each of these areas. (p.244)

He compares the task of the principal to one who views light through the many lenses of a kaleidoscope. By using all the lenses the principal can provide leadership for the various publics of their school.

Lightfoot (1983), studied carefully the activities of several successful principals. While all were different she found that each, in a manner consistent with his/her personalities, incorporated nurturing components in their leadership styles. She, like Deal, was sensitive to issues that implied that an effective school needs more than just strong leadership on academic fronts. It also has a ". . .need for intimacy and support . . ." (p.327)

Glickman (1987) also discussed that the principal of an effective school must attend to more than just academic success. "...Effective schools are often assumed to be good schools, but that is not always the case." (p. 622) To illustrate his point he told a story about an "effective school." The school was reported to be a great success in test scores while it lacked recess, field trips, small-group instruction, etc. Parents said it was " . . .effective, but no good." (p.622) The leadership in such a school looks at the success of the school only through the lens of academic success, and that is not enough.

The task of the school principal in the 1990's will not be an easy one. If they are going to accept the correlates of the "Effective Schools" research, they must be careful to embrace all of the correlates while still providing for the intimacy and support needs of students and staff as delineated by Lightfoot (1987). If this is not done the principal could lose the instructional leadership role in the school. Rallis and Highsmith (1986) contented that

the first realistic step in school improvement is to recognize that school management and instructional leadership are two different tasks that cannot be performed well by a single individual . . . (p.300)

This view is currently receiving a small amount of attention, but if principals continue to allow managerial responsibilities to monopolize their time, this will not be the case for long.

CHAPTER III

Procedures

Introduction

This study concentrates on the current perceptions of North Carolina's assistant superintendents with regard to the principal's role in curriculum leadership. Seven independent variables which may influence the development of these perceptions were selected for consideration: (1) assistant superintendent's relationships with coworkers; (2) size of the system in which the assistant superintendent is employed; (3) the systems involvement in a state pilot project; (4) the assistant superintendent's length of service in present position; (5) the assistant superintendent's active membership in professional curriculum organizations; (6) the assistant superintendent's prior experience as a principal; (7) perception of assistant superintendent toward his/her own personal role in curriculum leadership. Variables two and three dealt with school system's characteristics while one, three, four, five, six and seven reflect the characteristics of individual assistant superintendents.

Data were collected through a combination of questionnaires and interviews. The information gleaned from the questionnaire responses was converted into frequency

tables that were used to determine significant differences in response patterns via a calculation of chi square. The interviews were used to collect additional information on the two free response items on the questionnaire.

The survey population consisted of one assistant superintendent from each of the 131 LEA's in the state that had at least one assistant superintendent at the time of the study. At the time of the study two of 133 North Carolina LEAs didn't have the position of assistant superintendent serving the area of curriculum and instruction.

The remainder of this chapter provides specific information on the research method, the questionnaires, the respondent populations and the format used in the interviews.

Research Methodology

The form of data collection utilized in this study was a written survey instrument mailed to 131 LEAs in North Carolina for distribution to their assistant superintendents for curriculum and instruction. The survey was designed to collect responses that were used to determine differences in expected and observed response frequencies derived from the assistant superintendents' reported perceptions of the principal's role when the responses were grouped according to seven independent variables. The survey, in the form of

a four page questionnaire, was mailed to each of North Carolina's LEA's with the specific instruction that it was to be completed only by an assistant or associate superintendent in each of the state's 131 systems. In the event that more than one assistant or associate superintendent worked in a system, the survey was to be given to the individual who worked most closely with the principals in the area of curriculum and instruction. Instruments completed by persons in any other position were reported, but excluded from the data base of the study.

The survey questionnaire was developed by Brubaker and Simon (1987) to investigate the perceptions of principals regarding their view of the principal's role in North Carolina. Its reliability was verified by Williams (1987) using a test-retest format in a study of North Carolina's teachers' perceptions of the principal's role. She found the over all percentage of item agreement to be 84%.

The questionnaire in this study was used to collect responses that would be used in the study of differences between the seven independent variables and the dependent variable of the assistant superintendents' perceptions of the principal's role in curriculum leadership. It is believed that this post-facto study will produce data that allows the researcher to predict relationships of influence between the independent variables and the dependent

variable. Sprinthall (1990) stated that post-facto studies provide better than chance predictability. He points out that cause and effect can't be established in studies of this type.

Since the questionnaire was sent to the assistant superintendent who worked most closely with curriculum and instruction, the researcher provided guidelines to direct this dissemination. The guidelines (see Appendix A) were as follows: (1) The questionnaire was to be completed by an assistant superintendent. (2) If a system had more than one individual in this position the instrument was to go to the individual who worked most closely with curriculum and instruction. (3) Where multiple individuals held that position then the one with the most seniority would be asked to complete the survey. It was important that such a methodology be followed so that if follow-up work was needed the same individual could be reached.

Respondents who wished to receive a copy the data summary were asked to include their name and address with their completed questionnaire. Responses that didn't include this information were only identified by code to assure confidentiality and facilitate a second mailing for non-respondents (see Appendix D).

Analysis of these data was based on the calculation of chi square. This methodology was determined to be appropriate according to a four point checklist prepared by

Sprinthall (1990). First, the data are nominal based on tallied frequencies. Second, the researcher is interested in the differences in the assistant superintendents' perceptions of the principals' role as influenced by a series of independent variables. Third, the groups determined for each independent variable are independent of each other. (e.g. The selection of "no" as a response to the question of prior experience as a principal for one respondent has no bearing on the selection of "yes" by another respondent in the same category.) Fourth, each set of measurements is based on the difference in the dependent variable. Sprinthall maintains that when the data are nominal, differences are to be investigated and an independent selection of two or more measures is required; chi square is an appropriate methodology.

The second methodology used an open-ended interview. Those interviewed were asked to react to the issues addressed in the survey questionnaire. The structure of the interview was designed to elicit responses relevant to the topic as a follow-up to the two free response questions on the questionnaire. Four interviews were completed, two assistant superintendents representing pilot project systems and two representing non-pilot systems. The interviews were drawn from Abermerle, Stanly County, Salisbury and Rowan County.

Survey Instrument

The first page of the questionnaire consisted of a cover letter that requested the system's cooperation and provided guidelines for the delegation of the responsibility for answering the survey. The second page provided the respondent with a brief description and definition of Brubaker and Simon's (1987) framework on the conceptualizations of the principalship so that the respondents would have similar understandings of the five principal roles that make up this framework. They include the principal as: (1) Principal Teacher, (2) General Manager, (3) Professional and Scientific Manager, (4) Administrator and Instructional Leader, (5) Curriculum Leader.

The survey used by Brubaker and Simon (1987) to determine this framework, questioned 370 principals in North Carolina. They were asked:

1. What is your present leadership role?
2. What leadership role would you like to have?
3. What leadership role do the three principals you know best assume?
4. What leadership role do most principals in North Carolina play? (p. 72)

The third page contained the personal data questions that would be used in the frequency tables of this study. These questions were: (1) Number of years you have served as assistant/associate superintendent, (2) Size of school

system where you are employed, (3) Were you ever a principal, (4) Your highest degree completed, (5) Sex, (6) Age, (7) Were you involved in the Career Pilot Program, (8) Were you involved in the Lead Teacher Pilot, (9) List the professional curriculum organizations that you belong to, (10) Do you attend the meetings that are held by the organizations to which you belong. The last and fourth page housed Brubaker and Simon's (1987) perceptions framework.

The information collected in this four page questionnaire elicited all of the information needed in this study that could be derived via this format. The remaining data were retrieved via open-ended interviews with the four assistant superintendents from selected pilot systems. They provided background information on the pilot programs in addition to their responses on the survey sent to collect data for this study.

Validity and Reliability

Brubaker and Simon's five conception framework has been shown acceptable for use in this study on three fronts. First the review of literature supports the findings of the Brubaker and Simon (1987) framework. Historically researchers have used similar descriptors to those used in this framework to clarify the role of the principal. Second, while this methodology is labeled as a form of post-facto research Sprinthall (1990) maintains that is valid in

the social sciences where experimental control of the independent variables would violate ethical principals.

Post-facto research findings

"...do allow the researcher to make better than chance predictions. That is, being provided with information about the independent variable puts the researcher in the position of making above-chance predictions as to the performance on the dependent variable." (p.241)

Third, the pilot testing done by Brubaker and Simon found their survey items to be clear and accurate in what they measure. Williams (1987), in an independent study, strengthened the use of the Brubaker and Simon instrument by conducting a systematic comparison of the survey responses on the principal role with free response descriptions the same group of principals. Williams (1987) found that the descriptions collected via the instrument were similar to the free response descriptions provided by the respondents. Her study affirmed the reliability of the Brubaker and Simon instrument and reported an 84% reliability coefficient.

Population

One questionnaire was sent to each school system in North Carolina to be distributed to an assistant superintendent. Any responses completed by those other than individuals with the title assistant or associate superintendent were disregarded. This control limits the

study to those in a superordinate position in relationship with to the principal.

As of July 1, 1991, 131 of the 133 school systems in North Carolina had at least one assistant superintendent.

Summary

This study of the perceptions held by assistant superintendents in the area of the principal's role in curriculum and instruction is descriptive in nature. The study reports frequencies of responses categorized according to seven independent variables. A test of chi square was utilized to determine the significance of the differences between the observed and expected responses. This test was determined appropriate according to Sprinthall's (1990) checklist for research applications.

The actual polling of Assistant Superintendents began in the summer of 1991 with the second mailing following in October of that same year. A return rate of 74.8% was obtained allowing representation from 98 of 131 existing school systems in North Carolina who had at least one assistant superintendent. Analysis, discussion and interpretation follows in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER IV
Analysis of Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of the principal's role held by North Carolina's assistant superintendents. Survey instruments were sent to every school system in North Carolina to be forwarded to the assistant superintendents who were responsible for curriculum and or instruction. Each was asked to place North Carolina's principals as well as the specific principals with whom they worked in a framework. The framework consisted of the five conceptions or roles defined by Brubaker and Simon (1987). They are:

- Principal Teacher
- General Manager
- Professional and Scientific Manager
- Administrator and Instructional Leader
- Curriculum Leader

Data were obtained from surveys and open-ended interviews. The surveys were sent to the 131 school systems in North Carolina on July 1, 1991, who had at least one assistant superintendent. They were to be completed by the assistant superintendents who oversee curriculum and instruction (see Appendix A). After a second mailing (see

Appendix D) and follow up phone calls, a total of 98 were returned for a return rate of 73.7%.

The surveys investigated the observed and expected differences in the responses of the assistant superintendents' perceptions with seven independent variables. The independent variables were co-worker relationships, the size of the school system where employed, the school system's involvement in state offered pilot programs, the length of service in the role of assistant superintendent, active involvement in professional organizations, prior experience as a principal, and the individual perceptions of self as described in Brubaker and Simon's (1987) five conception framework.

The questions specifically addressed were:

1. What are the perceptions held by the assistant superintendents concerning the role of the principals with whom they work and their perception of the principals across North Carolina?

2. Does a significant difference appear in the perception of the principal's role in curriculum leadership when the assistant superintendent's is involved in CDP or LTP?

3. Does the size of the system seem to influence the difference in the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role?

4. Does a significant difference appear in the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role when the assistant superintendent's active membership in professional curriculum organizations is considered?

5. Does a significant difference surface in the assistant superintendent's perception of the principals with whom they work when his/her own role in curriculum is considered?

6. Does a significant difference surface in the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role when length of service in their current position is considered?

7. Does a significant difference appear in the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role when the assistant superintendent's prior experience as a principal is considered?

8. What are the key events and pressures seemed to influence the perceptions of the assistant superintendents in the area of the principal's role in curriculum leadership?

Each of the eight questions listed is discussed in detail in the chapter that follows. Surveys, free response answers and interview data have been included in this analysis.

Discussion of Results

Question 1: What are the perceptions held by the assistant superintendents concerning the role of the principals with whom they work and their perception of the principals across North Carolina?

Table one illustrates the percentages and frequencies that resulted from the survey that utilized Brubaker's and Simon's (1987) five conception framework. The data for this question were drawn from questions one and three of the survey instrument (see Appendix B). Question one asked for a description of the principals with whom the assistant superintendents worked and question three asked for the same information on principals across the state.

A total of 1283 principals in North Carolina were described by the 81 respondents to this question. The assistant superintendents, when focusing on the principals with whom they worked, placed principals in each of the five categories. The role of Administrator and Instructional Leader received the highest frequency with 443 (32.7%) principals. General Manager was the role that had the next highest frequency with 419 (32.7%) principals. The third highest frequency was Professional and Scientific Manager at 233 (18.2%) principals. These were followed by Curriculum Leader with 174 (13.6%) principals and the Principal Teacher with only 14 (1%). The totals for the actual role for most principals statewide found 0% reporting the

Table #1

Assistant Superintendents' Perceptions of the Principals With Whom They Work and Principals in the State of North Carolina

	Actual Role	
Role of the Principal	Principals With Whom They Work	Principal in North Carolina
Principal Teacher	(1%)	0%
General Manager	(32.7%)	(66.7%)
Prof/Sci Manager	(18.2%)	(18.5%)
Adm/Instr Leader	(34.5%)	(14.8%)
Curriculum Leader	(13.6%)	0%
Total Principals	(100%)	
Total Ass't Superintendents Who responded		81 (100%)

$$x^2 = 46.162$$

$$df = 4$$

$$p \leq .05$$

Calculation of the chi square indicates that there was significant difference between the expected and observed frequencies at a .05 level.

principal's role in either the Principal Teacher or Curriculum Leader category. The highest percentage on question three placed 66% of the assistant superintendents as reporting that most principals in North Carolina are functioning in the General Manager's role. This is followed by 18.5% who selected the Professional and Scientific Manager and 14.8% for the Administrator and Instructional Leader.

When contrasted with their perceptions of principals across the state it is clear that assistant superintendents see those with whom they work as functioning at a higher level than those across the state. The two conceptions in the framework that stress leadership house 48% of the principals with whom the assistant superintendents work compared to only a 14.8% for principals across the state. These results display major differences between the perceptions of assistant superintendents with respect to their co-workers and principals in the state. While they did report that some principals in their systems were functioning in the Principal Teacher role the overwhelming majority were shown to be in the higher level conception areas.

The difference between the perceptions of the assistant superintendents on their subordinates and principals across the state was determined to be significant. A chi square test found that a significant difference existed between the

observed and expected frequencies for the perception of co-worker principals and North Carolina's principals.

Question 2: Does a significant difference result in the perception of the principal's role in curriculum leadership when the assistant superintendent's is involved in CDP or LTP?

In question two the perceptions of the actual role of North Carolina's principals was analyzed for significant difference in response with participation in any of the state's pilot programs (e.g. CDP, LTP, etc.). The non-pilot and pilot groups both perceived the majority of the state's principals as functioning in the General Manager role and zero percent at either the Principal Teacher or Curriculum Leader conceptions.

Pilot system frequencies were 75.9% as General Manager, 13.8% Professional and Scientific Manager, and 10.3% as Administrator and Instructional Leader. When this was contrasted with non-pilot frequencies they were found lower in the General Manager category (61%) and higher in the next two categories with Professional and Scientific Manager at 21.2% and Administrator and Instructional Leader at 17.3%. While on the surface this displayed a pattern, a chi square test didn't find the differences to be significant.

Table #2

**Assistant Superintendents' Perceptions of the Principals
With Whom They Work by Their Involvement with North
Carolina Pilot Projects in Education**

Actual Role

Role of the Principal	Systems That Have Been Involved With Pilot Projects		Systems That Haven't Been Involved With Pilot Projects	
Principal Teacher	0		0	
General Manager	22	(75.9%)	32	(61.5%)
Prof/Sci Manager	4	(13.8%)	11	(21.2%)
Adm/Instr Leader	3	(10.3%)	9	(17.3%)
Curriculum Leader	0		0	
Total Systems	29	(100%)	52	(100%)

$$x^2 = 1.727$$

$$df = 2$$

Calculation of chi square indicates that there wasn't a significant difference between the expected and observed frequencies.

Question 3 Does a significant difference result in the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role when the size of the system is considered?

Each of the respondents were placed into one of three possible categories based on the size of the system in which they were employed. The categories were zero students to 4,999 in the first, 5,000 to 9,999 in the second and 10,000 students plus in the third. When this process of categorization was completed the smaller systems in North Carolina accounted for 61.3% of the respondents with the remainder divided so that the mid-sized and larger systems held 18.7% and 20% respectively.

One of the original propositions of this study was that larger systems would be more likely to perceive the principal in the Curriculum Leader role. However, when the data were examined, it was found that the three groups had quite similar perceptions of the principal's intended role with respect to Curriculum Leadership. Table #3 shows that the reported frequencies for the role of Curriculum Leader were within nine percentage points of one another. The differences for the other roles were more divergent, but not by enough to result in a significant chi square coefficient.

All three categories had a majority of their members selecting the Administrator and Instructional Leader role as the intended mode in North Carolina. These frequencies were

Table #3

**Assistant Superintendents' Perceptions of the Principals In
North Carolina by School System Size**

Role of the Principal	Intended Role					
	...Number of Students in the System..					
	0 - 4,999		5000-9,999		10,000 &	
Principal Teacher	0					
General Manager	0					
Prof/Sci Manager	5	(10.2%)	0			
Adm/In tr Leader	27	(55.1%)	9	(60.0%)	11	(68.8%)
Curriculum Leader	17	(34.7%)	6	(40.0%)	5	(31.2%)
Total Systems	49	(100%)	15	(100%)	16	(100%)
Total Ass't Superintendents Who responded			80		(100%)	

$$x^2 = 3.723$$

$$df = 4$$

Calculation of chi square indicates that there wasn't a significant difference between the expected and observed frequencies.

55.1% for category one followed by 60.0% for category 2 and 68.8% in category three. It was also worthy of note that only the smallest systems had any respondents who selected the Professional and Scientific Manager as the intended role (10.2%). The answer to this specific research question is that there is not a significant difference in response according to the size of the school system and the perception of the principal's role in curriculum leadership.

Question 4 Does a significant difference appear in the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role when active membership in professional curriculum organizations is considered?

There were 80 responses to the questions that pertained to the assistant superintendent's membership in professional organizations. Of this total 88% stated that they were active members in one or more organizations. Table #4 shows that the majority (54.9%) of those listed as active in one or more organizations described the intended role of the principal as best fitting in the Administrative and Instructional Leader category. This was followed by 38% in the Curriculum Leader camp and only 7% within this same category who selected the role of Professional and Scientific Manager.

Table #4

Assistant Superintendents' Perceptions of the Proper Role for Principals In North Carolina by Their Involvement In Professional Organizations

Role of the Principal	Intended Role		Assistant Superintendents	
	Ass't Superintendents Who Are Active in Professional Organizations		Aren't Active in Professional Organizations	
Principal Teacher	0			
General Manager	0		0	
Prof/Sci Manager	5	(7.0%)	0	(0.0%)
Adm/Instr Leader	39	(54.9%)	9	(100.0%)
Curriculum Leader	27	(38.0%)	0	(00.0%)
Total Systems	71	(100%)	9	(100%)
Assistant Superintendents Reported				80

$$x^2 = 6.761$$

$$df = 2$$

$$p \leq .05$$

Calculation of the chi square indicates that there was significant difference between the expected and observed frequencies at a .05 level.

When this information was contrasted with the remaining nine assistant superintendents, it was noted that all nine who didn't claim active membership matched the majority decision from the active group by their choice of the Administrative and Instructional Leader's role. It's important to note that none of those who described themselves as not being active selected the Curriculum Leader role. They unanimously reported the intended role to be that of an Administrative and Instructional Leader.

This matched proposition number five made early in the study which predicted that professional activity would result in significant differences in the perceptions of the superintendents. Twenty-seven of the seventy-one respondents (38%) shared a perception that matched closely with the role of Curriculum Leader. None of those who declared that they were not active made the same selection. The implication is clear that those active in professional organizations are more likely to have a variety of concepts of what the role of the principal should in fact be.

The response to this particular research question on the differences between assistant superintendents' perceptions of the principal's role when active membership in professional organizations was significant at the .05 level.

Question 5 Does a significant difference surface in the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role when his/her own role in curriculum is factored in with the role of the principals with whom they work?

The eighty respondents who addressed this issue placed themselves on the Brubaker and Simon framework (1987) in four of the five possible role categories. The role with the highest frequency, 45 or 56.2% of the respondents, was Administrator and Instructional Leader. Within the this category the assistant superintendents projected the intended role of the principal in such a manner that it matched the self view reported by the assistant superintendents. Table 5 shows that 66% of those who described themselves as Administrator and Instructional Leaders also selected it as the intended role for the state's principals. The next highest frequency in this category was 28.9% for the Curriculum Leader's role and the last was 4.4% who were reported as choosing the role of Professional and Scientific Manager.

This same pattern of matching the intended role for the principals as equal to the self view was found in the second largest group of assistant superintendents. Fifty-one percent of those reporting themselves as Curriculum Leaders also selected that as the intended principal's role. Within this group 44.4% chose the Administrator and Instructional Leaders role and the remaining 3.7% named the Professional

Table #5

**Assistant Superintendents' Perceptions of the Intended Role
For North Carolina's Principals by Their View of Self**

Role of the Principal	Intended Role			
	General Manager	Prof/Sci Manager	Adm/Instr Leader	Curriculum Leader
Principal teacher	0	0	0	0
General Manager	0	0	0	0
Prof/Sci Manager	1 (20.0%)	2 (66.7%)	2 (04.4%)	1 (3.7%)
Adm/Instr Leader	4 (80.0%)	1 (33.3%)	30 (66.7%)	12 (44.4%)
Curriculum Leader	0	0	13 (28.9%)	14 (51.6%)
Total Systems	5 (100%)	3 (100%)	45 (100%)	27 (100%)
Total Ass't Superintendents Who responded			80 (100%)	

$$x^2 = 23.895$$

$$df = 6$$

$$p \leq .05$$

Calculation of the chi square indicates that there was significant difference between the expected and observed frequencies at a .05 level.

and Scientific Manager's role. Table #5 also shows that of the eight remaining respondents, five reported that they functioned as General Managers and three as Professional and Scientific Managers. The pattern shown above in the first two categories mentioned doesn't hold true for these last assistant superintendent groups, but it is of interest that the two groups that described themselves as managers display no reports of the Curriculum Leader as the intended role.

In response to this specific research question, a chi square test determined that a significant difference in response existed between the expected and observed frequencies at a .05 level. Proposition six has been shown to be correct. The self view of the assistant superintendents roles in Curriculum Leadership has direct bearing on their view of the principal's intended role.

Question 6 Does a significant difference surface in the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role when length of service in their current position is considered?

The largest group of respondents on this survey, 68.8%, have been in the position of assistant superintendent for five years or less. This is followed by 15% with six to ten years, 7.5% in the 11 to 15 year category and 8.8% who have sixteen or more years of experience. With 67 of 80 respondents showing less than 11 years in this position, proposition number four leads us to the expected conclusion

that the majority of these respondents would perceive the principal's intended role to be the Curriculum Leader. Table #6 doesn't report the expected data. The majority does hold the perception that a leadership orientation is preferred over a managerial one, but it is clear that the majority perceives the principal's role as Administrative and Instructional Management.

The data as shown in Table #6 were in direct opposition to proposition four, which predicted that those with less experience would be more likely to focus on the role of Curriculum Leader. It reports that the only group that placed majority opinion in the area of Curriculum Leadership was the 11 - 15 years of experience group.

All of the respondent categories other than the 11 - 15 year group had the role of Administrative and Instructional Leader as majority group. Assistant superintendents in the first category, Zero to five years of experience, placed 5.5% in the Professional and Scientific Manager role, 60% in the Administrative and Instructional Leader role and 34.5% in the Curriculum role. The six to ten group had similar numbers with Administrative and Instructional holding 66.6% and Professional and Scientific and Curriculum Leaders both showing 16.7 % at the present.

Table #6

Assistant Superintendents' Perceptions of the Intended Role for Principals by Their Length of Service

Role of the Principal	Intended Role			
	Years of Service as an Ass't Superintendent			
	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-up
Principal Teacher	0	0	0	0
General Manager	0	0	0	0
Prof/Sci Manager	3 (5.5%)	2 (16.7%)	0	0
Adm/Instr Leader	33 (60%)	8 (66.6%)	2 (33.3%)	5 (71.4%)
Curriculum Leader	19 (34.5%)	2 (16.7%)	4 (66.7%)	2 (28.6%)
<i>Total Systems</i>	<i>55 (100%)</i>	<i>12 (100%)</i>	<i>6 (66.7%)</i>	<i>2 (28.6%)</i>

$$x^2 = 6.934$$

$$df = 6$$

$$p \leq .05$$

Calculation of chi square indicates that there wasn't a significant difference between the expected and observed frequencies.

A chi square test on the data found no clear significance on the research question that investigated the differences in response frequencies according to years of service.

Question 7 Does a significant difference appear in the assistant superintendent's perception of the principal's role when prior experience as a principal is considered?

The data on this question grouped the assistant superintendents into two specific categories, those with and without prior experience as a principal. Only 27% of the those who responded to the survey became assistant superintendent without first serving as principal. This percentage was expected in light of earlier studies by McRae (1987) and Briggs (1986). In Mcrae's study of North Carolina's superintendents it was reported that 80% of the respondents had prior experience as a principal. Briggs' study of other central office staff found 50% had served as a principal. Since Briggs' study included supervisors and directors the lower number of professionals with experience as principals was expected. This current study, completed five years after McRae's, shows a similar number of assistant superintendents with time spent as a principal, approximately 73% compared to McRae's 80%.

Proposition seven predicted a significant relationship between serving as a principal and the perception of the

intended role for North Carolina's principals. This didn't occur, however. Some differences were reported, but the majority of assistant superintendents in both categories selected the role of Administrative and Instructional Leader as the intended role. Of those who had not been principals (see Table #7) 45.5% stated that the intended role should be in Curriculum, compared to a 37.3% selection percentage for the groups that had served as principal. The latter group also differed in the fact that 8.5% perceived of the role as most like the Professional and Scientific Manager while the non-principal group had no one selecting that category.

In response to this specific research question a chi square test established that there is no significant difference in the observed and expected observations.

Question 8 What are the key events and pressures that have influenced the perceptions of the assistant superintendents in the area of the principal's role in curriculum leadership?

A content analysis was done on the responses provided by 90 assistant superintendents to the free response items on the questionnaires and in the four open ended interviews. Once the topics were extracted, each response was tallied, grouped and ranked (see Table #8). Seven topics were mentioned at least twice. An eighth group of responses was formed to provide a frequency for the 27 topics mentioned only once. Table #8 lists the five main topics that were

Table #7

Assistant Superintendents' Perceptions of the Intended Role for Principals by Their Past Employment as a Principal

Intended Role

Role of the Principal	Past Employment as a Principal	
	(Yes)	(No)
Principal Teacher	0	0
General Manager	0	0
Prof/Sci Manager	5 (8.5%)	0
Adm/Instr Leader	32 (54.2%)	12 (54.5%)
Curriculum Leader	22 (37.3%)	10 (45.5%)
Total Systems	59 (100%)	22 (100%)

$$x^2 = 2.135$$

$$df = 2$$

Calculation of chi square indicates that there wasn't a significant difference between the expected and observed frequencies.

Table #8

Free Response Data by Frequency

Key words	Frequencies
New Initiatives Mandated by the State	22
Change to Instructional Leader Versus Manager for the Principalship	17
Student Achievement	16
Teacher Evaluation	16
Changes in Society	7
Student Discipline	4
Teacher Resistance to Change	2
Topics mentioned only once include: Paper Work, New Technologies, Being everything to everyone, Time Management.	27
Total	111

reported more than five times each. They are: state mandated initiatives, change to instructional leader from manager, student achievement, teacher evaluation, changes in society, student discipline, and teacher resistance to change.

Analysis of questionnaire responses

The free response questions asked respondents to discuss two areas. The first asked what assistant superintendents felt was the most significant pressure on the role of the principal in the last ten years. The second provided space for a totally open response on the topic of the principalship. Four to five lines were provided for these responses (See appendix B). Some respondents utilized both response opportunities while others chose not to respond at all. A discussion of the five pressures most often mentioned follows.

- 1) The first key topic or significant pressure, North Carolina's mandated initiatives for education, was addressed by twenty-two respondents. Each expressed frustration with the number of projects that have never been completed. Some of the initiatives mentioned specifically were: Career Pilot, observer evaluators, outcome based education, School-based management, and administrator and teacher training modules.

2) The second key topic is closely related to the first. It dealt with the pressure for principals to change from managers to instructional or curriculum leaders. The concerns expressed dealt with the role conflict managerial principals face as they are forced to become leaders. The initiatives were and are mandated, but very little staff development was provided to help existing principals make the transition from manager to leader. One respondent wrote that "...principals need help with administrivia to allow time for new role of instructional leader." Another wrote the principalship "...has become so complex. They (the principal) must meet all of the old expectations plus. It's not just being instructional leader."

Some assistant superintendents appeared from their responses to be resolved to the opinion that for some of the principals in their system the role of curriculum leader was beyond reach. This perception is best summed up by the following quote "...god help them, the good ole' boys just need to be replaced."

3) Student Achievement was the third key topic with 16 respondents. The common thread here dealt with the accountability pressure in terms of student achievement that is being placed by the state on school systems and then on the principal. Accountability in this area has become a measure for identifying a good school and a good principal.

4) The fourth topic, again mentioned by 16 respondents, was teacher evaluation and the amount of time and energy that it required. Evaluation of staff is one of the tangible items that must be performed with all of the accompanying paper work, but it is only one piece of the puzzle. This dilemma can be felt in the following statement made by one of the respondents. Its not just teacher evaluation, its all of the "...conflicting role expectations of (facility) management, instructional leadership, teacher evaluation, curriculum facilitation, accountability and school base management..." combined.

5) Comments concerning societal changes represent seven respondents who discussed a number of student oriented issues from working parents and television to the decay of the functional American family. These are all issues that the school must cope with but can't control.

Each of the above topics dealt with broad pressures that are counterproductive in terms of the principal's role. Their significance is drawn from the fact that the assistant superintendents' free response opinions were confirmed by the independent collaboration of their peers.

Analysis of interview data

In the four interviews the same issues were raised that appeared on the free response section of the questionnaire. The format for this analysis will draw on the same five key pressures. The key pressures in this report are: state mandated initiatives, change to instructional leader from manager, student achievement, teacher evaluation, changes in society.

1) The first key pressure, North Carolina's mandated initiatives for education, was also discussed by each of the four interviewees. One of the assistant superintendents from a career pilot school system expressed concern that it was getting increasingly difficult for a principal to motivate his/her staff in light of questions about whether the project would ever be completed.

Another interviewee from a non-pilot system stated that, "30 years ago when I first became principal no one questioned the principal. Not the teachers, the parents or the community. If the principal said it needed to be done, it was done." However, today's society is much more open. The mandates of the state are delivered to teachers by the principals. When the state backs away from a project it's the principal who must answer the questions. Each time, the principal's credibility is weakened with his/her staff.

Part of the urgency of this pressure is found in the fact that each of the assistant superintendents interviewed

are their system's person in charge of initiating and reporting on the progress of the mandates. Just as the principals are loosing credibility with the teachers the assistant superintendents are experiencing increasing difficulty with the principals.

2) The second key topic from the free response questions and interviews dealt with the pressure exerted on the principals to change from managers to instructional leaders. Their wasn't a great deal of lengthy discussion on this issue but the assistant superintendents as a expressed concern. The group feeling can be summed up by one interviewee's comment "...many (principals) just weren't going to make it." All four interviewees addressed the fact that older principals weren't hired to be leaders. They were hired to manage a facility and its staff while keeping problems at a minimum.

3) Student accountability, the third key pressure was not a major issue in the interviews. Most of the attention was directed toward the other "process" issues.

4) The fourth key pressure revolves around the current teacher appraisal instrument. The instructional components of this appraisal instrument was said to have had a place, but most veteran teacher are ready to go beyond this close process style of evaluation. Three of the four interviews included discussion on the need for a more collegial model for evaluating and helping teachers. One interviewee spoke

at length about a teacher empowerment model that she was experimenting with that made teachers more responsible for their own growth. When her description ended, she took a deep breath and said, "...but our (manager) principals are having difficulty. It will take some time to get everyone on board." Another said, "We are spending more time on teacher evaluation than ever with TPAI and it is good for some, but others need more (time). Unfortunately the process is so lengthy that time is one of the biggest problems." None of the assistant superintendents devalued the concept or need for teacher evaluation, only the forced uniformity.

5) The fifth key pressure focus on societal changes. Concerns in this area were not based as much on the what can be done to reduce the number of changes, but instead on how schools can anticipate problems and continue making a difference for today's children. Two of the assistant superintendents interviewed mentioned the "Effective Schools" literature as part of their discussion of societal transition. They felt that for schools to have a successful affect today the idea of school based decision making would have to be accepted. The needs of different communities can't be addressed generically. Each spoke as if they believed that schools can continue to make a difference in the life of today's students.

The interviews clearly validated topics discussed by the survey respondents on the free response items questionnaire items.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of the principal as viewed by North Carolina's assistant superintendents for curriculum and instruction. The independent variables in this study were: co-worker relationships, the size of the school system where the assistant superintendent was employed, the school system's involvement in state mandated pilot programs, the length of service in the position of assistant superintendent, active involvement in professional organizations, prior experience as a principal, and the individual perceptions of self in Brubaker and Simon's (1987) five conception framework. Each of these were studied for effect on the dependent variable, the assistant superintendents perception of the role of the principal.

The questions presented at the beginning of this chapter are summarized below:

1. A significant difference was found to exist between assistant superintendents' perceptions of their subordinate co-worker principals and principals across the state of North Carolina (Table 1 p.59). 48.1% of co-worker principals were perceived as functioning at the two highest

levels on the grid compared to only 14.8% who viewed the principals across the state as functioning in those categories. Further when discussing North Carolina's principals the majority of the assistant superintendents, responding to this survey, placed the state's principals at the General Manager level (66.7%).

2. No significant difference was found in assistant superintendents' perceptions of the "actual role" of principals when the independent variable of system participation in a state mandated pilot project was applied. Both pilot and non-pilot systems had frequencies that placed the majority of the state's principals in the role of General Manager. A chi square test didn't determine the frequency variance significant.

3. No significant difference was found between the responses of assistant superintendents from different size school systems. The proposition that larger systems would be more likely to view the "intended role" of the principal in the leadership categories didn't materialize. Small, medium and larger systems all had approximately one third of their assistant superintendents name the role of Curriculum Leader as the intended role for the principal. Medium size systems actually had the highest percentage at 40% followed by small systems with 34.7% and larger systems at 31.2%. The only category to have anyone select a non-leader style role for the principal was the category consisting of the

smaller systems where 10.2% ranked the Professional and Scientific Manager as the intended role.

4. A significant difference in frequencies was found between the perceptions of the assistant superintendents who reported that they were active in professional organizations and those who stated they were inactive. 100% of those who identified themselves as inactive selected the Administrator and Instructional Leader as the intended role for North Carolina's principals. Active assistant superintendents' choices were spread over three categories with 38% Curriculum Leader, 54.9% Administrator and Instructional Leader and 7% as Professional and Scientific Manager. Eighty-eight percent of North Carolina's assistant superintendents claim to be active in professional organizations.

5. A significant difference was found between the perception of the principal's intended role and the assistant superintendent's view of their own role in curriculum leadership. The majority of assistant superintendents (90%) stated that they perceived themselves in the categories of Administrator and Instructional Leader and Curriculum Leader, 56.3% and 33.8% respectively. Within these two groups 86.3% of the assistant superintendents stated that the intended role of the principal also should be in one of the two leadership categories. Further 51% of those who view of themselves as Curriculum Leader in turn

selected that as the intended role for the principals and the 66.7% who saw themselves as Administrator and Instructional Leaders selected that same category for the intended principal's role.

6) No significant difference in frequency was found between the years of service as an assistant superintendent and their perceptions of the intended role of the principal. The category representing the majority of assistant superintendents was zero to five years, 83.8%. Those with less experience in the position were more likely to use the last three categories, but no significant pattern of difference in frequency was determined.

7) No significant difference in frequency was found between prior experience as a principal and the assistant superintendents' perceptions of the intended role of the principal. Those with prior experience as a principal (72.3%) spread the frequency responses over three categories instead of two for the non-principal respondents. However, the slight difference that resulted didn't impact the results significantly.

8) A content analysis of the free response and interview data revealed five topics of concern related to the principalship. The five topics taken from the comments of the respondents were: the negative impact of state mandated initiatives that have begun, but will never be completed or followed through on by North Carolina; the

pressure for principals to change orientation from management to leadership; accountability based on student achievement; time resources depleted by the current teacher evaluation model; and, the reality of handling all of the above and more during a time when society is changing so rapidly that it has had a demoralizing effect on institutions ranging from the family to governmental agencies.

CHAPTER V
Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations
For Further Study

Introduction

This study focused on the intended role of principals as viewed by North Carolina's assistant superintendents for curriculum and instruction. Survey instruments were mailed to the 131 North Carolina school systems who had at least one assistant superintendent July, 1991. They were forwarded to the assistant superintendents who were responsible for curriculum and or instruction. Each was asked to place North Carolina's principals as well as the specific principals with whom they worked on a five conception framework developed by Brubaker and Simon (1987). The resulting perceptions were then tested for difference in responses with seven independent variables: co-worker relationships, the size of school system, the school systems involvement in pilot programs, the length of service in the role of assistant superintendent, active involvement in professional organizations, prior experience as a principal, and the individual perceptions of self in the Brubaker and Simon (1987) framework.

The assistant superintendent's perceptions of the intended role for the principal are highly important to the

establishment of effective schools. The subordinate nature of the principal's relationship with the assistant superintendent places the assistant superintendent in an opportune position to influence the priority structure assumed by the principal.

In this chapter a summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations for further study will be presented. The data and resulting interpretation will prove useful to administrators at a variety of levels as they endeavor to create effective schools.

Summary

One hundred thirty one assistant superintendents were surveyed to determine their perceptions of the intended role for North Carolina's principals as well as the principals with whom they worked. These same assistant superintendents were asked to respond to two free response questions designed to uncover information on the most significant pressures on the role of the principal today. In addition a sample of four assistant superintendents were interviewed, two from systems that participated in state pilot programs and two who had not. This was done to verify and extend the survey data.

The reliability and validity of the instrument was supported by the literature and by the work of Brubaker and Simon (1987), Briggs' (1986), McRae (1987), Williams (1987)

and Bledsoe (1992). The work of each was based upon the same five conception framework developed by Brubaker and Simon (1987) on the role of the principal.

The questionnaire consisted of three basic parts (see Appendix C). The first part housed Brubaker and Simon's (1987) framework. The respondents were asked to place the principals with whom they worked in the framework. They also placed themselves, North Carolina's principals and the intended role of principals on the same framework. The second part of the questionnaire asked a variety of demographic questions that were used to identify the independent variables. A chi square test for significant difference between observed and expected frequencies was then computed based on the questionnaire responses. The third and last part of the questionnaire provided the respondents with two free response questions that were grouped, tallied and charted.

The findings of the study based on the analysis are as follows:

1. A significant difference was found to exist between the assistant principals view of their co-workers and the principals across the state. Most felt that the majority of the principals with whom they work functioned in one of the two leadership categories of Administrative and Instructional Leader or Curriculum Leader. Their

perceptions were quite different for the state's principals, with 66.7% of the 80 respondents placing them in the General Manager's role.

2. No significant difference was found in the perceptions of the assistant superintendents when they were categorized according to their system's involvement in one of the state's pilot projects.

3. The size of the school district was not found to significantly impact the perceptions of the assistant superintendent in this area. Approximately one third of the respondents from each size category stated that the intended role of the principal should be that of Curriculum Leader. The remainder of the medium and larger system assistant superintendents selected Administrator and Instructional Leader as the primary role. The smaller system selections included 10.2% of the assistant superintendents identifying the Professional and Scientific Manager as the intended role.

4. The involvement of assistant superintendents in professional organizations was found significant. Of the total group responding 88% reported being active. The 12% who claimed not to be active all chose the same category as the intended role, Administrative and Instructional Leader. The assistant superintendents who were more involved professionally selected three categories to describe the

intended role (Curriculum Leader #8%, Administrative and Instructional Leader 54.9% and Professional and Scientific Manager 7%.

5. The way an assistant superintendent perceives his/her own role in Curriculum Leadership was found to have significant impact on his/her view of the intended role for the principal. The majority of those who saw themselves as Curriculum Leaders also perceived that to be the intended role for the principal.

6. The length of service in the position of assistant superintendent was not found to have a significant impact on the perception of the principal's role. However, it was clear that the overwhelming majority of North Carolina's assistant superintendents have held that position for less than five years, 68.8%.

7. Prior experience as a principal was not found to produce a significant level of difference in this study. Of the assistant superintendents who responded to the survey, 72.3% reported prior experience as a principal. Only very slight differences in perceptions were noted.

8. Five areas exerting pressure on the principal's role were uncovered by the content analysis of free response data from the interviews and questionnaire items. They were: the negative impact of state mandated initiatives left incomplete, the pressure for principals to change from roles requiring a manager to ones that need a leader,

accountability based on student achievement, time resources depleted by the current teacher evaluation model, and the reality of handling all of the above during a time when society is changing so rapidly.

Conclusions

The role of the principal in today's schools has been labeled in educational literature as essential. Further, the review of existing literature has shown a need for focused attention on the change process and strong leadership. All of these areas converge in the "Effective Schools Movement" and its views of the principalship. Brookover (1978), Edmonds (1979), Lezotte (1988) and others point out that our schools haven't been meeting the challenges that our rapidly changing society has put forward. They state that strong school leadership provided by innovative curriculum-minded principals can provide the impetus for change that is critical for our schools to succeed.

This study focused on the perceptions of assistant superintendents as superordinates of principals. The priorities established at the level of the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction were shown to have an impact their perception of what is emphasized at the school level.

Analysis of the data collected in this study has led to the following conclusions:

1) Assistant superintendents perceive that their co-workers are functioning at higher levels within the Brubaker and Simon (1987) framework than the rest of the principals in the state. This leads to the conclusion that they believe that their attitudes and curriculum views have successfully influenced their co-worker principals to be more curriculum-minded. The implication is also made that other assistant superintendents in North Carolina don't have the same influence with the principal with whom they work (see Table #1 p.59).

2) Assistant superintendents who work in systems that haven't been evolved in state pilot projects don't report any significant difference in perception of principal's role. Actually the assistant superintendents who were from non-pilot systems had a higher frequency of selecting a leadership description for the actual role of principals in North Carolina. It could be concluded that when principals are involved in the implementation of a program initiated from an outside agency they lose leadership opportunities and instead are placed in a position of managing the state's program.

3) No significant differences were found due to the size of the system in which the assistant superintendent worked.

4) Professional involvement at the assistant superintendent's level produced a significant differences in response in perceptions held toward the principal's role. This leads to the conclusion assistant superintendents who are professionally active are exposed to a broader scope of curriculum issues and as a result are able to be more discriminating in the issues that they support and reject. In short they have more to base their perceptions on and as a result think more divergently.

5) The differences in response patterns between the assistant superintendents' view of self in curriculum leadership and their perception of the intended role of the principal was found to be significant. From this it can be concluded that if a system is careful to select assistant superintendents who perceive of themselves as curriculum leaders they (the system) can expect that the assistant superintendent will expect curriculum-minded decisions and actions from principals.

6) No significant differences in response frequency was found between the perceptions of the assistant superintendent according to their length of experience in that position. It was learned, however that this position is currently being filled with persons relatively new to the role (68.8% have five or fewer years in the position). The impact of this newer group on those currently in the position of principal has not yet been determined.

7) No significant difference was uncovered between prior experience as a principal and the assistant superintendents' perceptions of the principal's intended role. The 72.3% who had served as principal cast their view of the role over three categories compared to two categories for those without experience in the principalship, but this is the greatest extent of the divergence in rankings. The majority of both groups selected the role of Administrator and Instructional Leader as the intended role (54.2% with principalship experience and 54.5% without).

8) The content analysis of the free response and follow-up interviews resulted in a clear picture that there are significant pressures currently acting on the principal role. The five topics, in rank order by frequency of response included: the negative impact of unfinished state mandates, the pressure for principal to make the transition from manager to leader, school accountability based on student achievement, time resources depleted by the current teacher evaluation model, and the reality of our rapidly changing society. The nature of the comments displayed clear sympathy for those serving as principal. One respondent wrote, "Heaven help them!" while another stated that she wasn't sure that all of her subordinate principals were going to make it.

It is clear that the majority of assistant superintendents agree that the intended role of the

principal must be one that has a leadership orientation. Unfortunately they still perceive most of North Carolina's principals at the General Manager's level (66.7%). The use of this role is reinforced for principals when they are instructed by the state legislature to manage mandated programs.

As these issues were discussed in the open-ended interviews and on the free response portion of the questionnaire, a language of management and control surfaced instead of a language of leadership. When interviewed, the assistant superintendents with a management orientation had a tendency to reminisce about years past, a time when the principal was never questioned. The interviews established the power of language in approaching the revitalization of our schools. Those interested in nurturing the principalship toward Curriculum Leadership spoke of facilitating innovation while the others utilized the language of recreating or carrying out a program. Words like empowerment and site based leadership were not mentioned at all by the two interviewees who emphasized what principals have lost. This is contrasted with the leadership-minded assistant superintendents who could not complete a thought without some reference to the open-ended nature of the principal's task. These assistant superintendents were busy building loose structures that

would encourage the principals under their charge to create something meaningful for their school community.

These data show that the most significant effect on the perceptions of assistant superintendents are found in the independent variables of the assistant superintendent's view of self in curriculum leadership, active participation in professional organizations and co-worker relationships.

Recommendations for Further Study

During the decade of the 80's, North Carolina developed a number of projects that were designed to improve education by raising the competence of its teachers and principals. The Effective Teaching Training (ETT) program is an example of a project that was extremely ambitious and was provided for educators throughout the state. It provided the teachers with a common language and information base that stressed the works of a mixture of educational theorists.

Principals were subsequently trained in the Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument which was based on the 28 behaviors that were addressed in ETT. On the heels of these programs, the Effective Principals Training Project was developed and eventually disseminated.

It appeared that the goal of these projects was to enact positive change in everyone by educating all of the state's school personnel. The emphasis on all meant that

every teacher, young and old, sat down and experienced the training together.

By the mid-1980's money grew tighter and the state began trying a different approach. They developed a series of pilot projects that were to be enacted throughout the state. Sixteen systems were involved in a merit pay project called the Career Development Program. The plan was developed and implemented in the pilots, but never expanded to the rest of the state. Another pilot was devised, the Lead Teacher Project. This time four systems were selected. Again the project received good reviews, but was never expanded.

The result of this series of incomplete projects has resulted in three major problems. First, the considerable effort to create a common language for education has been short changed by the wide variety of experiences that were fostered by the pilot programs. Second, trust that pilots will never be continued and disseminated has been violated. Third, educational reform has become a trickle down process that originates at the state level.

The effective schools literature that is the justification for the much of the emphasizes with the current pilots stresses the need for principals and other school leaders who are strong and visionary in their approach. These leaders are not nurtured toward leadership

when they are required to manage the implementation of a pilot project.

Further study is needed to examine the effects of these forces on the role of the principal and on the relationships that the principal maintains with the assistant superintendents and the teachers with whom they work. Earlier studies of the perceptions of the principal's role as viewed by the teachers may now have changed drastically as a result of the state's change in reform methodology.

Also, the approaches of assistant superintendents who report to have a majority of their subordinate principals functioning in the curriculum leader and administrator and instructional leader categories of Brubaker's and Simon's (1987) five conception framework should be examined via case study methodology. This would allow a close examination of the interactive qualities that foster curriculum Leadership. The resulting portraits would be extremely helpful in the effort to get and keep schools on track.

Quantitative studies should still be used to identify specific schools and leaders for study. However, more knowledge is needed about what happens in a situation to provide the proper motivation for principals to become curriculum leaders. Once this information has been gleaned, follow-up studies that assess the significant relationships between dependent and independent variables will take on new meaning.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

**Letters to Assistant Superintendents for
Curriculum and Instruction**

Memorandum

To: Assistant/Associate Superintendent for Curriculum
and Instruction

From: W.E. Schnuit, Jr., Principal
Rockwell Elementary School
Rowan/Salisbury Schools

Date: July, 1991

Re: Study of the Assistant/Associate Superintendent
for Curriculum and Instruction's Perception of the
Role of the Principal.

A quick review of today's news will find a great deal of public and legislative attention directed toward the improvement of our state's system of public education. Much of this is aimed appropriately at the effectiveness of leadership provided by the principal.

I am conducting a study which will examine the current role of North Carolina's principals as perceived by Assistant/Associate Superintendents for Curriculum and Instruction. This survey will only be sent to you and others currently employed in your position. Therefore your views and prompt responses will be very important to the success of the study.

The instrument's arrival has been timed for the summer months in the hope that you will have less difficulty finding the minutes needed to complete the brief questionnaire. Your name and that of your local unit will not be used in the study. All responses will be kept confidential.

If you would like to have a copy of the results, please note that on your response and include a mailing address. Thank you for your time and assistance.

APPENDIX B
Conceptions of the Principalship

Conceptions of the Principalship

1. **Principal Teacher:** Routinely engages in classroom teaching for a portion of each school day; also responsible for daily school routines and clerical duties; does not believe special training is needed to be an effective principal.

2. **General Manager:** Is the official liaison between the school and the central office; spends the majority of time on clerical duties; relies upon common sense and reacts to problems as they arise; has the right to give and enforce orders to teachers; implements the curriculum as mandated by the state and local school board.

3. **Professional and Scientific Manager:** Spends more time in classroom supervision than routine administrative duties; uses test data as a basis for planning, implementing and evaluating instruction; is accustomed to the bureaucratic command/compliance organizational system; is interested in efficiency and the use of time to meet management goals and objectives.

4. **Administrator and Instructional Leader:** Recognizes that his/her role encompasses both governance functions through the bureaucratic organizational structure; handles instructional leadership functions through a collegial organizational structure; expects and accepts some friction between governance and instructional leadership functions; treats teachers as professionals; gives them significant input into staff hiring, scheduling, evaluation, procurement of materials, selection of objectives, methods, etc.

5. **Curriculum Leader:** Views the curriculum in very broad terms to mean more than a course of study and what each person experiences in cooperatively creating learning settings; believes that the role of the principal is too complex to reduce to simple technical procedures; does not attempt to dichotomize administrative and instructional functions, realizing that all tasks impact on what is learned; believes that the learning of adult educators is as important as the learning of children and youth.

Note: This questionnaire is adapted from The Five Conceptions of the Principalship by:

Dale Brubaker and Larry Simon (1987). How do North Carolina principals view themselves, other? NAASP Bulletin, 71 (495), 72-78.

APPENDIX C
Survey Instrument

Perceptions of the Principalship
As Held by
Assistant/Associate Superintendents
for Curriculum and Instruction

Instructions:

1. In column A, please indicate the number of principals with whom you work that fit the description of each conception. i.e.: an LEA has ten (10) principals. Five (5) may fit conception 2--General Manager; three (3) may fit conception 4--Administrator and Curriculum Leader; and two (2) may fit conception 5--Curriculum Leader.
2. In column B, please place a check beside the conception that most accurately describes where you think those principals should be.
3. In column C, please place a check beside the conception that you feel most accurately describes most of the principals across North Carolina.
4. In Column D, please place a check beside the conception that most accurately describes where you think the principals in North Carolina should be.
5. In column E, please place a check beside the conception that most accurately describes what you are presently doing in your role in the central office.
6. In column F, please place a check beside the conception that most accurately describes what you feel your role in the central office should be.

A	B	C	D	E	F	
						1. Principal Teacher
						2. General Manager
						3. Professional Scientific Manager
						4. Administrator and Instructional Leader
						5. Curriculum Leader

Please complete the following information:

1. Position you currently hold: _____
2. Number of years in this position: _____
 ___0-5, ___6-10, ___11-15, ___16-20, ___21-25, ___over 25
3. Were you ever a principal? ___yes, ___no, ___number of years
4. How many students are in your system? _____
5. Has your system been involved in any of the state's
 pilot programs? ___no, ___yes, If yes please check below.
 ___Career Development, ___LEAD Teacher, ___Other: _____

6. Sex: ___Male, ___Female

7. Age: _____

8. In what professional organizations do you belong:

9. Do attend meetings of these organizations? ___no, ___yes

10. Do you view yourself as an Instructional Leader? ___no,
 ___yes

11. What do you feel has been the most significant pressure
 on the role of the principal in the last 10
 years?

12. Free response opportunity on the topic of the
 principalship: _____

Thank you for your time and assistance with the survey.
 Place this sheet in the stamped envelope and return it to
 me by August 10. Thank you

APPENDIX D
Follow-up Letter for
Non-respondents

Memorandum

To:

From: W.E. Schnuit, Jr. Principal
 Rockwell Elementary School
 Rowan/Salisbury Schools

Date: October 28, 1991

Follow-up Contact

Re: Study of the Assistant/Associate Superintendent
 for Curriculum and Instruction's Perception of the Role of
 the Principal.

In July of this year I sent a request for information to your office. It would be greatly appreciated if you could review and complete the material in this second packet. (Your response to the first packet was not received as of 10-1-91.

Please sign in the space provided below if your system doesn't have person titled to position of assistant or associate Superintendent for Curriculum and/ or Instruction.

Thank you for your assistance and prompt reply,

W.E. Schnuit, Jr.
 Principal
 Rockwell Elementary School

At present _____ Schools doesn't have a personnel
 (system name)

position bearing this title.

 (signature of the person
 completing this form)

 (title)