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**The role of the principal as verified by North Carolina teachers**

**Williams, Julia Crowell, Ed.D.**

**The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1987**

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THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL AS VERIFIED

BY NORTH CAROLINA TEACHERS

by

Julia Crowell Williams

A Dissertation Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
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Approved by

  
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APPROVAL PAGE

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions which classroom teachers in North Carolina have about the role of their principal and other principals across North Carolina according to a five conception framework of the principalship. The effect of three independent variables - the school level of the teacher, the number of years of teaching experience of the teacher, and the gender of the teacher - on the roles selected were also examined.

Data were obtained from a sample of 416 teachers in the 140 public school systems in North Carolina. The findings of the study suggested that classroom teachers view the actual role of their principal as either an Administrator/Instructional Leader or a General Manager but prefer the role of Administrator/Instructional Leader. While teachers viewed principals across all of North Carolina as primarily General Managers, the desired role was consistent with the role which they desired for their own principal - that of an Administrator/Instructional Leader.

There was no significant difference between the roles which teachers selected for their principal when responses were examined according to the school level and the gender

of the teacher. The number of years of teaching experience did make a difference in the actual role perceived by teachers for their principal. However, it did not make a difference in the role desired by teachers for their principals.

Data collected on two free response questions about the role of the principal were consistent with the teachers' perceptions expressed on the survey.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Contrary to educational research and reports of the 1960's which claimed that schools could have little effect on student achievement (Edmonds, 1983; Good & Brophy, 1985), research of the 1980's has been aimed at demonstrating that schools can make a difference in the performance of students. This trend in educational research has been to examine the schools which have demonstrated success in increasing student achievement for traits which are characteristic of their effectiveness. These so called "effective schools" make a difference in the achievement, development and progress of their students.

Following this identification of the traits or correlates of effective schools, one aspect of the research has focused on the question, can an effective school be created, and if so, what does it take to create one? Boyer (1986) claims that the teacher is the key to creating an effective school. Goodlad (1984) argues that although teachers can make a difference, "the principal increasingly



is being viewed as the key person in school improvement" (p. 306). He further stresses that the individual school and not a school system is the best "unit of improvement". His research supports other effective school research which cites the strong instructional leadership of the principal as crucial for school reform (Bredeson, 1985; ERS, 1983).

A logical assumption could be that it is not the teacher or the principal who is the key to the creation of an effective school. An atmosphere or school "ethos" of learning created by both the principal and the teachers working together is a more likely tool. Neither can do it alone. De Bevoise (1984) notes that after studying over one hundred schools, Sizer concluded that successful schools require both good teachers and a strong principal. Sizer stated, "It is hard for teachers to carry a school with a weak principal, but a strong principal doesn't make a good school" (De Bevoise, 1984, p. 17).

The correlates of effective schools and effective classrooms are practices that principals and teachers can influence and change in attempting to improve a school (ERS, 1983). Through the efforts of teachers, schools can have an effect on student achievement. Creating an effective school requires both teacher and principal working together. This interaction requires that each understand the role of the other.

Various frameworks have been used to try to organize the roles of principals. Any framework that is used only represents an external system imposed on a continuum of the many facets of this role. Bredeson (1985) claims that the defining of a role should not be static but a dynamic, creative process. This is especially true of the role of the principal because the role has changed during the last one hundred years and is still changing. Brubaker and Simon (1986) looked at these changes and summarized the roles into five stages or conceptions of the principalship. Others have identified similar frameworks and labeled the various types of tasks required of a principal (Sergiovanni, 1984; Hall et al., 1984).

A definition of the role of the principal attempts to identify those things which facilitate instruction and encourage the learning process. Since teachers are a part of that process, they can identify those expectations which contribute to effective instruction. Teachers are closest to the learners and have first-hand knowledge of the assistance and support needed from the principal.

Goodlad's (1984) research found a "sameness" in schooling across the nation but he noted that there were differences in the atmosphere of schools as the result of how the teachers and principals worked together. Good and Brophy (1985) call the atmosphere which is created the "culture" of the school. Ideally, teachers and the

principal work together to create this culture. Teachers can make a difference but only in the right environment - an environment created and supported by the principal.

The interaction between teachers and principals necessary to create a positive learning environment requires that each actor play a certain role. Teachers have opinions about the role which the principal plays in creating a setting which enables them to do their best. This study will assess the perceptions of the classroom teacher about the role of the principal in creating an effective learning environment which can make a difference for students.

#### Statement of the Problem

This study will focus on the classroom teacher's perceptions of the role of the principal according to a five conception framework. The purpose of the study is:

1. To determine the role of the principal which is most frequently desired by classroom teachers.
2. To determine if there is a difference between the role desired by teachers for their principal and the actual role of their principal as perceived by teachers.

3. To determine the perceptions of teachers about the role of principals across North Carolina.
4. To determine if there is a difference in the teachers' perceptions of the role of the principal for teachers at different school levels.
5. To determine if there is a difference in the teachers' perceptions of the role of their principal depending upon the years of teaching experience of the teacher.
6. To determine if there is a difference in the teachers' perceptions of the role of their principal depending upon the gender of the teacher.

Several questions will be specifically addressed in this study:

1. How does the ideal role desired by teachers for their principals compare with the actual role perceived by teachers for their principals?
2. How does the ideal role desired by teachers for all North Carolina principals compare with the actual role perceived by teachers for all North Carolina principals?
3. Do teachers at different school levels perceive different actual and desired roles for their principals?
4. Does the number of years of teaching experience of the teacher make a difference in the actual and desired roles which are perceived by teachers for their principals?

5. Does the gender of the teacher make a difference in the actual and desired roles which are perceived by teachers for their principals?

### Research Methodology

Through stratified sampling, this study surveyed the 140 school systems in North Carolina to determine how classroom teachers perceive the role of the principal. Three teachers - one elementary, one middle/junior high, and one high school - from systematically selected schools within each system were asked to complete a survey during November and December, 1986. The survey asked teachers to select one of the five conceptions of the role of the principal according to their perception of the actual role of their principal, the ideal or desired role for their principal, and the role of principals across North Carolina.

The survey instrument was previously used to survey the perceptions of principals (Brubaker and Simon, 1987) and central office personnel (Briggs, 1986) about the role of the principal according to these same five conceptions. Reliability of the instrument was determined by a test-retest administration of the survey to a separate group of twenty teachers and measuring the consistency of

the responses between the two administrations. Responses by the teachers on two free response questions of the survey were compared to the conceptions selected as a measure of the validity of the instrument. A review of the literature also provided a basis for the framework of the instrument.

Data collected was summarized by frequency of occurrence. The role desired by teachers for their principals was compared to the actual role of their principals as perceived by teachers. The teachers' perceptions of the role of principals across North Carolina were also summarized. Analysis of the results determined whether or not a relationship exists between the dependent variable - the perception of the classroom teacher of the role of the principal and the three independent variables - the school level of the teacher, the number of years of teaching experience of the teacher, and the gender of the teacher. Analysis of the free response questions on the survey provided additional data on the teachers' perceptions on the role of the principal.

A more detailed discussion of the research methodology may be found in Chapter Three.

### Definition of Terms

The following terms or phrases are defined for clarification and consistency according to the manner used within this study:

principal - the appointed head of a school

local school system - the local school district or local education agency (LEA); may be a city or county system

effective school - a school characterized as having "a structure, process, and climate of values and norms that channel staff and students in the direction of successful teaching and learning" (Purkey & Smith, 1982)

perception - awareness or judgment which results in insight or knowledge

conception - "paradigm or pattern of thinking" which describes what a principal does or should do (Brubaker & Simon, 1986)

teacher - a classroom teacher whose major responsibility is the instruction of students for a majority of the school day

## Propositions and Limitations

### Propositions

The following propositions served as the initial beliefs regarding the perceptions of teachers about the role of the principal.

1. There is a significant difference between the role desired for principals by teachers and the actual role of principals as perceived by teachers.

2. Teachers at different school levels view the principal's role differently.

3. Elementary teachers perceive the principal's role as one of curriculum/instructional leader.

4. Secondary teachers view the principal's role as one of a manager.

5. Teachers with different levels of experience view the role of the principal differently.

6. Male and female teachers view the principal's role differently.

### Limitations

Although one aspect of the research on the role of the principal is concerned with the principal - teacher interaction, little information is available on the teacher's opinion of what a principal should do or how a



principal can better assist the work of a teacher. This limitation is one of the major reasons for doing the study.

A secondary limitation of the study is that the survey was distributed only to the public school systems in North Carolina. Generalizations may be made but there is no proof that teacher perceptions are the same across the nation.

The instrument was limiting because teachers were not always able to fit a principal into a particular role. No opportunity was provided for a teacher to allow for overlapping of conceptions although teachers could make additional comments.

Another limitation was that the sampling process for the survey and the collection of data depended on the principal of the selected school distributing the instrument to an appropriate teacher. Return rate was dependent on the cooperation of two individuals at each site, the principal and the teacher. Because of these limitations, the elimination of selection bias was not ensured.

Each of these identifying variables depends on self-reporting as a source of information. Therefore, the accuracy of the variables is dependent on the individual filling out the survey.

### Significance of the Study

Effective schools exhibit a positive culture which is to a large part the result of the interaction between principal and teacher. This interaction and the visionary leadership which an effective leader provides can create an effective school.

The input of teachers is becoming of greater importance. The Carnegie Report, A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (1986), emphasizes the professional autonomy of the teacher as being important to the culture of effective schools. There is increasing evidence that certain behaviors by principals are necessary as they attempt to establish a culture that encourages and facilitates teaching and learning (Patterson, Purkey, & Parker, 1986). The teacher's view of the role of the principal provides a side of the picture which is vital to understanding the creation of an effective school culture.

This study examines the teacher's perception of the principal's role. All of the variables being considered may have an impact on a teacher's perception. Both the role of the principal and the perceptions of a teacher are critically important to the culture of a school. This study contributes to the overall base of understanding about the complex role of the principal.

### Summary

The effective school research cites the strong leadership of the principal as a major correlate or characteristic of an effective school. Studies of this leadership role indicate diverse components resulting in the emergence of various pictures of the ideal principal. The leadership role of the principal is perceived differently by educators in different positions.

Given these varied roles, in which one of these roles would teachers place principals? What role do teachers see as being most supportive of the learning process? Another question which emerges is whether or not teachers at different school levels perceive the principal's role differently. Does the learning environment for an elementary school require a different role than that of a secondary school?

The interaction between teacher and principal as the leader who supports the instructional process helps create a positive learning environment. It is crucial that the principal and the teacher understand the role expectations of each other.

This study uses a survey of classroom teachers in North Carolina to examine the role of the principal from the teachers' viewpoint. A secondary part of the study

will determine if other factors influence a teacher's perception of the role of the principal.

Chapter Two contains an examination of the conceptions of the principalship and the role of the principal in an effective school. Chapter Three describes the design and methodology of the study. A description of the procedures, the survey instrument, and the population are included. Chapter Four reports the findings of the survey and an analysis of the data. The conclusions drawn from these findings and recommendations for further study are presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate classroom teachers' perceptions of the roles of the principal according to a five conception framework. This chapter presents a review of the literature and research related to the role of the principal. Each of the three sections within the chapter focuses on particular topics related to the principalship and applicable to this research. The first section will examine the role of the principal from a historical perspective with emphasis on the five conceptions being used in this study. Other literature will be used to support these five conceptions.

Through an examination of the effective school research, the second section will examine the role of the principal in creating an effective school. The third section focuses on the importance of a positive working relationship between teacher and principal. The interaction between principal and teacher can be cited as a significant part of the overall culture created in a school. Therefore, an examination of the teacher's

viewpoint is crucial in any consideration of the role of the principal.

All three sections provide background for this study. An understanding of the historical evolution and the current status of the principalship as it relates to the creation of an effective school are essential in attempting to define the role of the principal.

### A Historical Perspective

The principalship is a complex role which has evolved over time (Brubaker & Simon, 1986). Various conceptions of the role have changed as education, economics, and social values have changed. Examining the role from a historical viewpoint provides a background for any study of the present role of the principalship. Frameworks have been used to try to organize the tasks or duties of a principal. Brubaker and Simon (1986) proposed a five conception framework which can be used to discuss the roles which have evolved. Their framework does not have sharp delineations, but rather is a continuum with differing emphases on the many facets of the role.

Each of the conceptions proposed by Brubaker and Simon (1986) can be placed in an approximate time period of

history. A description of each of the conceptions taken from their work (1987) follows:

The Principal Teacher (1647-1850)

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.

The Principal as General Manager (1850 - 1920)

Is the official liaison between 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.

The Principal as Professional and "Scientific" Manager (1920 - 1970)

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.

The Principal as Administrator and Instructional Leader  
(1970 - present)

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.

The Principal as Curriculum Leader (present - sometime in the future)

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.

The identification of these various conceptions requires a flexible framework. There is no right or wrong,



good or bad conception - only a changing pattern which has evolved through time. Each conception does not disappear as a new one appears but continues to exist in varying degrees as the shift takes place.

Examples of each conception can be found in the schools of today. Some principals function as general managers and others, especially those in small schools, are in a position that facilitates or demands the role of a principal teacher. Complex interactions determine the role each principal plays.

#### Role of Principal Teacher

At one end of this continuum of principal functions is the principal teacher role. Historically, the early view of the principal was that of a teacher who also performed the clerical duties of a principal (Brubaker & Simon, 1986). The early schools usually had only one teacher who taught full time and managed the routine clerical tasks. Generally this principal had almost total autonomy. As the schools grew and teachers were added, tasks were divided up or delegated to one head teacher. This individual was usually the head or master teacher selected from the group of teachers to handle administrative matters (Boyer, 1983). As more and more administrative responsibilities fell to one person, the primary job of teaching fell prey to the

management functions. The primary role of the principal teacher was still teaching.

In spite of a general move away from this conception, there are advantages to this role. McPherson and Lorenz (1985) advocate principals who do not abandon the role of a teacher. They contend that a principal must lead and set an example through the teaching of both students and teachers. Boyer (1983) believes all principals should teach occasionally because they "cannot exert leadership unless they stay in touch with teachers and classroom teaching" (p.224). Some principals choose not to teach in classrooms either part-time or periodically and also do not attempt to teach the adults they work with every day (McPherson & Lorenz, 1985).

A principal must realize that being a teacher of teachers is an important aspect of the role and requires a different skill than teaching students. Adult learners need "teachers" who act as a resource and a facilitator of learning (McPherson & Lorenz, 1985). Principals should also be able to model good instruction through teaching students and provide empathy for teachers. The role of a principal teacher requires both qualities.

#### Role of General Manager

Historically the roles evolved when the tasks associated with managing a school multiplied as a result of

an increase in school size and bureaucracy, and the principal teacher became less common. Still the principal often taught for part of the school day. With this increased size, managerial duties pulled more time from the teaching role and the full-time principal position emerged, with the principal primarily acting as a manager. Frequently, the master teacher became the full-time principal. By the twentieth century, non-teaching principals were common. In De Bevoise's (1984) summary of the research, Lortie is quoted as saying that the role of the principal evolved through an "accumulation of tasks that teachers were either unable or unwilling to perform" (p.18). The principal becomes less of a colleague and more of an administrator.

In the evolution from principal teacher to manager, the principalship became the dumping ground for all maintenance responsibilities (Bredeson, 1985). The move toward one person as a designated principal or headmaster came with the introduction of a graded curriculum (Brubaker & Simon, 1986). Brubaker and Simon call this the role of a "general manager." In this role the principal carries out directives from higher level administration, reacts to problems, and tries to keep the school running smoothly. Principals in this category give little attention to the supervision of instruction. Bredeson (1985) uses a metaphor which characterizes the behavior of principals at

this point on the continuum as "survival." Through a reactive management style, the school functions are carried out with teachers being left to teach. The principal's role, according to Bredeson, is to run the school through luck or whatever natural skills are possessed.

#### Role of Professional and Scientific Manager

As schools became more sophisticated, more attention was given to the training of administrators and the role of the principal became more scientific. School boards and educators themselves demanded more training for principals. Increased classroom supervision and control of the instructional program by the principal required a more highly trained individual. During this time period administrative training programs increased and the number of organizations for educational administrators mushroomed. Brubaker and Simon (1986) call this new role one of a "professional and scientific manager."

Sergiovanni (1984) uses a framework which places the tasks of leadership into a hierarchical framework. In his framework, he refers to this role of the principal as a "management engineer." Planning, goal setting, and analysis of performance characterizes this conception of the principal. Providing an efficient organization within which teachers can perform would be seen as their primary contribution to the education of students.

This role also fits Sergiovanni's label of a "clinical practitioner." Within this same time period the use of standardized tests increased and the techniques of business management began to be applied to educational administration. Supervision of instruction through classroom observations using clinical methods became more common. The principal was seen as an expert in the profession interested in the ongoing education of the entire staff. However, the goal of the principal which fits this conception is more to organize and maintain rather than to move the organization forward. Blumberg and Greenfield's research on principals notes that it was not enough to have a smooth running organization which most frequently existed at this time, rather education needs "innovators" (De Bevoise, 1984).

#### Role of Administrator and Instructional Leader

When a professional educator becomes interested in the human forces at work in schools, a different type of principal emerges. Sergiovanni (1984) calls this role that of a "human engineer," and Brubaker and Simon (1986) use the term "administrator and instructional leader." Adept at human relations, the principal involves teachers in decision-making, and provides support for the instructional process.

In the role of the instructional leader and administrator, the principal is interested and involved with the overall operation of the school, including the instructional program. According to a study done in North Carolina by Brubaker and Simon (1987), seventy-one percent of the principals viewed this conception as their role.

The principal in this role experiences the dual nature of the job. Functioning effectively requires a balancing of governance and leadership functions. The managerial role is still necessary but the principal is also expected to provide the instructional leadership for the school. Emphasis is placed on the school's organizational framework and on the various leadership functions required of a principal. Being able to balance both roles sometimes creates conflict. Rallis and Highsmith (1986) recognize that school management and instructional leadership are two different tasks, and even go so far as to say that one person cannot manage both tasks. However, McPhail-Wilcox and Guth (1983) note that within effective schools, principals do not appear to experience a conflict between the dual roles of manager and instructional leader noted by other principals.

Vann's (1979) study, noted that principals would prefer to devote more time to curriculum development. The reasons cited for not carrying out this aspect of the role were time, preparation, and available autonomy. However,

the only reason which appeared to be significant was the principal's perception of the importance which superiors gave to curriculum and instruction. Vann's research indicates that principals respond to the expectations of others and not simply to their own desires.

### Role of Curriculum Leader

The principal as an administrator and instructional leader may appear to be the ultimate role. However, a word reoccurs in the literature which takes the role of the principal one step further. That word is "vision." Rutherford (1985) says that more effective principals have "vision for the future of their schools" (p. 32). Manasse (1984) and others refer to vision as a necessary quality for a principal. Bredeson (1985) defines vision as:

the principal's ability to holistically view the present, to reinterpret the mission of the school to all its constituents, and to use imagination and perceptual skills to think beyond accepted notions of what is practical and what is of immediate application in present situations to speculative ideas and to, preferably, possible futures (p. 43).

He places vision at the upper end of the continuum as the goal each principal should seek for a school. Sergiovanni (1984) defines vision as the "ability to create and communicate a view of a desired state of affairs that induces commitment among those working in the organization" (p. 8). He also quotes Warren Bennis as saying that

"compelling vision" is the key ingredient of leadership.

In referring to the role of the principal, Sergiovanni (1984) called this emerging conception the role of a cultural leader or "high priest." Brubaker (1985) uses the term "CURRICULUM leader," with CURRICULUM being defined as the overall setting which is created for learning within a school and community. This holistic view includes all aspects of the school as part of the curriculum. The principal serves as the leader who encourages and unleashes the energy and enthusiasm of all the staff whether teachers, aides, or cafeteria workers. Changes are not made by remote control but through the involvement of all concerned. In this role the principal dreams!

Willower (1984) agrees with this proposal of the role of the principal. He proposes that:

a principal's job is not just to manage the building and be an instructional technician. The principal should be a creator and user of the symbols, structures, and processes that promote educational excellence and individual growth - that is, a culture builder (p. 38).

He also notes that the school principal cannot create this culture alone but must coordinate the involvement of all concerned.

Vision is identified by many as vital to the establishment of a school culture. Brubaker and Simon (1986) identify culture as the living curriculum of the school and propose that the principal's main



responsibility is to provide leadership for the creation of the learning setting of this culture. In examining the role of the principal, organizational maintenance is necessary but vision offers hope, the promise of a better future. The principal must constantly work to define the role of the principal to avoid an overburdening of the position with maintenance factors, and to allow time for envisioning and for interacting within the community on behalf of the school (Bredeson, 1985). Boyer (1983) insists that a principal must lead with vitality and vision, being more than "just a top authority" but a "key educator" as well.

Lightfoot (1983) claims that the principal is responsible for "defining the school's vision and articulating the ideological stance" (p. 323). She proposes that the tone and culture of the school are set by the vision and purposeful action of the principal. In the portraits she paints of "good high schools" many of the principals were visionary, initiating leaders in schools with a noticeable positive school culture.

#### Educational Eras and the Role of the Principal

These relative time periods and conceptions of the principalship can be supported by the educational eras identified by Robinson (1986) as trends in the learning expectancy for students. He proposes that during Era I

(approximately 1837 - 1909), "a little learning" was expected from many students and that the role of the principal or headmaster was that of an overseer. Era II (approximately 1910 - 1975) was a time period when "much learning was expected from some students, but little learning was expected from other students" (Robinson, 1986, p. 8). During this time, the principal became an "administrator of the curriculum as prescribed by the school board, enforcer of rules and regulations, and rater of teachers" (Robinson, 1986, p. 20).

Education is now in the dawn of Era III which advocates that "much learning is expected from all students" (Robinson, 1986, p. 14). In the Paideia Proposal, Adler (1982) argues the idea that all children can learn if given the time and appropriate assistance. The role of the principal in Era III schools expands to include the "responsibility for directing and managing the teaching - learning process of the school and for maintaining a school environment conducive to learning" (Robinson, 1986, p. 21). This trend holds the principal accountable for the effectiveness of the school in helping all students achieve specified learning objectives.

Examples of each of these conceptions can be found in schools in North Carolina today. In some, circumstances demand a certain leadership type or style. For example, a small school may require a principal teacher. In some, the

principal has chosen to demonstrate a more advanced particular conception of the principalship.

The role of the principal has changed over time and continues to evolve with various roles continuing to exist. The new wave of demand for school reform puts pressure on the principal to provide the leadership for an effective school.

### The Role of the Principal in Creating an Effective School

The 1966 Equality for Educational Opportunity Study conducted by Coleman and others stated that schools have little impact on student achievement. The implication of this report was that there was "little schools could do to compensate for the effects of non-school factors on student achievement" (ERS, 1983, p. iii). This report triggered a wave of research which was aimed at identifying and analyzing effective schools to demonstrate that schools do make a difference in student achievement.

The underlying premise of this movement was that students were "eminently educable" and that schools do make a difference. As a result, in 1981 a new Coleman report concluded that some schools do have an effect on student achievement regardless of student background.

This "effective schools" research movement found similarities between instructionally effective schools. These schools demonstrated exemplary student achievement; however, no single factor could be identified as responsible for their success. Rather, various factors were identified in many different studies leading to the conclusion that school effectiveness is the result of "many policies, behaviors, and attitudes that together shaped the learning environment" (ERS, 1983, p. 61). The pervasive common elements in effective schools noted across several studies (Patterson, Purkey, & Parker, 1986) are:

- strong instructional leadership
- an orderly school climate
- high expectations of students and teachers
- an emphasis on basic skills
- frequent monitoring of student progress.

These factors and others identified by the various studies are not isolated events, but rather complex interacting factors which combine to create an effective environment for learning. The "effective schools" research shows that the determinants of student achievement lie within control of the school resulting in a clamor for school improvement.

#### The Principal as a Key Factor

The research on effective schools has brought about increased attention on the leadership of a school. Day

(1985) notes that recent studies such as A Nation At Risk and Action for Excellence, accept the role of the principal as a "critical one" in improving schools. Other researchers note that the principal is the key figure in "developing and maintaining a school climate conducive to learning" (ERS, 1983, p. 26). Bredeson (1985) draws the same conclusions from his research. He claims that (1) the "behavior of the school principal is the single most important factor supporting high quality educational programs" and (2) that "while schools make a difference in what students learn, principals make a difference in schools" (p. 31). Boyer agrees that the role of the principal is "pivotal" in creating an effective school, and that in his observations of schools, "when achievement was high, and where there was a clear sense of community . . . the principal made the difference" (1983, p. 219).

Lieberman and Miller's (1984) summary of the research, also notes that the principal is the "critical person" in school improvement. When the relationships between effective schools and effective principals are examined, several similarities can be noted. Both recognize the importance of school culture, both recognize the importance of local responsibility and control, and both share a commonality of purpose.

In a review of the literature on effective schools by Strother (1983), Clark and Lotto were noted as having

compiled a list of the various aspects of the principal's role. From fifty-three characteristics identified in the various studies, a group of researchers ranked the most important. These experts concluded that, in general, school administrators establish high standards for teachers and students, and expect that these standards will be achieved. Common leadership traits found in these administrators were high energy levels, strong desire to succeed, and a reasonable level of intelligence.

Rutherford's study (1985) also identifies the essential qualities of the principal. According to his research on the leadership skills of principals carried out at the University of Texas, the effective principal:

- has a clear vision for the future of the school
- can translate this vision into goals
- establishes a positive climate
- monitors progress
- supports and/or corrects when necessary.

Although researchers agree that there is no one best leadership style, the attributes characteristic of effective principals are common to much of the literature (Manasse, 1984). Again and again effective school leaders are noted to demonstrate a personal vision, information-sensing and analysis skills, and interpersonal skills. The ability to actively move the school toward a desired vision requires all these skills. Good and Brophy (1985) propose

that this vision is articulated in the daily interactions with staff members. The overall picture painted of the effective principal is one of a catalyst and a "risk taker" (Cawelti, 1984).

It is difficult to document the variations in the uniqueness of effective principals (Cawelti, 1984). There is no simplistic pattern because each situation is different. An effective principal establishes a school culture which facilitates teaching and learning. Although different researchers emphasize different skills, the tasks or roles required to carry out the job are all interrelated.

The findings of Firestone and Herriott (1982) report that variables from the effective schools are more common in elementary schools than secondary schools and that the effective schools research is not equally applicable to all schools. Their research points out that there is a differentiation between the organization of the two levels of schools. Elementary school staffs are more like a working group with a common goal whereas a secondary school is more like a complex organization with separate departments coordinating various aspects of the school.

Given this idea, the role of the principal could be different at different levels. An elementary school principal could be more "like the head coach of a sports team" and the secondary principal more "like the the chief

executive officer of a corporation" (Firestone & Herriott, 1982, p. 53). Firestone and Herriott claim that elementary principals have more opportunities to be instructional leaders than secondary principals (1982).

Some researchers claim that the key to sustained school effectiveness is the school principal whereas other research claims that it is not always necessary for the site administrator to be actively involved in the instructional leadership of a school. Examples can be found of effective school programs that were successful through a series of different principals (Lightfoot, 1983). In these cases the active leadership was provided to the teachers by supervisors, consultants, or others within the school.

The research by Gersten, Carnine, and Green (1982) points out that it is less important who provides the instructional leadership than that it is carried out by quality staff. A principal can be supportive and knowledgeable without directing the show. Instructional support from another source may be more functional than assuming that the principal must be the instructional leader. An examination of the entire leadership structure including principal, assistant principal, supervisors, and others, especially in a large school, may be more useful than using the single administrator approach.



This multi-individual idea may explain the variability found in the leadership styles of principals of effective schools. Each style is supplemented by "supporter" leaders whose roles enhance the role of the primary administrator. An individual can take advantage of his/her best qualities, develop others, and delegate those leadership tasks which best fit the styles and abilities of others. In some schools the role of the principal as the all-encompassing leader is unrealistic. There is not a single pattern that assures success.

No matter how it is carried out, instructional leadership is a necessary part of the school program. Strother (1983) notes that a study conducted by Leithwood and Montgomery proposed that one of the differences between effective principals and those who are just ordinary is the degree to which the principal deals with instruction. She concludes that:

effective principals function as instructional leaders, whereas leadership provided by the typical principal is largely administrative. Both effective and ineffective principals focus on the same environmental factors . . . but they attach varying degrees of importance to these factors (p. 292).

Instructional leadership is a shared responsibility by all those within a school and the community. The principal cannot do it alone. The effective principal involves the community and looks for ways to ensure that someone else

provides the resources or meets the needs when he/she cannot. The principal fosters relationships or acts to link those who can help each other. Creating unity and a positive climate requires all working together with a leader who models the expected behaviors, stimulates the release of energy, and dreams. Instructional leadership can be provided in a variety of ways. Each situation is unique and complex. Providing leadership requires balancing the dreams with the practical.

### School Culture

In an attempt to discover why some schools are more successful than other schools, researchers have studied various aspects of schools. The idea of a school culture emerges as one explanation. Goodlad (1984) attributes the fact that some teachers and students considered their schools to be "satisfying" to the culture found within the school. Successful middle schools were described by Lipsitz (1984) as having distinct cultures. Lightfoot (1983) looked for an overall "goodness" in the schools which she studied.

Various terms are used when referring to school culture. Rutter and others (1979) call it "ethos." Goodlad (1984) uses "climate," and others talk about a positive learning environment. School culture can be

defined as those "aspects of the school that generally reflect or structure the guiding beliefs and daily behavior of staff and students" (Patterson, et. al., 1986, p. 97). It is the glue that bonds the school together and enhances the students' learning and development.

Successful principals realize the importance of improving the social climate or culture and the impact of this culture on the instructional organization of the school (Dwyer, 1984). It is the responsibility of the principal to coordinate the overall culture of the school and keep it moving toward the vision or goals of the school.

Effective principals develop a supportive school climate (Boyer, 1986). The style and behaviors each uses to achieve this atmosphere may be different. There is no one way. Personalities and situations are different. One way of developing a healthy school climate is through the establishment of a collegial atmosphere among staff members (Hassenpflug, 1986). In a study entitled What Works: Research about Teaching and Learning, by the US Department of Education (1986), the importance of principals working with "teachers, students, parents, and community members to develop the school's learning environment" is recognized as vital to school improvement (p. 46).

Willower (1984) identifies the "social system or institutional character of a school as the key to building

a particular school culture that sustains school improvement" (p. 36). Sergiovanni (1984) also notes that successful schools have strong and functional cultures which demonstrate a vision of excellence within the school. Willower (1984) refers to the "sensitivity to values" as one of the marks of a school culture dedicated to school improvement.

In the summary of his research, Goodlad (1984) makes the point that improvements are made school by school with teachers assisting each other and principals creating the setting. He notes that the "the power for improving each school lies with the principal, teachers, students, and parents associated with it" (p. 129). A study by Patterson and others (1986) makes the same point: that principals cannot single-handedly turn a school around. Although leadership is required, improvement requires involving the staff in working together for a common goal with a vision for school excellence.

Goodlad (1984) discovered a "sameness of instructional practices" in the schools he studied. Differences were found in those conditions or characteristics which are difficult to measure. The climate of the schools he studied was different. The differences were primarily in the way people related to each other. Goodlad concludes that a "bond of trust and mutual support between principal

and teachers of a school appears to be basic to school improvement" (p. 9).

A positive school culture is created by many factors. Leadership with a vision of excellence, positive interpersonal relations among people, and sensitivity to individual personalities can help create this culture (Lieberman & Miller, 1984). "School reform . . . can only take place in classrooms with students and with teachers backed by a supportive climate created by principals as leaders" (Boyer, 1986, p. 26).

#### Teacher - Principal Interaction

Evidence of a positive working relationship or "spirit of cooperation" between teachers and administrators has been noted in several studies of effective schools (ERS, 1983). In such schools, administrators do not require control from the top, but make an effort to minimize the differences in status between administrators and teachers. Teachers do not feel that they are independent within their classroom, rather teachers and administrators agree on goals and collectively work toward them (Bacharach & Conley, 1986).

Effective principals involve teachers in decision-making creating a sense of ownership for the decisions

and goals of the school. In her visits to schools, Lightfoot (1983) notes that teachers are energized by greater participation in the process of education and not by lesser responsibilities. They want to be a part of something that makes a difference. Giving professional autonomy to teachers creates a collegial environment where teachers can take collective responsibility for student learning.

Greenblatt, Cooper, and Muth (1984) conducted a study which asked teachers about the management style of their principals and found that "selective consultation" related more closely to effective teaching behaviors than autocratic control or complete participative decision-making. This research suggests that the pendulum moved away from an autocratic style to a participative one, and is now moving to a blend of the styles - a style with strong, decisive control which is still open to the ideas of the staff. Although teachers want to have knowledge about the decision-making procedures, this research notes that teachers do not always want to be consulted about everything. A few teachers in fact do not wish to be involved at all but do want to know that others are involved. Bacharach and Conley (1986) also recognize that educational reform is not dependent on more bureaucratic control but a blend of autocratic and participative control

with clear goals and a definite organizational framework for achieving them.

Various studies have looked at the relationship between teachers and principals and identified those traits exhibited by principals which support and assist teachers. In Goodlad's (1984) study, teachers report that those conditions which are considered to be supportive are sensitive leadership by the principal, availability of help, and involvement in decision-making. A recent report by the US Department of Education (1986), also notes that teachers need a sense of collegiality demonstrated by shared responsibility and mutual support. This collaborative effort or "family" climate was noted in many effective schools (ERS, 1983).

Teachers represent a vital component of the learning process. Conditions which inhibit or limit their functioning must be controlled to maximize their effectiveness (Goodlad, 1984). Principals are in a position to ensure that teachers can do their job. The effective principal "creates an environment in which procedural obstacles to innovation are removed, an environment in which teachers are treated as professionals who can themselves improve instruction" (Rallis & Highsmith, 1986, p. 303).

The teachers in Goodlad's study identified a good principal as one who is "autonomous as a person and a

leader, treats staff members as colleagues and professionals and is consistent in dealing with teachers and students" (p. 255). In Lieberman and Miller's (1984) compilation of the research on teachers, they quoted Lortie as saying that:

Teachers want the principal to set up the condition that will make it possible for them to teach. They want a principal who is fair . . . warm, helpful, and accessible. Under these conditions, they will accept the principal's authority even as they bend it, shape it, and influence it (p.80).

#### Teacher Expectations

Teachers have definite expectations for their principals. Most teachers expect frequent monitoring and want useful evaluations which point out areas for professional improvement. Effective principals take the time to observe and provide constructive feedback and support for teachers. They are aware of what is going on in each classroom (Rutherford, 1985). Teachers also expect protection. In her portraits of schools, Lightfoot (1983) described a principal who acts as a buffer against "outside intrusions" in order to provide freedom and encourage initiative among the faculty and staff.

Principals give teachers flexibility in the classroom because they believe most teachers do a good job when given a certain amount of freedom. Principals, however, maintain a closer rein on problem classrooms. This general degree



of light supervision or control recognizes the teachers' autonomy and enhances the principal - teacher relationship.

Primarily, the principal stimulates teachers to put forth the maximum effort by giving them the freedom to try new ideas and make mistakes. Through a commitment to educational goals and inspiration from a supportive, envisioning leader, a teacher can feel inspired to likewise inspire students.

Lightfoot (1983) used the term "nurturance" to refer to the protection, support, and autonomy given to teachers. This nurturance was provided because principals recognize the teacher as a "critical educational authority" who guides the learning, growth and development of students, and seek to give attention to the needs of the teachers. Different principals "nurture" teachers differently. Each effective principal has an individual style which shapes the school and staff or is shaped by the situation. In a recent Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development study on the work of teachers, Lieberman and Miller (1984) conclude that:

Principals are important; they may be even critical. But they are not the only initiators and supporters of change. . . . Leadership is interactive. A school shapes a principal as much as a principal shapes a school (p. 79).

Improving a school depends on more than one idea or one person. Ideas can come from anyone within the school.

Changes can begin in places other than in the principal's office. The principal's task is to serve as the catalyst.

Effective administrators are supportive of teachers and skilled in providing a structure in which teachers can function effectively (ERS, 1983). By recognizing that teachers are an "essential resource," principals can take maximum advantage of their expertise (Carnegie, 1986). Lightfoot (1983) claims that "good schools are ultimately dependent on good teachers" (p. 341). The principal's task is to set the tone of the school and to determine the conditions which will enhance the teacher's ability to teach.

Principals with visions for their schools were almost always identified by their teachers as the individuals most influential in determining what happened in those schools. They led the band and made things happen (Rutherford, 1985, p. 32).

### Conclusion

As the administrator of a school, a principal has a unique opportunity to direct the progress and development of many students and teachers. In order to ensure the success of the learning process, he/she needs the cooperation of the experts in teaching. The manner in

which principals direct this process can be placed into a continuum of roles.

This literature review has summarized the evolution of the roles historically and examined the various conceptions recognizing that all forms exist today in varying degrees. Previous studies which examine the teachers' view of principals have primarily dealt with qualities, traits, or styles of the principalship (Greenblatt et. al., 1984; Goodlad, 1984).

The effective school research supports the view that the principal is the critical authority in creating an effective school. The school is ultimately the principal's responsibility. The creation of an effective school requires a team working cooperatively toward a common vision. Teachers and principal working together can create a learning atmosphere which can make a difference in student achievement.

Instructional leadership is an essential characteristic of an effective school, and the principal must ensure its presence since he/she is ultimately responsible for what goes on in the school.

CHAPTER III  
PROCEDURES

Introduction

This study is designed to assess the classroom teacher's perception of the role of the principal according to a five conception framework. A survey asked teachers to select the conception which best describes their perception of the actual role of their principal, the ideal or desired role for their principal, and the role of principals across North Carolina.

Responses from the 264 teachers who responded to the survey were summarized in order to formulate a picture of the various roles of principals as determined by classroom teachers. The role which teachers desire for the principal was compared to the actual role of the principal perceived by teachers. Further analyses of the responses was carried out to determine whether or not a relationship exists between the dependent variable - the perception of the classroom teacher of the role of the principal and the three independent variables - the school level of the teacher, the number of years of teaching experience of the teacher, and the gender of the teacher. Additional data

obtained from the free response questions was used to supplement the five conception framework.

This chapter includes a description of the research methodology, the instrument used in the study and the population responding to the survey.

### Research Methodology

For this study, teachers in North Carolina were surveyed to determine how they perceive the role of the principal. A stratified sampling procedure was used to identify teachers for the survey. Three schools, one elementary, one middle-junior high, and one high school, were systematically selected from each of the 140 public school systems in North Carolina. Four school systems in the state are composed of only two schools; therefore only two schools were identified to participate from those four systems. A total of 416 schools were identified to receive a survey.

The survey instruments were mailed to the selected schools on November 10, 1986. A cover letter to the principal (see Appendix A) explained the purpose of the survey and asked that the principal give the survey to the teacher in the school whose name fell closest to the midpoint in an alphabetical listing. The letter also

requested that the selected teacher teach for a majority of the school day. The survey packet for the teacher contained a cover letter which explained the study (see Appendix B), a sheet which explained the five conceptions of the role of the principal to be used in the survey, and the survey instrument (see Appendix C).

Teachers who wished to receive a summary of the completed study were invited to include a name and address with the response. Otherwise no identifying information was requested for the individual or the school. Each response envelope was marked with the system code used by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in order to identify non-respondents. A limitation of the survey was that it was dependent on both the principal and the selected teacher being willing to participate.

Through the system codes, a record was kept of the schools responding. Some of those responding removed the codes before returning the survey. A reminder (see Appendix D) and a second survey were mailed to those not responding on December 10, 1986. A total of 264 responses (63.5%) was received. Four percent were not usable for analysis due to multiple or omitted responses.

Analysis of the data includes a description of the role of the principal as perceived by the teachers who responded to the survey. The role desired for the principal was compared to the actual role perceived by

teachers. The teachers' perceptions of the role of principals across North Carolina were also described. Frequencies were determined for each category.

A teacher's perception is influenced by many variables. Three of these variables were examined to see if a relationship exists between the dependent variable - the teacher's perception of the role of the principal and the independent variables - the school level of the teacher, the number of years of teaching experience of the teacher, and the gender of the teacher. A chi square test was selected to compare the frequencies and to determine whether or not the relationship is significant.

Content analysis of the free response questions provided summary data. Individual responses of the teachers were grouped by related terms and tallied to indicate the frequencies for each task mentioned by teachers. The tasks or qualities mentioned were ranked and the top five for each question were used for summary data. These qualities were then compared to the conceptions selected by the teachers to determine if the responses were consistent.

### Description of the Instrument

The instrument used for the survey was selected from the work of Brubaker and Simon (1987). This five conception survey was used previously by Brubaker and Simon to survey the perceptions of principals regarding their roles and the role of other principals in North Carolina, and by Briggs (1986) to survey the perceptions of central office personnel on the role of the principal. Using this same survey instrument will enable comparisons to be made among these studies in later research.

During September, 1986, two different surveys based on the five conception framework were reviewed in order to select a survey instrument appropriate for the study. Five teachers were asked to complete both instruments. Following completion of the instruments, responses on the two instruments were compared and the teachers were questioned about the ease of completing the instruments. Both versions of the survey resulted in equivalent responses. Teachers expressed the opinion that most teachers would not take time to fill out a multi-page survey. Therefore, the shorter version of the survey developed by Brubaker and Simon (1987) and previously used in other studies was selected for use in this survey.

The original survey developed by Brubaker and Simon was adapted for use in the current study of classroom



teachers' perception of the role of the principal. In the survey, teachers were asked to select one of the five conceptions for each of the following:

- the conception which best describes the principal of your current school,
- the conception that most accurately describes where you think your principal should be, or you would like for him/her to be,
- the conception that you feel most accurately describes the principals across North Carolina,
- the conception that most accurately describes where you think the principals in North Carolina should be.

The reverse side of the survey contained personal data questions. Identifying information was requested on each of the following:

- (1) current teaching assignment
- (2) number of years of teaching experience
- (3) highest degree completed
- (4) currently working on a degree
- (5) sex; age.

In addition to the personal data, two free response questions were used to determine the validity of the instrument and to gather additional data on each teacher's perceptions of the role of the principal. Teachers were asked to respond to the following:

- What are the most important contributions of a principal to the effective operation of a school?
- What are the tasks which a principal should perform to help you do your job effectively?

Through these questions teachers had an opportunity to comment on tasks or qualities not addressed within the five conceptions.

### Reliability

The reliability of the instrument was determined by using a test-retest procedure to determine the consistency of the perceptions reported on the instrument over time. The survey was administered on two different occasions to a group of teachers not included in the sample.

Twenty-two elementary school teachers completed the survey on November 19, 1986 following a faculty meeting. The group was not told that the survey would be repeated at a later date. Each teacher was asked to place a personal identifying code on his/her survey.

Three weeks later on December 10, 1986, the group was again asked to complete the survey. The purpose of repeating the survey was explained to the group before administering the survey. The teachers were asked to place

the same identifying code on the second survey as was used on the first.

Twenty usable surveys were analyzed by determining the percentage of agreement of responses between the first and the second administrations. The percentage was determined for each question and for the total instrument.

Table 1 summarizes the item agreement for the instrument. For the total survey, there was 84% agreement between the responses to the items of the first and second administrations. When considering each question separately, question one on the survey shows a higher percent agreement than the other questions. One reason for this higher consistency could be that this question calls for the teacher to make a judgment about his/her current principal.

More knowledge may be available about this perception than asking for an opinion of what a principal should be (question two) or an opinion about principals across North Carolina (questions three and four). The overall percentage of consistency of responses indicates an acceptable level of reliability for the instrument.

Table 1

Item Agreement from Test-Retest Administration of Survey

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Item Agreement</u>				<u>Percent Agreement</u>
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	
A	1	1	1	1	100
B	1	1	1	1	100
C	1	1	0	0	50
D	1	0	1	1	75
E	not usable				
F	1	1	0	1	75
G	1	1	1	1	100
H	1	1	1	1	100
I	1	1	1	1	100
J	1	0	1	0	50
K	0	1	1	1	75
L	1	1	0	1	75
M	1	1	1	1	100
N	not usable				
O	1	0	1	1	75
P	1	1	1	1	100
Q	1	1	1	1	100
R	1	0	1	0	50
S	0	1	1	1	75
T	1	1	0	1	75
U	1	1	1	1	100
V	1	1	1	1	100
	---	---	---	---	---
Item Agreement	90%	80%	80%	85%	84%

0 = non-agreement of responses  
 1 = agreement of responses

### Validity

The five conception framework of the role of the principal is directly supported by the literature and was previously discussed in Chapter Two. Although various terms are used, different authors use similar frameworks to describe the role of the principal. These five conceptions are representative of the general types of tasks which principals perform.

The validity of the instrument was strengthened by a comparison of the teachers' responses to the conception selected. Teacher responses to the free response questions on the instrument were compared to the items marked on the instrument to see if similar responses with similar qualities were chosen. For four of the five conceptions, at least 50% of the teachers used comments that were consistent with the conception. The greatest consistency was found for Administrator/Instructional Leader and the least was within the Teacher Principal conception. Further analysis of the free response data is found in Chapter Four.

To some extent, the free response responses could be biased because teachers probably completed the survey before responding to the free response questions. However, the data received was valuable in completing the picture of the role of the principal.

### Description of the Population

Teachers selected for the study were employees of public schools in North Carolina during November and December of 1986. Of the 264 teachers who responded, 29.5% were males and 70.5% were females. This ratio varies slightly from the ratio of public school teachers in North Carolina. According to the North Carolina Public Schools Statistical Profile (1986), during 1985-86, 33.2% of the teachers employed in North Carolina were males and 66.8% were females.

Grade organization of schools selected was not a factor in this study. The stratified sampling technique identified one school at each level - elementary, middle/junior, and high school - in each system in order to survey equal numbers of teachers at each level. This stratification was used to avoid bias and to determine if teachers at different level schools have different perceptions of the role of the principal.

Teachers were asked to identify themselves as either elementary, middle/junior high, or high school teachers. 38% of the respondents reported that they were elementary teachers, 28% were middle/junior high teachers, and 34% were high school teachers. These results vary slightly from the expected equal distribution of teachers at each level.

In the sample population, 59.3% of the teachers surveyed held Bachelors' degrees, 37.5% held Masters' degrees, 2.4% held Sixth-Year Certificates, and .8% held Doctorates. These percentages for the sample population are comparable to the percentages for the entire professional personnel (of which the majority are teachers) in the public schools in North Carolina. During 1985-86, 64% held Bachelors' degrees, 32% held Masters' degree, 3% held Sixth-Year certificates, and 1% held Doctorates.

The number of years of teaching experience in the sample population was evenly distributed. 18% had from 1-5 years experience, 19% had between 6-10 years experience, 22% had 11-15 years experience, 24% had 16-20 years experience, and 17% had over 20 years experience.

By contrast, the age span for the sample population did not show an equal distribution but a greater number of teachers in the age 30-39 category. The percentages for each age group were: 20-29 - 11%, 30-39 - 47%, 40-49 - 31%, 50-59 - 10%, and over 60 - 1%.

### Summary

A sample of 416 teachers across North Carolina was surveyed to determine their perception of the role of the principal according to a five conception framework. Equal numbers of teachers from elementary, middle/junior, and high schools were selected for the sample.

The survey instrument was adapted from an instrument previously used to determine the perceptions of principals about their own role and from a study of the perceptions of central office personnel of the role of the principal. Teachers were asked to select the conception which best described their current principal, the desired role for their principal, and the role of principals across North Carolina. Opportunity was also provided for respondents to give additional feedback on the role of the principal through two free response questions.

Analysis of the personal data indicated the sample was representative of teachers in North Carolina. Results of the five conception survey were summarized to determine frequency of responses. Comparisons were made between the actual role perceived by teachers and the role desired for principals by teachers. Frequencies were also used to describe the perceptions of teachers for principals across North Carolina. Chi square was used to determine if a relationship exists between the dependent variable - the



teacher's perception of the role of the principal and the independent variables - the school level of the teacher, the number of years of teaching experience of the teacher, and the gender of the teacher. The free response data provided additional information on the role of the principal.

The reliability of the instrument was established through a test-retest procedure with a group of teachers not included in the sample. There was 84% item agreement between the first and second administrations indicating an acceptable level of reliability. Validity was established with a comparison to the various frameworks in the literature, and by a comparison of teacher responses on the free response questions to the selected conception.

CHAPTER IV  
ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate classroom teachers' perceptions of the role of the principal. Selected teachers were asked to respond to a survey of teachers' perceptions of the role of the principal by choosing the conception which best fits their perception of the actual and desired roles for the principal. The five conceptions or roles used in the survey were:

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

Independent variables considered were school level of the teacher, number of years of teaching experience of the teacher, and gender of the teacher.

Data were collected from a stratified, cluster sample of 416 schools - one elementary, middle/junior, and high school from each of the 140 school systems in North Carolina. One teacher from each of the schools was

selected by the principal to respond to the survey following predetermined selection criteria. A total of 253 usable survey responses was received.

Questions specifically addressed in the study are:

1. How does the ideal role desired by teachers for their principals compare with the actual role perceived by teachers for their principals?

2. How does the ideal role desired by teachers for all North Carolina principals compare with the actual role perceived by teachers for all North Carolina principals?

3. Do teachers at different school levels perceive different actual and desired roles for their principals?

4. Does the number of years of teaching experience make a difference in the actual and desired roles which are perceived by the teacher for their principal?

5. Does the gender of the teacher make a difference in the actual and desired roles which are perceived by teachers for their principals?

Each of the five questions is addressed further in this chapter with summary data from the investigation. In addition, responses on the free response questions provide insight on the role of the principal and a comparison to the five conceptions.

## Discussion of Results

Question 1: How does the ideal role desired by teachers for their principals compare with the actual role perceived by teachers for their principals?

Table 2 reports the frequencies and percentages of each conception for questions one and two of the survey (see Appendix C). Question one asked teachers to choose the conception that most accurately describes the principal of their school, and question two asked teachers to choose the conception that most accurately describes where they would like their principal to be within the framework.

The majority of teachers (57.3%) within the sample reported that their principals actually operate as Administrator/Instructional Leaders. A sizable minority (31.2%) of the teachers placed their principals in the role of a General Manager. The remaining three conceptions were represented by small percentages: Teacher Principal - 2%, Professional/ Scientific Manager - 6.3%, and Curriculum Leader - 3.2%.

Table 2

Teachers' Perceptions of the Actual and Desired Roles of their Principal

Conception	Question 1: Actual Role	Question 2: Desired Role
Principal Teacher	5 ( 2.0%)	8 ( 3.2%)
General Manager	79 (31.2%)	10 ( 4.0%)
Prof/Sci Manager	16 ( 6.3%)	20 ( 7.9%)
Adm/Inst Leader	145 (57.3%)	189 (74.7%)
Curriculum Leader	8 ( 3.2%)	25 ( 9.8%)
No response	0 ( 0.0%)	1 ( 0.4%)
	<u>253</u>	<u>253</u>

The majority of teachers (74.7%) prefer that their principal operate as an Administrator/Instructional Leader. The perceptions of the remaining third of the teachers in the sample were spread among the other four conceptions: Teacher Principal - 3.2%, General Manager - 4.0%, Professional/Scientific Manager - 7.9%, and Curriculum Leader - 9.8%.

While over thirty percent of the teachers in the sample perceived their principal as a General Manager, only 4% indicated that this was a desired role for their principal. The role of General Manager was the only conception whose perception declined, all others increased showing a desirability by some teachers. North Carolina teachers in the sample viewed their principals as either

Administrator/Instructional Leaders or General Managers, but clearly preferred that their principals operate as Administrator/Instructional Leaders.

Question 2: How does the ideal role desired by teachers for North Carolina principals compare with the actual role perceived by teachers for North Carolina principals?

Questions three and four on the survey (see Appendix C) address the teachers' perceptions of the role of principals across North Carolina according to the five conceptions. Question three asked teachers to select the conception that most accurately describes most of the principals across North Carolina, and question four asked teachers to select the conception that most accurately describes where principals in North Carolina should be within the five conception framework. Table 3 reports the responses of teachers to these questions.

Table 3

Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of Principals  
Across North Carolina

Conception	Question 3: Actual Role	Question 4: Desired Role
Principal Teacher	1 ( 0.4%)	4 ( 1.6%)
General Manager	163 (64.4%)	10 ( 4.0%)
Prof/Sci Manager	38 (15.0%)	14 ( 5.5%)
Adm/Inst Leader	39 (15.4%)	202 (79.8%)
Curriculum Leader	5 ( 2.0%)	21 ( 8.3%)
No response	7 ( 2.8%)	2 ( 0.8%)
	<u>253</u>	<u>253</u>

A majority of the teachers in the sample (64.4%) perceive principals across North Carolina as General Managers. The next largest percentages indicate some North Carolina teachers perceive principals as Professional/Scientific Managers (15.0%) or Administrator/Instructional Leaders (15.4%). Smaller percentages were reported for the other conceptions: Curriculum Leader - 2.0% and Principal Teacher - less than 1%.

The percentages for the teachers' perception of the desired role for principals in North Carolina were consistent with the percentages for the role which teachers desired for their own principals. 79.8% indicated that the desired role for principals in North Carolina was

Administrator/Instructional Leader. This was comparable to the 74.7% who desired this role for their own principal. However, more than twice as many teachers (64.4%) viewed principals across North Carolina as General Managers than viewed their own principals as General Managers (31.2%). Almost 60% of the teachers saw their own principal as an Administrator/Instructional Leader, but viewed other principals across North Carolina as General Managers.

A greater number of no responses (3%) were received on questions three and four. Teachers indicated through comments that they were not knowledgeable about North Carolina principals other than their own.

Question 3: Do teachers at different school levels perceive different actual and desired roles for their principals?

The stratified sampling technique used in selecting the population to be surveyed ensured relatively equal numbers of elementary, middle/junior, and high school teachers in the sample. The percentages for those actually responding were: 38% elementary, 28% middle/junior, and 34% high school teachers.

Table 4 reports the frequencies and percentages for the conception which teachers' selected as best fitting the



teachers' perceptions of the actual role of the principal according to the school level of the teacher.

Table 4

Teachers' Perceptions of the Actual Role of their Principal According to the School Level of the Teacher

Conception	Elementary	Middle/Junior	High
Teacher Principal	2 ( 2.1%)	1 ( 1.4%)	2 ( 2.3%)
General Manager	27 (28.1%)	22 (31.0%)	30 (34.9%)
Prof/Sci Manager	7 ( 7.3%)	3 ( 4.2%)	6 ( 7.0%)
Adm/Inst Leader	57 (59.4%)	42 (59.2%)	46 (53.5%)
Curriculum Leader	3 ( 3.1%)	3 ( 4.2%)	2 ( 2.3%)
	$\overline{96}$	$\overline{71}$	$\overline{86}$

Chi square = 2.312

Degrees of freedom = 8

Examination of the percentages indicates that the responses of the teachers were similar regardless of the school level of the teacher. A majority (approximately 60%) of the teachers at all three school levels view the actual role of their principal as an Administrator/ Instructional Leader. Another 30% at all three levels viewed their principal as a General Manager. Calculation

of chi square indicates that there is no significant difference between the expected and observed frequencies for the actual role of the principal as perceived by elementary, middle/junior, and high school teachers.

Table 5 summarizes the role desired by teachers for their principal according to the school level of the teacher. Analysis of the percentages shows that the majority of teachers at all school levels desire the role of Administrator/Instructional Leader for their principals.

Table 5

Teachers' Perceptions of the Desired Role of their Principal According to the School Level of the Teacher

Conception	Elementary	Middle/Junior	High
Teacher Principal	5 ( 5.2%)	1 ( 1.4%)	2 ( 2.3%)
General Manager	5 ( 5.2%)	2 ( 2.8%)	3 ( 3.5%)
Prof/Sci Manager	9 ( 9.4%)	3 ( 4.2%)	8 ( 9.3%)
Adm/Inst Leader	68 (70.8%)	58 (81.7%)	63 (73.3%)
Curriculum Leader	9 ( 9.4%)	7 ( 9.9%)	9 (10.5%)
No response	0 ( 0.0%)	0 ( 0.0%)	1 ( 1.1%)
	$\overline{96}$	$\overline{71}$	$\overline{86}$

Chi square = 5.217

Degrees of freedom = 8

Calculation of chi square indicates that there is no significant difference between the expected and observed frequencies for the desired role of the principal as perceived by elementary, middle/junior, and high school teachers.

Question 4: Does the number of years of teaching experience of the teacher make a difference in the actual and desired roles which are perceived by teachers for their principals?

Teachers in the sample population had experience levels which ranged from less than one year (beginning teachers) to over thirty years. Of the 253 teachers who responded, 18% had from less than one to five teaching years experience, 19% had six to ten years teaching experience, 27% had eleven to fifteen years teaching experience, 19% had sixteen to twenty years teaching experience, and 17% had over 21 years teaching experience.

For purposes of analysis, five categories were established for the number of years of experience. Table 6 reports the frequencies and percentages for the conceptions which teachers selected for question one of the survey according to the number of years of teaching experience.

Table 6

Teachers' Perceptions of the Actual Role of their Principal According to the Teachers' Years of Experience

Conception	Number of Years of Teaching Experience				
	<1 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 15	16 - 20	over 21
P Teacher	0( 0%)	2( 4%)	1( 2%)	0( 0%)	2( 5%)
G Manager	16(36%)	11(23%)	27(39%)	17(36%)	8(19%)
P/S Manager	2( 4%)	2( 4%)	5( 7%)	7(15%)	0( 0%)
A/I Leader	24(53%)	33(67%)	33(48%)	23(49%)	32(74%)
C Leader	3( 7%)	1( 2%)	3( 4%)	0( 0%)	1( 2%)
	<u>45</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>43</u>

Chi square = 27.573

Degrees of freedom = 16

Analysis of the data for the actual role of the principal as perceived by the teacher reveals that a greater percentage of the teachers in all five categories view the actual role of their principal as that of an Administrator/Instructional Leader. The next largest percentage in all five categories is the role of General Manager. However, there are slight variations in the percentages for all categories. The most experienced teachers showed a slight preference for the role of Administrator/Instructional Leader. Calculation of chi

square indicates that there is a significant difference ( $p \leq .05$ ) between the expected and observed frequencies of the conceptions selected by the teachers depending on the number of years of experience of the teacher.

Table 7 reports the responses of teachers to question two of the survey on the desired role of the principal. Frequencies are reported according to the number of years of teaching experience of the teacher.

Table 7

Teachers' Perceptions of the Desired Role of their Principal According to the Teachers' Years of Experience

Conception	Number of Years of Teaching Experience				
	<1 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 15	16 - 20	over 21
P Teacher	0( 0%)	5(10%)	2( 3%)	0( 0%)	1( 2%)
G Manager	2( 4%)	0( 0%)	4( 6%)	3( 6%)	1( 2%)
P/S Manager	3( 7%)	3( 6%)	4( 6%)	7(15%)	3( 7%)
A/I Leader	32(71%)	37(76%)	53(76%)	33(70%)	34(79%)
C Leader	8(18%)	4( 8%)	6( 9%)	3( 6%)	4( 9%)
No Response				1( 2%)	
	<u>45</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>43</u>

Chi square = 21.817

Degrees of freedom = 16

Across all five categories of experience, the preferred role or conception was Administrator/ Instructional Leader. The role of Curriculum Leader was selected by 20% of the teachers in the 1 - 5 year category. The percentages in all other categories are low.

Calculation of chi square indicates that there is not a significant difference between the expected and observed frequencies of the desired role for the principal depending on the number of years of experience of the teacher. The number of years of teaching experience does not make a difference in the expectations which a teacher has for the principal of his/her school.

When comparisons are made between the actual role perceived by teachers and the role desired for principals by teachers according to the number of years of teaching experience, similar trends can be seen in all categories. Although the teachers in all categories preferred the role of Administrator/Instructional Leader, the percentage was greater for those in the over 20 years category than those in other categories. Teachers in the 1-5 year category choose the Curriculum Leader more frequently than those in other categories.

Question 5: Does the gender of the teacher make a difference in the actual and desired roles perceived by teachers for their principals?

The sample population was composed of 29% males and 71% females. Table 8 reports the frequencies and percentages of the responses according to gender for the five conceptions for question one which asked teachers about the actual role of their principal.

Table 8

Teachers' Perceptions of the Actual Role of their Principal According to the Gender of the Teacher

Conception	Males	Females
Principal Teacher	2 ( 2.7%)	3 ( 1.7%)
General Manager	24 (32.4%)	55 (30.7%)
Prof/Sci Manager	4 ( 5.4%)	12 ( 6.7%)
Adm/Inst Leader	41 (55.4%)	104 (58.1%)
Curriculum Leader	3 ( 4.1%)	5 ( 2.8%)
	<u>74</u>	<u>179</u>

Chi square = 0.797

Degrees of freedom = 4

The percentage of teachers selecting each conception is similar for both genders. Analysis of the responses

using chi square indicates there is no significant difference between the expected and observed responses of males and females when they are asked to indicate their perception of the actual role of the principal. Almost 90% of both the males and the females viewed the actual role of their principal as either an Administrator/Instructional Leader or a General Manager.

Table 9 reports the responses of teachers to question two concerning the desired role of the principal according to the gender of the teacher.

Table 9

Teachers' Perceptions of the Desired Role of their Principal According to the Gender of the Teacher

Conception	Males	Females
Principal Teacher	2 ( 2.7%)	6 ( 3.4%)
General Manager	6 ( 8.1%)	4 ( 2.2%)
Prof/Sci Manager	3 ( 4.1%)	17 ( 9.5%)
Adm/Inst Leader	54 (73.0%)	135 (75.4%)
Curriculum Leader	9 (12.1%)	16 ( 9.0%)
No response		1 ( .5%)
	<u>74</u>	<u>179</u>

Chi square = 7.176

Degrees of freedom = 4



Similar responses were observed for each of the five conceptions regardless of the gender of the teacher. Analysis of the data using chi square indicates no significant difference between the expected and observed responses of males and females. The majority of males and females desired the role of Administrator/Instructional Leader for their principal.

#### Summary of Free Response Data

In addition to the structured survey that asked teachers to select one of the five conceptions, respondents were asked to provide additional information on the role of the principal through two free response questions. These questions provided an avenue for teachers to express their individual feelings and supplemented the information obtained through the five conception framework.

A majority of the teachers (84%) responding to the survey took time to answer at least one of the free response questions. The teachers listed a total of 1079 comments about the tasks or qualities of principals. Through content analysis, the comments on each question were grouped by related tasks, tallied, and placed in rank order to indicate the tasks or qualities mentioned most frequently by teachers.

Question six asked teachers to identify the most important contributions of a principal to the effective operation of a school. The five qualities or tasks mentioned most frequently in descending order were support, leadership, organization/management, instruction/curriculum, and discipline.

The most frequently mentioned word was support. Of the 213 teachers who responded, 60 suggested that "support" was one of the contributions of a principal to the effective operation of a school. In addition to the word support, or supportive, teachers used other phrases to describe their idea of a supportive principal. One teacher noted that the principal should be "an advocate of teachers." Another claimed that the principal "needs to be the teacher's 'guidance counselor' in all areas of the school." In addition to being an "advisor and a helper," teachers want principals who "support and encourage teachers to work at their greatest potential."

Fifty-seven of the 213 teachers responding mentioned leadership as an important contribution of a principal making it the second most frequently mentioned trait. One teacher described leadership as:

the ability and willingness to work effectively with teachers, students, and administrators toward one common goal - learning. Common sense and courage are needed to recognize and implement the best solution to educational problems.

Another teacher wanted a principal who could "give the school a positive environment for learning." This setting can be created by a principal who is " 'on top' of things with an eye and an ear to the entire workings of the school." Teachers identified the principal as "the force that is stable, consistent, supportive, helpful," and is "a leader by doing." One teacher noted that the principal "should act as a leader not a driver." Principals who "lead by example" and "involvement" are preferred by teachers for their school.

The third most frequently mentioned trait, organization/management was noted by 45 teachers. Both of these tasks are important parts of the role of the principal, and they were identified by teachers as aspects which were important to them. One teacher noted that the principal should "keep the school well-organized, clean, and orderly." Others mentioned that the principal should be the "general manager of the overall school," a "good organizer," and in general, "make sure the school is run in an efficient manner."

Concern for curriculum and/or instruction was the next most frequently mentioned trait with 42 teachers noting its' importance. Teachers identified "an awareness of the curriculum being taught in the classroom" as typical of principals involved with curriculum and instruction. One teacher identified this quality as the "coordinating of the

curriculum and serving as the leader to establish goals and objectives." According to teachers, principals should provide "instructional guidance" and "oversee the instructional atmosphere of every classroom."

Discipline of the school is a task which ranked fifth when teachers listed the tasks a principal should perform. Thirty-four teachers responded that the principal should "oversee discipline" so that a "high level of school-wide discipline" is maintained. Primarily, teachers want principals to "support their discipline measures or practices" and provide assistance in cases of "severe discipline problems."

Question seven asked teachers about the tasks or duties of a principal which help the teacher perform effectively. Responses to this question were similar to those given for question six. The first three qualities or tasks mentioned most frequently were support, discipline, and organization/management. These were also in the top five noted by teachers as important contributions of principals to the overall operation of a school(question six).

Because question seven asked teachers to consider the tasks a principal performs which help the teacher, the next two items mentioned most frequently were seen by teachers as tasks which specifically helped teachers do their job more effectively and were not ranked in the top

ten items for question six. These tasks were evaluation/feedback and to remove obstacles to teaching.

The most frequently mentioned quality for question seven was support. Fifty-eight teachers noted that support was a quality which helps teachers. One teacher identified this trait as "simply 'to be there' as a support person." Others wanted the principal to "be in the classroom enough to see what teachers are faced with daily." In general, teachers want principals to provide "support and provisions for the teacher's needs."

Discipline was the second most frequently mentioned task for question seven. Comments by the 57 teachers who noted this task were similar to those mentioned for discipline in question six. Teachers want principals who are "supportive and helpful with discipline problems" and who "enforce discipline" through "consistent discipline practices."

Organization or management responsibilities were mentioned by 43 teachers making these tasks the third most important duty of the principal. Teachers want principals who "organize the school so that the least interruptions possible occur" and who "establish and uphold basic rules in the school." Practices of principals should enable the teacher "to teach in a safe and orderly environment."

Observation with constructive feedback was the fourth most important task mentioned by teachers as being

necessary to help them improve. A total of 43 teachers noted this trait as being important to them. They want principals who "offer feedback from observations consistently whether it is positive or negative." Teachers want principals in their classrooms on a regular basis and they want to receive "input in order to better their teaching skills."

The fifth most frequently mentioned task desired by teachers for principals was to remove obstacles to teaching. In addition to the 40 teachers who noted particular obstacles, many of the other tasks which teachers noted could have been placed into this category causing it to rank higher than the rank which was actually assigned. Factors within a school such as lack of resources and support for discipline can be obstacles to teaching. The availability of materials, the time to teach without interruptions, and support services are only part of the teacher's needs. An effective school-wide discipline program, a smooth running school, and support for instruction enhance a teacher's ability to teach.

Teachers referred to their needs with general comments. They want principals to "keep interruptions and paperwork to a minimum" and to "assign duties, especially clerical duties, to support areas, and let the classroom teacher teach!" Others expressed their feelings by saying that the principal should "run interference on

non-teaching activities which interfere with classroom instruction" and "provide the where-withall for me to teach." In general, teachers want principals to "remove as much 'outside' pressure as possible so teachers can teach!"

Teacher comments on questions six and seven covered the entire realm of the role of the principal. Additional individual comments worthy of notice were:

"know what is going on in the classroom through observations and interactions with students,"

"provide an environment that is safe, orderly and conducive to learning,"

"be visible," "be available," "be in control,"

"create an atmosphere where teachers can teach and students can learn,"

"make the school a positive place for teaching and learning to take place,"

"expect excellence from students and teachers,"

"to be there when needed,"

"concerned and involved in all aspects of the school's operation," and

"an overall atmosphere of cooperation between students and teachers should be fostered by the principal."

Two additional teacher comments can be used to summarize the role of the principal. One teacher reported that the role of the principal is to "inspire me." Another said that "effective leadership helps make an effective

teacher." All teachers responding to the survey assigned roles to the principal which are vital to a school's operation indicating the importance of the principal to a school.

Comparison of the Five Conception Survey  
to the Free Response Questions

In order to determine whether or not the traits listed by teachers in questions six and seven were consistent with the conceptions selected on the survey a comparison was made between the two.

Question two on the survey considered the actual role of the principal as viewed by the teacher and was selected as the basis for comparison because this question asked teachers to select the conception that most accurately described where they think principals should be. The teachers were grouped according to their responses to question two.

None of the teachers who had selected Principal Teacher as the desired role for their principal mentioned teaching as a part of the principal's role in responding to questions six and seven. Their responses were similar to the responses of those teachers selecting other categories.



Of the teachers who selected General Manager as the conception which they desired for their principal, 60% used comments on questions six and seven typical of a manager type principal indicating consistency between the responses on the survey and the free response questions. Some of their comments were: "manage a school with a confident, independent manner," "keep the building and school running smoothly," "enforce rules and regulations," and "overall supervisor for the total plant." An additional 25% used the term "leadership" in their comments about the desired role for the principal. The remaining 15% used non-specific terms such as "good communicator" and "enforce discipline."

Fifty percent of the teachers selecting the Professional and Scientific Manager as the role most desired for their principal used terms such as "organization," "professional," and "coordination" to describe the tasks of a principal. These terms are consistent with the role of Professional/Scientific Manager. The remaining 50% mentioned support of teachers, maintenance of discipline, and dissemination of materials. Only 6% of the teachers in the group mentioned leadership as a desired trait.

A majority of the teachers (64%) responding to the free response questions on the survey also selected Administrator/Instructional Leader as the role most desired

for their principal. Within that group of teachers, 38% used the term "leadership" in answering questions six or seven. An additional 25% used other phrases which could be descriptive of an Administrator/Instructional Leader. This yields a total of 63% agreement between the survey and the free response questions. Examples of phrases used are: "provide a climate for effective teaching," "have clear goals," and "guide instructional program." The remaining 37% used phrases which generally describe maintenance or management functions.

Seventy percent of the teachers who selected Curriculum Leader as the conception desired for their principal mentioned terms in answering questions six and seven which are consistent with this conception. Examples of their comments were: "understanding of and active role in all aspects of school life," provides "freedom to be creative in learning experiences," "realizes leadership position governs the overall attitude of the school," "initiator," "working along side teachers to guide and help them achieve goals," "setting the tone for human interaction." One teacher summed it up by saying:

the principal ideally should establish a positive environment for learning which takes place at all levels as well as in and out of the classroom. Therefore, the most important contribution that a principal can give to a school is a healthy environment for learning where teachers as well as students are respected and supported in their pursuit of knowledge.

### Summary

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of the principal from the teacher's viewpoint. In addition to a summary of the frequencies of each conception selected by teachers, the selected roles were compared to three independent variables - the school level of the teacher, the number of years of teaching experience of the teacher, and the gender of the teacher.

Classroom teachers report that their principals operate primarily as either Administrator/Instructional Leaders or General Managers. While teachers view the actual role of their principal as either an Administrator/Instructional Leader or General Manager, the preferred role for their principal is Administrator/Instructional Leader.

Principals across North Carolina are viewed by teachers as primarily General Managers. The role desired by teachers for principals across North Carolina is consistent with the role teachers desire for their own principal. Teachers prefer the role of Administrator/Instructional Leader for all principals.

There is no significant difference between the roles which teachers at elementary, middle/junior and high schools perceive as the actual and desired roles for their principals. Teachers at all three levels expressed similar views on the role of the principal.

The number of years of teaching experience does make a difference in the actual role perceived by teachers for their principals. Teachers in different categories view the role of the principal differently with the primary role in all categories being the role of Administrator/ Instructional Leader. A larger percentage of the teachers with over twenty years of experience preferred this role. The role of a Curriculum Leader was preferred to a greater extent by teachers with one to five years experience.

There is not a significant difference in the role which teachers desired for their principals when comparisons were made according to the number of years of teaching experience. The percentages are similar across all categories of experience.

There is no significant difference in the roles selected by males and females as the actual and desired roles for their principals. The percentages of each conception selected were similar for both genders.

In responding to the free response questions, teachers noted that support, leadership, organization/ management, instruction/curriculum, and discipline were tasks which were important contributions of a principal to the effective operation of a school. Support, discipline, organization/management, evaluation and feedback, and removing obstacles to teaching were the tasks most

frequently mentioned by teachers which principals perform to enhance a teacher's effectiveness.

Teacher comments on the free response questions were consistent with the conceptions selected on the survey for all roles except Principal Teacher. For each of the other roles, at least 50% of the teachers mentioned traits which were congruent to the conception selected.

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS  
FOR FURTHER STUDY

Introduction

This study focuses on the classroom teachers' perceptions of the role of the principal according to a five conception framework of the principalship. Teachers in the 140 school systems in North Carolina were surveyed to determine their perceptions of the actual role of their principal, the ideal or desired role of their principal, and the role of principals across North Carolina. Independent variables - the school level of the teacher, the number of years of teaching experience of the teacher, and the gender of the teacher, were examined to see if they made a difference in the conceptions selected by teachers.

A teacher's view of the role of the principal reveals a facet of the total picture which is vital to an understanding of effective schools. Because teachers are part of the schooling process, their opinion of how the principal can serve the school most effectively and enhance their own role is important.

In this chapter, a summary of the study, conclusions, and implications for further study will be presented. The insights which are gained can help ensure that the role of the principal enhances the role of the teacher.

### Summary

Classroom teachers at selected elementary, middle/junior and high schools in North Carolina were surveyed to determine their perceptions of the actual and desired roles for their own principal and for principals across North Carolina. The teachers were also asked to respond to free response questions about the tasks or qualities of principals.

The reliability of the instrument was established by using a test-retest procedure to determine the consistency of the perceptions reported over time. The overall percentage of consistency of the responses indicates an acceptable level of reliability for the instrument.

The validity of the instrument is supported by the literature and through a comparison of the conception selected to the teacher comments on the free response questions.

Summary data provides a picture of how teachers view their own principal and other principals in North Carolina. Analysis of the data also determines if the three independent variables (school level of the teacher, the number of years of teaching experience of the teacher, and the gender of the teacher) makes a difference in the conception selected by the teacher.

The findings of the study based upon the analysis of data are:

1. A majority of classroom teachers prefer that their principals operate as Administrator/Instructional Leaders. However, most teachers perceive that their principals actually operate as either Administrator/Instructional Leaders or General Managers. The role of General Manager is not a role desired by teachers for their principals but nearly one third of the classroom teachers view their principals in that role.
2. The role desired by teachers for North Carolina principals was consistent with the perceptions for their own principals. Teachers wanted the role of Administrator/Instructional Leader for all North Carolina principals, but viewed principals across North Carolina as actually operating in the role of General Manager. The roles of Professional/Scientific Manager and Administrator/Instructional



Leader were noted to a much lesser extent for principals in North Carolina.

3. There is no difference in the teachers' perceptions of the actual or desired roles of the principal according to the school level of the teacher. Whether the teacher is in an elementary, middle/junior, or high school, both the desired role and the actual role are viewed the same by classroom teachers. Teachers at all three levels view the actual role of their principal as either an Administrator/Instructional Leader or a General Manager, and desire the role of Administrator/Instructional Leader for their principals.
4. There is a significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies of the conceptions selected by teachers for the actual role of the principal depending on the number of years of teaching experience. A greater percentage of the teachers in the over 21 years category choose Administrator/Instructional Leader than in other categories. No significant difference was found between these same categories of years of experience when the role desired for principals by teachers was analyzed. Almost three-fourths of the teachers in all categories of experience wanted the role of Administrator/Instructional Leader for their principal.

5. There is no difference in the teachers' perceptions of the actual or desired roles of the principal according to the gender of the teacher. Both males and females desired the role of Administrator/Instructional Leader for their principal but view Administrator/Instructional Leader and General Manager as the actual role of their principal.

When teachers were asked to identify the most important contributions of a principal to the effective operation of a school, the tasks mentioned most frequently were support, leadership, organization/management, instruction/curriculum, and discipline. Some of these same tasks were mentioned when teachers were asked about the tasks of a principal which help the teacher perform his/her job more effectively. Those tasks which teachers mentioned most frequently were support, discipline, organization/management, evaluation, and to remove obstacles to teaching.

Comments which teachers made on the free response questions were generally consistent with the conceptions selected on the survey.

### Conclusions

The effective school research supports the view that the principal is the critical authority and catalyst in creating an effective school. The creation of an effective school requires a team working cooperatively toward a common vision of educational excellence. This dynamic interaction between principals and teachers is a significant part of the overall culture created in a school. Therefore, an examination of the teacher's perception is crucial in any consideration of the role of the principal.

A study involving perceptions looks at an individual's view based upon past experiences and present situations. Each person's perceptions are influenced by a variety of factors. Taking into account the vast array of complex interacting factors, this study attempts to describe the role of the principal from the teacher's viewpoint. The purpose of the study was to determine:

- how teachers view the actual and desired roles of their principal according to a five conception framework of the principalship,
- how teachers view the actual and desired roles of principals across North Carolina,
- whether teachers at different school levels perceive the role of the principal differently,

- whether the number of years of teaching experience of the teacher makes a difference in the teacher's perception of the role of the principal,
- whether the gender of the teacher makes a difference in the teacher's perception of the role of the principal.

Analysis of the data collected led to the following conclusions:

1. Classroom teachers in North Carolina view the actual role of their principals as either Administrator/ Instructional Leader or General Manager.
2. Classroom teachers in North Carolina prefer the role of Administrator/Instructional Leader for their principals.
3. Teachers view most North Carolina principals as General Managers but prefer the role of Administrator/ Instructional Leaders.
4. The actual and desired roles of the principal are viewed the same by teachers regardless of their school level.
5. The number of years of teaching experience of the teacher does make a difference in the teachers' perceptions of the actual role of the principal, but does not make a difference in the teachers' perception of the desired role of the principal.

6. The actual and desired roles of the principal are viewed the same by males and females.

In conclusion, teachers in North Carolina perceive their principal as either an Administrator/Instructional Leader or a General Manager, but clearly prefer the role of Administrator/Instructional Leader for their principal. The majority of principals across North Carolina were viewed as General Managers. Consistent with the teachers' desire for their own principal, they preferred the role of Administrator/Instructional Leader for all principals in North Carolina.

Two of the three variables investigated did not make a significant difference in the responses of teachers. The selections by teachers of the actual and desired role of the principal were similar regardless of the school level or gender of the teacher. The number of years of teaching experience did make a difference in the actual role which teachers viewed for their principal but did not make a difference in the role which teachers wanted for their principal.

Teachers do have clear expectations of the role which they want a principal to play in creating a positive learning environment for students. When John Roeweche, coauthor of Profiling Excellence in America's Schools, was asked about the single most important element needed for

effective schools, he replied, "Leadership is the key and working with faculty" (AASA, 1986, p. 11). Teachers recognize the need for the leadership of a principal, and they want someone who provides support and encouragement to them as they strive to achieve excellence in schooling. Providing effective leadership for effective teaching is clearly the role teachers desire for principals.

#### Implications for Further Study

Effective school research cites the strong instructional leadership of the principal as crucial for school reform (Bredeson, 1985; ERS, 1983). The recent demand for effective schools and the documented importance of the principal in providing the leadership for achieving this excellence has resulted in increased study of the role of the principal. Effective principals provide a clear vision for the future of their school while supporting and encouraging the efforts of effective teachers. Further studies are needed to investigate the specific behaviors which are necessary to establish a positive school culture which facilitates teaching.

This study notes that teachers prefer that principals operate as Administrator/Instructional Leaders. Since the interaction between principal and teachers has been cited

as important in creating an effective school, further study of this conception may reveal the intricacies of this interaction, as well as, examine what is actually involved in "leadership." Principals cannot exert leadership in a vacuum; while at the same time, teachers need the leadership of the principals to make their job easier. More research on this aspect of the principalship is needed.

Combining this study with those which previously studied the role of the principal from the principal and central office staff point of view will provide a more complete view of the complex world of the principal. Additional research may also extend these studies to include the perceptions of other groups (i.e., parents, students, community groups) that interact with principals. A complete picture of the complex interacting factors involved in the principalship must consider all aspects of the role.

Evolution of the role of the principal as cited in Chapter Two indicates that the role of Curriculum Leader may be the emerging role for the principal. With Administrator/Instructional Leader being selected as the preferred role in three-fourths of the sample and the actual in over half of the cases studied, indications are that this role is presently the primary role. Only a few teachers view their principal as operating in the role of

Curriculum Leader or desire that role for their principal.

If this is the emerging desired role for the principal, how will this role be articulated to principals and to teachers? Perhaps a close study of the few principals who were identified as actually operating in that role might reveal the qualities, traits, or tasks which separate this role from others.

Few teachers mentioned the "visionary leadership" referred to in much of the literature as characteristic of an effective principal. However, some did use similar expressions which may indicate a move in that direction.

Is the distinction between Curriculum Leader and Administrator/Instructional Leader a fine line which is difficult for teachers to distinguish, and a concept which has not yet reached across North Carolina? If Curriculum Leader is a desired role, how will educators provide the training for principals to operate in this manner until the components of the role are identified? Or, is the Curriculum Leader an ideal for which each principal strives?



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APPENDIX A

Letter to Principal of Selected Schools  
in North Carolina

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
AT GREENSBORO



*School of Education*

MEMO

To: Principal

From: Julia C. Williams *JCW*

Date: November 10, 1986

Re: Study of the Classroom Teacher's Perception of the Role of the Principal

Educators are continually examining the factors which create a positive learning atmosphere for students. Creating a setting where teachers can do the best possible job is vital to an effective school, and can be considered to be the responsibility of the principal. Just what the role of the principal involves is the topic of many articles and studies.

As a part of a continuing study on the role of the principal, I am examining the role of the principal as perceived by classroom teachers. Your assistance is requested by allowing one of your teachers to fill out the enclosed survey. In order to provide a random sampling of teachers, please give the survey to the teacher whose name falls closest to the midpoint in an alphabetical listing of teachers. The person selected should teach a majority of the school day.

Neither individual nor school system responses will be identified in reporting the results. Your assistance with this study is appreciated. Thank you for your time.

GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA / 27412-5001

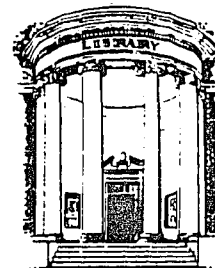
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APPENDIX B  
Letter to Participating Teacher



THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
AT GREENSBORO



*School of Education*

MEMO

To: Selected Teachers

From: Julia C. Williams *JCW*

Date: November 10, 1986

Re: Study of the Classroom Teacher's Perception of the Role of the Principal

A positive learning environment where teachers can do the best possible job is vital to an effective school. Creating this environment is the responsibility of all within a school. The role of the principal in establishing this setting is the topic of many articles and studies. I am conducting a study which will examine the role of the principal from the teacher's viewpoint.

You were selected through a systematic sampling procedure to participate in the study. Your assistance is needed to determine the perceptions which teachers across North Carolina have about the role of the principal. Please read the conceptions of the role of the principal on the reverse side of this sheet and complete the survey of your perceptions about the role of the principal according to these conceptions. After completing the survey, please place the survey in the enclosed stamped envelope and return it to me by December 1, 1986. Your participation in this study is appreciated.

Neither individual nor school system responses will be identified in reporting the results. Your responses will be kept confidential and your school will not be cited in any way.

If you would like to have a copy of the results of this study, please enclose your name and address with the survey. Thank you for your time and assistance.

GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA / 274 12-5001

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## CONCEPTIONS OF THE PRINCIPALSHIP

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

APPENDIX C  
Survey Instrument

CLASSROOM TEACHER  
PERCEPTIONS OF THE PRINCIPALSHIP

Instructions

1. In column A, please place a check mark beside the conception that most accurately describes the principal of your current school.

2. In column B, please place a check mark beside the conception that most accurately describes where you think your principal should be, or you would like for him/her to be.

3. In column C, please place a check mark beside the conception that you feel most accurately describes most of the principals across North Carolina.

4. In column D, please place a check mark beside the conception that most accurately describes where you think the principals in North Carolina should be.

A	B	C	D	CONCEPTIONS
				Principal Teacher
				General Manager
				Professional and Scientific Manager
				Administrator and Instructional Leader
				Curriculum Leader

(over)

CLASSROOM TEACHER  
PERCEPTIONS OF THE PRINCIPALSHIP

Please complete the following information.

1. Which best describes your current teaching assignment?

\_\_\_\_\_ Elementary School  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Middle/Junior High School  
 \_\_\_\_\_ High School

2. How many years experience do you have as a classroom teacher?

Number of years \_\_\_\_\_

3. Check the highest degree which you have completed?

\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor's                      \_\_\_\_\_ Sixth Year  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Master's                      \_\_\_\_\_ Doctorate

4. Are you currently working on a degree? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your sex?                      Age?

\_\_\_\_\_ Male                      \_\_\_\_\_ 20-29                      \_\_\_\_\_ 40-49                      \_\_\_\_\_ 60-69  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Female                      \_\_\_\_\_ 30-39                      \_\_\_\_\_ 50-59

6. What are the most important contributions of a principal to the effective operation of a school?

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7. What are the tasks which a principal should perform to help you do your job effectively?

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Thank you for time and assistance with the survey. Place this sheet in the stamped envelope and return to me by December 1. Thank you.

APPENDIX D

Follow-up Letter to Principal

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
AT GREENSBORO



*School of Education*

MEMO

To: Principal  
From: Julia C. Williams *JCW*  
Date: December 1, 1986  
Re: Study of the Classroom Teacher's Perception of the Role of  
the Principal

Several weeks ago I asked for your assistance with a survey which I am conducting of the classroom teacher's perception of the role of the principal. If you have already responded, please disregard this reminder and thank you for your cooperation. If you have not participated in the survey, would you please assist me by giving this survey to a teacher.

In order to provide a random sampling of teachers, please give the survey to the teacher whose name falls closest to the midpoint in an alphabetical listing of teachers. The person selected should teach a majority of the school day.

Neither individual nor school system responses will be identified in reporting the results. Your assistance with this study is appreciated. Thank you for your time.

GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA / 27412-5001

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