Leadership Perceptions of the Elementary School Program

Marie F. Doan
University of South Alabama

Ronald G. Noland
Auburn University

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
**Dorothy J. McGinnis
Reading Center and Clinic**

LEADERSHIP PERCEPTIONS OF THE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL READING PROGRAM

MARIE F. DOAN - University of South Alabama

RONALD G. NOLAND - Auburn University

A myriad of studies has been conducted in recent years to investigate the perceptions of principals, supervisors and other educators concerning various aspects of reading instruction (Bawden & Duffy, 1979; DeNicola, 1983; Fryer, 1984; Jacoby-High, 1980; Worden & Noland, 1984). These findings have provided valuable insight into the educational process in the elementary schools.

Educators continue to be concerned with the professional working relationship among principals, teachers, and supervisors. Several recent studies have investigated and compared the perceptions of key persons in reading education (DeNicola, 1983; Fryer, 1984; Jacoby-High, 1980). Principals and teachers are central to effective reading programs (Jwaideh, 1984; Pinero, 1982; Pinkney, 1980). Both have perceptions of reading instruction and their roles within a program (Bawden & Duffy, 1979; Jacoby-High, 1980). Research suggests that the perceptions of these two groups are not always in concert (DeNicola, 1983; Fryer, 1984). According to recent research, strong leadership frkom a principal is essential to promoting an effective reading program (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan & Lee, 1982; Fryer, 1984; Hoffman & Rutherford, 1984; Jwaideh, 1984; Pinkney, 1980).

Some research investigations have indicated that principals perceived their work as being closely involved with the adminstrative, pupil, and policy aspects of reading; however, they were only sometimes involved with the instructional process in that their roles were of secondary support. Though principals viewed themselves to be closely involved with many components of the school program,

they expressed a desire to substantially increase their involvement and commitment to the reading program (Motley & McNinch, 1984).

Teachers view their effective principals as instructional leaders and as experts in a wide variety of areas (Austin, 1979). DeNicola (1983) reported that classroom teachers desire their principals to be more involved in the reading program. Fryer's study (1984) revealed that primary and intermediate teachers were satisfied with their principals' involvement in the reading program in terms of "obtaining materials, communicating with parents, setting a favorable school climate, and making district materials available for use" (p. 114). The teachers, however, did not perceive the principals' time spent in the classroom to be as great as the principals did; the teachers did not feel encouraged by their principals to expand their reading teaching skills.

The major purpose of this study was to identify similarities and differences between principals' and teachers' perceptions of the involvement of principals in the elementary school reading program. Such clarification was necessary in order to promote clear communication between the principals and teachers to meet program needs.

Method

Subjects

Subjects for the study consisted of 245 teachers from 15 randomly selected elementary schools and the entire population of 51 elementary principals. The single stage cluster sample of teachers yielded 160 primary teachers and 85 intermediate teachers. All subjects were from a county school system in Alabama.

Procedures

A table of random numbers was used to select the 15 elementary schools from which the teacher subjects were obtained. The data for the study were gathered by means of two sets of questionnaires which were administered to the entire population of principals and to the sample of teachers.

The investigators selected and trained a team to assist in administering the questionnaire to the principals and teachers. Team members visited the schools during a weekly

faculty meeting and distributed and collected the completed questionnaire at that time. The principals' questionnaires were administered during the monthly principals' meeting. Completed questionnaires were collected at that time to ensure return from the entire population of principals.

Instrumentation

The principal and teacher questionnaires used for this study were obtained from a doctoral dissertation completed by Fryer (1984). He complied these questionnaires from instruments used in previous studies, modified them, and tested them for validity. The questionnaires were revised again by the writers and were subjected to a pilot study in order to confirm the scale and establish test-retest reliability. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measured Sampling Adequacy Coefficient was .87 and supported the sampling adequacy procedure.

The principals' and teachers' questionnaires requested demographic data as well as responses to individual items in a scale related to the principals' involvement in the reading program. The points in the scale ranged from (1) To a great extent (GX) to (5) Not at all (NOT).

Questionnaire Items

Principals' Involvement in the
Reading Program (Teachers/Principals)

1.01 To what extent (is your principal/are you) involved in your reading program (please consider all aspects, i.e., planning, facilitating, staff development, etc.)?

1.02 To what extent (does your principal help you/do you help teachers) obtain and use materials for reading instruction?

1.03 To what extent (does your principal/do you) encourage and/or help develop teaching abilities in reading?

1.04 To what extent (is your principal/are you) familiar with classroom reading instruction efforts?

1.05 To what extent (is your principal/are you) involved in the evaluation of students in reading?

1.06 To what extent (does your principal/do you) work to create a positive reading climate in the school?

1.07 To what extent (is your principal/are you) willing

to help make district reading resource personnel available?

1.08 To what extent (is your principal/are you) willing to help make district reading resource materials available?

1.09 To what extent (does your principal/do you) visit in the school's classroom during reading instruction activities?

Research Design

A single stage cluster sample was utilized to obtain the teacher subjects from 15 randomly selected elementary schools in the county. All 51 elementary principals from the county system were surveyed in order to establish a norm. The bootstrap approach as presented by Efron was used to analyze data (Diaconis & Efron, 1983; Efron & Gong, 1983). In addition to the bootstrap procedure, analysis of data was performed by using the cluster mean as the sampling unit and analyzing the 15 sample means via multivariate analysis of variance with follow-up $\underline{t}$-tests. Both procedures yielded congruent results; therefore, findings are reported from the bootstrap approach using confidence intervals.

Results

The group mean was calculated for all principals for the scale. The individual teachers' means were subtracted from the principals' group mean to obtain a difference score. The bootstrap method was employed to generate 2,000 new samples of mean differences for the scale. A bootstrap mean was derived for the scale and a 95% confidence bound was constructed using the Boneferoni adjustment. The confidence interval was investigated to determine if it were reasonable to conclude that the principals and teachers differed significantly. Figures 1 and 2 illustrating the findings present principals' and teachers' means for each item within the scale, bootstrap means, and confidence intervals.

The research question asked if teachers' perceptions of the principals' involvement in the reading program were similar to the perceptions of the principals. Principals responded once to each item with respect to primary teachers and once for intermediate teachers. Teachers responded only once to each item. Principals' perceptions

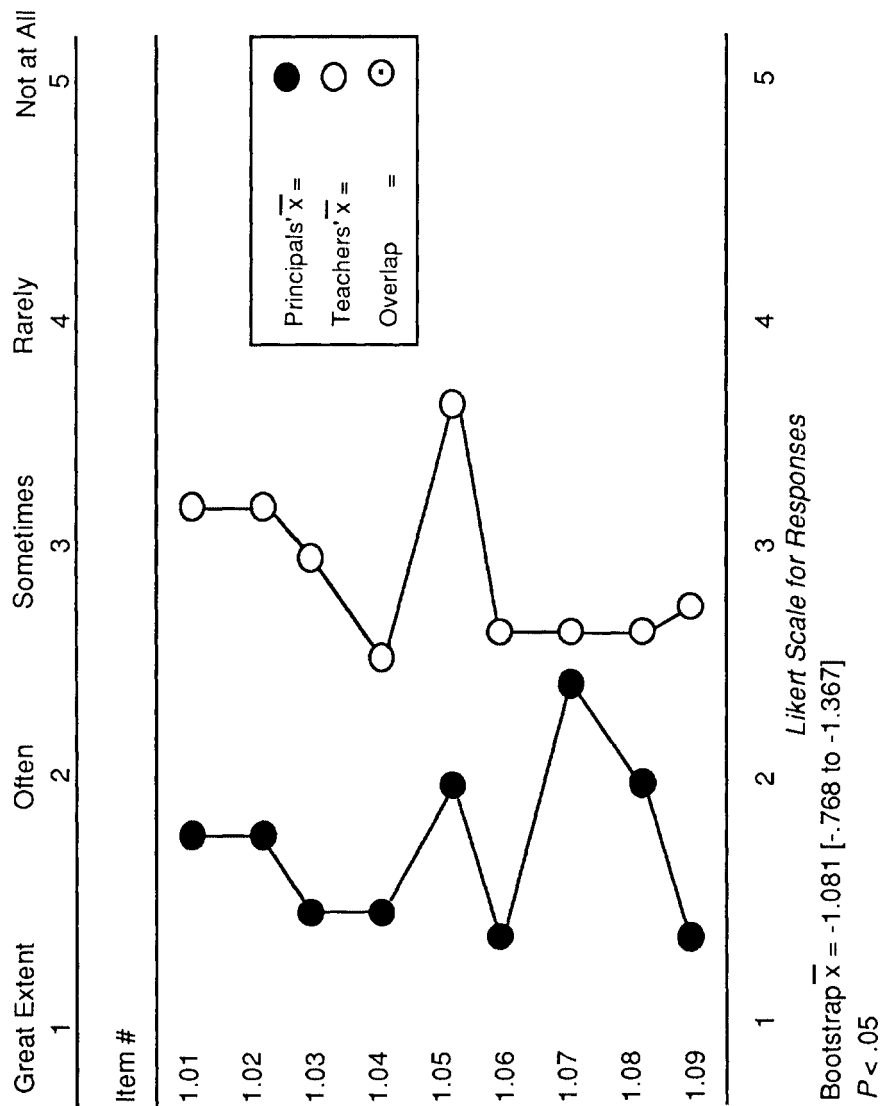Figure 1. Principals' Involvement in the Reading Program
(Grades 1-3)

Figure 1: I. Principals' Involvement in the Reading Program (Grades 1-3).

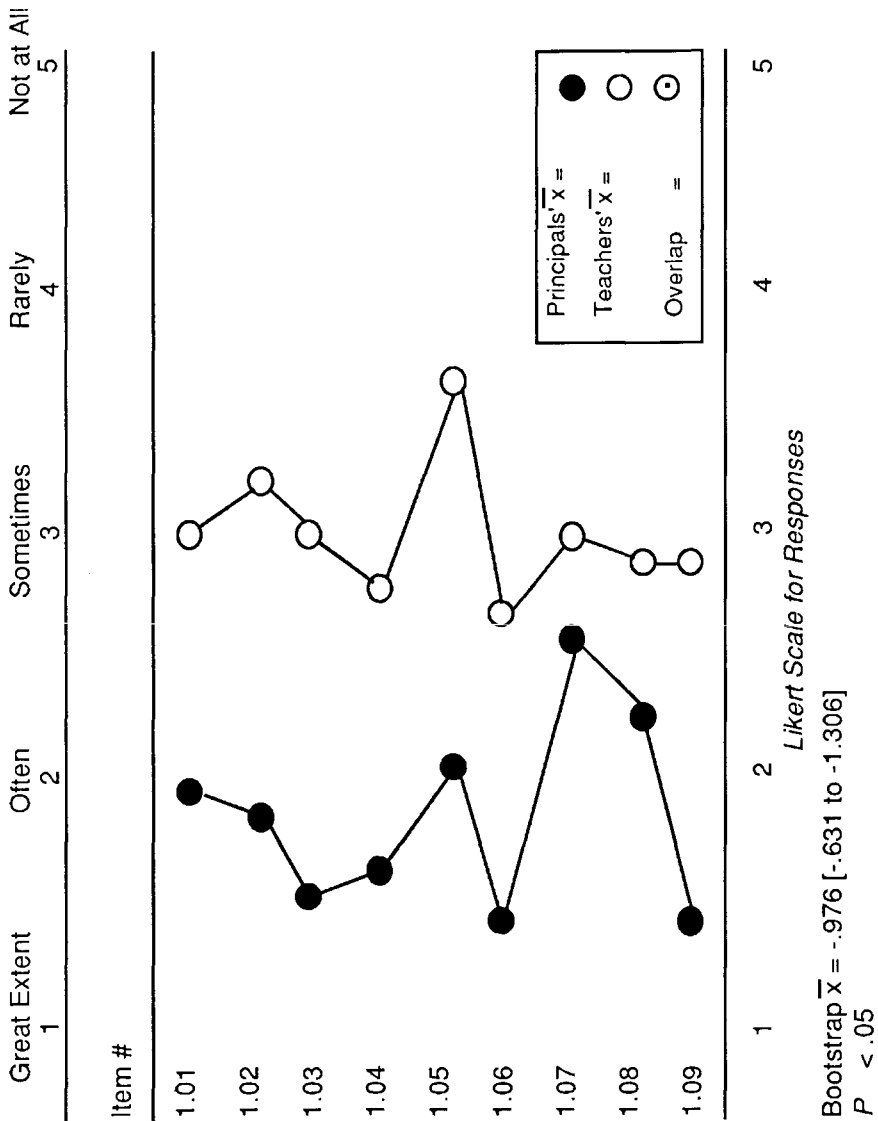Figure 2. Principals' Involvement in the Reading Program
(Grades 4-5)

Bootstrap $\overline{x}$ = -.976 [-.631 to -1.306]
P < .05

Figure 2: I. Principals' Involvement in the Reading Program (Grades 4-5).

differed significantly from both primary and intermediate teachers with regard to the principals' involvement in the reading program.

Discussion

Analysis was conducted on total scale means for principals and teachers; however, references are made to within scale items where findings are consistent with or contradict current literature.

Both primary and intermediate teachers differed significantly from principals with respect to their perceptions of the principals' involvement in the reading program. Teachers perceived principals to be less involved in the reading program than principals perceived themselves to be. Fryer's (1984) research indicated that principals viewed their time spent in the classroom to be greater than teachers perceived it to be and the teachers did not feel encouraged by principals to expand their reading teaching skills. These results from Fryer's study are consistent with the findings from this study. Findings from several studies have indicated that both teachers and principals have expressed a need for more principals' involvement in the reading program (DeNicola, 1983; Jacoby-High, 1980; Motley & McNinch, 1984). Motley and McNinch reported that principals viewed their roles to be of secondary support with respect to the instructional process, leaving supervision of teachers to department chairpersons, reading specialists, and reading consultants.

For principals to make decisions consistent with sound educational theory, and for teachers to implement such mandates, it is essential that a common ground of communication and agreement be established with respect to the principals' involvement in the reading program. It is with these findings in mind that the following recommendations are made:

1. Principals should note the perceived differences teachers hold with respect to the principals' involvement in the reading program and initiate efforts to become more involved in the daily instructional program. Teachers should be receptive to principals' involvement and open to discussion concerning program needs and strengths.

2. Principals should attempt to plan for and schedule

more time in the classroom to familiarize themselves with the daily classroom efforts and program needs.

3. Further study is needed with various school populations concerning principals, teachers, and reading specialaists with respect to their perceptions of the principals' involvement in the reading program.

REFERENCES

Austin, G. (1979). Exemplary schools and the search for effectiveness. Educational Leadership, 37(1), 10-14.

Bawden, R., & Duffy, G. (1979, April). Teacher conceptions of reading and the impact on instructional behavior. Paper presented at IRA, Atlanta, GA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 169 482).

Bossert, S., Dwyer, D., Rowan, B., & Lee, G. (1982). The instructional management role of the principal. Educational Administration Quarterly, 18(3), 34-64.

Cohen, J., & Cohen, P. (1983). Applied multiple regression/correlation analyses for the behavioral sciences (2nd ed.) New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

DeNicola, M. (1983). The principals' role in reading achievement and in reading programs: Perceptions of principals, classroom reading and language skills teachers. Dissertation Abstracts International, 44, 1331-A. (Univ. Microfilms Intern't'l No. GAX83-21254)

Diaconis, P., & Efron, B. (1983). Computer intensive methods in statistics. Scientific American, 246, 116-130.

Doan, M. (1987). An investigation of principals' and teachers' perceptions of the elementary school reading program. Dissertation Abstracts International.

Efron, B., & Gong, G. (1983). A leisurely look at the bootstrap, the jackknife, and cross-validation. The American Statistician, 37(10), 36-48.

Fryer, G. (1984). A comparison of principals' and teachers' perceptions of principals' reading program involvement, reading struction practices, materials use, and staff development needs in grade one through five . . (Univ. Microfilms Intern't'l # GAX 84-27532).

Jacoby-High, B. (1980). Principals' conceptions of reading as they influence decisions made about the reading program. Dissertation Abstracts Intern't'l, 42, 3966-A. (University Microfilms, # GAX 81-06390).

Jwaideh, A. (1984) The principal as a facilitator of change. Educational Horizons, 63(1), 9-11.

Motley, R., & McNinch, G. (1984). The principal and the reading program. Reading World, 24(2), 81-186.

Pinero, U. (1982). Wanted: Strong instructional leadership. Principal, 62(4), 16-19.

Pinkney, H. (1980). School principal: Manager or figurehead? Educational Technology, 20(10), 51-52.

Worden, T., & Noland, R. (1984). An investigative study of teachers' reading preferences and related classroom practices. Journal of Reading Education, 10(1), 31-38.