

**THE MALTESE PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP:  
PERCEPTIONS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

The main aim of this research was to investigate the conditions that influence and shape the occupational perceptions of principals; systematically observe primary school principals in the islands of Malta, and to contrast these findings with the perceptions of a group of deputy principals. To achieve this aim three studies were conducted.

The first study employed a self-administered questionnaire survey method employed with all principals in primary schools (i.e. state, church and private). 'Discussions with parents', 'discussions with staff' and 'desk work' have been highlighted as the major job functions taking up most of the principals' time. Half of the respondents rated 'desk work' as their major job function. The Maltese principal tended to perceive his/her role as falling within the chief executive model. The principal's duties related largely to the division and allocation of work, the co-ordination and control of organisational activities, communication with parents and staff, maintaining discipline and order, and maintaining the level of resources and plant upkeep. This survey, however, shows that principals wanted to take on functions within the leading professional model.

In the second study, an observational study was conducted with the aim of checking out some of the perceptions principals held towards their role and to add another dimension to the overall picture by identifying what principals actually did in their daily life at work. The study explored the work patterns of eight primary school principals in the state sector.

The observational study attested to the multi-varied nature of the principal's role. The principal's day was generally hectic in pace, varied in its composition, discontinuous and superficial in any pursuit of tasks, with the unexpected always as one of the few certainties of the job. The principal's energy was observed as being devoted to keeping the school ticking over in the short run with hardly any time being devoted to discuss matters of direct relevance to the teaching-learning process, such as classroom practice, curriculum review and update. The dominant model was that of the transactional leader who is fixing things, managing and coping in order to maintain the smooth operation of

the organisation. As highlighted in the questionnaire survey principals devoted their time to administration, pastoral care and communication with parents. Little to no time was stated as being devoted to high value tasks such as strategic planning and curriculum review. The portrayal of Maltese primary school principals is that they are not so much reflective or transformational leaders, rather they are chronically busy, reactive as against proactive, and caught up in, and tied down by the unceasing demands of others for their attention. The present research seems to have identified the transactional nature of leadership as the main medium of interaction that the primary school principals opted for.

Bearing in mind the present period of changes and development of school management practices in Malta, it was felt appropriate to seek feedback from deputy principals whose own role was undergoing change. A small group of twenty newly-appointed deputy principals were approached to view how they perceived the role of the principal. At the same time it sought to identify their perceptions of their own role, and get an indication of how they viewed tomorrow's principalship. This, it was felt, would provide data as to how Maltese administrators in general viewed their role. Deputy principals presented similar feedback to that presented by principals. The major difference being in the way deputy principals perceived tomorrow's principalship - one which went beyond the transactional model of principal as administrator to the transformational model of principal as leading professional. However, nothing conclusive can be drawn out. There is a strong indication that principals and deputy principals desire this move but some responses express a certain degree of inconsistency which shows that the implications behind the transformational model are not well and truly understood by the participants of this survey.

The implications of the findings for today's and tomorrow's principalship were discussed.

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*This work is dedicated to my family  
and baby Ruth*



**SECTION A**  
**INTRODUCTION**  
**AND**  
**HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE STUDY IN CONTEXT

#### 1.1 Introduction

This brief introductory chapter attempts to do three main things. First it places the present study, "The Maltese Primary School Principalship: perceptions, roles and responsibilities", in the context of educational research and development in the small island of Malta. Secondly, it very briefly introduces the area of study within the local and international arena. Thirdly, it identifies and gives an overview of the main themes around which this study is developed.

#### 1.2 Educational research in Malta

Perhaps due to the size, economic constraints, its colonial heritage, the problem of politicisation and political polarisation in Maltese education (Zammit Mangion, 1992). Malta never made provision, mainly in terms of philosophy, structures and funding, for the conduct of research in the field of education, or any field for that matter. For the purposes of the present analysis it is important to note that Malta had been a British colony since 1802 (until 1964 when it got its Independence and 1974 when it became a Republic) and that the islands' economic survival depended completely upon Her Majesty's armed forces. Furthermore, as Frenco (1979) has pointed out, despite periods of self-government, policy-making, including developing the infrastructure and foreign policy, remained in the hands of the Colonial administration. The consequence of this was that solutions to local problems were looked for in what was devised for foreign contexts, very often with unhappy results (Fenech, 1992). This outlook towards the role of research in education was epitomized by the then Labour Prime Minister who, in the late 1970s, stated during a parliamentary debate on Malta's economic resources, that the resources did not allow for funding or institutional provision of research. The Prime Minister recommended Maltese policy makers to rely on foreign research findings or to hire foreign experts when the need for solutions to particular problems arose. This helped to perpetuate the approach adopted during the colonial period which is well documented through the Reports of various Royal

Commissions such as the Austin & Lewis, (1839), Keenan (1878), Ellis (1942) and Crichton-Miller (1958), together with UNESCO sponsored Reports such as those by Lewis (1967) and Cameron (1971).

In spite of this attitude it was the Faculty of Education, established within the framework of the University of Malta in 1978, which began to generate research of some significance in Maltese education. However, this initiative was not followed by central backing for independent research. A decade and a half later and most research work is still carried out by undergraduates in the different faculties within the University, and university lecturers concomitant with their duties, further studies, without funds or else through government/university scholarships. Fenech (1992) is of the opinion that most of this research is what Taylor defined as "curiosity-oriented" rather than "policy-oriented" (Taylor, 1985, p.42). It is research which emerges from the predilections or specific interests of university staff. Most of it has been tied to the advancement in the academic careers of individuals and therefore carried out to satisfy higher degree requirements.<sup>1</sup>

One of the first researchers within the Faculty of Education was Farrugia (1985). One of his studies investigates, through a postal survey questionnaire, the social status of Maltese primary school teachers. He has also published works in the field of educational administration (Farrugia, 1991, 1992; Farrugia & Attard, 1991). More recently, another Faculty of Education lecturer, has conducted a sociological analysis of the process of primary schooling using an ethnographic methodology (Darmanin, 1989, 1990). She has also carried out studies on gender in education (1991, 1992) and educational policy-making in Malta (1991). Another area of study which has generated interest within the Faculty of Education concerns our Trade Schools (an idiosyncratic organisational arrangement for low-ability secondary school students) which have been studied by Sultana (1992). Important areas which have been extensively researched in the field of educational psychology are those related to streaming (Borg, 1992; Borg & Falzon, 1991) and stress (Borg, Falzon, & Riding, 1991; Borg & Riding, 1993). From a strictly philosophical angle, Wain (1991) has written a critical evaluation of the National Minimum Curriculum. Fenech (1992), on the other hand, has undertaken a

historical and ethnographic approach to the process of primary schooling in Malta.

Research is also conducted by another agency outside the Faculty of Education and that is the Department of Education (now known as Education Division). The Education Division in Malta administers the educational system in the island state and conducts policy directed research as part of its brief. However, as Zammit Mangion (1992) observes, the quality of this research leaves much to be desired mainly due to the fact that the Education Division has, since its inception, been mainly engaged with the organisation and administration of its service rather than with other matters. As the Cameron Report stated back in 1970

The Education Department, for historical as well as for obvious geographical ones, has developed as a highly centralised organisation on strictly civil service lines. Not only in organisation but in some of its attitudes it is better suited to administering a very small-scale, fairly static government educational system and so is under great strain in coping with the much larger and more dynamic system Malta has today. In consequence it persists in trying to do by itself what no other Education Department of the same size elsewhere would ever consider.  
(1970. p.31)

Cameron goes on to state that Department of Education officials are not prepared to seek the support and advice of those who might have the expertise or the know-how to improve the system. This situation has come about because in the past, whenever the need arose for changes to be made, whatever their nature, the Maltese Government always called for outside assistance and relied on the recommendations of foreign experts. This was not because there was no local expertise to carry out the necessary research to inform policy making, but as clearly stated by Tuppen "because as in many countries, an outsider is more acceptable than a Maltese when changes are being made" (1970. p.8).<sup>2</sup> Departmental reluctance to utilize the research knowledge and skills of people lower down the educational system, total reliance on foreign expertise, as well as lack of research funds, explains the shortcomings in the field of research and development of education in Malta.

However, looking back at some of the developments which have taken place since the early 1980s one can detect a change in departmental attitude towards the conduct of

educational research (Mifsud, 1994). There is the realisation that the formulation of policies requires a sound research base. This is evidenced by some of the research work carried out over the last decade mainly in the sphere of primary education. Research work conducted on remedial education and the educationally sub-normal children (Department of Education, Malta, 1982a, 1982b) are early examples. In 1987, a National Conference was held in Malta for Education Department officials and school principals. Some of the deliberations and recommendations raised during that Conference have inspired this researcher to undertake the present study. In the following year the problem of streaming in primary schools started being addressed by an appointed committee (Department of Education, 1988). In the same year, 1988, research in primary school administration was conducted with a view to introducing school-based development (Department of Education, 1989).

The difference between the educational research carried out by the two institutions - i.e. the Faculty of Education and the Education Division - lies mainly at two levels, the qualitative and its orientation. The research carried out by the Education Division is mainly "policy-oriented" (Taylor, 1985), whereas that conducted by the Faculty of Education tends to be academically more rigorous, but at the same time more "curiosity-oriented" [i.e. satisfying the intellectual interests of academics] (ibid., 1985). Furthermore, until now both the Faculty of Education and the Education Division have not succeeded in establishing a collaborative relationship to identify and undertake research to solve educational problems (Fenech, 1992). Maybe this is merely a reflection of particular characteristics of Maltese society itself which at times expresses a highly self-centred and ego-centric approach to life and life chances (Abela, 1991; Tabone, 1987; Zammit Mangion, 1992).

It is within this relatively hectic period of research activity in the development of education in Malta that the present study has been conducted. In certain respects it shares some of the characteristics of the studies conducted by lecturers within the Faculty of Education. First, its most immediate purpose is to fulfil an academic requirement. Secondly, the methodology is the researcher's own choosing. Thirdly, its timing and duration have not been determined by any sponsoring institution. Fourthly, it forms part of a considerable research effort which so many people working

in the field of education are undertaking.

The present work, however, differs from the research which has preceded it in at least three ways. It does so first in the way my interest in the area was generated, secondly by the methods it adopts, and thirdly, in the themes and issues it raises. My inclination towards this area started to develop whilst pursuing postgraduate studies in New Zealand for a Masters degree in educational administration. Back home in 1987 this researcher started running academic/professional courses, presenting papers and writing-up reports on the general area of school administration and school-based development in particular. This study is not "curiosity-oriented" but adopts a rationale that aims at change. It is being conducted with the intention of informing educational policy and more so effect legislation with regards to the role of the principal. Methodologically, it breaks some new ground. It identifies and studies a specific target group - i.e. all primary school principals in the islands of Malta - and undertakes a questionnaire survey of the whole group. This is linked with an observational case study approach of a small group of principals. This research approach is gaining in popularity and is a recognised and valued method for researching the role of the principal (see Davies, 1987; Reynolds, 1992). Apart from being the first time that such an approach is being used in Malta it is also the first time that a researcher has spent so much time in a school/number of schools (i.e. 16 weeks, over 500 hours of observation).

Thematically, the present study also departs from the earlier research work. It is the first time that the principalship and the role of the Maltese primary school principal is being studied in such detail using a variety of methods to understand the complexity surrounding the role of the principal. Furthermore, such issues as the relationship between central control and the role of the principal, the bureaucratisation of the educational system and its influence on role have been illustrated historically, through the case study and the questionnaire survey. As a study, therefore, it is the first of its kind locally and at the same time forms part of a fairly recent area of study abroad. It therefore makes claims to some originality in the ground it covers and moreso the treatment it gives.

The next section presents the area of enquiry within the local and international context. It explains the rationale behind the need to understand the role of the principal. The main aims behind this study are highlighted.

### **1.3 The role of the primary school principal**

Since the mid-1970s there has been a gradual, but steady, increase of international interest in the importance of the principal's role in the success of a school and in researching the work content of the principalship (Laws & Dennison, 1990; Purkey & Smith, 1983). Primarily, this is evidenced by the proliferation of studies on this domain conducted in various countries, for instance in Australia (e.g. O'Dempsey, 1976; Willis, 1980), Canada (e.g. Friesen, Holdaway & Rice, 1991; Johnson & Holdaway, 1990), New Zealand (Edwards, 1979), U.S.A. (e.g. Kmetz & Willower, 1982; Wolcott, 1973), Sweden and The Netherlands (Hopes, 1989), and the U.K. (e.g. Bullock & Thomas, 1994; Clerkin, 1985; Davies, 1987; Harvey, 1986). This research, Johnson & Holdaway (1990) observe, has been accompanied by numerous articles in professional journals, reports published by educational authorities and conferences, as well as workshops and case studies (Hopes, ed., 1989).

Most studies on the role of the principal come from a relatively small number of countries, notably, as indicated above, the U.S.A., Canada, Australia and the U.K. - all of which are highly industrialised countries. In view of this, Cohn & Rossmiller (1987) point out, it is not unreasonable to argue that relatively little is known about the phenomenon in other countries, primarily whether or not the principalship is a major characteristic of effectiveness in schools and whether the factors that condition the nature and perceptions of the principal's role in such countries (primarily developing ones) are fundamentally similar to that reported by their counterparts in industrialised countries. Studies by Fuller (1987), Lockheed & Hanushek (1988) and Stego, Gielen, Glatter and Hord (1987) have gone some way at rectifying this situation by presenting data on the principalship from other countries including developing ones.

The principal of a primary school must assume many roles.

According to Waters (1979) the U.K. principal is called, amongst other things, to be a planner, organiser, selector, trainer, communicator, co-ordinator, team builder, motivator, delegator, controller, director, evaluator, innovator and chairperson - and these only in his/her dealings with members of the teaching staff. When this is extended to include pupils, parents, ancillary staff, Departmental officials and many others, it is readily obvious that the U.K. primary school principal finds himself/herself as the fulcrum, or at the epicentre of the small but complex universe which makes up the primary school.

Naturally, the role of the principal, in any society, will vary in time. Thus the principal can be concerned purely with administration, following a prescribed role which is centrally controlled. The 1970s/80s in the U.K. saw the chief executive and leading professional model emerging, one which sees the principal as centrally supported (i.e. by the LEA). The late 1980s saw the emergence of the semi-autonomous leader/manager. The 1988 Education Reform Act in the U.K. and subsequent legislation have forced major changes to be implemented rapidly, placing many additional demands on schools. Alongside the implementation of the National Curriculum and its associated arrangements, schools have had to come to terms with local financial management, additional governor powers, open enrolment, and OFSTED inspection arrangements. The Local Management of Schools (LMS) represents, as Thomas (1991) and Huckman (1994) point out, a major challenge and a major opportunity for the education service.

It is a period which calls for principals, their staff and governors to reassess their roles. From the 1970s to the 1990s one can observe a development from a purely public model of schooling to a more client-orientated/ market orientated model. The role of the principal in particular has become more extended and more demanding (e.g. Hill, 1989; Thorpe, 1992; Webb, 1994). At the same time Hendry & Leighton Beck have argued that "little current research has examined the extent to which headteachers believe that these changes, initiated in the main beyond the world of the headteacher, have influenced the ways in which they manage their schools" (1993, p.14). They go on to raise important questions: "What do we know about - or can speculate on -



headteachers' perceptions of their role and leadership styles within the structure of present-day schools?" (ibid., p.14).

This enquiry will attempt to provide the basis for an in-depth examination of the role of the Maltese primary school principal. The aim is to analyse the professional perceptions of the principal and at the same time, investigate the nature of the tasks he/she performs on a daily basis. Thus by comparing what he/she feels he/she ought to be doing with what he/she actually is doing, a picture will emerge which may reveal discrepancies between the theory and practice of the principal's job. It may also provide us with comparative research material as to the way we view the principalship in Malta when compared to foreign principals, especially those in the U.K.

This study is being undertaken in the island nation of Malta at a time when the country is undergoing quite a number of changes at the school level, and one which is 'new' to literature on the principalship.

This writer, who is actively involved in the education programmes for school principals in Malta, has long been aware, from his regular visits to schools, discussions, meetings and personal interviews with school administrators, of the need to address this area. It comes at a time when the role of the school principal "is assuming an importance greater than ever before" (Muscat, 1995, p.28). It is a time when the idea of decentralisation of the education system is being given serious thought, and when principals are being asked to take on a number of tasks which before was the prerogative of central authorities. There seems to be a move to a period which challenges what Farrugia has defined as "the traditional culture (in Malta) that seems to hold on to administrative and bureaucratic power" (1992, p.165). This move towards forms of decentralisation should place the role of schools, and in particular the role of the principal, at the forefront of such discourse. However, despite so much focus on the school, principals argue that they still have to follow the dictates of the Ministry of Education and the Education Division, thus ignoring the unique pivotal position of the school as an agent of reform (Bezzina, 1991; Darmanin, 1994; Mifsud, 1994; UNESCO, 1988). This in itself raises cause for concern and highlights the importance

of conducting research in this area.

It was recognised at the outset that, whilst some, if not most, of the characteristics behind the principalship in Malta are bound to be similar to those in studies reported elsewhere, it seemed sensible to argue that this could not be taken as given and had to be verified empirically. In addition to this, it was of course also acknowledged that certain aspects would be idiosyncratic to the local situation and as such demanded unravelling.

Close interaction with Maltese principals through various in-service courses, seminars and workshops, particularly over the past nine years (e.g. Department of Education, 1989; Farrugia, ed. 1994; UNESCO, 1988) reveals that their perceptions are influenced by at least three factors, namely a) those derived from their own direct experiences at school level and with superiors, b) the experiences derived through the various professional in-service courses they attend, and c) the effects that educational changes and developments have on the role of the principal [e.g. the introduction of the National Minimum Curriculum]. It is evident that, while on one level there is a national feeling to improve the 'academic know how' of principals through the various in-service courses being offered, on the other hand one finds that the reality, the social milieu in which principals have to work on a daily basis has not been really addressed over the years (Mifsud, 1994; Muscat, 1995). This study attempts to do so.

In terms of the wider research values, it was primarily hoped that the envisaged scale of, and the themes addressed by, a project carried out in one specific and complete, compact context (which primarily allowed the entire population of primary school principals to be included in the sample) would constitute a useful contribution to a rapidly developing area of research. Secondly, it could lead towards possible international comparisons.

As such the overall aim of this study is

- a. To initiate a critical discourse on the present role of the primary school principal in Malta.

To achieve this, the research objectives are:

- i. to enquire on the content and characteristics of the Maltese principal's work by investigating how such characteristics and dimensions are perceived by primary school principals;
- ii. to undertake systematic observation of what a sample of principals actually do in their daily work within school;
- iii. to contrast the way principals perceive their job with what they actually do;
- iv. to see whether there exist particular differences for the demographic sub-groups of sex, age, length of experience and type of school;
- v. to compare and contrast these findings with the opinions of a sample of newly-appointed deputy principals.

The last section presents an overview of how this study has been organised.

#### **1.4 Overview**

This thesis consists of nine chapters, organised in four sections. Section A (Chapters One, Two and Three) comprises the Introduction, a historical overview of the Maltese Education system, and the concept of identity as perceived by the primary school principal. Section B (Chapters Four and Five) presents the literature review and methodology chapters. Section C (Chapters Six, Seven and Eight) presents the result of this study, and Section D (Chapter Nine) concludes the study.

Chapter Two presents a brief historical account and traces the origins and growth of the system of primary schools in Malta. The role of agency in bringing about educational change, the importance of the socio-historical context as both a facilitator of and a constraint on the change process are two themes which are woven into the narrative. A third theme which infuses the whole study and central to it is the bureaucratisation of the educational process through which cultures of schooling were generated. It then picks up the theme of control and gives a brief account of its establishment in the Maltese educational system. The main protagonists are the various Directors of Education, mainly Pullicino, Savona and Laferla, and the Department of Education within which their policies and administrative decisions acquired

institutional, and, as it turned out (in spite of quite a number of Reports to change the existing system), permanent status.

This chapter helps us to place the study of the principalship in a better perspective. Through a historical analysis the reader is made aware of the parameters in which principals today have to operate.

**Chapter Three** presents the concept of identity and work behaviour as perceived by principals. The chapter starts off by briefly outlining the role of the primary school principal in Britain. This is then contrasted with that of the Maltese principal.

**Chapter Four** presents a review of the literature on the principalship by looking into the following four areas of study: effectiveness of primary schools, leadership and effective schools, characteristics of successful principals, and the work patterns and behaviour of primary school principals.

**Chapter Five** presents the methodology chapter. It presents some of the research designs and methods used to explore this area of study and at the same time explains the researcher's choice of the research design and data gathering techniques used for the purpose of the present study.

**Chapter Six** highlights the first part of the research study - the survey. It presents a review of the findings to the self-administered postal questionnaire conducted with all Maltese primary school principals. On the other hand **Chapter Seven** presents the results of the second part of this research conducted through an observational study of a small group of primary school principals. **Chapter Eight** presents the findings of the perceptions of a group of newly-appointed deputy principals. **Chapter Nine**, the conclusion to the whole study, sets out a general conclusion by proposing answers to the major research questions put forth in Chapter One. This discussion is followed by a consideration of the limitations and significance of this investigation, as well as a number of practical recommendations aimed at improving the current situation facing principals. Some suggestions for future lines of inquiry are also set out.

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Fenech's analysis seems to be an over simplification of a more complex issue. Quite a number of those pursuing post-graduate studies have done so through government scholarships which in the main determines the type of specialisation required at a national level through a policy-oriented approach. However, what in most cases happens is that when postgraduate students return from their studies abroad they are absorbed by the University thus leaving the Education Division without its cadre of professional personnel.

<sup>2</sup> The present Government is in fact still adopting a similar procedure in its drive to change the existing organisational structure and 'attitude' of the Maltese civil service. Whether this will help to overcome our major problem, what Cameron had defined as the need for "a change of heart among those already in it" (1971, p.32) has still to be seen.

## CHAPTER TWO

### GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, DEPENDENCY AND DEVOLUTION OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN MALTA

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter starts by presenting a brief historical account of the origins and growth of the system of primary schools in Malta. Then it moves on to trace the emergence and growth of centralisation in the administration of the Maltese education system. The main intention is that of providing a context which will lead to a better understanding of the theme under discussion.

#### **2.2 The early stages: laying the foundations of a national system of primary education**

One of the first things the British Government did when it took over the Islands of Malta at the turn of the nineteenth century was “to promote every means by which the affections of the [Maltese] people could be drawn more closely to the British Crown”. This instruction included, among other things, the promotion of the English language. To this end the then British Governor, Sir Thomas Maitland, was exhorted to support and encourage the establishment of public schools very much on the lines of those in the United Kingdom (Laferla, 1936). Three schools were set up. However, this was far from an easy task to accomplish especially when “only meagre funds were made available” (Zammit Mangion, 1992, p.17).

In 1836 a Royal Commission composed of Sir Lewis and Dr Austen were sent to Malta to inquire into the state of affairs and were very incisive about the perilous situation education was in

The elementary instruction in Malta is small in quantity and bad in quality. In our opinion, it will never be extended or improved to any considerable extent, unless its extension and improvement be aided by the government.

(1839, p.42)

Besides recommending the need to extend the provision of elementary schools, they called for the direct intervention on the part of the Government together with a number of other recommendations. In spite of the many difficulties facing the authorities the schools started to open and within ten years around 24 primary schools had been set up. The lack of qualified teaching personnel, inadequate accommodation, as well as able administrators, cumulatively contributed to the creation of a school milieu which brought upon it the condemnation of the more conscientious and socially perceptive citizens (Badger, 1839; Bonavia, 1849; Grunzo, 1843; Pullicino, 1850a)

These schools as they at present exist, do more harm than good and instead of imparting knowledge, however humble, and form better habits in a population sadly in want of them, disseminate vice and a dislike for knowledge.

(A Maltese, 1847, p.4)

To a large extent, it took a change of Governor to bring about the much needed expansion and reforms in Maltese education. Soon after his appointment as Governor in 1847 Sir Richard More O’Ferrall began to take active steps to improve the education of the lower classes. In 1849 the Governor selected and appointed a young Maltese priest, Canon Paolo Pullicino, who was then a teacher in a primary school to the position of Director of Elementary schools. In his first report Pullicino stressed the need to bring about “principle, order and purpose” (1850a, p.21) in elementary school teaching. Within a span of thirty years he introduced what was known as the ‘class’ system. Town schools with a high pupil population and therefore able to offer a broader instructional programme were classified as third class schools. In the most industrious villages where teaching was merely restricted to serving the needs of the local community, second class schools were set up. Whilst in the sparsely populated rural areas, where the bare essentials of elementary knowledge was taught, first class schools were created (Pullicino, 1861). Pullicino also reformed and extended the curriculum, introduced the simultaneous teaching of Italian and English, drew up syllabuses, chose and compiled textbooks, selected and rented premises for use as schools, inspected teachers to determine their promotion and demotion, and examined the pupils. He also launched a system of teacher training at the University.

Pullicino had a tight control on everything within the field of education. What he said was law and everyone had to follow his directives to the letter. (see Appendix A for specimen copies of the type of circulars and correspondence that circulated between the Directors of Education of the time and the schools).

### **2.3 Education under political attack**

“Human failure” and later on “Government niggardliness” (Zammit Mangion, 1992) undermined much of what Pullicino had proposed. For example, many of the classroom teachers were very lowly qualified and badly paid, so they found it difficult if not impossible to introduce Pullicino’s suggested methods of teaching. Teachers found it difficult to cope with a broad curriculum and moreso could not cope with large classes of 40 pupils and over. Due to the demands and the absence of any compulsory attendance measures many of pupils lost heart and never attended schools, while thousands never even attended. Over and above all this, public education became highly politicised. Quite a number saw in Pullicino an obstacle to the propagation of liberal ideas and educational progress (Webster & Bullock, 1864). Pressures to remove Pullicino gained momentum, and, eventually had the upper hand (Bowen Jones & Dewdney, 1961). In 1878 two Royal Commissioners, Julyan and Keenan respectively were sent to Malta, the former to inquire into certain aspects of the state of the Island, and the latter to report upon the system of education.

The Keenan Report (1878), emanating in a highly emotive political context, found nothing to praise in the Maltese system of elementary education. For the situation to improve, Keenan recommended that more funds should be allocated. He identified the immediate needs as being: the introduction of compulsory primary education; purpose-built school premises; provision for the training of headteachers in the United Kingdom; a mechanism for the inspection of schools; a reorganisation of the teaching complement and a new salary structure for them; changes in the curricula, syllabuses, textbooks and methods of teaching (instruction); and last, but most important, the Report recommended that the Maltese language should be given more importance within the curriculum and that English should replace Italian as the compulsory language for the Maltese. The report and its implementation served as a strategy for the



transformation of the Italianate culture of the Island into an English one. The person chosen to do this was Dr Savona, a teacher, politician, journalist and an anglophile of note.

The Savona years were most significant, apart from the way he helped fulfil the concerns of the Keenan Report, for the noteworthy developments of elementary schools. It was during his tenure that selection for the Grammar School was introduced, a decision which embedded itself so strongly in the culture of Maltese schooling that it has determined the development of the curriculum inside the primary schools ever since. Selection was further reinforced with the introduction of the scholarship system in 1915 which enabled the top few to secure a free place in the Grammar Schools. This was introduced as a measure to open secondary schooling to the children of the poor (Fenech, 1992, p.92).

In the late 19th century right up to the mid-20th century promising teachers who had done well in the junior and senior Oxford examinations were trained in the U.K.. Once back in Malta they took on administrative posts in schools. From 1953 and until the late 1960s prospective male principals were sent to St Mary's Teacher Training College, first in Hammersmith and later in Strawberry Hill, London. On the other hand prospective female principals were sent to different teacher training colleges such as those in Liverpool, Hull or Bath (Camilleri, 1968).

Savona's reforms were forced against an ever-mounting opposition in the Council of Government and outside which led to a political storm. Savona was suddenly relieved of his office in 1888, possibly, according to Laferla (1948), as a form of appeasement to the opposition. His position was taken over by Caruana. By the late 1890s, and after Caruana's departure, the school-building programme had been started and above all parental awareness of the benefits behind schooling increased to such an extent that schools began to increase. The quality of schooling, however, still failed to improve, once again due to low teacher salaries and a lack of proper provision for secondary education. This was the task that Dr Laferla took in hand as soon as he was appointed Director of Elementary Schools in 1920.

Politically, the 1920s were most interesting and challenging years as they marked a significant step in Malta's Constitutional development. After one hundred and twenty years of British rule, Malta was granted self-government with a constitution in 1921 assigning responsibilities for domestic affairs to the Maltese themselves. Education became the responsibility of a Minister. This meant that education became a topic for debate in Parliament with all the major political parties having to establish clear educational policies.

Educationally the 1920s were eventful years. The Malta Union of Teachers (MUT), affiliated to the National Union of Teachers in Britain, was set up. The Union began to exert quite an amount of pressure and influence on the improvement of teachers' working conditions and on their professional development. Laferla's main aim was that of improving teacher quality, build a respectable profession and bring discipline and order in the elementary schools which was still lacking. His contribution to the development of the local education system is worth noting. His most notorious influence has been in the field of educational administration, to which he transferred his military skills <sup>1</sup>. In military fashion he created different teacher categories to which salary differentials were attached and set up the machinery for the inspection of schools and teachers so as to ensure that there was conformity to central directives.

Dr Laferla was a strict disciplinarian and he ran the Department on military lines. He wielded the grade system of teachers' working conditions and a strict system of inspection, this helping him to raise the standards of teaching to a very high degree (Zammit Mangion, 1992). At the same time, he managed to build an esprit de corps and a spirit of camaraderie among his teachers which helped to raise their good name and status in Maltese society. He introduced and enforced a system of strict discipline among the staff. School administrators and staff had to carry out his directives to the letter. Laferla made it a point to regularly visit the schools thus he could assess for himself the quality of the teaching staff and principals. With regards to school

principals he transferred the 'soft' principals in the larger schools to the smaller ones, pensioned off the incompetent ones and called others to perform duties in the Department where they would do less harm (Camenzuli, 1971).

Laferla's military strategy even encroached the pedagogical domain of teachers. At a time when alternative employment was hard, practically impossible to come by, prospects for promotion were scarce and the fact that the elementary teachers were recruited from a working class which was renowned for its subordination, it was not difficult for Laferla to elicit uncontested deference to his authority (Fenech, 1992,p.97).

After the Second World War self-government was restored and a new urge to start afresh spurred one and all for national reconstruction. The post-war years brought about new political, social and economic ideas filtering into the Islands helping to change people's minds and attitudes. The war, which had brought hardship and sorrow was also beneficial in changing their mentality, their way of life, their outlook and aspirations (Zammit Mangion, 1992). Laferla was the last Director of Education appointed directly by the British authorities. His successors, however, rose from lower ranks in the system mainly through promotion procedures.

The post-war period brings us to the current situation in the primary schools.

#### **2.4 Post-war developments**

Whilst enrolment of school-age children had increased tremendously legislation for the introduction of universal primary education had not yet been enacted. After the war an Ordinance was finally passed which placed an obligation on parents/ guardians to send

their children to school. Unfortunately the socio-economic situation was not congenial to making the implementation of the Ordinance a success. There was an acute teacher-shortage, lack of adequate accommodation to house the increasing number of children and insufficient school equipment and resources (Department of Education, 1947). The authorities dealt with the problem by creating a shift system whereby the same teacher taught two groups of children, one in the morning and another in the afternoon.

At the same time educational planners and policy makers took active steps to raise the quality of elementary schooling. Teacher-training was extended; a Syllabus and Textbook Committee was set-up; special education needs provision was introduced; educational broadcasting was setup in 1948; and a Ministerial committee was appointed to investigate, among other things, the primary school curriculum and organisation. Recommendations contained in a 1948 Department of Education Report were taken up by the Government and implemented (Department of Education, 1948).

By the mid 1960s the majority of teachers had been college trained and the post-war baby-boom was on the decline, thus relieving pressure of pupil numbers on the schools. At the same time quite a number of European countries, including Britain, were experiencing dramatic changes in all fields including education. Yet, in very few cases did these ideas reach our Islands and more so effect classroom practice.

The elections of 1971, which saw the return of the Malta Labour Party to government, brought with it fundamental changes in the education system. From very early in the day, an international body of education experts were asked to come to Malta and to help Government draw up a comprehensive plan on education based on new economic,

social, as well as cultural alignments. Throwing aside the policies upon which the political independence of Malta had been attained and developed in the previous seven years, the new Government set about changing the whole educational system and mentality from one that had by tradition followed the progress of the people and was still subservient to a colonial mentality, into a dynamic system that could be wielded and shaped to bring about the desired or projected social, cultural, economic and political ideals.

Some of the major changes took place at secondary level and mainly the system of entry into secondary schools. Selectivity through highly competitive 11+ examinations was abolished and a policy of continuous assessment introduced. Streaming according to ability was abolished and mixed ability classes introduced. The 7-Year Development Plan (1973-1980) articulates the rationale for these changes as follows

The abolition of exams is accompanied by increased emphasis on the development of the child's personality and the pupils are encouraged to pursue their interests free from the rigidities which formerly determined the attitudes of school children towards schooling, by concentrating their minds unduly on specific subjects and specific tests at determinate intervals.

(1973, p.75)

Due to a number of reasons, which we cannot go into here, these policies were 'unsuccessful' and abandoned a decade later. The 11+ examinations were reintroduced, streaming reinstated, national annual examinations to determine the classification of children reintroduced and a tripartite structure of secondary education provision resuscitated. These changes at secondary level had radical implications for the way the curricula were handled at primary level. In fact there was a dramatic

reduction of the curricular experience of primary school children as more and more emphasis began to be placed on the teaching of the examinable subjects on which streaming in the primary schools and the allocation of pupils to secondary schools entirely depended. Pupils in the last year of primary had to sit for three examinations in the following subjects: Maltese, English and Mathematics. Principals, especially in the first schools (i.e. 'A' type) were finding the situation unbearable, and, in 1985, used the influence of a foreign consultant, who was running a series of courses on the Island, to advise the Government to eliminate streaming at least in the infant classes. Streaming was consequently abolished in Year III in 1986.

The 1987 general elections brought about a change in administration. After a Labour government had been in power for seventeen years a change towards a more liberal party took place. The new administration also heralded a new Education Act in 1988 which indicated radical changes in educational policy. The authorities took measures to blunt the cutting edge of the 11+ examinations by increasing the annual intake of pupils into the secondary schools. Under the previous administration the three examinable subjects resulted in quite a number of schools neglecting all the other areas so that children would 'enjoy' maximum exposure to the three core subjects. The Government tried to overcome this neglect, as well as broaden the curricular experience of children in the Primary Schools, by adding Religious Knowledge and Social Studies to the three which already existed. Reacting to this move Fenech concludes that

Outside observers may not question the correctness of the intentions behind these educational measures, but will find it hard to accept them as educationally very sensible.

(1992, p.104)

However, the present policy betrays a concern to provide for a more adequate curricular experience and a perceptive assessment of what can be done in a situation where selection and examinations are deeply embedded in the culture of teaching.

Currently, primary education in Malta is going through an interesting phase in its development. Fenech (1992) and Zammit Mangion (1992) are of the opinion that a conglomeration of factors can help individual schools take curriculum development more seriously. The setting up of school councils in 1990 helps illustrate this Government's desire for greater devolution of authority and the type of framework which would allow for more participative decision making. Fenech is of the opinion that, the publication of the National Minimum Curriculum, provides schools with a "framework for curriculum review, evaluation, and development in the schools themselves"; and the granting of Professional Status, with the opportunity for "primary schools to change from merely reactive to more positively creative institutions" (1992, p.105). What Fenech seems to overlook is, on the one hand, the existing lack of provision from an administrative, organisational and structural dimension, which needs to be in place for such curriculum development to take place on a regular basis in our schools (Department of Education, 1989), and most importantly a change in attitude, what Cameron describes as a change of heart (1970).

#### **2.4.1 A summary**

This brief historical account of the evolution and growth of the primary school system in Malta helps to introduce some of the main themes which surround the development of this study on the principalship.

Perhaps the most important theme, generating a number of sub-themes, which structures this study is change and its introduction in social systems. When elementary education on a mass scale was introduced in the nineteenth century, Malta was a British colony. The majority of the population formed part of the poor class. They were people who were neither conscious of the benefits which accrue to education nor willing to forgo their children's earnings which, for many were so essential for family upkeep (Keenan, 1878).

Given this situation, demands to set up an elementary education system did not come from the grassroots, as was the case in England where the working class insisted on having educational provision (Simon, 1974). One can see the intermingling of the political with social motives in the British Government's decision to take responsibility for mass schooling in the 1840's. Such a decision eventually led to the flow of many educational ideas from Britain into the Maltese education system.

The implementation of such a decision required local support, hence the recommendation that the Catholic Religious doctrine should be the taught subject in the schools and the parish priest to have the facility of access at all times to teach the Catholic catechism. This also led to the appointment of local educational leaders to take charge of the administration of the educational system.

This also introduces another sub-theme on educational change: the role played by the agent. In the early years of elementary schooling the British, in order to allay fears on the part of the local clergy that, through the British occupation of the Islands, the Protestant faith would not take hold of the population, they ensured that the culture of



elementary schooling would be embedded in the Roman Catholic faith. They did this by appointing two clerics to administer the elementary schools. The first was unsuitable for the post (A Maltese, 1847), while the second lasted for thirty years before being ousted by pro-British elements when Britain became more interested in inserting British culture into the programme of the elementary school.

In tracing the history of educational development in Malta one cannot ignore the determining role of human agents to bring this about. There are three who deserve special mention: Pullicino, Savona and Laferla, The three had been chosen for different reasons. Pullicino was appointed on religious grounds and on his appointment he toured a number of European countries to gain insights into what to implement at the local level. On the other hand, Savona and Laferla were appointed for political reasons. Savona was considered the right person to carry out the recommendations put forward by the Keenan Report (1878) which, as we have seen, intended to bring about a transformation of Maltese culture from one taking sustenance from Italy as a source to one shaped by British influence. Laferla was appointed to ensure that the English language would be finally institutionalized as the official language of Malta and at the same time eliminate the Italian language from the prestige it held.

Whilst chosen for different reasons, Pullicino, Savona and Laferla shared many characteristics. The three of them were very strong-willed in the pursuit of their ideals and adopted similar strategies: mainly importing outside educational ideas and models and adapting them for local implementation and using coercive means to ensure that their plans were carried out by their subordinates at school level.

The actions of the various directors of education reflects a deepening bureaucratisation of the educational process. We saw how Pullicino introduced 'principle, order and purpose' within the system by creating differentiated roles, established hierarchical relationships, identified specific responsibilities and provided for mechanisms to ensure compliance with departmental directives. Pullicino's main concern was to effect the teaching process and make teaching more systematic and thereby efficient. However, one notes that the amount of central direction and supervision as well as the hierarchically structured routine, began to inhibit and stifle initiative at the grassroots level.

Adopting a historical perspective, the first part of this chapter traced the initiation and subsequent development of an elementary educational system over a century and a half. It identified some of the key figures in the educational landscape, their principal moves and motives, as well as some of the consequences of the decisions they had taken. The aim was to provide a context within which to understand better and also situate the discussion of the themes and issues in the chapters which follow. The second part of the historical section introduces the concept of control and gives an account of its establishment within the Maltese education system.

## **2.5 The emergence and growth of centralised control**

In the previous section the brief account of elementary schooling in Malta indicated the degree of centralisation in the administration of the Maltese educational system. Quite a number of observers, both local and foreign, have commented on the excessive forms of centralisation of the system at various stages of its development (Bruce, 1921; Cameron, 1970; Farrugia, 1985; Lewis, 1967; Scerri, 1976; Zammit Mangion, 1953)

and others have recommended that steps should be taken to devolve authority to the schools (Department of Education, 1989; UNESCO, 1988).

Keenan's report, for instance, criticised the Maltese education system as one which was "excessively governmental, ignoring all local control and inviting no local participation" (1878, p.4). He proposed that School Management committees should be set up, and these were to include members from their local communities. Their role was envisaged to incorporate a wide range of duties to include the following:

1. Oversight of teaching in the school;
2. Provision of adequate school accommodation;
3. Appointment of school staff;
4. Observance of departmental regulations;
5. Collection of school fees;
6. Providing a statement about the finances of the schools to the Department of Education annually.

(Keenan, 1878, p.4)

Keenan's concept of power can be considered most advanced for his times and definitely going against the evolution of education in Malta at the time. His comments then are still very much valid today. The way Keenan viewed the power relationship between the centre and the schools comes out very strongly through his statement that

the only power which the State really wants to hold in its own hands is the power of requiring that every locality shall be provided with adequate school accommodation and of seeing that the secular results of instruction are entirely satisfactory.

(ibid.,p.49)

Mindful of the quality of the teachers in the schools, however, Keenan stipulated that the schools should continue to work according to a nationally prescribed time-table and education grants to be provided to those schools which were found to be efficiently run and in accordance with the rules of the Department.

As mentioned in section 2.3 Savona was appointed Director of Education mainly so as to put into effect the Keenan Report. School Management Committees were set up, though their role was merely limited to oversight of teachers, observance of departmental regulations, and school attendance by the pupils. An Inspectorate was also set up at the same time. The Inspectorate would then 'strengthen' the Committees' efforts through regular visits to schools and through nationally set examinations. As a result the Committees were never established along the lines recommended by Keenan. They ended up functioning as an 'extended' arm of the Department to bring about more effective control from the centre.

This conformed with the belief that the stronger the control from the centre, the more orderly would the schools become and the more efficiently would teachers do their work. Thus, in the early 1880s a more effective system of supervision over teachers was created but it did not seem to have had a positive effect on the quality of education. This can be evidenced from a report written by a British expert in the early 1920s who found that the provision at the local level remained very unsatisfactory, parental indifference had not diminished, and the administration and teaching still left much to be desired (Bruce, 1921).

Bruce recommended and outlined a plan aimed specifically at the introduction of a degree of decentralisation in the Maltese educational system. He suggested that

Administration must get nearer to the doors of the people. There is room and need for the division of the Island into districts - say five or six,...in each of which a small body of residents should be constituted to look after the educational provision in the area.

(1921, p.iv) <sup>2</sup>

Bruce went on to suggest that this representative body should be first assigned a consultative role and through experience and exposure given some definite forms of power and responsibility. He was, however, of the opinion that educational policy planning and educational expenditure should remain the prerogative of the Ministry. Bruce was very much inclined towards the type of relationships the Keenan Report had recommended four decades earlier and which was evolving more or less at the same time in Britain (e.g. Grace, 1987). Yet, again none of the recommendations forwarded by Bruce were adopted and centralised decision-making continued to be, and still is, the most pervasive feature of educational administration in Malta.

The main focus of the latter part of this chapter will be to trace the emergence and growth of centralised control in the Maltese educational system. We will also explore how various mechanisms of control were devised and eventually strengthened by those who were at the helm of educational administration over the years. It will be argued that the Department of Education at systems level began to cultivate what Fenech calls a “dependency relationship” (1992, p.180) with the staff in the schools. As a result it took the teachers at school level quite a long time to acquire enough professional confidence to start negotiating for some form of authority. This information, this writer believes, will help us understand better some of the major issues surrounding principals and the principalship.

### **2.5.1 Control**

It has already been stated that during the early nineteenth century (circa 1820 - 1850) the system of elementary education was practically in a complete shambles and complaints were aired to the British authorities from various quarters. When Pullicino

was given the position of Director he was practically in charge of everything except finance. He, in fact, made it a point to work on his own and without ever seeking assistance. Thus, for a period of thirty years he dominated the educational scene, single-handedly determining the curriculum and pedagogy of the elementary schools (Zammit Mangion, 1992).

Pullicino lived up to his mission to establish “principle, order and purpose” in the school system. He ensured ‘sole ownership’ by taking on the role of sole arbiter of educational policy and whilst abolishing the post of deputy director he stopped the appointment of others whom he considered as potential rivals to his overall authority (Camilleri, 1968). Being in a position of sole leadership, Pullicino laid down all the rules and regulations and demanded strict adherence to them by monitoring compliance himself. In the absence of educational legislation Pullicino’s regulations remained the only mechanism which guided the administration and management of the whole system.

The most effective mechanism of control enacted by Pullicino consisted in the detailed programmes and time-tables he prescribed for the schools. He provided all teachers with a stable teaching pattern for imitation by teachers in all schools on the Islands. Pullicino shared the belief held by many nineteenth century educators that there was one best system and one approved method of teaching (Rich, 1933; Tyack, 1974). His grip on both curriculum and pedagogy is brought out quite clearly in one of his reports when explaining the role behind the monthly meetings with teachers. The purpose was

to correct many mistaken ideas of the teachers about teaching methods or other educational matters so that teaching in the schools might be rendered more uniform.

(1856, pp.11-12)

He was only interested in conformity with his pedagogical ideas and adherence to his principles that he sought in his assessment of teachers.

Discussing the politics of primary schooling Brehony (1990) distinguishes between “overt power” which is used by the state to secure its established aims, and “conditioned power”, which is a more subtle form entailing persuasion and the engineering of consent. Pullicino exercised both forms of control. Through the laying down of formal regulations for all teachers to follow he exercised overt power. Through his monthly meetings with teachers, inspection reports and teacher training that he himself gave, he was conditioning them to the pedagogical practices he wanted them to adopt.

Pullicino was here adopting the strategy, known in the literature on organisational change, as ‘power coercive’ (Benne & Chin, 1969; Etzioni-Halevy, 1981). Through a variety of regulations he compelled teachers to behave as he deemed fit and through the Model school, where teachers were trained and ‘educated’, he provided a pattern of teaching which teachers had to scrupulously follow (see Pullicino, 1861, p.20). This strategy which Pullicino continued to adopt for three decades embedded itself so strongly in administrative procedures that it became the established method of introducing change in Malta’s educational system. This total dependency of the teaching force in one man is clearly illustrated in Keenan’s report

The teacher is mere automation. That of which he ought to be the best judge - the distribution of his own time and the judicious time of his pupils - is entirely determined for him by the Chief Director (i.e.Pullicino).

(ibid., p.8)

Such a centralist ethic was prevalent in quite a number of European countries (Mitter, 1988), including Britain (Musgrave, 1980) in the nineteenth century. Malta was no exception.

However, whilst in Britain, in particular, it did not take long for teachers to mobilise themselves and react to the imposition from the centre (e.g. Gosden, 1972; Morris, 1969), nearly seventy years elapsed before the elementary school teachers in Malta set up their own representative body - the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT).

This exercise of control over others continued to grow and be strengthened even after Pullicino's departure and well into the twentieth century. This is the area developed in the next section.

### **2.5.2 The rigid form of control goes on**

Savona, who followed Pullicino as Director, practically continued in the latter's footsteps by reinforcing the system of control already in existence. This he did by presenting schools with a restructured time-table for them to follow; by putting more weight on the teaching of English; by setting up the School Management Committee to report to the Director of developments at school level; by establishing, in 1881, the Inspectorate with their main task being that of conducting inspections in schools and setting examinations. Savona also introduced an annual examination at the end of elementary schooling to determine entry to the Secondary Grammar Schools. This was one of the most important decisions in Malta's educational development because this examination later became the ominous 11+ examinations, which, as Fenech so appositely put it, "like the albatross, still hangs around the neck of those who are administering the system at the present time" (1992, p.186).

Caruana, Savona's successor, also kept on the tradition of keeping tight control on the schools. This he did in a number of ways. He introduced school uniforms and formalised examinations. In order to maximise control and minimise misunderstandings with the schools through letter circulars, he reintroduced the custom of meeting school teachers on a monthly basis. This allowed him to discuss school matters and issue directives.

Thus, Pullicino, Savona and Caruana established the norms governing the administration and management of a centralised education system. Laferla, who became Director in 1920, as his predecessors, did his utmost to strengthen decision-making at the centre. He did this by taking a number of measures. Firstly, he tightened Departmental control over school examinations by issuing a syllabus indicating the exact content on which the Department of Education would base its examination questions. Secondly, he introduced what can be considered as a crude



system of teacher accountability to the centre by demanding that all teachers should keep class registers in which they had to enter details about their weekly content coverage in what were sub-titled 'Forecast' and 'Record of Work' sections. These would then be vetted by the principal (Letter Circular 25.02.1928). The Class Registers were also accessible for inspection by members of the Inspectorate. That approach still lingers on till this very date. Thirdly, Laferla started organising seminars and conferences for principals at which they were requested to present pupils' copybooks "for each standard [Year group] of the school, following the method laid down in the language series and availing themselves of the stories and pictures of the 'Twentieth Century Readers' (Letter Circular 29.10.1923). Finally, he consolidated his control over classroom practice by requesting his Inspectors to publish lesson plans based on the prescribed textbooks for teachers in the teachers' journal published by the MUT, *The Teacher*.

Laferla's fixation to control the work of the classroom teacher whom he did not trust led him to introduce the Montessori method since this did not depend on the teachers' professional expertise but on the availability of the right resources. In fact the Montessori method has been described by Whitbread as "almost teacher-proof and self-corrective" (1972, p.58).

Laferla's lack of trust in his subordinates, so emblematic of educational leadership in Malta, coupled with his love of military discipline, led him to employ strategies which, as Zammit Mangion stated, "served only to instil fear and terror in the teachers hearts" (1992, p. 52). These strategies included surprise inspections of schools and classrooms as well as the summoning of teachers to the Department of Education to account for their behaviour (Camenzuli, 1971).

Quite a number of researchers of the Maltese educational system have over the years expressed great concern as to why teachers have tended to adopt a soft attitude towards central control. One valid reason has been forwarded by Zammit Mangion (1953) who refers to the teachers' level of education and training. This position has strong historical evidence to back it. A number of reports from Keenan (1878) to Ellis (1943)

abound in references to the extremely low level of education and total lack of professional expertise of teachers.

Social class deference has also been identified as another reason behind their response to control. Educational administrators tended to come from the cosmopolitan and wealthier sections of the community, whereas teachers normally came from the more respectable sections of the lower (working) classes (Farrugia, 1985). Whilst the educational administrators tended to have a university/tertiary education and a wide cultural background, teachers often had little more than elementary schooling. Another factor identified by Busuttil (1988) is that since Malta's economic situation was never buoyant, unemployment was rampant and the teachers always laboured under the fear of dismissal on the grounds of inefficiency. Although this has changed, especially over the last twenty years, one finds that teachers on the whole are still very complacent about the way things unfold, how decisions are made and taken (Wain, 1991). This is also a phenomenon which needs to be unravelled.

A change of tide came along after the Second World War. Vast improvements in the socioeconomic situation of the Maltese in general came about, with it better provisions for teacher education and training, and the recognition of the MUT as the Union representing teachers<sup>3</sup>. This led to the teaching profession strengthening its role as a partner in education in Malta. To that evolving situation is the next section dedicated.

## **2.6 Major developments in the post-war era**

By the end of the Second World War, all the infrastructure for the exercise of control had been laid. This included, amongst other things, a strongly-led Department of Education, with administrative responsibilities for all educational activity on the Islands; some form of legislation for compulsory school attendance, and an educational system firmly entrenched in the academic traditions. The main subject areas in the curriculum for primary schools were Religious Instruction, Maltese, English and Arithmetic. These were contained in the Compulsory Education Ordinance of 1946 which included for the first time in Malta's educational history, legislative prescription for the curriculum. The syllabus thus became the Education Code which could be amended,

repealed and re-enacted by the governor-in-Council on the advice of the Board of Education (Fenech, 1992).

It is interesting to note, as Fenech (ibid.) points out, the striking resemblance between the Education Code which was given legal status by the Compulsory Education Ordinance of 1946 and the Education Code enforced on teachers in Britain in 1862. Both formed part of educational legislation and, therefore, had legal standing. Both had a prescribed curriculum based on set standards attached to which was an annual examination to determine whether a child was promoted to the next class or not. In language style as well as format the two curriculum documents are also quite similar. Yet, what is most striking, and maybe the most important resemblance, is their underlying assumption about the structure of the curriculum, one narrowly based on language and arithmetic, and, in the case of Malta, Religious Instruction.

Although the curricula as documents highlighted gross similarities one notes that the major, and ultimately most important factor - implementation - revealed differences between the teaching professions in the two countries. Whilst in Malta it was introduced without any difficulty, in Britain there were harsh protests and its enactment faced a lot of difficulties (Maclure, 1986). In Malta the Code continued to be the regulating mechanism for the curriculum of the primary schools until the enactment of new legislation in 1974.

Whilst the Department of Education had taken quite a number of measures to reinforce central prescription a change of Director brought about some changes. The choice of curricula and textbooks remained in the hands of officials within the Department; national examinations were abolished and replaced by school-based ones; the Inspectorate began to modify their style to a more advisory one as against the dominant prescriptive/autocratic one (Department of Education, 1954).

These changes were brought about due to a number of reasons. Firstly, there was a healthy mood on a national level that things could be improved. Secondly, the new personnel employed within the Department of Education brought forth improved

relationships. Thirdly, teacher-training institutions, offering more professional courses, were set up. Lastly, the MUT, after achieving official recognition in 1943, brought its professional development role to the forefront of its concerns.

Thus the late 1940s and early 1950s saw the start of a degree of autonomy for teachers at school level with regards to the way teachers taught the curriculum. Zammit Mangion (1992) talks of a more child-centred focus to education. This curriculum discretion continued for over two decades. In 1972 this was further extended with the removal of school-based annual examinations as well as the 11+ examinations. Fenech is of the opinion that this was "a propitious time for the primary teachers to become more professionally adventurous by engaging in school-based curriculum evaluation and development activities" (1992, p.195). Fenech saw schools as having the opportunity to engage in school self-evaluation and yet instead began to "show willingness to succumb to departmental prescription, which came in 1976 with the establishment of national examinations and in 1981 with the introduction of the 11+" (1992, pp.195-196).

This writer does not agree with this analysis. Schools, then and now, could not implement the suggestions here alluded to by Fenech - that of school-based curriculum development and evaluation. For these to take place quite a number of factors need to be present, including the organisational structures at school level, the right value systems and support services - and not merely a degree of curriculum discretion. This is brought out quite clearly in the literature abroad on school effectiveness and self-evaluation in particular (e.g. Caldwell & Spinks, 1989; Clift, Nuttall, McCormick, 1989; DES, 1985; Emerson & Goddard, 1993; Reynolds & Cuttance, ed., 1993). One has to bear in mind that the changes enacted in the early 1970s were based on political ideologies of a socialist government which came into power in 1971. Their ideology was to provide education for all at secondary level and they approached this by abolishing the competitive 11+ examinations and creating 'area' schools which would take on mixed-ability students. This ran counter to the existing system which consisted of teachers who were trained to teach selected students and streamed classes. The teaching profession had not been prepared for such a dramatic change in school intake.

This point, however, has not been addressed by Fenech (1992) and Zammit Mangion (1992). Changes at national and school level do not take place in a vacuum, and any form of reform, even ideological, has to understand the context and climate in which it is to be introduced. This has always been a cause for an hiatus in educational reform in Malta.

The 1974 Education Act again saw the Minister of Education creating new mechanisms of control with the responsibility of the curriculum transferred from the Governor-in-Council to the Minister of Education. Article 3 stipulates that

Subject to the provision of this Act and to any regulations made thereunder, Government schools and educational institutions shall be administered and education therein imparted in accordance with directions from time to time given by the Minister and with such syllabi and curricula of study and subject to such requirements and of such qualifying and other examinations as the Minister may from time to time determine and approve; and the Minister may give different directions for different purposes and for different schools or institutions.

This Act repealed previous legislation and gave the Minister wide discretionary power over all forms of educational provision and curriculum matters.

Quite a number of changes in the educational power struggle took place during the post-war years. First, the 1947 Constitution granted self-government to the Maltese, and secondly a change in the procedure for the appointment of the Director of Education was introduced. Previously the Director had been appointed directly by the British authorities from outside the educational system. Since the 1940s Directors were chosen from within the ranks (mainly on the basis of seniority). With the exception of a brief period in the 1920s, educational policy making was in the hands of the Director of Education. However, for the past four decades the Minister of Education has assumed this prerogative. This means that the Department of Education has no more a policy-making role but merely a policy-implementing one (Cameron, 1970; Farrugia, 1992; Lewis, 1967).

It is worth noting at this stage that educational legislation in Malta provides the basis for policy making. This remains the prerogative of the Minister in power. On the other

hand the Department of Education has the power to introduce and implement policy directives within the Department itself and within schools. It is since 1947 that the Department of Education lost a lot of its traditionally wide policy making power and became what Cameron (1970) describes as the 'executive arm' of the Ministry of Education.

In a study on the relations between teachers and the State in Britain, Grace (1987) distinguishes between two power levels in educational administration, namely, that of the Minister representing the formal embodiment of the State in education and the "State apparatus", represented by the various categories of educational bureaucracy and administration. Grace points out that

The power relations between these two levels can and do change over time as a result of wider political developments; the energy and ideological commitments of particular ministers and the experience, skills and vested interests of the senior officials.

(1987, p.196)

This comment about shifting power relations between officials in the bureaucracy and the politicians in the case of Britain does not apply in a situation like the Maltese where the 'policy-making community' (MacPherson & Raab, 1988) has always been a narrow one. After Malta's Independence in 1964 the political parties won more and more power and the various government departments, including the Department of Education, took on a more executive role which still persists today (Calleja, 1988).

This shift in power relations in education was sealed by the introduction of the Interpretation Act of 1975 which placed the holders of administrative office in a more subservient role. Article 6a laid down that

...where an Act confers a power on the holder of an office, and such power relates to any business of the Government, or is exercisable as part of the functions of a department of Government, for which responsibility has been assigned to a Minister under the Constitution, such power even if expressed to be exercisable in the discretion (whether absolute or otherwise) of the holder of that office, shall be exercisable subject to the control, supervision and direction of the Minister responsible for that business or department of the Government.

The editorial of one of the local English daily newspapers 'The Times' is quite provocative, highlighting the plight of the civil servant

There was a time when the civil servant was considered to be, in some respect, too powerful. Now the politician, and not only Ministers but also MP's and prospective candidates for election, want to be seen overpowering the civil servant by too readily and too frequently inserting themselves between the public and the civil servant.

(The Times, 24th Sept., 1990)

Lawton's distinction between the bureaucrats and the professionals amongst the officers in the State system helps illuminate further the analysis of power relationships in education (Lawton, 1984, 1985). Lawton argues that, within the Department of Education and Science in Britain (DES) reside the professionals and bureaucrats, besides the politicians. Educational policy making is often a resolution of tension between the three parties. In his review of documents coming from DES he finds evidence of an influence of the three elements.

In Malta, the equivalent of these three groups can also be identified. They are to be found in the Department and Ministry of Education. The Minister, the Permanent Secretary and the Administrative sections within the Department of Education (i.e. civil servants) occupying one level, whilst the Director (now Director General) and his entourage, including the Education Officers (e.g. HMIs in the U.K.) in another level (see Figure 2.1).

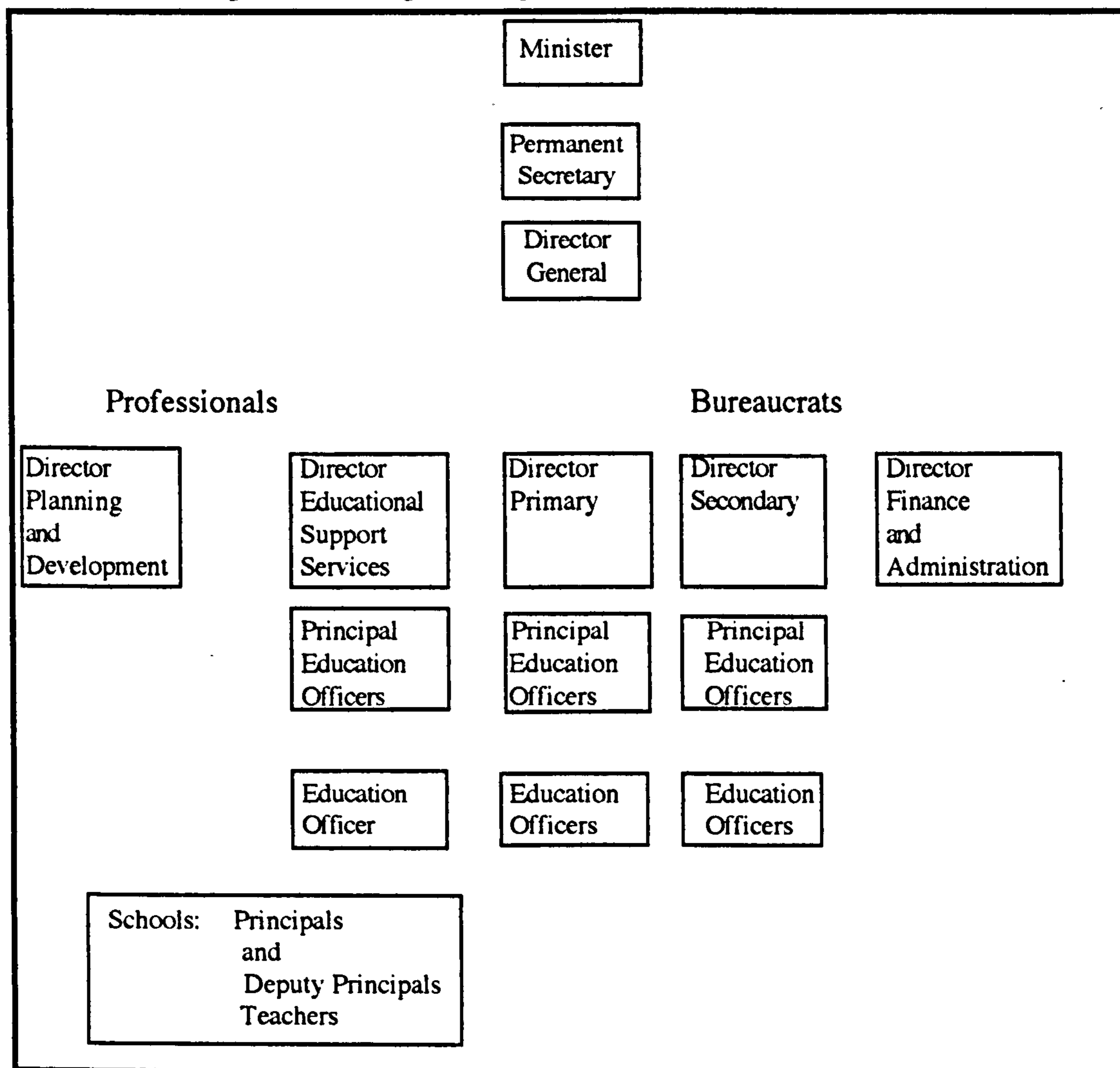
In Malta things unfold in practically the same manner. The politicians decide (a lot will depend on how these decisions are arrived at) and it is at the operations level that the bureaucrats and the implementers come in. They have to, as reported by Lewis (1967) and Cameron (1970), oversee any directive and its implementation. It is not the first time, however, that conflicts emanating from irreconcilable interests of the bureaucratic and the professional groups over the implementation of policy decisions arise (Farrugia, 1985). This mainly occurs when decisions regarding the funding for and eventually distribution of educational resources have to be taken, with the bureaucrats adopting "a dog in the manger attitude" (Cameron, 1970).

Hoy and Miskel explain this conflict of interests between professional and bureaucratic groups within organisations quite forcefully when they argue that

The ultimate basis of a professional act is professional knowledge; however, the ultimate justification of a bureaucratic act is its consistency with the organizational rules and regulations and approval by a superior. Therein lies the major source of conflict between the organization and the profession; it is the conflict between “professional expertise and autonomy” and “bureaucratic discipline and control”.

(1982, p.113)

Figure 2.1 The governing structure of education in Malta



The Maltese situation often unfolds such that the bureaucrats have the last say since they have more impact on the political group.



Reading through the Letter Circulars from the Department of Education to the schools will indicate quite explicitly the extent to which the educationalists end up being engulfed in bureaucratic procedures. As in Pullicino's day, detailed programmes of study based on prescribed textbooks are sent to the schools for implementation. They entail a strict pacing of the work of schools which allows them little space for the exercise of individual initiative. For instance, back in 1970, the Ladybird Key Word Reading Scheme was introduced in all State primary schools. National conferences were organised to facilitate implementation and establish "a certain amount of conformity" (Letter Circular 670.69.2). Teachers were directed to use the scheme as stipulated and at the same time were also reminded that they could not consider adopting any other scheme. The circular was reproduced in 1977, 1981 and 1985, and its directives are binding on the teachers to the present day.

The Education Act of 1988 set out the right of the state to establish a National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) of studies for all school. *Prima facie*, as Darmanin argues "this might appear as the legislation of entitlement rather than the imposition of ministerial norms" (1993, p.165). However, this Act was followed by a series of Legal Notices stipulating the NMC for each level of schooling. Farrugia commented that the "exaltations of the Act [regarding the NMC] have not been matched by executive action" (1992, p.165). And, after the introduction of the NMC, which was designed to be broad enough to move from previous centralisation of prescribed syllabi, this was followed in 1990 by a detailed primary school syllabus, and in the early 1990s by centrally developed detailed schemes of work for teachers to follow.

## **2.7 The training of primary school teachers and principals**

Although a system of elementary schools had existed for over half a century, no adequate provision for the training of teachers had been undertaken. This is well evidenced by Keenan who reported that

Of training in the real sense as it is understood in Britain and Ireland, there is simply none. There is, to be sure, a rough and ready way, something in the shape of preparatory practice; but it is too rough and even as practice, too incomplete to be dignified as training.

(1879, p.16)

The training Keenan is here referring to merely consisted in having the best pupils in the top elementary grades being selected for upgrading instruction to be completed by a few sessions in method at the Model School in Valletta. Their knowledge of subject matter was naturally limited, practically non-existent. School authorities therefore adopted a textbook-bound curriculum.

On Keenan's recommendations the best candidates started being sent to England to pursue courses in colleges of education. In 1888 a Training School was set up with the mission of improving teacher quality. Unfortunately, although this system lasted forty years, it did not produce the expected results. This was mainly due to the fact that the teacher-trainees had only an elementary education background.

Laferla, in the 1920s proposed a solution by setting up Central Schools to be followed by the Higher Central school. After the successful completion of the course, they were employed as pupil teachers and required to attend one day a week at the Training School before they were given appointment. In these schools the pupil teachers were instructed in the subject teaching in general and methodologies of class control and discipline. It was a type of training aptly described by Pritchard as "based on the personal experience of the instructors, on what had worked for them, on intuition and common sense in view of the conditions and class sizes their students would encounter in the schools" (1988, p.100). By the 1930s the work of the Central Schools began to bear fruit, and by 1934 the system could even boast of a steady supply of teachers. Entry qualifications into the teaching service were raised to the Senior Oxford School Certificate. In 1935 the Training School course was up-dated to a 3-year, part-time Post-Certificate Course in pedagogy and primary school curriculum subjects with a tough examination at the end of each year. Lectures were delivered by the best principals and subject Masters available on the Island. A fourth year was eventually added for the most meritorious which concentrated on English language and literature.

Future principals were selected from those candidates who obtained the highest marks in the final examinations and who were then sent on a scholarship course in a U.K. teachers' training college to obtain the U.K. Teacher's Certificate. Principalships were given only to those who successfully completed their two-year teacher-training U.K. course (Laferla, Malta Government Gazette, 1938, p.319). This scheme was phased out in the late 1960s.

The Ellis Report was full of praise of the initiatives introduced by Laferla. However he felt that the time had come for teacher training to be more intensive, more advanced and more comprehensive (1943, p.3). This report was taken up by the Government and became its charter of educational reforms in the 40s and the 50s (Zammit Mangion, 1992).

In 1947 two Training Colleges run by Religious Orders were set up locally. Entry requirements became more demanding. Courses were also extended, growing from a one year course first to two, and then to three years. Certification at the Teacher Training Colleges was recognised by the London University Institute of Education. The final stage was reached in 1978 when a Faculty of Education was established within the University of Malta and started offering a Bachelors degree in Education. In the 1980s it also started offering post graduate certificate in education courses (PGCE).

A 1951 Reorganisation Scheme for teachers which was implemented in 1953 saw for the first time introduced the post of Deputy Principal (then called 'School Assistant') to help Principals in primary schools. This initiative did a lot to raise the standards of efficiency and qualifications of teachers (Zammit Mangion, 1992). All those who wanted to be considered for the post of Deputy principal had to sit for a competitive examination. Prospective principals were chosen on the basis of seniority from those occupying the post of deputy principal. The Reorganisation Scheme of 1974 however, saw the end of examinations which the 1953 Reorganisation Agreement had introduced for the post of Deputy principal and the requirement that Deputy Principals proceed overseas for their further training before appointment were abolished, and no post-selection or post-appointment training requirement was included any longer in the

conditions of service. A new promotion scheme was introduced: 60% of the vacant posts to be filled in purely on the basis of seniority and 40% by application, interview and selection according to merit.

Since then the Department of Education has tried to make up for the deficiency created by this Scheme by embarking, in conjunction with the University of Malta, on a management training course for newly-appointed principals. These courses were started in 1992. Two such courses have been held so far and judging from the participants' feedback they have proved very fruitful. It is hoped that such a course becomes a regular feature of the Department's support services.

In addition, since 1986 the Faculty of Education has been running a two-year evening diploma course in Educational Administration and Management which is intended for teachers holding or aspiring to posts of administrative responsibility in education. Candidates for the diploma, at present, must be in possession of a locally recognised teaching qualification together with five years teaching experience. It is to be noted that the Agreement between the Government and the MUT on the Reorganisation of Teaching Grades of 1989 stipulated that in appointing Deputy Principals on the basis of merit and efficiency, preference was to be given to teachers in possession of the Diploma in Educational Administration and Management. A recent development has been the signing of a Reorganisation Agreement between the Government and the MUT (August 1994) which, amongst other things, states that any person wishing to be considered for the post of principal must be a deputy principal of five years standing and in possession of the diploma just mentioned and/or another recognised qualification.

Apart from what can be described as 'formal' approaches to school administrator development the Department of Education has been offering since 1987, during the summer vacation, one-week in-service courses on topics related to school administration. These courses are mainly directed to those occupying an administrative post. Such courses are attended on a voluntary basis and are limited to around 20/30 participants at a time.

The 1994 Agreement also abandons seniority as a criterion for promotion. A price had to be paid for stopping a method which had been in use for twenty years and had raised the expectations of long-serving officers. This took the form of a rather strange provision which stated that for every one of the next fifty principals to be appointed, the most senior deputy principal (not appointed) will start earning a salary equivalent to that of the appointed principal. In other words, faced with the prospect of having to appoint, on the basis of seniority, someone who is considered unsuitable, the government has opted to burden the Treasury rather than the school, and keep the aspirant happy.

Salary wise, principals have not fared well. While more is being asked of them in the management of their schools, the difference between the salary they receive and that of teachers on their staff has diminished steadily over the past 20 years. In 1975, a principal's salary was 30% higher than a teacher's. By 1989 that difference had gone down to 15%. Now it stands at just around 7%. This is attributed to the limited number of salary scales available for fitting in all teaching grades 4.

It is however, in their chances of promotion that senior principals have suffered the most serious setbacks in the last five years. Under the 1975 agreement, assistant directors of education were appointed from principals and education officers, generally on a personal seniority basis. This method was adhered to for fifteen years. Then in 1989, for no apparent reason, the method was replaced by the introduction of two provisions. The first was that principals aspiring to higher promotions had to indicate their intention early on in their career by refusing principalships of schools over 500 pupils and the salary that went with this position. The second had to do with filling a new post of principal education officer created to fill the gap between principal/education officer and assistant director. In a once-only gesture of benevolence, the initial eight posts were filled equally from principals and education officers, but thereafter they would be filled from education officers only. It is still difficult to understand the motives behind these provisions. However, they, like other issues, are cause for concern and reflection especially for those aspiring for the principalship.

### **2.7.1 A summary**

In this broad overview of teacher education provision in Malta, three distinct phases can at least be identified. The first phase (1800-1880s) was characterised by ill-educated teachers who acquired rudimentary pedagogical skills by imitating another teacher. It was a device introduced to meet the exigencies of the time brought about by the start of mass schooling, which was characterised by large number of pupils, lack of teachers to meet the demand, and lack of adequate space as well as resources. It marked the start of the pupil-teacher system based on the assumption that the school could teach itself. As Fenech argues this “was a contingency arrangement rather than the result of an articulated philosophy of teacher education” (1992, p.208).

The second phase (1880s-1940s) saw training as the occurrence at the start of one’s career which entailed the acquisition of transfer to the chalk face. Once acquired it was assumed that they would last a lifetime. Therefore, not only was it assumed that the baggage of skills, knowledge and attitudes could be identified beforehand, but they would remain permanently valid.

The third phase (1940s- today) saw a radical change in orientation. Like the second phase this approach entailed the removal of the teacher from the chalk face to receive training in a separate institution. However, as against the previous two phases, it acknowledged its limitations and provided for them by prescribing periodic topping-up through in-service courses. It took the view that knowledge, skills and attitudes could become obsolete after a period of time.

Training for the post of school administrator has changed dramatically over the years. It started in the 1930s with Maltese being sent to attend teacher training colleges in the U.K. During the 1960s and mid-1980s practically nothing happened. Then the mid-1980s saw the professional development of principals being introduced at two levels. First, seminars, INSET courses and short intensive courses in management development were introduced for existing school administrators and newly-appointed ones. On another level, the University of Malta started running a two-year evening diploma course for existing and aspiring school administrators.

Salary incentives for principals have diminished and are presently quite insignificant when compared with teachers' salaries and those of deputy principals. Promotion chances for the young principals look brighter. For those long in the service they have been killed, since principals, now, have to indicate, quite early in their career, whether or not they aspire to take on posts within the Head Office structure.

These phases indicate development and training of teachers which has occurred over a period of nearly a century and a half.

## **2.8 Developing professional confidence**

It is clear from what we have said so far that teacher initiative/autonomy, including that of the principal, was kept to a minimum. The call for uniformity and its effects on educators is clearly brought out in the following quote:

Every school in Malta uses the same textbooks, the class syllabi are uniform throughout, and the same type of blackboards, benches, teaching aids and apparatus is found in all the schools. This is so because everything is controlled from Head Office and very little, if any, initiative is left to the principal ... It cannot be denied that routine and centralisation have created a uniformity in our schools that is bordering on regimentation and in educational matters, regimentation is taboo.

(MUT, 1958, p.8)

To ease central direction, the MUT started making claims for a redefinition of the role of the Inspectorate from one which is purely inspectional to one which is of an advisory nature. In 1975 the Government came to an agreement with the MUT and it abolished the category of the Inspector and replaced it by that of Education Officer. Through such initiatives propagating the dissemination of progressive educational practice and making specific/concrete recommendations to the authorities the MUT worked constantly to bring about a change in the culture of teaching and schools in particular.

After the Second World war the MUT started presenting a case for the abolition of the elementary tradition in primary education which until then prevailed. They were of the opinion that the existing system should be replaced by a course which is the first stage of an educational process on the lines suggested by Hadow (Board of Education, 1931) culminating in secondary education for all (MUT, 1945, p.283, 322). Unsuccessful, it

still continued to articulate its philosophy of a progressive primary curriculum

Nowadays schools do more than instruct pupils in the 3Rs. We are concerned with the all-round education of lively boys and girls; we provide for the practice and enjoyment of health in and out of school; we teach children the practice and enjoyment of music and the arts and of skills and crafts; educate them in good citizenship and teach them to know, love and serve God.

(The Teacher, 1952 ,p.1)

The MUT fought an unsuccessful battle for a comprehensive system of education when secondary education for all was introduced in 1970 for egalitarian reasons. When the 11+ examinations were reintroduced in 1981, it did the same thing and sent a memorandum<sup>5</sup> to the political parties on the eve of the election reminding them that

Teaching in the primary schools should never be conditioned by highly selective examinations leading to a special secondary school. This leads to cramming in at least the last two years of the primary level with the consequent neglect of the true aims of education.

(MUT, 1981,p.2)

The MUT constantly strives to inject into the system ideas and concrete proposals for implementation. Governmental responses to such initiatives have alternated between the totally receptive to the utterly antagonistic. At the moment relations between the union and the policy-makers is entering a delicate phase which in certain respects is full of promise.

However, this writer is of the opinion that when one makes a thorough analysis of most MUT - Government agreements, they have, in the main, emphasised better salaries and better conditions of work for teachers. Hardly any drive has been directed towards structural changes at the school and classroom level which would call for different professional relationships to be developed by teaching staff and within the whole teaching profession. This means that whilst on the one hand teachers were becoming more professionally qualified, and through their union, were calling for greater recognition (mainly status), hardly anything was being done to institutionalise a system which would lead to restructuring at school level. We are presently faced with a system which is highly centralised, with teachers who are now academically qualified



and with a strong union behind them safeguarding their classroom autonomy. Thus, whilst a system of centralisation has persisted over the years, its hold on the role of the teacher has dramatically changed, with the union being the main instigator of this change. Any move towards school reform has to contend with, on the one hand a centralised system of education and on the other teachers strongly safeguarding their autonomy.

## **2.9 Concluding remarks**

This chapter has discussed the introduction and eventual consolidation of control in the Maltese education system. The power to establish a system of primary schools primarily rested with the colonial administrators, who, through the agency of chosen leaders from among the top class of the local population, found no difficulty in concentrating power in the central administration. Malta inherited an administrative system similar to the one described by Johnson, that is, one with a

historical convergence of two cultures: that of the colonised and the colonisers ... (a system) providing the apparatus for the subjection of one to the other.

(1973,p.294)

Thus the British developed an efficient central administration to govern the local population and at the same time provide the support services demanded by the military. In this organisational scheme, we have seen, decentralisation, sharing of power and, least of all, autonomy had no place. Such attitudes survived post colonial years. This task seemed to have been made easier by a number of factors.

Perhaps the most powerful factor was the newness of educational change itself. Power in the hands of those who planned the system was increased by the fact that there had been nothing before it and therefore there were no constraints of decisions taken by previous administrators. And, since the expansion of the local system of education needed the financial support of the British Government, this strengthened the hands of those in central authority. The indifference on the part of the illiterate population, together with the total indifference of the upper class to the provision provided, made it practically impossible for local leaders to emerge and make claims for some say in

educational matters at the local level. Finally, the submissive trait in the Maltese character (Zammit, 1988) also facilitated the imposition of centralised control.

Once the mechanisms of control were set in motion subsequent educational administrators used them to employ coercive methods to introduce change in the educational system. It took over seventy years for the MUT to emerge on the educational scene and a further quarter of a century for it to be recognised as a negotiating partner in the educational power relationship. And it was through the efforts of the teachers' union that the case for a measure of devolved decision-making had been made. The extent of the success did not only depend on the strength of the union's pressure but also on the holders of political office as well as the professional qualities of the rank and file.

The training that administrators, in particular, have received over the years has fluctuated. After the Second World War prospective principals were receiving specialised training abroad and teachers aspiring for an administrative post had to sit for competitive examinations. The 1960s and 1970s was practically a period of stagnation with only a few deputy principals receiving training abroad prior to taking on the principalship. The 1974 Reorganisation Scheme saw the abolition of the existing system and the introduction of a scheme based on 60% of the appointment being based on seniority and the remaining 40% by application and selection according to merit. The late 1980s and early 1990s have seen a revival in the need for specialised training both of a formal and informal nature intended for those occupying or aspiring for administrative posts.

School administrators and their teachers, however, whether individually or as an organised group, have not yet achieved that degree of professional autonomy which gives them enough confidence to intervene decisively in particular school matters. The attitude that school policy, aims and curriculum development are the prerogative of the central administration still prevails. And the lack of structural provision for administrators and their staff to take the initiative and create their own structures for development and evaluation, on the lines of other educational systems abroad, has

served to reinforce that attitude. Thus, principals and their teaching staff have never had the opportunity to engage in school development work. What has brought about this state of affairs has been a combination of three factors, namely Ministerial reluctance to devolve more responsibilities to the schools, the reluctance of the MUT for organisational changes at the school level, and the Department's inadequacies as an agency of change and development. The latter will be shown in the study of the principalship in Maltese primary schools.

**Notes:**

- 1 Before joining the Education Department Laferla was a Captain in the British Army.
- 2 It is interesting to note is that since the early 1990s the Government set-up an organisation called the Management Systems Unit comprised of Maltese and foreign consultants. One of their main objectives is to propose ways and means of improving the Maltese Civil Service. Some of the recommendations to be found in a Report on the Department of Education published in 1993 are very similar to those proposed by Bruce.
- 3 The Malta Union of Teachers was finally recognised as a trade union in 1943, after a struggle spanning a quarter of a century.
- 4 The 1994 salary scales for education class grades are the following:

Director General	Scale 3 Lm 7,701
Director	Scale 4 Lm 7,001
Assistant Director	Scale 5 Lm 5,010 x Lm 199 - Lm 6,204
Education Officer	Scale 6 Lm 4,695 x Lm 185 - Lm 5,805
Principal	Scale 6 Lm 4,695 x Lm 185 - Lm 5,805

Deputy Principal	Scale 7 Lm 4,424 x Lm 164 - Lm 5,408
Teacher (over 20 years)	Scale 7 Lm 4,424 x Lm 164 - Lm 5,408
Teacher (over 10 years)	Scale 8 Lm 4,159 x m151 - Lm 5,065
Teacher	Scale 9 Lm 3,918 x Lm126 - Lm 4,461

5 Prior to elections, every five years, the Malta Union of Teachers prepares an educational memorandum which is distributed to all parties contesting the elections.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE ROLE OF PRINCIPAL**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the concept of identity as perceived by the primary school principal, and to focus upon the role of the principal in terms of how he/she sees it and also how his/her function is perceived by significant others. By examining these related concepts it should be possible to identify the nature of the tasks the primary school principal finds himself/herself engaged upon during the course of running the school as he/she fulfils his/her role in its broadest sense. The first part will explore the local authorities' attempt at defining the tasks and responsibilities required of principals in Malta. Then, the U.K. primary school principalship is explored. At the end of the chapter the context of the investigation is highlighted.

#### **3.2 The role of the Maltese Principal**

In 1981 the Malta Union of Teachers (i.e. the largest representative body of the teaching profession) requested the government to recognise teachers' professional status and to place them on the civil service grade at par with members of the established professions. The Union's claim followed the graduation of the first group of student-teachers to qualify from the newly established Bachelor of Education programme within the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. That event was acknowledged by the educational authorities, and highlighted by the Union's claim, as the beginning of a new era for the teaching service, and an important step towards the mutually acclaimed objective of creating an all-graduate teaching force. Since then the 'professional status of teachers' has become an important issue for the teaching corps in Malta.

The reorganisation of teacher education and its outcome in the form of a bachelors degree in education had an immediate impact on the salary and status relativity of teachers with other grades in the civil service. However, local research has shown (Farrugia, 1985) that the transfer of teacher education from Teacher Training Colleges

to the university had, in the longer process, far greater implications for teachers' occupational attitudes than the immediate improved civil service grade ratings.

One also notes another trend developing in the Maltese education system, especially over the past twenty years in which three Reorganisation Agreements have been signed (in 1974, 1989 and 1994 respectively). In all Agreements the main focus has always been directed at the reorganisation of the teacher grades. Such agreements have mainly expressed a concern towards teacher salaries and their conditions of work in relation to other professions. At the same time nothing has been expressed with regards to the incumbents of school principalship, the role they have to play in school management and quality improvement in particular, their salary and conditions of work in relation to professionals at their level in other sectors (e.g. bank managers, managers in industry, university lecturers).

Investigation into the type of documentation on the principalship revealed that some form of systematic attempt to define the role of the principal is contained in the 1989 Reorganisation Agreement which highlights appointment criteria and procedures, together with particular working conditions. The Agreement states that:

- principals should be appointed from deputy principals having not less than five years experience in the grade of deputy principal and based on the following criteria:
  - 60% of potential principals on the basis of efficiency and seniority,
  - the remaining 40% of potential principals on the basis of merit and efficiency following a call for applications (1989, p.13);
- school population determines the number of deputy principals a principal can have (ibid., p.18); and
- principals move from one scale-band to the next on the basis of efficiency and seniority subject to the school having the pupil population to which the particular scale-band is applicable (ibid., p.4).<sup>1</sup>

These conditions reveal the main criteria for eligibility and hence the determining factors behind selection and promotion to administrative posts in schools in Malta. The most important criterion stands out as being age (i.e. seniority), followed by merit and efficiency.

This has led to a situation where principals can move to a higher scale-band if and when there exists a vacancy in a school with the pupil population to which the particular scale-band is applicable. What this really means in practice is that a principal might be offered a promotion to a higher scale-band quite late in his/her career. And, as a result of this approach principals are moved from one sector (i.e. primary, secondary, technical, post-secondary) to another according to Education Division exigencies. Moreover, this situation is made even worse when principals have hardly had time to settle in one school that they are moved to another. The transfer of administrative and teaching staff respectively is one which has rendered instability as a general characteristic of schools. This criterion also means that the older a principal gets the larger the school population and teaching staff he/she has to handle.

The latest developments are to be found in a recent Education circular (122/1993), which came out over two years after this research was initiated, for the post of principal which lists the following responsibilities in addition to the ones stated above. This list underlines how the local authorities perceive the role of the principal.

- i) the proper management of the staff at the school;
- ii) the organisation of the school;
- iii) the maintenance of discipline, orderliness and cleanliness within the school;
- iv) the upkeep of the school plant;
- v) the keeping of up-to-date records of pupils, staff and other relevant information concerning the school;
- vi) the timely requisitioning of the school's utilities requirements;
- vii) the proper management of the school's stores and other material resources;
- ix) liaison with parents, staff and officials at Head Office;
- x) carrying out any duties compatible with the job.

(Education circular 122/1993)

The Maltese list of responsibilities seem to provide us with particular deficiencies. On the one hand the tasks and responsibilities have been presented without any attempt to group them within key areas. Secondly, probably because of a typing error, item (viii) has been omitted from the list altogether. Thirdly, items like 'the proper management of staff', and 'the organisation of the school' are so general that they have no value in such a list because they are open to all sorts of interpretations.

Such a list, and its shortcomings, provides us with substantial information as to how

principals are being perceived on the Island. Item (i) 'the proper management of the staff' is definitely a crucial area of management for any principal. However, it needs clarification since many of the Maltese principals are appointed to the principalship without any prior management training. Personnel management involves, amongst other things, establishing effective means of communication, delegating responsibilities, motivating staff, organising meetings, resolving conflict. The Education Division has partly made up for this deficiency by embarking, in conjunction with the University of Malta, on a management training course for newly-appointed principals. One also has to question what is meant to be understood by the word 'proper'. Is 'proper' to be defined in a prescriptive sense - i.e. the management of staff as prescribed by central authorities; or does it allow principals to create their own management procedures to tackle school matters? Item (ii) on the other hand looks into school organisation. Here again this item is open to interpretation. The organisation of 'what' is very much explained in the list that follows item (ii). Such an interpretation stresses a dependency model with principals being called to adopt organisational structures and management procedures which are centrally prescribed. It could also be seen as a move towards greater autonomy at the school level and, in particular, in the ways principals 'manage' their schools.

Items (iii) and (v) centre round the pupil, teaching staff and auxiliary staff, another crucial area. The principal is expected to maintain discipline, order and cleanliness, and to keep up-to-date records of all pupils within the school. Record keeping can become a daunting task. The most common complaint from principals is that they are inundated with paperwork, and, considering that many schools do not have any clerical staff, the principal is often reduced to a glorified clerk (Aquilina & Portelli, 1987; Farrugia, ed., 1994; Fenech, 1992).

It is also important to note how the list considers order and discipline together with cleanliness. One would imagine that cleanliness would fall under item (iv) which considers the general upkeep of the school.

Items (iv), (vi) and (vii) concern the management of resources. The operative word



here is 'requisitioning', for though school councils have been set up to administer the funds and assets of the school, the principal remains with little or no say in the provision of resources. These items confirm that the principal is still required to requisition stores and maintenance works which will be supplied centrally, not always as requested, not always when required, sometimes not at all (Muscat, 1993, p.46). There has been an attempt to pass on a small sum of money to the principal to meet minor maintenance requirements, but this is too small and has hardly changed the complete dependence on Head Office for what the list calls 'utilities requirements' (Farrugia, ed., 1994).

Item (ix) has to do with outside contacts.

The latest Agreement sees one main development on the 1989 agreement. This calls for prospective principals to be in possession of a recognised qualification in administration and management.

Such then is the way the primary school principal is perceived. Principals are required to maintain discipline and order in the school and to keep it clean; to keep some sort of up-to-date records; to maintain the level of resources and plant upkeep by timely requisitioning; to show skills of personnel management and to establish and maintain outside links.

The Maltese list tends to ignore some of the most important areas of the principal's activity and influence as those highlighted by Whitaker (1987) and Waters (1985). There is nothing, for instance, about having a vision and purpose (e.g. Holmes, 1993), being goal-oriented, about aims, objectives and school policies (Mortimore & Mortimore, 1991; Robbins & Alvy, 1995), about curriculum design and development (Day, Whitaker & Johnson, 1990), about staff development and appraisal (Southworth, 1993), nothing on school planning (Davies & Ellison, 1992; MacGilchrist et al., 1995; Stoll & Mortimore, 1995), nothing about evaluation, budgeting and finances (e.g. Audit Commission, 1993).

According to Hughes (1985) the principal acts as both chief executive and leading professional. The post LMS principals are seeing their role changing from that of teacher and leading professional (e.g. Hellowell, 1991) to that of manager (Bullock & Thomas, 1994; HMI, 1992). The Maltese list fits in nicely into the chief executive category but contains nothing of what is to be found in the leading professional dimension. In other words, our existing perception of the principal is as an executive, a civil servant supervising varied activities taking place in the school as has been reported by Fenech (1992).

The UNESCO study (1988) reports a small group of principals arguing that despite so much focus on the school and the way the structures and goals of education and schooling in particular have changed over the years in Malta there has been no focus nor mention as to the principal's changing role (or otherwise) in the school. Principals argue that they bear the brunt of Ministerial and Departmental shortcomings, contending that they are expected to fulfil the increasingly ambitious educational targets set by politicians and high-ranking civil servants, to comply with the increasing demands of teachers, and to satisfy the heightened academic and social expectations of parents. They also seemed to claim that they have to work in an unstable milieu wrought with lack of direction, ministerial control and lack of support, inadequate resources, workload pressures and no say in policy making concerning school reform. It is hoped that one of the effects of this research will be to verify these claims.

In two publications which came out in the late 1980s, Maltese primary school principals put forward the following recommendations to the education authorities:

- schools should be encouraged to develop their ethos and programme of activities along chosen aims which would be within the principles governing education.
- as professionals [principals] should be allowed more freedom in curricular and administrative matters.

(UNESCO, 1988, p.183)

- Schools (within broad national guidelines) develop their own aims and objectives which form the basis of evaluation of that school's programme.
- The present roles and responsibilities of school administrators be seriously studied and planned in the context of modern educational

thought.

- The authorities concerned should see that school administrators are helped in becoming effective educational leaders concerned with the accomplishment of the following roles:

- principal as manager
- principal as leader of people
- principal as curriculum developer
- principal as change agent.

(Department of Education, 1989, pp.33-34)

Bearing in mind these comments and the latest job description of principals shows that not many of their comments have been addressed. In fact, in the latest national conference on primary schools similar concerns were aired by principals

- Principals are the managers of the schools and have to give due attention to office administration but first and foremost they should be able to manage the learning situation.

- Principals should have enough time to be able to take the initiative leading their staff in the school's educational mission.

- ...principals should have more say in curriculum development, selection of text-books, staff organisation and the controlling of other school needs.

- In order to be able to nurture a creative dimension, Principals need to be seen as agents of change. In the present circumstances it was noted that there are a number of handicaps. ...

(Farrugia, ed.,1994, pp.251-253)

There is a clear dichotomy between what is laid down by central authorities as to what principals should do with what principals feel they should be involved in. A detailed analysis of a) how principals see their role, and b) how they appear to operate within their prescribed role would help us gain a better understanding of the principalship in Malta. Prescription on its own will not, as Whitaker (ibid.) argues, determine what principals do. A more indepth approach is required in order for us to get a clearer picture of what is a highly complex and ill-defined role, which as Jones suggests, is circumscribed by an "unbiddable set of variables" (1988, p.6).

In view of the key position that principals hold and the impact this has on all aspects of school life it is not unreasonable to argue that a better understanding of the issues being raised by Maltese principals would shed more light on the complex nature and dynamics of the principalship. Indeed, in the light of the research literature which

supports the idea that leadership and the principalship in particular are essential factors in determining school effectiveness an investigation of the reality of the professional life of school principals takes on added importance.

Quite a number of studies which have sought to identify those characteristics/factors which can determine or help in the success of schools (i.e. bring about school effectiveness) have singled out the 'quality of leadership' as the most important one (e.g. DES, 1977; Mortimore et al., 1988; Reynolds & Cuttance, 1993). This study is concerned with the role of the principal within the Maltese education system.

Observations abroad, such as those by the DES that "the most important single factor in the success of ... schools is the quality of leadership of the head" (1977, p.36); that "purposeful leadership of the staff by the headteachers" (e.g. Davis & Thomas, 1989; ILEA, 1986) is a key factor behind school effectiveness, form the basic premise of this study which aims to establish a research base built round contemporary literature and locally undertaken research round which we can study, analyse and understand the role of the Maltese principal and the principalship in general.

The following section will, as a means of contrast, examine the role of the U.K. primary school principal.

### **3.3 The Concept of Role with reference to Primary School Principals in Britain**

There are many different uses of the term role. Robinson (1981) suggests that some writers take it to refer to positions within society. Others consider the performance of people in the role. Hence, he suggests, role can have passive or active interpretations depending upon the model of socialisation employed by the individual. To comprehend meaningfully how a person is carrying out his/her role, Robinson states that

people do not simply respond to their role, to the value orientation or the economic substructure, but actively create their roles in the material circumstances in which they live.

(1981, p.38)

This does not imply, as Robinson goes on to state, that the individual has the freedom to do as he/she pleases, or to ignore the power which some have to constrain the activities of others. Instead, he suggests, the individual is immersed in an objective social structure, within which interaction with significant others will forge an objective reality of the world.

Quite a number of writers have analysed the concept of role in relation to teaching with Hargreaves (1975), Coulson (1976) and Whitaker (1987) being three of the most cogent. Whitaker considered the concept of role and suggested that

When we talk about a role we are more concerned with the part played by an individual in social or organisational life, than with personality. The role a person is considered to be playing is, to a large extent, determined by a set of well-defined expectations.

(1987, p.3)

This reflects the active perspective suggested by Robinson. On the other hand Hargreaves proposes a more passive perspective:

We shall use role to refer to behavioural expectations of a position.

(1975, p.46)

Although the above definitions may have different interpretations, both writers make reference to expectations within their concept of role. The relevance of expectations requires further examination as it will be argued later that the role of the principal and the tasks attached hereto are largely consequences of the expectations of his/her role.

Hargreaves points out that role behaviour may differ from role expectations. Role behaviour will be affected by a number of factors including personality factors, the way the incumbent sees their role, the ideology of the school, the status of the role holder in the educational institution or in society in general, pupil motivation, and the expectations of the different members of the role set (i.e. the complement of role relationships which arise from his/her holding a particular position). Furthermore Hargreaves suggests that the whole body of expectations making up the role is likely to contain some conflicting elements. The occasions in which the person finds difficult in conforming to the expectations that make up his/her role have been defined as role

strain or role conflict. Circumstances within the school which may bring about role conflict include occasions when a person simultaneously occupies two positions where the roles are incompatible. An example of this inter-role conflict is that faced by a teacher whose own child is in his/her class; the formality of the teacher role can often come into conflict with the loving role of the father. Another example of role conflict is that caused by a lack of consensus with regard to the expectations of a role. For example, amongst teachers there exists a range of opinion about the efficacy of areas like 'traditional' or 'progressive' methods. The disagreements about different methodologies, children's rights, and so on, constitute the source of much role conflict.

Role conflicts can also arise when the expectations of different role partners are not compatible. Hargreaves points out that the deputy principal is particularly susceptible to this form of role strain. The principal demands the loyalty of his/her deputy in the carrying out of school policy. On the other hand the staff regards the deputy as one who fights for their views and to be an informer on the principal's intentions. Finally, role conflict can arise when the values, attitudes or personality of the person cause him/her to fail to meet the expectations of the role. As an example Hargreaves suggests that the principal who lacks organising ability or inter-personal skills is likely to create administrative chaos or friction with his/her teachers because of his/her inability to meet their role expectations of him/her.

In general Hargreaves states that

role conflict is a very common occurrence and there are very few roles  
which are not to some degree liable to one or more conflicts ...  
(1975, p.54)

Such a statement raises an important question, why, then are social situations not in a continual state of imbalance or tension which the various types of role-conflict seem to imply? Hargreaves analysed a number of mechanisms which are used to resolve or reduce role conflict. These mechanisms include strategies such as presenting a temporary idealised role performance or conforming to the expectations of the most

influential role partner. Another mechanism and a very significant one within the framework of this enquiry is that of giving one role priority over others. Hargreaves states

even within a single role there is likely to be a hierarchy of obligations which dictate the expectation to be accorded priority.

(1975, p.55)

This mechanism of role priority involves making an assessment of the tasks in hand and then deciding which one merits immediate or prolonged attention. The central theme of this investigation is an analysis of the tasks performed by the primary school principal. It is obvious that perceived priorities will be a significant factor in this enquiry, hence the issue will require fuller examination later.

As has already been stated both Hargreaves (ibid.) and Whitaker (ibid.) stress the significance of expectations within roles. Whitaker further develops the model when he identifies 'expectations' as one of four distinct categories which influence the role of the primary principal. 'Expectations', 'prescriptions', 'situations' and 'predilections' combine, Whitaker suggests, to provide a definition of the principal's role.

'Expectations', Whitaker contends, come from a number of sources, principally a) parents, b) teachers and c) local/central authorities. Whitaker points out that a) parents do not only concern themselves with educational issues but are also demanding in terms of their children's rights, behaviour, social relationships and health in particular. They expect principals to be knowledgeable about all aspects of the child and expect him/her to intervene when specific problems arise. Principals do spend quite a lot of their time (e.g. Webb, 1994) responding to the different expectations of parents who themselves represent a wide range of value positions. b) Teachers also have their own expectations. Here Whitaker points out that although the principal is perceived in terms of his/her leadership qualities the nature of the principal's task/role will very "much depend upon the personal and professional aspirations of the members of staff" (1987, p.6). The performance of the principal will very much depend on the type of relationship(s) that he/she manages to nurture in the school. The importance of the

concept of leadership and its implications for the principal will be developed later. c) The third major influence on 'expectations' originates from the expectations of local and central authorities. Whitaker suggests that these expectations are articulated at appointment boards, in-service courses and seminars and are perpetuated by school visits and inspections.

Another important category identified by Whitaker is that of 'Prescriptions'. Prescriptions are those influences which are mainly established through legislation (e.g. Education Acts). They can be either of an educational nature such as the provision of Environmental Education or Religious Education in schools. They could be also of a less specific nature such as Health and Safety at Work regulations. Irrespective of their emphasis these prescriptive influences require the attention of the principal and departmental officials are in power to monitor their adoption. Prescriptions, though, within the British Educational System are to a minimum and the principal finds himself/herself invested with the power to control virtually all aspects of the day to day running of the school (e.g. Adelman & Alexander, 1982; Waters, 1979). In fact Alexander states that "the primary head in Britain has a formidable concentration of power which the requirements of the 1980 Education Act concerning the role of governors and the rights of parents have done little to diminish" (1984, p.161). This power, Alexander contends is considerably more than administrative. The 1982 HMI first school survey asserts that the principal is responsible for the ethos of the school.

This implies ... planning a suitable curriculum, establishing the organisation to implement it and a system for evaluating what is taught ... maintaining good communications and relations with parents, the local community, the LEA and the heads and teachers of associated schools.

(DES, 1982, para.3.1)

The Articles of Government addressed to Governors of primary schools in the Inner London Education Authority state

the headmaster (sic) shall control the conduct and curriculum, the internal organisation, management and discipline of the school, the choice of equipment, books and other resources, the methods of teaching and the general arrangement of teaching groups, and shall exercise supervision over the teaching and non-teaching staff.

(Waters, 1979, p.13)



Although addressed to primary schools within the I.L.E.A., a similar degree of autonomy is present in primary schools throughout all regions of the country. The delegated powers are unequivocal and clearly illustrate the extent to which the head is the dominant authority figure within the school.

The prescriptive influence on the role of the principal is further evidenced in the regular memoranda, directives, procedures which are issued from local and central level. Such administrative tasks, although not intrinsically prescriptive, represent the legal-rational corpus concomitant with the position of the principal.

Current initiatives (i.e. post 1988 Education Reform Act in the U.K.) in education, including open enrolment, financial delegation, teacher appraisal, and records of achievement, have increased the power of the principal. Principals have overall responsibility for all that takes place in the running of a school. In recent years, principals have received increasingly detailed instructions from officers of their LEA on the organisation of their school. Now, through financial delegation, their role is extended further. The role of principals is, according to Hill, to:

- **understand** what is provided and how much is spent
- **initiate** work to reconsider resource allocation
- **assess** alternatives and their cost
- **consult** with those affected
- **decide** whether to change, and what, when and how
- **record** the decisions taken
- **evaluate** the effectiveness of the change.

(1989, p.27)

The move is towards a more managerial role than the leading professional role model (e.g. Bullock & Thomas, 1994). LMS has also introduced an imposed role to governors, which include the power of financial management, curriculum, pupil discipline and staff appointment (e.g. Hill, 1989; HMI, 1992).

The role is also affected by what Whitaker calls the 'Situation' of the school. Situations, states Whitaker, includes such factors as the physical characteristics of the school and the environment within which it is placed. It includes the ethos of the school and the qualities of the staff. An important consideration in this category is the

size of the school. It can be suggested that the tasks faced by a principal of a small rural school are different from those of a principal in a large urban school (Gallon & Patrick, 1990).

The environment and social-economic background of the pupils will, suggests Whitaker, affect the role of the principal. The extent and focus of parental involvement will depend upon their perceptions of the educational process and the aspirations they hold for their children. Research by Douglas (1964), Frazer (1959) and the findings by Plowden (1967) have shown that parental encouragement, material provision and family size are salient features in the educational development of the child. Thus a school set within a middle-class suburban area may attempt to reflect the ethos of the environment, whereas one within a poorer, inner city zone may attempt to provide the antithesis of the environment.

Qualities of the staff will affect the role of the principal (Harling, ed., 1984; Murgatroyd & Grey, 1982). A young staff may require help during induction, whilst an older established staff may require critical self-evaluation with respect to methodology and practice. This situational influence will also include staff management such as drawing upon strengths of good practitioners and identifying their dealing with the weaknesses of the less able teachers (Bollen & Hopkins, 1987; Hopkins, 1990; Oldroyd & Hall, 1991).

'Predilections' is used by Whitaker to describe the last major influence on the role of the principal. He uses this term to refer to the personal qualities of the principal and the particular cherished 'visions' or 'aspirations' he/she may hold for the school. This supports quite a lot of the literature findings on the important traits behind the principalship and that of leadership (e.g. Bell, 1990; Coulson, 1986; Southworth, 1987).

Summing up the combined effects of the above influences on the role of the principal Whitaker states,

To the collection of tasks that must be done, and those that are expected to be done, must be added those which the particular school situation demands; only then can the head see what space is left for those he or she would like to do.

(1987, p.8)

The above propositions of Whitaker present a general, wide-ranging perspective of the role of the primary school principal. Aspects of his four major influences reveal a degree of overlap, whilst a number of the factors he considers require much deeper analysis. Whitaker alludes to a concept of leadership which Coulson (1986) describes as the process of leading, and it is this consideration which requires particular examination.

Hencley (1973) identifies a number of developmental trends in the emergence of new images or conceptions of the 'leader' viewed as 'the efficiency expert' (Taylor, 1911), as a 'social engineer' (Mayo, 1946), as an 'organisational engineer' (Gulick & Urwick, 1937) and as 'clinician' (Schutz, 1958). Baron (1956) traced the development of the 'headmaster tradition' of the mid-nineteenth century public schools and showed that the tradition was emulated with only slight modifications in the new secondary schools of the early twentieth century. He stated that the role concept which emerged was of the school principal as a benevolent autocrat, feared yet loved by staff and pupils and very much a leader of undisputed authority. Within this autocratic position the principal also maintained a role of teacher and he/she adopted a paternalistic, pastoral relationship to staff and pupils alike. Other writers point to the close ego-identification of the principal with the school (Becker, Eraut & Knight, 1981; Coulson, 1976; Renshaw, 1974), and the tendency of principals to refer to 'my' school and 'my' staff has been found to be a recurrent theme in serving teachers' discussions on primary school management (Alexander, 1984).

The results of a survey carried out by Bernbaum (1976) suggested that the leadership style identified by Baron had changed very little. He found that contemporary principals of post-primary schools still conceived of their role and tasks in traditional terms, with a strong emphasis on pastoral care and human relations aspects.

At the same time writers in the sociological tradition adopted a more managerial

approach to the role of the principal. Writers such as Hoyle (1969), Musgrave (1971) and Musgrove (1971) considered the role of the principal in terms of areas like school objectives, decision-making, innovation and systems maintenance. This change in emphasis reflected a move beyond the classical model of Lewin (1944) of democratic, autocratic and laissez faire leadership styles to a more dynamic systems approach.

Blake & Mouton (1964) analysed leadership in terms of the emphasis the authority figures placed upon the people he/she worked with, and the tasks that had to be carried out. Blake and Mouton took the two dimensions and called them 'Concern for People' and 'Concern for Production' which they represented on a two dimensional managerial grid. The grid is formed by an x-axis, designated concern for people, and a y-axis, designated concern for production, each marked on a nine-point scale (see Figure 3.1). A manager's style can thus be located on the grid in relation to the two dimensions. They pointed out that the two dimensions were not mutually exclusive and that an ideal style, 9.9, could be identified which showed high concern for people and for production. Taking co-ordinates from the grid 81 different styles can be identified. Although drawn up for production management the Blake and Mouton grid can be applied to the school situation and Whitaker (1987) uses it to identify certain leadership styles of principals. Five are analysed which represent the four extremes and the central position of the grid.

1 : 1 This represents a low concern for tasks and for people. The principal in this category has little concern for either the educational purposes of the school or the staff and children. According to Whitaker, a principal in this band complains of being weighed down with paper work and according to Waters this is the head who is safe behind his barrier of correspondence (1979, p.253).

9 : 1 This principal is high on tasks but low on people. He/She is characterised as having an overwhelming concern for high standards of work from teachers and children. The low concern for people results in an autocratic stance and an expectation that orders and decisions will be

accepted without debate.

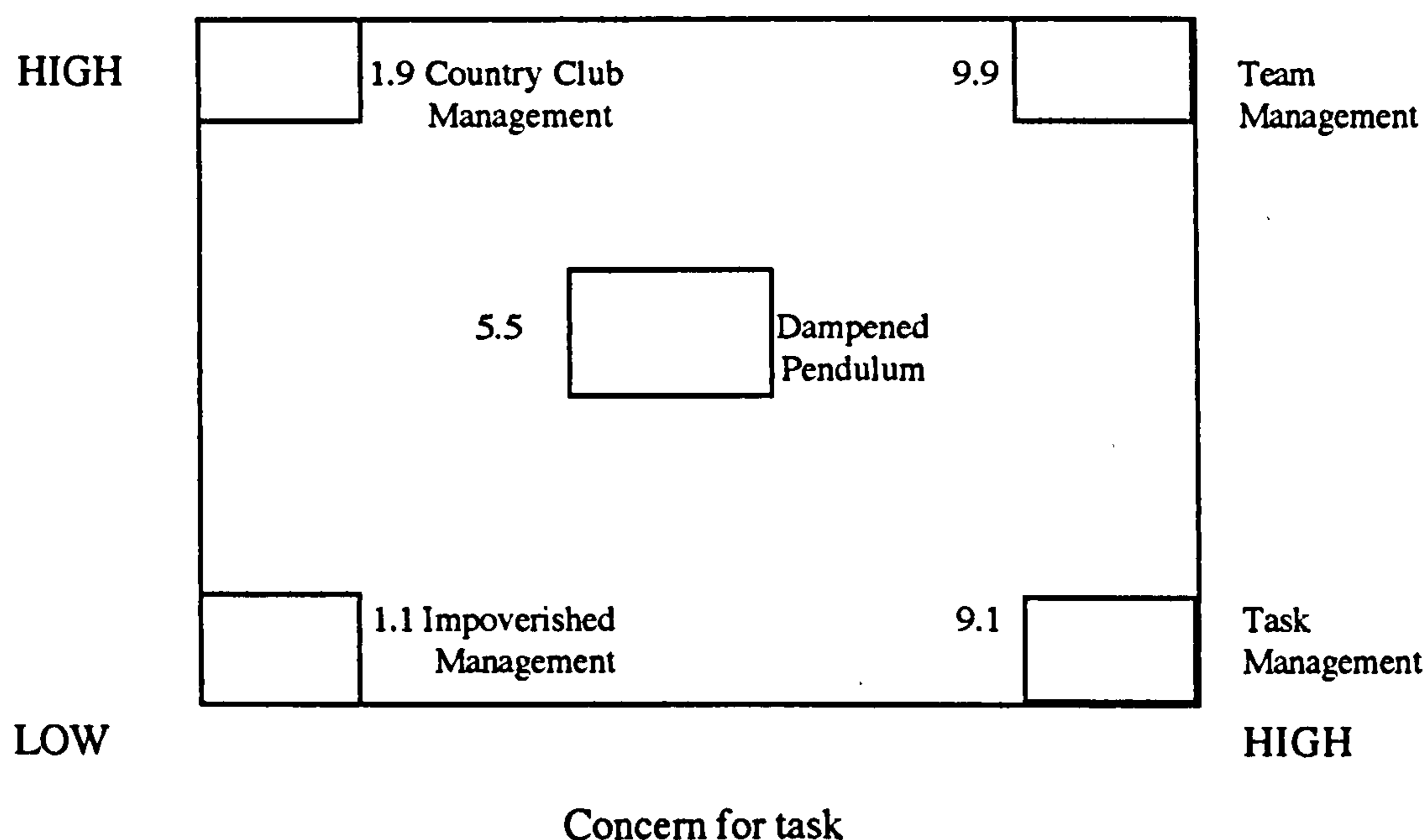


Figure 3.1: The Blake & Mouton managerial grid

- 1 : 9 Blake and Mouton refer to this position as 'country club management' and it represents a style where all the concern is for people rather than tasks. According to Whitaker, this type of principal is casual and informal and tends to gloss over problems in the hope that they will go away. The main concern is for the happiness of the children and for making working conditions as relaxed as possible.
- 5 : 5 In this position the principal attempts to achieve 'a happy medium' and fails on both counts. The organisation of the school is weak.
- 9 : 9 As stated above this is the model to strive for. It represents both a high concern for tasks and people. The principal regards the individual as having an important role in realising the aims and objectives of the school. There is a high degree of teamwork and decisions are reached through discussion, during which the interests of both the pupils and

teachers are considered. This style tries to discover the best and most effective solutions whilst aiming at the highest attainable production to which all those involved are called to contribute, and in which everyone finds his/her sense of accomplishment.

On the other hand Halpin & Croft (1962) identified four types of leadership styles emanating from the principal. These are:

1. "Thrust", which represents the principal's attempts to move the organisation to its goals by the example of his/her own efforts.
2. "Consideration", which describes the principal's attempts to show more concern for teachers in human terms.
3. "Production-emphasis", describes such behaviour as close supervision and one-way communication from principal to teachers in highly directive tones.
4. "Aloofness", refers to the principal's behaviour which is formal, impersonal and which goes by the book.

According to Halpin & Croft (ibid.), these types combine to produce six different school climates, namely open, autonomous, controlled, familiar, paternal and closed. Of the six climates they identified 'open' is proposed as being the most desirable to achieve. This climate is typified by high esprit, low disengagement and low hindrance from the principal, who in turn is high on thrust and consideration yet low on production emphasis and not aloof on staff.

Comparing the above typology to the Blake and Mouton managerial grid it can be suggested that an open climate is similar to that of a 9 : 9 classification when the teachers also reflect a high concern for tasks.

Hughes (1973) attempted to reconcile the persisting attitude of the "headmaster tradition" and the developing accounts of the "headmaster as a manager or chief executive". His research tested out the implication of the proposition that the secondary school principal is simultaneously the 'leading professional' and the 'chief executive' of

the organisation. Hughes identified two independent factors relating to the leading professional role - a traditional factor which could be compared to the "headmaster's tradition", and an innovating factor indicating an openness to external professional influence leading to education change. Hughes analysed these two factors and developed a four-fold typology. He suggested that an individual principal may be:

1 below average on both dimensions, what he calls an abdicator,

2 & 3 below average on one dimension, but not the other: a traditionalist or an innovator,

4 above average on both dimensions: an extended professional

Hughes' research suggested that the traditionalist principal received less support from members of staff compared to both innovators and extended professionals. The extended professional tended to favour informal interaction with staff, a process through which there is a free exchange of views regarding the general development of the school. In addition, Hughes suggested that the chief executive dimension was greatly influenced by the principal's own perception of his/her measure of autonomy. Those who consider that they had been granted a high degree of autonomy by external authority were more likely to act positively in their internal administration, taking initiatives and delegating effectively to members of staff. Additional research carried out by Morgan & Hall (1982) concluded that, after taking account of continuing social and environmental change, while the persona of the principalship may have changed from autocrat to leading professional, there is a need for the secondary school principal to be viewed

as both the leading professional in the development of the school and the chief executive in its running and accountability.

(Hegarty, ed.,1983, p.26)

Cohen (1970), having analysed common perceptions of principals concerning their role concluded that

the core beliefs of headteachers concerning their role, those mandatory prescriptions which are commonly accepted by all, are directed solely towards the internal system of the school.

(pp.197-198)

Within the core beliefs Cohen analysed the social needs satisfaction and the social control dimensions of leadership behaviour and identified the following priority prescriptions principals agreed upon as necessary to their role:

1. Concern for the personal well being of individual pupils and teachers.
2. Warm, friendly relationships to govern the interactions of all school members. Such an aim to be implemented through their own example of kindness, courtesy and approachability.
3. Concern for the quality of performance of both staff and pupils and for ways of improving and of supervising that performance.

Cohen also identified roles which were less central than the core beliefs, but which exhibited a large degree of consensus within his sample group. These included 'communicating school policy' to school members, 'assisting teachers in the course of their work', and a concern for 'improving their own personal professional performance'.

Although role conceptions were overwhelmingly internally based, Cohen identified 'parents', and to a lesser extent 'Her Majesty's Inspectorate' as the significant external position-occupants influencing the role conception of the principal.

Reconciling the role conceptions of internal positional-occupants and external positional-occupants, Cohen alludes to the boundary position of the principal. He sees the principal as the person occupying the focal point of articulation between the school's internal and external systems. In this regard Cohen quotes Kelsall & Kelsall (1969) who see the principal as

often the sole representative outside the school who is felt to be able to speak authoritatively regarding the school's aims and interests.

(p.202)

Other writers have analysed the different roles of the principal. These include Taylor (1969) who considered the principal in his/her role as school administrator. Taylor suggests that the principal is responsible for both system maintenance in relation to both



personnel and structure, and to system growth. The latter role is concerned with the responsibility of achieving long-term educational goals, innovation and curriculum planning.

On similar lines Lipham (1964) made a distinction between the 'leadership' and 'administrative' aspects of the principal's role behaviour. While Halpin (1956) analysed the 'initiating structure' and 'consideration' concepts of leadership. 'Initiating structure' helps to describe the efforts of the leader to establish well-defined patterns of organisation, channels of communication and methods of procedure. 'Consideration' refers to behaviour indicative of mutual trust and warmth in the relationship between the leader and the members of staff. Halpin argues that organisational effectiveness is related to high performance by the administrator on both these leadership dimensions.

Guba (1957) referred to nomothetic leaders and idiographic leaders. Waters (1979) analyses these types within the primary school and refers to the nomothetic leader as one

only concerned with the success of the school and a conforming attitude of unquestioning obedience from all the staff.

(p.53)

Ideographic leadership, on the other hand, is characterised by an emphasis on the individual while organisational requirements tend to be minimised. According to Waters this leader

places the welfare of the individual teacher above the needs of the school.  
(1979, p.56)

According to Guba, transactional leadership lies between the nomothetic and idiographic poles and describes behaviour aimed at reconciling the conflict between the demands of the organisation and the needs of the individual member.

The pressures brought upon schools through LMS has meant that principals have to take on a more managerial role than they might have liked to (Hellawell, 1991). This

has meant that principals have had to adjust to different forms of relationships than those which the leading professional role might be allowed. The market/ client model which has been introduced means that principals and their staff have had to review their present roles and responsibilities (Evetts, 1994; Purvis & Dennison, 1993; Southworth, 1993) which in fact determine the type of leadership and role behaviour adopted by school members.

### **3.3.1 Summary**

This section attempts to summarise the main issues concerning the study of 'role' discussed so far. Table 3.1 highlights the main criteria of how one can analyse the role of the principal as put forward by various authors quoted in this chapter. The role of the principal is seen to be influenced by quite a number of factors:

- The way the role unfolds depends on the type of interactions that take place between the principal and those involved in the teaching-learning process: children, parents, teachers and local/central authorities.
- Legislation, directives and memoranda which come from outside the school outline particular parameters in which the principal can operate.
- The socio-economic environment the school is in, its size, the level of parental interest and aspirations all effect the role the principal will take on.
- The personal qualities, attributes, aspirations of the principal himself/herself.
- His/Her perception of role.
- Principals enjoy quite a significant amount of autonomy (i.e. delegated authority) and therefore a lot of what takes place in schools (e.g. setting up the organisation; determining school aims and objectives, establishing relationships with people) depends on how they themselves are prepared to approach their role.

This examination of principalship roles has revealed a number of overlaps. There is similarity in the idiographic/nomothetic extremes model and the Blake & Mouton management grid. There is also similarity between Hughes's development of the chief executive/leading professional model to Taylor's analysis of system maintenance and systems growth.



One, however, notes that throughout the literature there has been a consistent realisation that the role of the principal can be seen to have two distinct emphases. There is a clear split between the expectations of the personnel within an organisation and the actual goals of the organisation. According to Hoyle (1969) the principal

must seek to perform two basic functions: he must be task oriented  
...and he must be person oriented.

(p.46)

The dichotomy between tasks and people is brought out quite forcefully in one of the most comprehensive examinations of the primary school, that of Plowden (1967). This comprehensive survey analysed all aspects of primary education and directed itself to the principal and his/her role. Some of the main suggestions regarding the role of the principal included:

it is for the head in co-operation with the staff to crystallise the schools aims and to see that schemes and organisation serve them (para 929)

if there is an area of the curriculum which often teachers cannot effectively cover, the headteacher will have to equip himself (sic) as far as possible to deal with them (para 930)

the headteacher must keep in touch with parents (para 932)

...the head should invite the help of assistant teachers in preparing schemes (para 934)

...the head should go further than is commonly done in delegating duties  
...(para 935)

Whitaker's role definition of the primary school principal also reflects this wide-ranging role and again reveals the dichotomy between tasks and people. Whitaker presents this role in four main categories

- Authority and responsibility

1. To be responsible to the governors for:

- a.the internal organisation, management and discipline of the school

- b.the supervision of the teaching and non-teaching staff.

2. To be responsible with the governors for:

- a.the general conduct and curriculum of the school

- b.the appointment of teaching and non-teaching staff.

- Curriculum

1. To work in consultation with the staff on:

- a.planning the curriculum policies of the school

b. controlling the organisation of the curriculum  
c. evaluating the working of the curriculum in the light of planned aims and objectives, and initiating corrective action where necessary.

• Organisation

1. To work with the staff to create and maintain an efficient and happy organisation with particular attention to: a) staffing, b) distribution of finance and resources, c) supervision of pupils

2. To create and maintain a decision-making structure providing facilities for participation by the staff.

3. To create and maintain an efficient system of communication.

• People

1. Through the exercise of a teaching role to get to know as many children as possible.

2. To have regular contacts with all members of the teaching and non-teaching staff.

3. To help, support and advice staff in the pursuit of their duties and the development of their careers.

4. To be available to children, teachers, non-teaching staff, governors, parents, LEA officials, HMI, and visitors.

(1987, pp.10-11)

Waters (1985) defines the role of the principal in a similar way to Whitaker. He goes on to add that ultimately the principal must decide upon the degree of importance to attach to each aspect of the role. The main thesis put forward by Waters is that the roles principals are being called to take on today are becoming more complex thus requiring more than just experience gained through the role itself, more than 'common-sense', or the reliance of an efficient secretary, a loyal deputy or a helpful colleague.

From what has been said the principalship, in the main, rests upon the process of leadership. Given the ambit of this study it is worth highlighting those characteristics of successful principals. This area will be developed in greater detail in Chapter Four. Drawing on the works of Coulson (1986), Greenfield (1980), Sergiovanni (1984), and the review by Stogdill (1974), amongst others, it is possible to group some of the principals' characteristics which, in the view of principals and teachers are associated with successful primary school management. The main areas are:

**1) Successful principals are goal-oriented.**

This means that such principals have a vision of where they want to see the school develop and have articulated this vision into a series of goals. A sense of direction is created by operationalizing their goals and values through a series of long/ medium and short term plans. Griffin (1983), for example, suggests that the principal is

responsible for establishing and maintaining the perception of the mission of the school. Effective leaders involve others in setting up aims, establishing policies and plans of action (Griffin, 1983; Paisey, 1981).

**2) Successful principals enjoy a high level of personal security.**

This security enables them to tackle issues inside and outside the school without feeling unduly threatened. This suggests, as Coulson points out, that some measure of disengagement from the traditionally strong ego-identification between the principal and the school is desirable (Coulson in Southworth & Lofthouse, 1990, p.16).

**3) Successful principals have a high tolerance of ambiguity.**

Principals who feel strongly about structure, continuity and stability will find frequent change and constant uncertainty a source of frustration and tension.

**4) Successful principals tend to be proactive as against being reactive** when confronting internal and external demands. Thus they tend to adopt a more entrepreneurial attitude concerned mainly with development than preservation.

**5) Successful principals are sensitive to the dynamics of power both inside and outside the school.** Coulson points out that such principals "are adept at seeking out sources of power and support through informal networking (liaison) and at the same time sensitive to the informal codes of professional practice which govern expectations for relations among teachers and between teachers and head" (in Southworth & Lofthouse, 1990, p.17).

**6) Successful principals can take an analytical perspective towards problem solving.** Due to their actual position in the organisation, their professional knowledge, experience and expertise they can support, help and advice staff towards solving individual, group and school problems. "Effective leaders face problems, share them and seek to learn from them" (Murgatroyd & Grey, 1982, p.291).

**7) Successful principals are in charge of the job and do not let the job be in charge of them.** They are thus able to react to the demands and pressure of their job, thus reacting to the unknown or unpredictable, without being swamped by them. Whilst at the same time seeing that they can devote time and energy to those areas and activities which will help them reach their vision or goals (Day, Whitaker & Johnson, 1990; Dubin, ed., 1991; Green, ed., 1994; Holmes, 1993).

There is little research support for the existence of universal traits correlated with leadership (Holly & Southworth, 1989). Nevertheless, the structure and traditions of primary schooling place the principal in a central and dominant position of influence. Several writers have suggested that genuine involvement by the school principal is a crucial context variable which influences the direction or lack of it that the school will take (Bell, 1990; Berman & McLaughlin, 1975; Jennings, 1977). The general tone of the school and staff is determined by the principal. The belief is that the principal acts as “an organiser of professional development, a facilitator to the faculty, and a negotiator of resources for the school...His (sic) personal style, level of activity, competence and relationships with faculty and community, all interact with his (sic) ideas ... to make him (sic) a powerful determinant of what will happen” (Jones, 1980, pp.28-29).

### **3.4 A summary of the context of this investigation**

It has been proposed in this chapter that the key figure behind the welfare and development of the ‘effective school’ is the principal. At the same time the clear dichotomy between tasks and people has been emphasised. Coulson (1976) has pointed out that despite the growth and diversification of the demands made upon principals, they retain personal control over issues involving policy decisions, the supervision of teachers, the introduction of change, and that “they perceive a need to involve themselves personally in every aspect of school life” (ibid., p.285). Coulson refers to this close supervision by the principal of every aspect of school life as paternalism. Paternalism, she suggests, is typified by the close personal identification of the principal with the school - he/she thinks of it as his/her school. It has also been pointed out that despite so much focus on the school and the way the structures and goals of education and schooling in particular have changed over time in Malta there has been no focus nor attention as to the principal’s role in the school. Thus, despite recognition of the importance of the principal, as mainly expounded in the school effectiveness literature, in Malta it is still a ‘new’ area of research.

It is argued that an examination of the context and characteristics of the principal’s work together with how certain characteristics and dimensions of the principalship are

perceived by Maltese primary school principals may help us understand the role of the principal better together with suggesting ways and means of improving their current position. This investigation will explore the tasks carried out by the principal during the day-to-day running of the school and will reveal the extent to which Coulson's claim is correct. This study thus works within the parameters of the institution and based round an observational study of the principal at work and from the way principals see themselves through a questionnaire survey.

As indicated in this chapter the last twenty years or so have witnessed a proliferation of studies on various aspects of the principalship. Several themes have been addressed by these studies. A number of researches carried out in various countries, and addressing what are perhaps some of the major themes in this area of study, will be reviewed in Chapter Four.

Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> It is to be noted that the appointment criteria, procedures and working conditions only apply to State school principals, and therefore exclude church and private schools.



# **SECTION B**

## **BACKGROUND**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PERCEPTIONS AND PERFORMANCE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

A consideration of the literature on the principalship reveals the varied approaches and the different theoretical orientations of the researchers who have explored this area. True to the literature on the principalship in general, attempts at comparing the different findings reported in studies on the principalship are complicated by a number of problems, the most significant of which are the different definitions of principalship proposed by various researchers, the different approaches to the study of the principalship, the differences in the research methodologies employed, and, as a result, the limited generalisability of findings.

In addition to problems of conceptualisation, almost all the reviewed studies make use of indirect methods of investigation such as questionnaires and surveys. Although valid in their own right, these techniques have particular inherent limitations. Furthermore, most studies have been carried out on relatively small samples of subjects. Although these issues should not deter one from trying to bring together different strands of the work carried out in this area of research they should nevertheless be borne in mind.

It is the purpose of this chapter to provide a review of the research on the principalship carried out in various countries during the past twenty years or so. It must be emphasised that the review is an attempt to provide a background for the present study by bringing together findings from various countries. It is not suggested that these findings are somehow generalisable from one school system to another or, indeed, from one country to another. As such, one must be cautious not to make generalisations which at best give a very simplistic account of an otherwise very complex area of research. In fact, it is here argued that whatever conclusions are derived from this review are valid insofar that they give an overall picture of the state of

the research findings in the area. Indeed, it is the contention of this writer that since each educational system is essentially unique it necessarily demands investigation of the problem in its cultural and social contexts, rather than making generalisations to it based on studies carried out in contexts which may share very little in common with it. Nevertheless, it must be said that such comparisons may lead to a better and clearer understanding of the principalship in general and the characteristics of successful principals in particular.

In an attempt to exert some coherent pattern upon the research findings reported in this review these will be organised into four sections: effectiveness of primary schools; leadership and effective schools; characteristics of successful principals, and the work patterns and behaviour of primary school principals.

#### **4.2 The effectiveness of primary schools**

The debates about effectiveness have gone past the stage of whether we should discuss it. They have moved to definitions of effectiveness, identification of the characteristics of effective schools, criteria for identifying such schools, and discussion of what action can be taken to increase school effectiveness. Grady et al. (1989), Beare, et al. (1992), amongst others, contend that most researchers would seem to agree that academic achievement is the main criterion to assess effectiveness, however, over the years other areas such as organisational climate have arisen as alternatives. They also report that "the definitions, measures, and results of effective schools research often vary according to the guiding theory of the evaluator" (Grady et al., 1989, p.16). Substantial confusion thus seems to exist over the means and ends of effective school functioning (Johnson & Holdaway, 1990).

This section examines these issues in relation to primary schools with focus on the role of the principal and the close linkage between school effectiveness and the role of the principal.

Interest in school effectiveness emerged partly in response to reduced public confidence in the quality of education, together with pressure for increased accountability. An extensive body of literature has resulted. Three studies in particular, Coleman et al.,

1966, Jencks et al., 1972, and the Plowden Report, 1967 stimulated many researchers to become interested in the topic of school effectiveness. Their research findings showed that schools had very little effect on academic outcomes. The main determinants of school success being socio-economic and genetic. Thus what a child brings to school is more important than what happens in the school and classroom in determining the kind of person he/she will become. And, as Down argues "this was combined with determinist tendencies in sociology of education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976), which led to a neglect of research of the school as an institution independent from the wider society. Children's educability was largely seen in terms of individual, family and community explanations" (1993, p.1). There was a widespread pessimism about the extent to which schools could have any impact upon children's development and Bernstein's (1971) view that education cannot compensate for society was generally accepted.

It was argued that if the home and family backgrounds have such an impact on how well a pupil performs educators should create models of teaching and learning which would bring teachers and parents closer together (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1992, p.4). At the same time the social order itself was under attack from a number of quarters too. The period when the efficacy of conventional schooling was being questioned coincided with developments like the war on poverty, civil rights, the emancipation of women, and in the field of education the alternative schools movement, acceptance of lifelong learning, new and different curricula and learning programmes.

People began to understand that conventional schools may unwittingly (or quite wittingly) reaffirm an unjust social order and notions of class distinctions and privilege, that they can be a means of cultural reproduction and that left to their own devices they will probably produce more of the same (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1992, p.6). The movement to reestablish the reputation of conventional schooling started to gather momentum in the late 1970s. The late 1970s produced a number of significant studies aimed at showing that schools do make a difference to pupil achievement and at identifying characteristics which were common to those schools shown to be effective. Critics cited an array of shortcomings of these and subsequent input-output studies,

including the problem of distinguishing school effects from the cumulative impact of genetically endowed differences, prior achievement, and the influences of neighbourhood, home and peer groups (Benson, 1978; Garms et al., 1978); an unwarranted statistical assumption of direct, linear covariation of inputs and outputs (Glasman & Biniaminov, 1981); and dependence on standardised reading and mathematics test scores as measures of the problematic goals of education (Bowles, 1970; Richards & Ratsoy, 1987). As a result, the findings from input-output studies have been dismissed by some as "uninterpretable" (Bickel, 1986, p.190) and "useless for immediate purposes such as informing public-policy" (Garms et al., 1978, p.253).

Other observers were more optimistic. They argued that, even if the impact of schools on pupil achievement is small, effective operation of schools makes some contribution to pupil achievement. A proliferation of studies and reviews resulted (e.g. Davis & Thomas, 1989; Good & Brophy, 1985; Mortimore et al., 1988; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Weindling & Cohen, 1981). New research findings contradicted the more publicised input-output studies and supported Edmonds thesis that "all children are eminently educable and that the behaviour of the school is critical in determining the quality of that education" (1979, p.20). Some of the distinguishing characteristics of effectiveness included: high expectations of instructional effectiveness among staff; strong leadership by the principal; an orderly, quiet and work-oriented atmosphere; an emphasis on academic activities and development, and frequent monitoring of students' achievement; collaborative work by teachers; uninterrupted classroom instruction; and care of physical facilities (Edmonds, 1979; Rutter et al., 1979; Weber, 1971).

This section has highlighted that various characteristics are essential for pupil development to take place. One such characteristic is that of leadership and the imperative role that school principals can play in determining school effectiveness. The next sections will focus on this characteristic in greater detail.

### **4.3 Leadership and effective schools**

Findings from three varied but interlinked areas, support the idea that leadership is an important factor in determining organisational effectiveness. The first step is comprised

of those studies of organisations which are not primarily concerned with education. The Peters & Waterman study (1982) is considered as a landmark in this area. In a later publication Peters & Austin (1985) looked at leadership in greater detail:

... for the last twenty-five years we have carried around with us the model of manager as cop, referee, devil's advocate, dispassionate analyst, professional, decision-maker, naysayer, pronouncer. The alternative we now propose is leader (not manager) as cheerleader, enthusiast, nurturer of champions, hero finder, wanderer, dramatist, coach, facilitator, builder. It's not a model of what might be or a prescription for the impossible. We've learned it in real-time, from people who've done it in glamour industries and those who've won in extremely adverse situations - in low-growth industries or the public sector ... From all these people we've learned nothing about magic. We've learned, instead, of passion, care, intensity, consistency, attention, drama, of the implicit and explicit use of symbols - in short, of leadership.

(1985, p.265)

The second set is made up of school effectiveness studies. Numerous studies and reviews investigating school effectiveness not only include the quality of leadership as an important factor but place it in a high priority. Among the earliest researchers in the United Kingdom were Power et al., (1967). Through a longitudinal study they attempted to investigate the delinquency rate of students in a number of schools. The research team showed that over a six-year period stable differences existed between schools. They showed that these differences were relatively independent of the catchment area of the schools. As Mortimore points out "due to disagreement with one of the teacher unions over the publication of results, [ a point also highlighted by Reynolds, 1992] the study was never completed" (1991, p.220). Its contribution mainly lies in the way it opened up the research question to subsequent researchers.

Brimmer et al., (1978), on the other hand, focused on the academic achievement of students. The research team collected information on the prior achievement of a sample of students drawn from 44 schools. It used measures of parental occupations and educational levels to control for differences in home background. The researchers found differences between schools even when these intake factors had been taken into account.

In England the work of Rutter et al., (1979) is most commonly cited along with the HMI survey **Ten Good Schools** (DES, 1977). Of eight factors investigated as part of this survey leadership was given prime position.

What they [ principals] all have in common is effective leadership and a 'climate' that is conducive to growth. The schools see themselves as places designed for learning; they take trouble to make their philosophies explicit for themselves and to explain them to parents and pupils; the foundation of their work and corporate life is an acceptance of shared values.

Emphasis is laid on consultation, team work and participation, but, without exception, the most important single factor in the success of these schools is the quality of leadership of the head.

(1977, p.35)

The eight-year study by Rutter et al., (1979), concluded that some schools were more effective than others in their effects upon pupil development. The Rutter study concentrated on changes in pupil achievement to demonstrate a school's quality. The type of school effects the research team looked into were: high attendance, good behaviour in school, school results in public examinations, and the proportion of delinquent pupils at the school. The research team found that particular characteristics were not associated with overall effectiveness, amongst them class size, formal academic or pastoral care organisation, school size, school administrative arrangements, and the age and size of school buildings (Reynolds, 1992, p.12). The important internal school factors determining high levels of effectiveness were argued by Rutter (1980) to be: a) the balance of intellectually able and less able children in the school; b) the system of rewards and punishments, c) school environment, d) ample opportunities for children to take responsibility and to participate in the running of their schools, e) successful schools tended to make good use of homework, to set clear academic goals, f) outcomes were better where teachers provided good models of behaviour by means of good time-keeping and willingness to deal with pupil problems, g) findings upon group management in the classroom suggested the importance of preparing lessons in advance, of keeping the attention of the whole class, of unobtrusive discipline, of a focus on rewarding good behaviour and of swift action to deal with disruption, and h) outcomes were more favourable when there was a combination of firm leadership together with a decision-making process in which all

teachers felt that their views were respected. Rutter showed that "it does matter which school a child attends. Moreover, the results provide strong indications of what are the particular features of school organisation and functioning which make for success" (1979, p.1).

During the 1980s, a comprehensive, four-year longitudinal study tracked the progress of 2,000 pupils from ages 7-11 in the Inner London Educational Authority (Mortimore et al., 1988). The study aimed to assess the impact of schools on progress and development after taking into account various entry and background characteristics. In addition to increases in basic skills and effective communication, attention was paid to attendance, behaviour, attitudes, and self-concept. Information was collected from records, observations, questionnaires and interviews. Mortimore's research team identified a number of schools which were effective in both academic and social areas, which possessed the following twelve characteristics: purposeful leadership by the principal; involvement of the deputy principal in duties of the principal; involvement of teachers in decision making; consistent action by teachers; structured teaching and encouragement of independent work; intellectually challenging teaching; work-centred environment; limited focus in each teaching session; maximum teacher-pupil communication; detailed records of pupils' progress; extensive parental involvement; and a positive climate involving praise and reward, and firm but fair behaviour. In summary, the more effective schools demonstrated friendly, supportive environments, had assertive principals and staff who shared administration and decision making, and had teachers who devised structured learning in a flexible, focused and challenging setting.

Research carried out in the U.S.A. from the late 1970s onwards also attempted to develop an inventory of the characteristics of the effective school. Austin (1978), in Maryland, identified eighteen high-achieving and twelve low-achieving schools. The factors which accounted for differences among schools were strong principals who participated in the instructional programme; high expectations held by those principals about themselves, the teachers and the students; and a school programme which emphasised intellectual rather than affective goals.



The Michigan Studies by Brookover et al., (1979, 1982) concluded that student outcomes can be explained not only by differences in intake but also by climate and structure characteristics. Another study by Brookover & Lezotte (1979) was carried out on six 'improving' primary schools and two 'declining' schools in Michigan, using a case study method which allowed the researchers to conclude that the improving schools were likely to have principals who were curriculum leaders, who asserted themselves in that role, who maintained tough discipline and who assumed responsibility for evaluating pupil achievement.

Edmonds obtained research findings that contradicted the much publicised input-output studies and supported his thesis that "all children are eminently educable and that the behaviour of the school is critical in determining the quality of that education" (1979, p.20). Edmonds argued that there seemed to be five tangible and indispensable characteristics of effective schools: 1) "strong administrative leadership" (1979, p.22); 2) "a climate of expectation in which no children are permitted to fall below minimum but efficacious levels of achievement" (1979, p.4); 3) "The school's atmosphere is orderly without being rigid, quiet without being oppressive, and generally conducive to the instructional business at hand" (1979, p.4). Elsewhere he calls it an "orderly, safe climate" (1982, p.2); 4) The school has "a pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus .... in which the acquisition of basic school skills takes precedence over all other school activities" (ibid.); and 5) effective schools ensure that "pupil progress can be frequently monitored" (ibid.).

Given the overall findings of the literature the main conclusion drawn is that successful school leadership is associated with quite a number of factors. Reid *et al.* (1987) present us with an overview of these results. A breakdown of research to date shows that findings can be divided into eleven categories. These are: school leadership, school management, school ethos, discipline, teachers and teaching, the curriculum, student learning, reading, pupil care, school buildings, and school size. The one we are concerned with here 'Successful leadership' is associated with:

1. Setting a strong administrative example (Weber, 1971; Brookover et al., 1979; Edmonds, 1979a, b, 1981a; California State Department of

Education, 1980; Glen, 1981);

2. Principals who recruit their own staff (Austin, 1979, 1981);
3. Leaders being fully supportive of teachers (Levine & Stark, 1981);
4. Skilled leadership in providing a structural institutional pattern in which teachers can function effectively (Levine & Stark, 1981);
5. High levels of parent-teacher and parent-principal contact (Armor et al., 1976);
6. Principals who achieve a balance between a strong leadership role for themselves and maximum autonomy for teachers (Armor et al., 1976);
7. Strong instructional leadership (Trisman et al., 1976);
8. Principals who are firm disciplinarians and provide strong behavioural role models for teachers and pupils alike (NIE, 1978).

(Reid, et al., 1987, p.24)

The third set is made of studies specifically concerned with primary schools and/or principals. In England and Wales studies of primary school effectiveness are rather in short supply (cf. Blease & Lever, 1991; Reynolds, 1992). The work of Mortimore et al. (1988) is the notable exception. The general findings of Mortimore's Junior School Project appear consistent with findings in other settings. From a careful examination and a discussion of the statistical research findings as well as the use of educational and research judgments, twelve factors emerged as significant characteristics of effective schools: 1) Purposeful leadership of the staff by the principal, 2) The involvement of the deputy principal, 3) The involvement of teachers, 4) Consistency of teachers, 5) Structured sessions, 6) Intellectually challenging teaching, 7) The work-centred environment, 8) Limited focus within sessions, 9) Maximum communication between teachers and pupils, 10) Record keeping, 11) Parental involvement, and 12) Positive climate. Their study gave prominence to aspects of leadership in three of the twelve factors which emerged as significant characteristics of effective schools. This is what they had to say about leadership:

Purposeful leadership occurred where the headteacher understood the needs of the school and was involved actively in the school's work, without exerting total control over the rest of the staff. In effective schools, headteachers were involved in curriculum discussions and influenced content of guidelines drawn up with the school, without taking complete control. They also influenced the teaching strategies of teachers, but only selectively, where they judged it necessary. This leadership was demonstrated by an emphasis on the monitoring of pupils' progress, through teachers keeping individual records. Approaches varied - some schools kept written records; others passed on folders of pupils' work to their next teacher; some did both - but a systematic policy of record keeping was important.....

..... Thus, effective headteachers were sufficiently involved in, and

knowledgeable about, what went on in the classrooms and about the progress of individual pupils. They were more able to feel confident about their teaching staff and did not need to intervene constantly. At the same time, however, they were not afraid to assert their leadership where appropriate.

(Mortimore et al., 1988, pp.250-251)

Mortimore et al.'s research appears to validate the comments of primary HMIs in England and Wales. HMIs (Wales) produced an interesting document on leadership in which they stated:

Within schools it is heads who have the highest authority to make decisions, and their effectiveness as leaders is a crucial influence upon the life and work of schools. ... The leadership of the head is a key factor in the design and implementation of the curriculum. ...

(1985, pp.1,8)

This view is generally recognised and shared by primary HMI. It is also shared with LEA officers. The ILEA Committee on Primary Education Report, for example, accepts the central role of the principal:

The head is always, in law as well as in fact, responsible for the situations in his or her school. Successful heads have interpreted these powers and duties wisely. They have not been authoritarian, consultative, or participative as a matter of principle, they have been all those at different times as the conditions seemed to warrant, though most often participative. Their success has often come from choosing well, from knowing when to take the lead and when to confirm leadership offered by their colleagues. They do not excuse poor practice in their schools on the grounds that someone else suggested it, or that they delegated the decision to others.

(1985, p.66)

It should be noted that the research arose out of primary school practice before the 1988 Education Reform Act in Britain which involved a major shift of educational power from the LEAs to the Secretary of State and to the schools themselves with their more powerful governing bodies. Thus a number of points are specific to primary schools and they have been changed by the enhanced educational and managerial role of the principal under the local management of schools (Down, 1993, p.4).

As Southworth (1990) points out these three sets of sources do not exist independent of one another. They work together and create a powerful perspective about the nature

and impact of leadership in all schools. It is now widely accepted that primary school principals can dramatically affect a school's effectiveness.

#### **4.4 Qualities that characterise effective principals**

The findings concerned with leadership do seem to be consistent in so far as they suggest that leaders can make a positive difference to the effectiveness of an organisation. The purpose of this section is to describe and illustrate the major features of what is known about leadership, in the context of school effectiveness, in a way which would provide us with greater insights into quality leadership. Leadership is dependent on a form of relationship in which one person influences others towards the achievement of organisational goals. This means that leadership is not exercised in a vacuum or in isolation. The process of leadership cannot be separated from the activities that people within an organisation are involved in. Leaders are chosen in order to help groups attain the stated objectives. Leadership and the post of leader entails a position of power and authority. Before analysing the idea of the leader as one employing power and authority, it is important, as Down (1994, p.2) points out, to draw attention to the fundamental principle of leadership, which stresses the importance of understanding human behaviour. The research work undertaken by Beare et al., (in Preedy, ed., 1993) will be referred to in this section. As Beare et al., state "A useful starting point is to clarify the concepts of 'leadership' and 'leader'" (in Preedy, ed., 1993, p.142). Many meanings are attached to the terms as the following references highlight. Dubin saw leadership as "the exercise of authority and the making of decisions" (1968, p.385), while Fiedler considered the leader to be "the individual in the group given the task of directing and coordinating task-relevant group activities" (1967, p.8). According to such definitions, those who have formal authority by virtue of their appointments are leaders and may therefore exercise leadership. Stogdill, on the other hand, defined leadership as "the process of influencing the activities of an organised group toward goal setting and goal accomplishment" (1950, p.4). While this view includes the contexts envisaged by Dubin and Fiedler, it acknowledges that people without formal authority may exercise leadership. The source of influence or power may be their expertise, or the capacity to bring rewards or benefits, or their capacity to apply sanctions, or their personal qualities which make them liked or respected as

people. Such leadership may emerge in many contexts in a school and may involve people other than the principal and senior staff. In this perspective the principal is seen as a facilitator (Thomas, 1978), as initiator (Hall & Hord, 1984; Stalhammar, 1984; Stego et al., 1987). Leaders may, therefore, act formally from a position of authority within an organisation, or informally, from particular personal skills, aptitudes or abilities that enable them to influence others.

Stogdill's perspective also went on to include the setting in which the goals were established, as well as the influence of activities associated with the accomplishment of the goal. Such a perspective helps us to appreciate the importance of leadership in effecting change. In this regard Lipham defined leadership as "the initiation of a new structure or procedure for accomplishing an organisation's goals and objectives" (1964, p.122). In this respect, as Beare et al., point out "a principal will not be a leader at all if activity is limited to the maintenance of existing means and ends" (in Preedy, ed., 1993, p.143).

More recent attempts to define the concept of leadership explore more ground than the organisation and the activities associated with goal setting and goal accomplishment. As Sergiovanni points out:

There is more to leadership than meets the tactical eye. The real value of leadership rests with the meanings which actions import to others than in the actions themselves. A complete rendering of leadership requires that we move beyond the obvious to the subtle, beyond the immediate to the long range, beyond actions to meanings, ...  
(in Sergiovanni & Corbally, eds., 1986, p.106)

Attention is now, more than ever, also given to meanings and values. As Handy points out the leader has to act as a model for his/her colleagues. Within his/her role as model the leader influences the behaviour of others (1986, p.113). According to Greenfield "the task of leaders is to create the moral order that binds them and the people around them" (1986, p.159). He sees leadership as a "wilful act" in which the leaders try to commit others to the values that they themselves believe are good. Pondy goes on to state that the effectiveness of a leader lies in "ability to make activity meaningful ... not

to change behaviour but to give others a sense of understanding of what they are doing" (1978, p.94 in Preedy, ed., 1993, p.143). The exercise of leadership by a principal in a school involves clear communication, giving specific aims and objectives, looking into relationships between the different parties concerned, and so on.

Approaches at understanding leadership have, as Handy (1986) explains, usually fallen under one of three general headings: trait theories, style theories and contingency theories. Each of these three dimensions seems to contain some elements of truth but all fail to explain enough of the difference between effective and ineffective leadership to be generally useful in a variety of situations. Attempts to develop theories have involved the study of situations in which leadership is exercised, acknowledging that there is no one best way to lead in all situations. Attempts to develop theories have involved the study of situations in which leadership is exercised, acknowledging that there is no one best way to lead in all situations, but that in any particular situation one approach to leadership may be more effective than another. The theories will be briefly reviewed.

#### **4.4.1 Trait theories**

Trait theories rest on the assumption that the individual is more important than the situation. Therefore, if we can identify the distinguishing characteristic of successful leaders these could be used to select a leader for a given particular position. Studies in the first half of this century compared the physical and psychological characteristics of leaders and non-leaders. By 1950 there had been over 100 studies. Unfortunately, few of the traits identified were common throughout the studies. Most studies single out the following three traits: intelligence, initiative, and self-assurance. Other studies mention: enthusiasm, sociability, integrity, courage, imagination, decisiveness, determination, energy, faith and virility (Handy, 1986, p.95).

The trait theory lost much of its acceptability with the rise of behaviourism which disputed the idea of inherited traits, contending that such characteristics are acquired. There are a number of difficulties with the trait approach. Thus, there is bound to be some subjective judgment in determining who is regarded as a 'good' or 'successful'

leader. Stogdill's (1948) analysis of the earlier studies revealed little consistency in the findings. The various studies do not agree as to what traits are leadership traits, how much of any trait a person should have and what the relationship of such traits are to actual instances of leadership. Others have pointed out that not all leaders possess all the traits, and many non-leaders may possess most or all of them. However, in a later study of more recent research Stogdill revealed a number of traits which consistently characterise more effective leaders. These include: sense of responsibility, concern for task completion, persistence, energy, risk-taking, originality, self-confidence, capacity to handle stress, capacity to influence, and capacity to coordinate the efforts of others in the achievement of purpose (Beare et al., 1992, p.103).

#### **4.4.2 Style theories**

The assumption behind these theories is that managers can no longer rely on their position to exercise the functions of leadership. They must have regard for the need to encourage high morale, a spirit of cooperation and willingness. In order to achieve this they must adopt a certain style of leadership. By leadership style is meant the ways in which the functions of leadership are carried out and the manager typically behaves towards members of the group. Some earlier explanations of leadership style classified them on the basis of how leaders use their authority. Leaders were seen as applying three main styles: authoritarian, democratic or laissez-faire. In the extreme authoritarian style, power resides with the leader. It is the leader who alone exercises full authority. He/She commands and expects compliance, is dogmatic and positive, and leads by the ability to withhold or give rewards and punishments. Alone he/she exercises decision-making and authority for determining policy, procedures for achieving goals, and work tasks and relationships.

In the democratic style, on the other hand, these powers and responsibilities are shared with the group in some way or other. The democratic leader consults with subordinates on proposed actions and decisions and encourages, as much as possible, participation. The focus of leadership is more with the group as a whole, with members having a say in policy-making and procedures to the point where the leader either consults them before action or not acting without their concurrence. It is commonly assumed that

people are willing to give more of themselves under democratic conditions than under authoritarian ones. One theoretical base for this belief is that participation in these areas of responsibility will tend to satisfy the self-actualisation and esteem needs of the individual and will therefore release more effort. Another set of theories holds that participation affects one's need for stimulation and variety in one's work, and thereby releases more effort (Handy, 1986, p.96).

On the other hand, the laissez-faire leader is one who chooses to give subordinates a high degree of independence. Such leaders depend upon subordinates setting their own goals and the means of achieving them. An extreme form of this style is abdication where the manager does not want to get involved, and lets the group get on with the work in hand.

Whatever style a leader adopts will, to a large extent, depend upon the situation encountered. Furthermore, a number of factors have combined to make individual managers less autocratic, including broader standards of education and training, the influence of trade unions, pressure for greater social responsibility for employees, and government legislation to protect employees.

Research by Likert (1961) has led to the view that an effective manager is strongly orientated towards participation, creates an ethos, a climate in which all members of the organisation share in one another's common needs, values, aspirations, goals and values. Likert suggests four systems of management: 'exploitive - authoritative', in which the manager is highly autocratic, limiting decisions to the top and communicating downward; 'benevolent authoritative', in which the manager shows some patronising trust in subordinates, permitting some upward communication and some delegation of decisions, but with close policy control; 'consultative', in which the manager has substantial confidence in subordinates, allowing a flow of communication and some decisions to be made at lower levels; and 'participative-group', in which the manager has complete trust in subordinates in all matters, using ideas from them constructively, giving economic rewards on the basis of group participation and encouraging decision-making throughout the organisation. In particular Likert found that those who applied



the participative group system had the greatest success as leaders. He ascribes the effectiveness of many departments and companies to the degree of subordinate participation. Handy also reports that there is evidence that supportive styles of leadership are: related to subordinate satisfaction, related to lower turnover and grievance rates, results in less inter-group conflict, and, are often the preferred styles of subordinates (1986, p.97). Likert's findings were generalised on the basis of research into small groups. This, therefore, highlights an important drawback behind his studies. Down expresses concern that since the 'participative-group' approaches are often introduced when companies are profitable, it may not be justifiable in separating out this system as the casual factor related to good production. The model is a people-centred one, stressing as it does the ability of managers to handle people effectively. However, in practice, Down argues, many managers attempt to manage through the use of rules, systems, procedures and paperwork, rather than with and through people (1993, p.5).

#### **4.4.3 Situational/ Contingency Theories**

##### **Situational Theories**

There are those who see the leader as the product of his/her time and situation. They see people as tending to follow those whom they perceive as providing them with the means and the situations of accomplishing their own personal desires. Within such a context the person who becomes leader is the person who knows best what to do in the circumstances and is seen by the group as the most suitable leader given a particular situation. Hersey and Blanchard proposed a situational theory in which leadership behaviour should be varied according to the level of maturity of the followers. Two dimensions of maturity are proposed: professional and psychological. There are also two dimensions of leadership behaviour: task behaviour in which the leader emphasises or specifies the task; and relationship behaviour, in which the leader invests time in developing good interpersonal relationships with and among the group. The theory proposes four general types of leadership behaviour, each of which is appropriate to a particular level of maturity. With increasing maturity, the leader should move through styles designated 'telling', 'selling', 'participating', and 'delegating' (in Preedy, ed., 1993, p.145).

One of the major difficulties and limitations behind the application of the Hersey and Blanchard theory is that dealing with human behaviour. The level(s) of maturity of members of an organisation will vary, and furthermore their levels of maturity will change over time and more so people will have different levels of maturity for different tasks.

### **Contingency theories**

Contingency theorists take more specific account of the other variables involved in any leadership situation. In particular they focus on the task and/or work group and the position of the leader within the work group. Fiedler (1967), one of the major exponents of this theory, distinguishes between leadership style and leadership behaviour. According to Fiedler

... leadership style is an innate, relatively enduring attribute of our personality which provides our motivation and determines our general orientation when exercising leadership. Leadership behaviour, on the other hand, refers to particular acts which we can perform or not perform if we have the knowledge and skills, and if we judge them appropriate at the time.

(Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, in Preedy, ed., 1993, p. 145)

Fiedler concentrated upon a) the relationship between the leader and his/her group, and b) the structure of the task, as determinants in the choice of the most effective style of leadership. After conducting a number of studies where he explored leadership situations in a number of organisations he concluded that the most important situation variables were: 1) leader-member relations - the degree to which the group leader is accepted by the group members and is able to maintain their loyalty; 2) task-structure - the degree to which the rules, regulations, job descriptions, and policies are clearly specified; and 3) position power - the degree to which the leader is able to apply both positive (i.e. rewards) and negative (i.e. punishment) sanctions. If the leader has good relations with the group members, has established a high task structure, and strong position power the situation will be favourable. If the opposite is true, the situation will be unfavourable. The favourableness of a situation was defined as the degree to which a given situation enables a leader to exert influence over a group. The Fiedler theory has implications for matching leaders to situations and for encouraging leaders to

modify their situation where possible to ensure consistency with style. Beare, Caldwell & Millikan are of the opinion that "these applications rest on such fine distinctions, and represent such a small aspect of all that must be considered, that the theory seems unlikely to have major impact ...(in Preedy, ed., 1993, p.146). Fiedler's work has, in fact, been subject to much criticism but, as Down argues, it does provide a further dimension to the study of leadership. It brings into consideration the organisational variables which affect leadership effectiveness and suggests that in given situations a task-oriented, or structured, style of leadership is most appropriate. The 'best' styles of leadership will be dependent upon the variable factors in the leadership situation. Fiedler argues that leadership effectiveness may be improved by changing the leadership situation. Position power, task structure and leader-member relations can be changed to make the situation more compatible with the characteristics of the leader (Down, 1993, p.10).

More recently Bossert et al., (1982) condensed such characteristics into four dimensions of effectiveness: 1) emphasis on formulation and achievement of goals; 2) power and decision making; 3) organisation and co-ordination of programmes and 4) use of human relations skills to recognise success and foster teacher's growth, morale and commitment.

A brief summary of each area follows:

1) Emphasis on formulation and achievement of goals.

A number of studies have found that principals in high achieving schools tend to emphasise achievement (e.g. Gross & Herriott, 1965; Wellisch et al., 1978). This involves setting instructional goals (Blumber & Greenfield, 1980; Lipham, 1981), developing performance standards for students (Wellich et al., 1978), and expressing optimism about the ability of students to meet instructional goals (Brookover et al., 1979). These behaviours are often called instructional leadership (Clark, Lotto, McCarthy, 1980; Lipham, 1981), and the principal's performance in this area is apparently central to the establishment of a school climate that supports achievement (Brookover et al., 1979).

Effective principals have a strong vision of what their schools can be, and they encourage all staff to work towards realising that vision. The importance of vision is a recurring theme in studies of excellence and leadership in education. (Green, 1994; Mortimore & Mortimore, 1991). For the school leader, Holmes argues "vision is ... the mental image of the kind of school you are trying to build for the future ..." (1993, p.16). Colton defines vision as that "which establishes goals or objectives for individual and group action, which defines not what we are but rather what we seek to be or do" (1985, p.33). Through daily interactions and modelling, the principal transmits his/her vision of a better school to teachers and other staff and influences them to act to achieve that vision. Rutherford (1985) noted that when a principal has a strong vision for the future of a school, most teachers become aware of and accept that vision. Naturally, the principal's own vision is influenced by that of others, such as community leaders, department officials' philosophy. As Holmes states this is quite a complex task and far from easy to accomplish. However, it is this vision that gives everyone connected with the school a reason for wanting to do things well and for feeling proud of what the school represents and seeks to achieve (Holmes, 1993, p.16). Such visions have to be translated into school development plans (DES, 1991; Hargreaves et al., 1990) with all the problems that arise out of such an exercise (Constable et al., 1991; Hutchinson, 1993; Wallace, 1991).

## 2) Power and decision making

The literature on effective schools also has shown that effective principals are more powerful than their colleagues in ineffective ones, especially in the areas of curriculum and instruction, where effective principals are found to be more active and powerful in decisions (Murphy et al., 1985). Strong district involvement in instruction and curriculum (California State Department of Education, 1977), when it supports principals' instructional goals, also appears effective (Lipham, 1981), but the mobilisation of such support may depend on the principal's power within the district (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980). In addition, principals of successful schools are effective within the community. They know community power structures and maintain appropriate relations with parents (Olivero, 1980).

### 3) Organisation and co-ordination.

Some studies have suggested that successful schools are better organised than unsuccessful ones, although the data on this issue are vague and sometimes contradictory, particularly when classroom-level data are aggregated. There are some robust findings about school-level organisation, however, especially as it relates to principals' behaviour. Principals in effective schools apparently devote more time to the co-ordination and control of instruction and are more skilful at the tasks involved (Hill & Bonan, 1991; Slegers et al., 1994). They do more observations of teachers' work (Lipham, 1981), discuss more work problems with teachers (Gross & Herriott, 1965; Wellisch et al., 1978), are more supportive of teachers' efforts to improve (California State Department of Education, 1977; Gross & Herriott, 1965; White, 1992), and are more active in setting up teacher and programme evaluation procedures (Lipham, 1981) than principals in less effective schools.

Principal involvement in classroom management also appears important to school success (Michigan State Department of Education, 1974). For example, successful schools are characterised by structured learning environments with few disciplinary problems, where students are engaged actively on tasks (California State Department of Education, 1977; Clark, Lotto & McCarthy, 1980). Principals are important to this process, in particular to the extent that they support teachers with discipline problem. By controlling public spaces, by stressing discipline, and by handling disciplinary problems in their offices, principals buffer the instructional core from disruptions (Thompson, 1967). There are other ways in which principals can buffer classrooms so that they run smoothly. For example, a California study indicates that principals in effective schools are more active in distributing materials and more supportive of special projects (California State Department of Education, 1977).

Other studies suggest that the principal's impact on instructional outcomes may be less related to his or her own behaviour than to the instructional programme and the degree to which it is structured and co-ordinated at the school level. Clark and associates argue that successful schools more clearly spell out programme and curricular objectives (1980), whilst Wellisch and associates show that the extent to which the

content, sequence, and materials involved in instruction are co-ordinated school wide sustain effectiveness (1978). At the same time, school wide promotion practices (Wellisch et al., *ibid.*) and procedures for placing students (California State Department of Education, *ibid.*) are associated with school effectiveness.

#### 4) Human relations

Highly effective schools also appear to differ from less effective schools in terms of the quality of human relations, and principals appear important to this difference. Effective principals are also seen to be active in setting "a tone of order and purpose for the schools as a whole" (Mackenzie, 1983, p.11) and in fostering desirable attitudes among staff and students. According to some writers this behaviour centres on showing concern for and interacting with students (Wilson, 1982). However, most writers have focused on the promotion of an orderly atmosphere - one that is quiet, pleasant and well-maintained (Shoemaker & Fraser, 1981) and that maximises time for learning (Mackenzie, 1983). Greater consensus has been obtained about the principal's communication of performance expectations to staff and students (Blum, 1984; Cohen, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; Little, 1981; Shoemaker & Fraser, 1981). Effective principals apparently recognise the unique styles and needs of teachers and help teachers achieve their own performance goals, a process that may fulfil teachers' higher order needs (Austin, 1979). They also encourage and acknowledge good work (Lipham, 1981). Gross and Herriott report that principals who expressed Executive Professional Leadership (EPL) have a positive impact on teachers' morale (1965). Teachers led by such principals manifest more of a sense of pride in their school and are more loyal to it than teachers led by principals low on EPL. In addition, they are more willing to cooperate with fellow teachers and respect the judgments of administrators. Gross and Herriott suggest that teacher morale has a positive impact on student performance, perhaps by increasing teacher effort (Levin, 1978). An equally plausible assumption, argues Bossert and associates (1982) is that the casual ordering of these variables is reversed: that teachers whose students perform well are more satisfied (Lawler & Porter, 1967). Nevertheless, teacher satisfaction may be important in its own right and have indirect effects on student performance.

#### **4.4.4 A Summary**

To summarise, these findings indicate that the managerial behaviour of principals is important to school effectiveness. Strong instructional leadership by the principal together with a vision of where to go have been singled out as the most critical components of an effective and successful school. It is this vision which allows staff to set policies, which in turn determine the aims and objectives to be pursued. Such an orientation allows schools to view their role from a pro-active rather than a merely reactive perspective. Effective principals are instrumental behind the creation of a warm school climate which calls for a strong sense of community, an academic, personal and social orientation, high expectations for pupils and teachers alike, and one which is based on clear goals and objectives, consistent values and rules. Like earlier leadership studies, however, no single style of management seems appropriate for all schools. For example, reviews of the successful schools literature intimate that principals must find the style and structures most suited to their own local situation (Davis & Thomas, 1989; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The same conclusion can be reached by a careful examination of quantitative studies of effective schools. Some of these contain interaction effects which suggest that certain principal behaviours have different effects in different organisational settings (Brookover et al., 1973; Galloway, 1983). Such findings reaffirm the contingency approach to organisational effectiveness found in particular leadership theories already discussed.

The studies also show the importance of school and district organisation to the development of instructional management and leadership (Daresh & Liu, 1985; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Murphy et al., 1985; Levine & Lezotte, 1990). In addition, principal leadership is also influenced by outside-school factors (e.g. Bridges, 1979; Cuttance, 1993 Gray & Jesson, 1987) which, as Reynolds (1993) points out, has not been adequately looked into. On the other hand, research on suburban districts shows principals having considerable latitude (Peterson, 1981), with weak direct controls and little supervision of their work (Meyer & Rowan, 1978). Although input controls are present and constrain principals, they do not direct their work. Similarly, while their superiors stress output controls, principals are not sure which of these are important.

Clearly, organisational variables characterising both schools and districts need to be analysed in order to comprehend more fully how the managerial and leadership behaviours of principals are shaped. A study by Salley and associates (1979) identifies a broad number of factors - including size, shape of the administrative hierarchy, characteristics of the staff and students, as well as the principal's background and the socio-economic context of the school - all of which have effects on principals' work activities. Other studies note that school-level technologies and state and federal fundings also are important (Davis, Rowan and Stackhouse, 1976).

Finally, these studies indicate that the behaviour of principals is partly responsible for differences between schools in effectiveness. Organisational variables, particularly the organisation and co-ordination of the school's instructional programme, also make a difference (Burns, in Dubin, 1991; Holmes, 1983).

#### **4.5 Work patterns and behaviour of primary school principals**

##### **4.5.1 Introduction**

The study of leadership in professional settings has a long, if thin, history in educational administration (Paisey, 1984). This is the case for practically most developed countries. The literature on school administration, with some exceptions, has tended to be prescriptive and hortatory rather than descriptive and empirical (McGeown, 1984). Much of our knowledge about the school principalship has developed out of various investigators' interests in either role theory or leadership behaviour. This emphasis has resulted in a body of literature excessively preoccupied with questions about administrator/ teacher interaction, instructional leadership and social change. Accordingly, the scholarly community has come to embrace a kind of 'conventional wisdom' that the principal is, and should be, the instructional leader of his or her school (e.g. Lipham & Hoeh, 1974). What has not been clear over the years, however, is whether the on-the-job behaviour of the school principal is consonant with this role. It is only from the early 1970s that observational research has seriously begun to address the question of how principals actually spend their time (Blease & Lever, 1991).



Such studies into aspects of school life highlighted, amongst other things, how the pace of change and the increasing demands being made upon schools was increasing pressure on principals. In an article entitled 'Competence and the Head' Robin Barrow (1976) highlights the resonant distinction between 'running' a school to 'organising' or 'managing' one - a distinction which was forcing principals not only beyond purely administrative work as Winkley (1983) seems to suggest but also beyond direct classroom-teaching contact and into the world of management, attitudes and relationships.

The traditional concept of the principal as a teacher rather than a manager who essentially learns his/her role 'on the job' (Kelsall & Kelsall, 1969) was strongly being challenged as a result of the new and ever increasing pressures schools and their staff had to face. A series of reports highlighted both the demands being made upon schools and the difficulties principals were encountering as they transferred from class teacher to principal, a transfer which happened without preparation by way of training or induction.

It is no longer possible to master the skills of headship only through day to day experience of schools, indispensable though this is. (Scottish Education Department, 1965)

All new head teachers, and if possible deputy head teachers should receive courses of training to prepare themselves for new responsibilities in management and personal relationships. (Gittens Report, 1967)

[Head teachers] need help about management and administration. (Plowden Report, 1967)  
(quoted in Laws & Dennison, 1990, p.269)

This very much resounds the feelings expressed by Maltese administrators as reported in Section A.

By the late 1970s the theme remained unaltered but tentative suggestions about managerial functions were being put forward. The DES Primary Survey (1978) promoted ideas like delegation, team-building, planning and evaluation. The First School Report (DES, 1982) was more specific. It defined the responsibilities of

principals - that of curriculum planning, establishing the organisation for implementation and evaluation of the curriculum, and maintaining good relationships with outside agencies. No particular style was recommended but effectiveness, it was claimed, related to good interpersonal links, purposefulness and firm control of expenditure.

Clearly some definition of role was being attempted and how best this role can be accomplished. At the same time an increasing number of books about principalship appeared describing how principals should manage their schools. Waters (1979), for example, talked of outstanding schools run by principals with flair, wisdom, energy and that sense of knowing how things ought to be done. But, he goes on to recommend that such attributes need to be accompanied by strong organisational and managerial ability through activities like planning, organising, selecting and communicating. Whittaker (1983) suggested a similar list, but, reflecting the 1980s in particular, analysed factors influencing principals towards a change of role to include i) increasing requirements of the LEA and DES often through legislation, involving the school in more administrative work; ii) raised expectations of public, parents, LEA, teachers, etc.; iii) demands upon the principal made by specific school institutions; and iv) the aspirations of certain principals to make their schools more successful.

According to this view principals were being driven towards a more overt chief executive role (Hughes, 1973), while many must have been selected according to criteria which relied on the attitudes of the 1960s - the principal as the leading professional.

With the introduction of LMS principals are being called to question their leading professional role as they take on more managerial responsibilities. A unitary role, as Hellawell (1991) and Thomas & Bullock (1994) suggest is the one principals in the U.K. are presently contending with (Jones & Hayes, 1991). Britain, a traditionally decentralised and devolved education system, has, since the mid-eighties systematically adopted centralist policies as the means of inducing change (e.g. the introduction of the National Curriculum, privatisation of school inspections, Local Management of

Schools, diminution of the role of Local Education Authorities, etc.). Such centralisation has been presented in terms of increasing the autonomy of schools which are obliged to operate within a market economy harnessed to sharper and shorter lines of accountability between providers and consumers. Increasing autonomy at the level of the individual school has placed greater demands upon principals (Audit Commission, 1993; HMI, 1992; Thomas & Bullock, 1994; Huckman, 1994).

#### **4.5.2 Principals and Managers**

Research on the managerial activities of principals has developed out of that of other managers. The work of Carlson (1951), analysing the activities of nine Swedish directors, was the first major empirical study to use the time diary method. Each director was asked to record daily events, as a result of which Carlson concluded that the work pattern was characterised by frequent interruptions and fragmentary activities. Much of the activity was associated with information acquisition and its subsequent communication, so as to fulfil organisational needs as perceived by the directors. As a result Carlson thought it difficult to categorise much of the purpose of their work. As later research confirmed the importance of information acquisition and communication in managerial life, the issue of categorising observed activity assumed more significance. Stewart (1967) for example, studied 160 managers in an attempt to discover how they spent their time and while reinforcing views about fragmentation, the variety of activity, and the concern for information, particularly in the verbal mode, the problem of classification remained.

One of the early works which influenced many later studies was Mintzberg's (1973) study of managerial work. Mintzberg enquired into the actual day-to-day activities of organisational executives over an extended period of time. He noted the enduring loyalty to maxims, such as those of Henri Fayol in 1916, that managers plan, organise, co-ordinate and control. Mintzberg showed that models such as Fayol's or Gulick's POSDCORB do not really tell what managers *actually do*.

For a week with each person, Mintzberg observed five chief executives of American organisations at work. These people were the chairman of a consulting firm, the

general director of a hospital, the president of a manufacturing firm, and the superintendent of a school district. He noted their work contacts and kept a chronological record of their work activities and a check on their mail. On the basis of his findings, Mintzberg arrived at a number of propositions concerning the nature of managerial work. There were significant differences among the five managers he observed but they all shared the following characteristics:

1. Because of the open-ended nature of his (sic) job, the manager feels compelled to perform a great quantity of work at an unrelenting pace. Little free time is available and breaks are rare.
2. In contrast to activities performed by most non-managers, those of the manager are characterised by brevity, variety and fragmentation. In general, managerial work is fragmented and interruptions are commonplace.
3. The manager actually appears to prefer brevity and interruption in his work. He becomes conditioned by his workload; he develops an appreciation for the opportunity cost of his (sic) own time; and he (sic) lives continuously with the awareness of what else might or must be done at any time. Superficiality is an occupational hazard of the manager's job.
4. The manager gravitates to the more active elements of his (sic) work - the current, the specific, well-defined, the non-routine activities. Mail processing is viewed as a burden, with the little 'action' mail receiving the most careful attention. The pressure of the job does not encourage the development of a planner, but of an adaptive information manipulator who works in a stimulus-response environment and who favours live action.
5. Verbal and written contacts are the manager's work and his (sic) prime tools are five media: mail (documented), telephone (purely verbal), unscheduled meetings (informal face-to-face), and tour (observational). The manager clearly favours the three verbal media, spending most of his (sic) time in verbal contact.
6. Mail receives cursory treatment, although it must be processed regularly. The mail tends to contain little 'live action' material; processing is time-consuming; and it moves slowly and involves long feedback delays.
7. The scheduled meeting consumes more of the manager's time than any other organisation.

8. 'Tour' provides the manager with the opportunity to observe activity informally without prearrangement. But the manager spends little of his (sic) time in open-end touring.
9. External contacts generally consume one-third to one-half of the manager's contact time.
10. Subordinates generally consume one-third to one-half of the manager's contact time, most often for purposes of making requests, of sending or receiving information, and of making strategy. The manager interacts freely with a wide variety of subordinates, bypassing formal channels of communication to do so.
11. The manager spends relatively little time with his (sic) superior.
12. The manager's job reflects a blend of duties and rights. Although a cursory look into the manager's activities might suggest that they often control little of what they do, closer analysis suggests that the manager can exert self control in two important ways. The manager is responsible for many initial commitments, which then lock him (sic) into a set of ongoing activities, and the manager can take advantage of his (sic) obligations by extracting information, by exercising his (sic) leadership, and in many other ways.

On the basis of these findings Mintzberg set out to identify a new taxonomy of managerial roles. Mintzberg moved away from the kind of formulations suggested by the classical/ functional approach to management (e.g. Gulick's POSDCORB) and the lists of task areas that other theorists have preferred. He described the manager's job in terms of various 'roles'. Mintzberg identified three sets of managerial roles which derive sequentially from the manager's formal authority and status:

1. Interpersonal roles

Three of the manager's roles arise directly from his/her formal authority and status involve basic interpersonal relationships. The roles are that of *figurehead*, *leader*, and *liaison*. Because of the status and authority possessed, the manager is recognised as the figurehead, the head person, a symbol, and has to carry out certain duties and behave in a certain way because of that. The manager also has to be available to deal with people who reasonably expect to be able to see the manager and to talk directly to

the person who has the status and authority to solve their problem, make a decision, provide the information they want, etc.

In the role of leader the manager uses the power and influence which goes with the job. The leader role identifies the manager's relationship with the people who work for him/her. Managers set the tone and style of the department they manage and how they treat the people working for them will determine how pleasant or disagreeable it is to work in that department. The manager encourages them to do what is required and what they are capable of, checks up on what is going on and takes responsibility for the development of the people working for him/her.

Within his/her liaison role the manager develops a network of contacts outside the immediate department through which he/she gives and receives useful information.

## 2. Informational roles

By virtue of his/her interpersonal contacts, the manager emerges as the nerve centre of the organisation. The roles are that of: *monitor*, *spokesman*, and *disseminator*.

The monitoring role allows the manager to ask for and receive information from a number of sources in order to improve understanding of what is happening within his/her own department and whatever is happening outside that may affect it. This information will be in the form of reports, analyses, memos, accounts, as well as what is heard in meetings, briefing groups, presentations, and informal conversations.

On the basis of what has been found out, and interpreting it using his/her own judgment, the manager also takes on the disseminator role where he/she disseminates or passes on information to the people who work for him/her. It may be factual or it may be an expression of the manager's own set of priorities. The manager also passes information between one person and another in the group.

As spokesperson the manager passes information to other external groups.

### 3. Decisional roles

"Information is not, of course, an end in itself; it is the basic input to decision making" (Mintzberg, 1975, p.56). Four roles describe the manager as decision-maker: *entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator.*

As entrepreneur, the manager continually looks for opportunities to develop the work of the department and for ways of overcoming its problems. As such, the manager designs and puts into action much of the controlled change that takes place.

The manager must also take charge of disturbances when something happens to which there is no well-tryed response. The disturbances may arise from conflicts between the people who work for the manager, conflicts between his/her department and another, or from a threatened loss of resources.

As resource allocator the manager oversees the allocation of all the organisation's resources which are available to the department. This will include obvious resources such as money, and whatever facilities that will buy, and manpower. The manager takes responsibility for establishing the basic work system of the department and programming work of the people who work for him/her - deciding what will be done, who will do it and what structure will be used.

As negotiator the manager takes charge when the department has to negotiate with other departments or with other organisations.

Thus, like Carlson (1951) and Stewart (1967), Mintzberg re-emphasised the variety, fragmentation and rapidity of their work, and the frequent interruptions. He, too, reported that verbal contact dominates the mode of communication. For all the executives observed the issue of time management was crucial - a manager seems to be "plagued by the possibilities of what he (sic) might do and what he (sic) must do" (1973, p.51). Decisions were made more difficult by the impingement of unscheduled events (for a principal having to take a class for an absent teacher would be a typical example) or the regular and identifiable activities that must be scheduled.

### **4.5.3 North American and Australian Research**

In relation to the principalship the other significance of Mintzberg's work was the research it encouraged, particularly in North America and Australia.

One of the first but at the same time one of the most intensive and comprehensive studies ever undertaken in the United States on the school principal was that by Wolcott (1973). Wolcott undertook a study of one elementary school principal. His use of ethnographic techniques and his subsequent description and analysis produced a depth of understanding quite distinct from empirically-based studies of larger samples of principals. The monograph shows clearly and vividly the world of one principal - how he spends his time, who he talks to, what his attitudes are, what sort of mail he gets, what he is trying to do with his school, and how he relates to the various members of his system.

As part of a two-year study, Wolcott "shadowed" Ed Bell, an Oregon elementary school principal, for one year. Wolcott spent extended periods of time following Bell around throughout his day's activities. Similar to the studies already reviewed Wolcott describes a principal whose job is, in the main, dictated by events.

In an attempt to study the work behaviour of five elementary school principals Kmetz and Willower (1982) used Mintzberg's structured observation technique. Over a period of five weeks the principals engaged in a total of 3058 activities during 233.7 hours of work (averaging 54.7 hours each per week, which included an additional eight evening hours per week). Over 86 percent of the principals' activities, occupying more than 70 percent of their time, involved personal contacts. These contacts included face-to-face meetings, telephone calls, and the often brief visual or verbal interactions that occurred during monitoring or touring. The majority of the principals' meetings took place in their offices, or other high density areas were the sites of more brief interactions. More contacts were made with teachers and more time was devoted to contacts with them than with any other group. Their activities were often interrupted. This resulted in polychronics, i.e. doing two things at once. About 38 percent of all the principals' activities were either interrupted or were themselves interruptions. The activities which



were most likely to be interrupted were monitoring, scheduled meetings and desk work.

The main findings of this study concerning work volume and pace are consistent with studies of those holding administrative positions in other fields. Events ordinarily controlled the principals rather than the other way round. In other words, the principals had not worked out the means for deliberately allocating their attention. Kmetz & Willower stress that in the face of the tide of everyday events that more or less engulfs the practitioner, the safeguarding of deliberate and thoughtful administrator action and decision making becomes problematic.

In Australia O'Dempsey (1976) was also one of the first who pioneered research into the actual work of school principals. His research involved observing three high school principals for one week each, closely recording their work. His research focus was directed at what principals really did in relation to the various statements made as to what they should do (1976, p.1). O'Dempsey was able to apply many of Mintzberg's findings to the Australian scene. He showed that there was a high degree of commonality in the work content and characteristics of Mintzberg's five managers and his own three school principals. O'Dempsey proved Mintzberg's assertion that managerial work was characterised by brevity, variety and fragmentation.

However, O'Dempsey's research highlights the traditional and paternal form of principalship where the principal was often the best qualified teacher on the staff. In this study O'Dempsey points to the teaching role the principal has to perform coupled with a fairly narrow range of administrative and welfare duties. Thus the principal's role was seen as a mere extension of classroom life.

An exploratory study of the primary school principalship in New Zealand was conducted in the mid-1970s by Edwards. By using the techniques of an ethnographer Edwards (1979) aimed to study the principalship in five suburban primary schools in a New Zealand city and endeavoured to identify some of the major organisational and administrative problems and needs which were reflected in the cases of these principals.

Edwards describes the New Zealand principal as one heavily involved in the day-to-day management of the school by responding to factors "of the moment" (1979, p.253). Activities tended to be of short duration, of a routine nature, carried out in a somewhat disjointed fashion, frequently not being conducive to careful pre-planning of the principal's time, with little time for relaxation from the daily stresses of office work, with, too, some lack of clarity of role relationships and responsibilities among people within the schools.

#### **4.5.4 British Research**

By comparison with North American and Australia, research on primary principalship in Britain is more limited. This is particularly so in two respects. First, in quality of research design and second in its failure to produce data of a comparable worth. The situation has also been exacerbated by the appearance during the 1980s, at the same time as interest in the head as manager has grown, of books which describe what a primary principal *ought* to do (Reynolds, 1992). The literature has, with some exceptions, tended to be prescriptive and hortatory in nature (McGeown, 1984). Exceptionally, though, there have been a few studies of principal activity, while some works on primary school management have used empirical research to support their analyses of the principal's role. This material can be combined to achieve a core of knowledge about the work practices of primary school principals in Britain.

One of the first researchers to conduct studies on the principalship was Lyons (1972, 1976) who studied the patterns of work behaviour of secondary school principals. This study, together with other studies here reviewed, reveal not only a considerable similarity between continents but when the behaviour of the principals is compared to studies of non-educational managers recorded by Mintzberg (1973), again the similarity is striking. Jenkins (1985) undertook a study to identify and compare the job perceptions of principals and deputy principals in schools with those of senior industrial managers.

The main research instrument utilised was a technique known as the Repertory Grid based on Kelly's Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955). This technique allows for

both in-depth investigation of individuals and the aggregation of information which makes generalisations possible. The managers of eleven schools in South Wales and the West of England and seven manufacturing units in South Wales were studied in depth (a total of 49 managers). In addition to undertaking the grid each manager was interviewed and also completed a questionnaire on his/her internal and external orientation. The following observations were made:

- **Task management**

Managers in both schools and manufacturing industry appeared to concentrate on maintenance tasks rather than developmental and planning tasks - the perspective tends to be short term and immediate rather than long term. This refers to the reactive as against proactive role. In schools the task involvement of both principals and deputy principals seems limited in the main to administrative and functional tasks. There is a very restricted involvement by the principal in planning and policy making. On the other hand, all managers tended to some extent to confirm Mintzberg's view of managers undertaking a variety of tasks and gravitating to the more active elements of work - focussing on specific rather than general issues. The study also highlights that managers, unlike principals, indicate a strong commitment to planning. Managers seem to take on an overall view of their organisation while principals are guilty of a lack of attention to planning and strategy as opposed to operational issues. The wide range of task activities - production targets, planning, administration - undertaken by managers is then in direct contrast with the limited range of tasks undertaken by principals. Jenkins also found that both principals and managers in the administration trend deal with correspondence and communications, and in the internal/external with external activities.

- **Management of people**

Interpersonal roles have high priority among all managers although they have even higher prominence in the behaviour of senior school staff. Principals perceive their job as highly people-centred. They reveal a concern with resolving problems presented by parents, pupils and staff and are particularly active in the control, discipline and welfare of pupils. The heavy involvement of principals in the management of people supports Mintzberg's view about managers in general having a preference for people-centred,

face-to-face activities. Managers, on the other hand, also express a concern for managing people, although this concern does not emerge as strongly as with the principals. While stress is laid on maintaining good interpersonal relationships with the workers, people are very closely linked in the minds of the managers with production and an even greater emphasis appears to be put by managers on the more structured people activity of industrial relations.

- Internal/external orientation

The internal/external duality figures strongly in the literature on managers in general but there is less positive evidence of an external orientation on the part of senior staff in schools. The principal's external orientation is very much to do with the problems thrown up by the school's immediate environment mainly in the shape of parental dissatisfaction. Managers on the other hand exhibit strong external trends and deal with a wider environment than schools mainly in terms of dealing with other companies, marketing and outside negotiations. The major difference that arose between managers and in schools and managers in industry was on the question of competition in the environment. Schools see very little while manufacturing industry see this as one of the crucial issues to their survival. The competition factor inevitably ties in with the stress by managers in industry on performance and productivity. (The findings would definitely be different in a post-LMS environment)

Other research findings from this study are worth noting. Jenkins points out that this study helps to bring out that principals and deputy principals tend to suffer from role ambiguities and that although it appears that in many schools principals and deputy principals work as a top management team, it may be that the roles of the team members are too undifferentiated and undefined.

In an attempt to survey the work of primary school principals Davies (1987) combined an observational approach and a diary method. Four principals, coming from a wide spectrum of primary schools were chosen. The four principals studied, during the observation period of five days, worked an average week of 46.2 hours each showing some similarity with Lyons' (1976) secondary school principals' 44-45 hour week and

to Mintzberg's (1973) chief executives who averaged 40 hours each per week. However they were well below the 54 hours of the principals observed by Kmetz and Willower (1982) and the 59 hours of those observed by Willis (1981). During the working week the principals undertook a multitude of activities, the daily average of 50 tasks falling between Mintzberg's 22 for chief executives and the 122 recorded daily tasks of Kmetz and Willower's (1982) principals. The level of work activity displayed an unrelenting pace throughout the day, a true break hardly ever occurring. For example, coffee breaks were often spent talking to staff regarding children or being informed about defects in the building or checking that certain staff were on duty supervision. Lunchtimes, likewise were a time when the principals needed to be available to be seen by teachers and, when not occupied by meetings, the principals' disciplinary and supervisory role was particularly evident.

These principals' days were characterised by brevity, variety and fragmentation similar to other empirical managerial studies (e.g. Mintzberg, 1973). A notable feature was the large number of short-term activities which each principal undertook. On average 60 per cent of all the principal's activities were less than nine minutes in duration, while only 7 per cent lasted beyond an hour. The average duration for each activity undertaken was 13 minutes. The highest distribution of activities frequently occurred during the first part of the morning. Similarly, all the principals suffered from many interruptions during the week, nearly one-quarter of all activities undertaken being interrupted. The results are quite similar to other studies reported in this review. The principals studied seemed to make no attempt to reduce interruptions, and often increased their likelihood by embarking upon 'grand tours' of the school premises - what Peters and Waterman (1982) defined as the MBWA (managing by wandering about) style.

The principals utilised a variety of media in the performance of their role both within the school and with their external links. They used 'desk work' sessions to process mail and for planning, organisational and scheduling activities. Much of the mail received was informational in character, and much was passed on to either the principal's secretary or deputy principal to deal with. Similarly, routine clerical and administrative

tasks such as the collection of dinner money, the filling in of forms or the checking of invoices was dealt with by secretarial help. An average of 56 sessions per week took up about 17 per cent of the principals' total work time, the average duration was short (eight minutes) and often suffered from interruption. However, the principals in this study made no real effort to cut down on these interruptions and were nearly always available to speak to someone if they knocked on the office door. Desk work was sometimes broken off by the principals themselves when they would go on a visit or tour of the school.

While the principals utilised a variety of media to fulfil organisational functions, they exhibited a marked preference for verbal rather than written communication. The principals' reliance on interpersonal relationships was emphasised by an extensive use of meetings, visits and tours of the school, the principal's predilection for interpersonal relationships being matched by an inclination for involvement in 'live' action. During the week studied, an average 34 hours was spent in verbal contact; this accounted for 83 per cent of the principals' total work commitment.

One-third of the principals' time was occupied with meetings which had been pre-arranged, but it was unscheduled meetings which were most frequent, each principal averaging 89 such meetings during the week, one-fifth of their working time. These normally brief meetings were sometimes interrupted by another activity and often involved the exchange of information or action requests. Frequently these meetings could be of a fairly trivial nature but served the purpose of keeping the principal in touch with all that went on in school.

The principals studied were involved with a large number and a variety of participants during their working week. Frequently, the principals dealt with several different people at different levels in rapid succession. The internal aspect of their role received the greater emphasis, nearly three quarters of the principals' time being spent with participants in schools. Most of the time was involved with children and teachers, while other internal contacts were brief. However, liaisonary functions between the school and external agencies also made up an important contribution towards the role,

principally speaking with parents, providing resources, organising building maintenance, dealing with local education officials and coordinating support services such as medical, educational-psychological, welfare, social and remedial branches. A considerable proportion of the remaining external work involved attendance at governors' meetings, parent-teacher committees and other functions normally fulfilled out of school hours. The principals spent little time alone (on average only 17 percent). They were involved in meetings primarily with either one other or more than four people. The majority of all contacts were made in the principal's office, making up nearly half the contacts and occupying nearly one-third of the time. What stands out in this study is that the traditional principal function of pedagogical leader and disciplinarian played an important part in the principals' role. The primary school principals studied paid much attention to being in classrooms either visiting or actually teaching. A quarter of contacts were made in visits to classrooms and nearly half their time was spent there. From the review of the literature one can see that this feature is very much characteristic of principalship in the U.K. In both studies conducted by Harvey (1986) and Davies (1987) it was observed that principals spent a lot of time in direct contact with pupils whether in classroom teaching or else in informal discussions of various sorts (e.g. discussion of projects, discipline).

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On the other hand administrative desk work only occupied one-fifth of the principals' time, quite in open contrast to some of the others studies reviewed.

Harvey's study points to the primary school principal undertaking numerous functions which make up their role. While administrative desk work only took up a small portion of the principals' time an important aspect of their role was as the facilitator of the efficient running of the internal organisation, acting as communicator and organiser, and of the maintenance of links with the external environment. The principal would seem to be the centre of the information network of the primary school and as such is in an unique position to have knowledge of what goes on in the organisation. It would also appear from the large number of requests and the number of times the principals are kept informed that primary school staff perceive this function of the principal's role as being legitimate. This aspect was emphasised by the large number of decisions the

principal had to make during the week, most decisions, even those of a relatively minor nature, being referred directly to the principal. Their people-oriented styles meant the principals were able to keep in touch with everything that went on in the school.

While the managerial aspect of the role is clearly definable, the primary school principal is very much the leading professional of the school (Hughes, 1975). All the principals, even of the larger schools, spending much time either teaching or visiting classrooms. During this time the pedagogical leader role was much in evidence, a great deal of time being spent in negotiation and discussion of items regarding policy and the curriculum of the school.

It would seem that the results of this study correspond to much of what is postulated in the literature as being the role of the primary school principal. The main factors highlighted by this study is the amount of time spent with children and the time actually involved purely with pedagogical matters.

In another study, Clerkin (1985) a principal himself, studied the principalship by examining data in the form of interviews and time diaries provided by three newly appointed principals, combined with a questionnaire survey of 18 others from a national sample of 40 'new' principals. Clerkin's use of the time diary with primary school principals is the first of its kind in England.

The research study, while adopting a different research approach, supports the findings of other studies. The three principals filling in the diary commented that at times they felt like "victims of circumstances", where they could not control the intensity and pressure of events. By far the most dominant modes of behaviour of the three case study principals were face to face communication with staff and pupils as well as general administrative activities. Curriculum development and policy matters together with external relationships were also given a high priority.

In the survey 40 percent of the newly appointed principals cited 'Establishing priorities' as one of the major internal difficulties they were facing. Moreover, 60 percent found



that 'dealing with a large number of decisions' was also a serious matter for them. The common theme throughout was the problem of coping with a host of people with pressing problems to be dealt with at once. Clerkin observed that the varied, fragmented and often brief activities principals are involved in must not be regarded as "single or discrete activities" (1985, p. 294) but as multifaceted, complex activities which form part of a wider process which helps create and maintain a network of understanding, information and relationships.

The greatest amount of recorded activities in the case study principals' diaries was in the category of *general administration*: A significant amount of attention was paid also to *equipment, buildings and plants maintenance*. Although the principals were concerned about an alleged increase in 'petty bureaucracy', they expressed a considerable degree of dissatisfaction with their own performances here. This is an interesting finding which is not highlighted in other studies which have been reviewed. Most work of an 'administrative nature' is in the main reported to be delegated to clerical staff. Comments raised by the principals themselves in this study shows that they recognised that some of the work they were taking full responsibility for could have easily been delegated. This may be due to the fact that the sample chosen by Clerkin were all newly-appointed principals with two years experience or less. A considerable number of principals referred to the need for training to help them cope with general administrative matters. While some expressed gratitude for the assistance provided by the secretaries, the inclinations were that frequently it was not the principals who planned or directed office management procedures. The principals in both the case studies and the survey, seem to have become over-involved at times with relatively minor tasks rather than delegating these to other appropriate persons.

Like in other studies, the attention given to communication in the diaries confirms that the primary school principal's role is essentially a person-oriented one. All three case study principals emphasised the importance of maintaining continuous personal contact with pupils, teachers and ancillary staff. In the survey the principals commented on the importance of having an 'open-door policy' for teachers, pupils and community members alike. However, a 'significant number' also mentioned the problem of being

"unable to find sufficient time to engage in worthwhile discussion with colleagues, as well as the fact that they seldom had a chance to listen to other staffs' comments or points of view for a sustained period" (Clerkin, 1985, p. 296).

What Clerkin defines as curriculum development, school policy and INSET featured third in the list of principal tasks - well below communication and administration. The diaries do not give a full picture of the nature of the principal's involvement here but the evidence suggests that much activity in school centred on such things as preparing policy documents or discussing the curriculum with individual teachers. 'Visiting classes' was also frequently referred to in the data. The principals who answered the questionnaire were not questioned specifically about this group topic. However, it is clear from their response that a good deal of curricular initiative was being focused on language and mathematics. Forty percent referred to introducing new reading schemes or revising the ones being used at the time, and thirty percent to similar activities in mathematics. Smaller percentages referred to modifications in the science curriculum, and the introduction of microcomputer studies.

Like other principals they record having hardly any time for a 'quiet time' - to be on one's own to read or reflect. Thus Clerkin's 'principal' is one who is always up and about tackling a high intensity of tasks with frequent interruptions rather than a systematic ordering of curricular or organisational programmes based on agreed policies or clearly understood management structures. The diary patterns illustrate a situation where the majority of a "principal's energy is devoted to 'keeping the school ticking over' in the short run with only limited opportunity to consider important longer term issues" (1985, p.298).

In 1984 a small-scale investigation was initiated by a Primary Heads Study and Research Group to find out how principals planned to use their time in schools and to compare this with what actually happened (Harvey, 1986). With the literature showing that life in primary schools, for principals and teachers, is characterised by fragmentation, variety, urgency, restlessness and unplanned interruptions the Research Group considered that, as a management exercise, it would be helpful for principals to

record this difference. Through this research it was hoped that common patterns would emerge related to the size and type of environment of the schools which would provide important information for those running management training programmes.

Thirty-two primary principals returned fully completed schedules. The sample was large enough to provide data for a range of comparisons between planned and actual use of time. The number of recorded changes in the use of time from what had been planned varied for each principal between 11 and 70 a week. The average number of changes was 40. These results show that there were no major differences between the way principals plan to use their time and the actual use of that time. Following the six main categories for coding, the following table highlights the total average of how principals state they would want to spend their time and how they actually spend it.

	Intended	Actual
Contact with pupils	30.7%	31.1%
Preparation and INSET	25.6%	21.2%
Administration	22.9%	18.7%
Contacts with staff	10.3%	11.8%
Contacts with others	6.5%	11.6%
Other (incl. travelling)	4.0%	5.5%

There was also no major differences between principals of rural and urban schools. However, this research study showed that size of school did make a difference. The small rural and urban school principal was interrupted less than the average, possibly because they spend more time teaching pupils and so were less available to be interrupted.

The comparison between intended use of time and actual use of time recorded by the principals over a one week period offers some interesting points for discussion. As might be expected (prior to LMS) principals planned to spend most of their time first in contact with their pupils (av. intended 30.7% - actual 31.1%). Sub-group comparisons however show that principals of small rural schools actually spend more time in contact with pupils especially in classroom teaching than the rest of the rural and urban school principals. What Harvey notes is that unexpectedly small urban school principals do not spend as much time with pupils as their rural counterparts. In fact

whilst there are marked differences between rural school principals with regards to their contact with pupils (intended: small 45%, medium 26.9%, large 28.1%; actual: small 39%, medium 25.9%, large 29.8%) there are no marked differences between urban school principals (intended: small 35.9%, medium 29.7%, large 27.6%; actual: small 33%, medium 32%, large 30%).

One consequence of the greater contact with pupils in small schools (planned and actual) appears to be that these principals have less time to be with their staff - rural schools, intended 3%, actual 5%, compared with the average for all schools of 10% and 12% respectively. The results also suggest that urban principals intend and actually do spend more time in contact with staff than principals of rural schools - urban principals: intended 12%, actual 13%, compared with 8% and 10% for rural principals.

The overall increase in time actually spent in contacts with others (LEA advisers, parents, etc.) compared with that planned appears to be common for all types of schools - i.e. about twice the time as intended (6.5% to 11.6%). There was little difference between types of schools, apart from the relatively high figures for 'others' in small urban schools. In the fourth category, that of administration, principals of rural schools as a group spent as much time on administration as they had intended (20-21%). The overall decrease in time spent on administration was accountable to urban principals (24% down to 18%).

With regards to the fifth category covering private study, planning and preparation of school-based activities and attendance at external in-service activities, the overall decrease in time spent compared with the intended use of time was found to be common to all types of schools (intended 26%, actual 21%). This decrease is accounted for by changes in school-based activities. Attendance at principals' meetings and other out-of-school activities, are naturally more protected from last minute changes. The contrast between attendance to out-of-school activities and school-based ones is highlighted by Harvey. Harvey notes that principals having commitments out of the school keep to their appointments and are not delayed by school needs. On the other hand they tend to allow for all sorts of interruptions when organising or attending school-based activities.

According to Harvey it is important for principals to develop strategies for coping with the unexpected so as to minimise the disruptions that can adversely affect their planned school-based INSET. As in the case of administration, several principals reported that preparation and planning work had been taken home to be completed when their intended use of time set aside for this became so disrupted by unexpected events.

The pattern that emerged in this study is that of principals controlled by events, and feeling drawn to respond to unscheduled situations rather than controlling events and initiating actions. This puts into perspective the pro-active - reactive dilemma facing principals.

The confirmation that principals do many things quickly raises subsequent questions about the nature of these actions and their purposes. For most principals in the U.K. the longest sustained activity is teaching. Even studies of secondary school principalship establish this issue (Hall et al., 1986). Teaching represents their previous specialism and principals seem to spend more time in this previous role than comparable senior managers in commerce and industry. They are also more likely to use professional knowledge gained in an earlier role as a basis for new activities concerned with policy, development, quality control and supervising the work of others. The notion of the professional leader actually participating in professional work remains a feature of most, if not all, primary schools. As we have seen Harvey suggests that principals of small schools spend more time with children than those of medium and large primary schools which is accounted for by a large proportion of teaching.

Primary school principals are caught up in a web of conflicting and constraining pressure. They have to be Janus-like figures, looking into demands as they arise from both within and outside the school. Principals, Bell & Morrison (1988) explain, have to tread a tight rope between parties pulling, at times, in different directions, thus having to adopt what Hargreaves (1978) defines as a 'coping strategy' which allows them to coherently signal appropriate messages to diverse agents and to resolve or allow differences and conflicts to be managed. Some principals do this by 'retreating'

from the classroom, facilitating their easier management of both executive and professional roles (Coulson, 1985). For other principals, however, the retreat from the classroom is not possible - these are the teaching principals mainly to be found most active in small primary schools as Harvey (1986) has already highlighted. Theirs, Bell & Morrison explain "is a peculiar problem of reconciling the demands of the non-teaching principal's roles and yet being at the same time a class teacher ... "(1988, p.204). Their potential for 'role strain' is stronger as macro demands on the school become their day-to-day classroom lived experiences. A level of sensitivity to macro demands and interpersonal working relationships is required in which teaching principals may well have to choose between compromising their own principal roles vis-a-vis public pressures and negotiating a working consensus with their colleagues (Woods, 1983). The teaching principal has simply too much to do to fulfil each role sufficiently.

Bell & Morrison (1988), in their study of teaching principals delved deeper into this area with the intention of investigating how they adopt a 'coping strategy' which enables them to manage these twin responsibilities.

They undertook a study with twenty-five teaching principals all of whom worked in small schools. There were two parts to the investigation. Initially a rating schedule was prepared and administered to ascertain the ways in which teaching principals perceived their roles. Secondly, semi-structured interviews with a random sample of fourteen of the teaching principals were conducted to explore the respondents' perceptions of the role strain and conflict in greater depth.

The principals were given a list of 29 characteristics of a principal's role covering professional, managerial and interpersonal qualities. Respondents were asked to rate each aspect on a five-point scale of importance that is, how they perceived the importance of each aspect solely from the perspective of their role as principals. They were then asked to complete a second, identical rating schedule, from the perspective of a classroom teacher. The five main role behaviours from the two perspectives reported in this study, together with the combined scores, were the following:

Role behaviour	Headteacher's perspective	Class teacher's perspective	Combined scores
Accessible to staff, children, parents	1		2
Closely identifies with teachers' interest		1	
Closely involved in classroom and school activities	2	2	1
Willingness to teach		3	
Flexible and imaginative	3		
Supportive of staff, conciliator	4	2	3
Open to new ideas	4		
Experienced classroom teacher		4	4

From this it is evident that teaching principals identified quite strongly with class teaching. Further analysis revealed that: good interpersonal relationships with staff, community and pupils, and professional qualities were rated more highly than management or administrative roles; aspects of 'consideration' (Nias, 1980) - accessibility, supportiveness, identification with teacher's interests - were rated consistently higher than aspects of 'decision centralisation' (Nias, 1980) - authoritarianism, enforcement of discipline, setting priorities; and those qualities associated with a 'collegial' style of team membership decision making (Campbell, 1985) was preferred.

The results of the semi-structured interviews complemented the rating schedule outcomes. The teaching principals interviewed all saw their first priority being to the class with secondary consideration being given to administrative functions. It was significant that principals' administrative functions were seen as 'interruptions' to the real task of teaching the class. Principals coped with this by judicious use of part-time teachers to free them to carry out administrative work, or by working an extra long day (40-45 hours weekly), or by working at home, or combinations of these. Steps were also taken by principals to ensure minimal interruptions from visitors during class hours and to cope with disruptions that did arise (i.e. encouraging autonomous learning).

The main perceived advantage in the role of the teaching principal is that they gain 'a

greater awareness of and involvement in school life' (71.4%), followed closely by 'more developed relationships and closer involvement with children and staff' (42.9% and 35.7% respectively). Whereas the main perceived disadvantages in the role of the teaching principal were of a practical, constraining nature: 'lack of time' (78.6%), 'difficulty of going into other classes and acquiring an overview of the school' (71.4%), 'interruptions and distractions' (57.1%), and 'greater workload' (50%). From this it is evidently clear that the frequency of response to perceived disadvantages is much greater than that of perceived advantages.

In a project undertaken by Harris & Clark (1989), Mintzberg's (1973) managerial roles were used as a basis for getting different principals to talk about their perceptions of the job. Eleven principals were chosen and they were asked to give some examples, from their own experience, of how each of the following roles were carried out by themselves in their school:

Interpersonal roles: Figurehead, Leader, Liaison  
Information roles: Monitor, Disseminator, Spokesman  
Decisional roles: Entrepreneur, Disturbance handler,  
Resource allocator, Negotiator.

The major finding of this study is the recognition that "what happens in schools is not simply 'education', and that headmasters (sic) are not simply 'teachers'" (Harris & Clark, 1989, p.24). Certain principal's activities are management ones and, as such, involve management skills. The findings highlight that such skills are largely different from those necessary for teaching, and consequently need the appropriate training to learn the skills to take on such managerial posts.

In a small study on the changing role of the primary school principal Hellowell (1991) interviewed 24 principals about the appraisal of their managerial performance. The research findings have to be borne in the light of the 1988 Education Reform Act which saw a major shift of educational power from the LEAs to the Secretary of State and to the schools themselves. The principalship was taking on a new dimension. The principal was being perceived as being a manager first and a teacher second, with the



implicit notion that principals may in the future become more distanced from their staff. The response of the principals interviewed has to be borne in light of this fact together with the belief that the majority of the principals interviewed saw themselves as individuals who had been promoted to principalship because they were good teachers. Moreover they wished to lead their schools by continuing to set a good example of classroom teaching practice - i.e. the leading professional.

One of the major findings which came out during the interviews is that all the principals were "very worried about increasing managerial pressures" (Hellawell, 1991, p.322). The principals saw themselves primarily as teachers not administrators. And, most of them regarded the teaching-principal role as a defence mechanism against some of the managerial pressures they were facing - in itself another coping strategy not identified as such in the Bell & Morrison study of teaching principals.

All principals had strong views about the new 'headteachers contract'. There was a high degree of consensus among the principals that their jobs were ones with very wide-ranging responsibilities which the new conditions had now codified, and by implication had now made legally inescapable. Some principals positively welcomed the headteachers' contract, seeing it as official recognition for a role which was essentially a managerial one. The majority, however, felt that the move towards making the primary school principal more of an administrator/ manager and less of a teacher/ leader was a retrograde step. All principals however were in agreement that the general trend was one of external pressures towards an increasingly managerial role for the primary principal. As a result of the ever-growing pressures from outside all principals reported that they had to reduce, in some cases drastically, their time spent in class teaching. The group interviewed by Hellawell as a whole felt under increasing pressure and that the main thrust of this pressure was to turn them more towards administration and management and less towards teaching. The study highlights the dilemma facing most principals with the introduction of LMS, that principals are coming to see the two roles of chief executive and leading professional as an 'either-or' relationship rather than a 'both-and' one. If the unitary one is to be maintained then this may be best done by delegating some of the duties associated with the chief executive

role. In fact with the introduction of LMS the role of deputy principal is being studied in greater detail (Helps, 1994; Purvio & Dennison, 1993) leading to definite changes as those suggested by Webb (1994).

The 1988 Education Reform Act involved a major shift of educational power from the LEAs to the governors and the schools themselves. Parental choice, open enrolment and the local management of schools created a market model of education and opened up the possibility of schools competing like commercial enterprises. The Act, together with a number of subsequent acts have brought about radical changes in the management of schools. This means that the primary responsibility for financial management in the day-to-day aspects of a school rest mainly with the principal and the senior management team. Such responsibility involves decision making about such resources as teaching and support staff, books, equipment, materials and maintenance work. LMS therefore, is more than a financial task, it is whole school resource management.

A number of studies have been conducted to explore the impact of the LMS initiative. Bullock & Thomas (1994) undertook a longitudinal study through the use of postal questionnaires and school visits. The study shows that LMS has made principals increasingly positive about its benefits. The majority (i.e. 81%) of principals do not wish to return to pre-LM arrangements. On the other hand the main unwelcomed impact of LM has been the level of administrative work and the pressures of time. This study shows that on average principals spent an extra eight hours a week on LM related matters. The results of this study show, however, a decline in the amount of pressure principals are feeling due to LM. It is evident from this study that LM is affecting and therefore changing the role of the principal. In general it seems that the role of principal is becoming less focused on teaching and more on managing. Principals are now seeing themselves as taking on the role of 'manager', 'policy maker', and 'chief executive'. Some of the comments raised by the principals themselves calls for reassessing the role of the principal and deputy principal and the type of management training required for such a post (1994, p.96). Bullock & Thomas end this study in a cautionary manner by quoting a primary school principal who states that "there has

been an appreciable change in the headteacher's role and workload ... this has not necessarily been to the total benefit of pupils/ staff/school" (ibid., p.97). This expresses a major shift of power on the part of the principal from one centred on classroom practice to a managerial one.

Whilst Bullock & Thomas were conducting their own research Webb (1994) was conducting a two-phase qualitative research into the implementation of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 2. Webb's research starts off by referring to the 'deluge of directives' that the 1988 Education Reform Act brought with it and then moved on to describe the effects of these changes on the principal's role. Webb reports that principals had to demonstrate a wide range of skills both in relation to their traditional role of curriculum developers, teachers and administrators, and in their more recent roles of subject specialists, INSET providers, entrepreneurs and resident inspectors. Like Bullock & Thomas, Webb reports that although LM had initially increased the amount of routine administration this was slowly diminishing with new people being enrolled and/or others taking on added responsibilities.

Moreover, Webb saw the principals as vision setters, as leaders who "maintained an overview of the curriculum and sought to ensure that the ways in which it was taught reflected their vision of the school" (ibid., p.6). The majority of principals reported that they were spending increasing amounts of time on professional commitments outside the school. Time available to spend in the classrooms was increasingly likely to be devoted to monitoring rather than teaching or working alongside class teachers. Monitoring was deemed imperative in order to compare school policies and practices against the criteria in the OFSTED inspection manual. Principals felt that staff had become accustomed to non-teaching principals and understood why this was necessary. Principals were anxious that for them to provide effective curriculum development, teachers need to develop interpersonal, organisational and evaluative skills, together with the confidence to disseminate ideas to colleagues.

Like Bullock & Thomas, Webb looks into the important role of management development. Webb suggests that both principals and deputy principals should spend

more time together, sharing and discussing matters. She also suggests that principals should consider job-sharing with their deputies. Such an exchange could enable principals to refresh and up-date their classroom practice.

Webb also notes that whilst on the one hand a number of factors were combining to break down the private individualist culture of primary schools and replace it with one characterised by openness, trust and co-operation, these practices have been undermined by the forces combining to promote directive management styles by principals. Webb argues that the tensions identified and their implications need to be acknowledged by policy makers at local and national level. On the one hand, schools are being encouraged to embrace collegial management styles. On the other hand, the nature of the reforms and the actual pace of change itself require the institutionalisation of increasingly directive and controlling mechanisms (p.25). Webb argues for more detailed case studies of schools to provide evidence on the advantages and disadvantages of alternative management models for staff relationships and the quality of teaching and learning.

#### Management training requirements

From what we have seen up to now the role of school principal is changing and that this changing role requires greater attention to the pre-appointment preparation and ongoing development opportunities for principals. Although the role and related education and skill development needs of principals have changed significantly during the latter half of this century many recent events have accelerated the rate of change (Fullan, 1992; Holdaway & Ratsoy, 1991; SMTF, 1990). Consequently, development programmes must take careful account of the occupational culture of schools and thus be cognizant of the new needs and reflect the implications for the emerging principalship role.

At the same time, Coulson (1985) points to the varied management development programmes available for principals in Britain. Courses for principals in Britain, Coulson argues

normally embrace a variety of activities such as hearing about how other heads run their schools, learning about theories of organization and of management, receiving the advice and direction of experienced practitioners, inspectors and advisers, and, possibly, working on case studies or simulation exercises. Now all these have undeniable value; yet all are schematized, generalized and largely unconnected with the head as a *person*, as an individual.

(1985, p.115)

Coulson goes on to argue that employing such traditional methods the participant is seen as a "recipient", an "object" as against a subject. "Attention is concentrated upon socializing the individual into the leadership role, the acquisition of ideas and knowledge which heads 'should' have, and upon the displaying of appropriate 'head-like' attitudes and behaviours. The emphasis is on *performing* the role adequately" (ibid., p.115). Wallace & Hall (1989) and Styan (1989), on the other hand, expressed great concern that whilst the British government set up the National Development Centre for School Management Training (NDC) and the funding for such programmes as the One Term Training Opportunities (OTTO), few availed themselves of such opportunities. Thus principals are appointed "with little or no preparation or personal support" (Styan, 1989, p.27). It is argued by Coulson (1976, 1985) and Argyris (1982) in particular, that for management development to succeed it is essential for principals to do their utmost to learn about their own situations in order to make new sense of them. Argyris states that management development programmes need to critically scrutinise the governing values which underpin the present practice of the principalship.

This is exactly the argument followed by Daresh & Playko (1992) who state that since the transition into the principalship is a difficult one, professional support, especially in the initial stages are warranted. They put forward a strong argument in favour of introducing induction programmes. This, however, cannot be regarded as an orientation exercise related to "skills associated with simple survival on the job" (1992, p.150). Daresh & Playko argue in the same vein as Argyris (1982) and Wallace & Hall

(1989) for a strategic programme which entails strategies which provide adequate short term support which will help them tackle new management tasks generated by reforms and also strategies contributing to long term development by encouraging a critically reflective approach to practice.

Lyons and associates (1993), pointing out the crucial role that the principal has to play in the delivery of a quality education, state that the setting up of Assessment and Development Centres would go a long way in the proper selection of principals and the identification of their management and development needs. The use of such centres is relatively new to Britain and has had limited use, although principals who have so far been involved "found the experience a most beneficial developmental exercise ... and an invaluable opportunity for self-evaluation" (Lyons, et al., 1993, p.247). The only drawbacks being that it is a costly and time-consuming exercise, an issue which is currently being addressed.

Whilst these developments have been taking place only a limited number of studies have been undertaken to explore the perceived training needs of principals. Craig (1982), himself a principal, undertook such a study with a sample of primary school principals in Kent, in order to provide data which would help "determine whether management training courses for headteachers are seen to be a necessary part of an in-service training programme... (and) ... to determine what (they) see as important elements that should be incorporated into such training" (p.17).

Respondents were unanimous in their belief that in-service management courses for principals were necessary. The majority of principals called for management training in the areas of curriculum management, communication techniques, staff assessment, development and selection. Respondents feel that theoretical elements should only be introduced when the mentioned needs are satisfied. The respondents also called for varied teaching methods to be utilised. The principals also called for single phase (e.g. primary sector) courses of short duration (e.g. three-day course) with follow-up work. Only one in four respondents were interested in following award-bearing courses in educational management. Craig expresses surprise that principals do not seek

secondment to pursue studies on a full-time basis, and at the same time is concerned that principals have limited knowledge of what courses are available for them to follow.

McGill & Hendry (1989) also explored primary school principals' perceptions of their management roles and training needs in the Grampian Region in Scotland. All primary school principals were invited to participate out of which 78% agreed. The principals in this sample had very limited management training prior to taking on the role of principal.

When selecting priority areas for training 82% of the principals selected Curriculum Matters (e.g. policy writing, strategic plans, curriculum development, staff training, school-based INSET); 28% selected Administrative Matters (e.g. all forms of paperwork, enrolments, external and internal communication); 28% Interpersonal Relationships (e.g. meetings, interviews, appraisal); and 18% Building and Resource Matters (e.g. maintenance, requisitioning, stock taking).

The study highlights five strands of development in training principals: 1) development of necessary and new practical skills; 2) up-dating of information and knowledge; 3) efficient strategies for the management of time; 4) cultivation of desirable attributes; and 5) stress modification and control (1989, p.23). McGill and Hendry argue, school management practices are changing and the competencies required for the principalship cannot all be picked up 'on the job'. Similar to the Craig (1982) study this research brings out that principals' training needs must be studied within the social context, ascertained and provided for. The perceptions that principals have of their professional needs need to be considered when drawing up management training programmes.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This review has focused on the perceptions and performance of primary school principals. Although only studies carried out with primary school principals have been reviewed here, researchers have also addressed this issue among principals in other levels; mainly secondary (e.g. Daresh & Liu, 1985; Gunn, 1984; Gunn & Holdaway, 1985, 1986; Johnson et al., 1977; Martin & Willower, 1981; Sroypan, 1988; Willis,

1980). Other studies, and so to a very limited extent, have been of a comparative nature between different levels of school organisations (e.g. Holdaway & Millikan, 1980; Johnson & Holdaway, 1990), and using different methods to explore the role of principal (e.g. Chapman & Willis, 1982).

From the above review a number of points may be drawn, as follows:

a. The review has shown that more effective schools demonstrated friendly, supportive environments where an emphasis is on consultation, teamwork, participation in decision-making, and purposeful leadership by the principal. The research concludes that the effective school is likely to have principals who are curriculum leaders, who assert themselves in that role, who maintain discipline and assume responsibility for evaluating pupil achievement.

b. Leadership is a determining factor behind school effectiveness. Successful school leadership is associated with a variety of factors. The following items have stood out in different studies:

1. Setting a strong administrative example (Weber, 1971; Brookover et al., 1979; Edmonds, 1979a, b, 1981a; California State Department of Education, 1980; Glen, 1981);
  2. Principals who recruit their own staff (Austin, 1979, 1981);
  3. Leaders being fully supportive of teachers (Levine & Stark, 1981);
  4. Skilled leadership in providing a structural institutional pattern in which teachers can function effectively (Levine & Stark, 1981);
  5. High levels of parent-teacher and parent-principal contact (Armor et al., 1976);
  6. Principals who achieve a balance between a strong leadership role for themselves and maximum autonomy for teachers (Armor et al., 1976);
  7. Strong instructional leadership (Trisman et al., 1976);
  8. Principals who are firm disciplinarians and provide strong behavioural role models for teachers and pupils alike (NIE, 1978).
- (in Reid, et al., 1987, p.24)

c. Effective leaders have been found to portray particular traits including: an emphasis on formulation and achievement of goals - the principals know where they want to go and transmit this to their staff; effective leaders have power and effect decision making in the areas of curriculum development and instruction; effective leaders are highly organised and co-ordinate the curriculum programme with their teachers, creating



evaluation and review programmes for the success of their educational goals; effective leaders are human relations oriented - expressing strong interpersonal skills; such leaders create the necessary structures for effective communication to take place and do their utmost to maintain healthy interpersonal relations in the work setting - with pupils, teachers, parents and outsiders alike.

d. Another finding highlights the importance that district organisation has on the development of leadership at school level.

e. In general the principal's work is characterised by brevity, variety and fragmentation, with interruptions being quite commonplace. On average principals worked 46 hours per week. Activities ranged from as much as 122 tasks to as little as 50 tasks. Most activities were of a short duration. The majority (60% - 70%) lasting not more than 8-9 minutes. Most activities tended to be interrupted and principals made no attempt to reduce such interruptions. Principals are proud of their 'open-door policy'. Principals spent at least up to 75% of their time in direct personal interaction with others.

f. Principals express a clear preference for involvement in practically everything that takes place in the school. There may be several reasons why principals appear so attracted to doing many things themselves: others, in particular teachers, are too busy with their classes to take on certain responsibilities; there is a shortage of clerical support; the principals want to be seen in charge, as far as possible, of everything that takes place in the school.

g. Principals spent around 20% of their time on administrative work.

h. Principals spent only short periods of time on their own.

i. Quite a number of the principals researched spent quite a lot of their time in classrooms either directly teaching or discussing pedagogical matters with teachers. This varied quite a lot from one country to another. However, whilst U.K. principals

were found to spend time directly involved in classroom teaching, although the changing role of principal after LMS was exerting pressure on this dimension, other principals, especially on the other side of the continent, were concerned with creating the right organisational and management structures for their staff and themselves to discuss and develop school policies, including pedagogical ones.

j. Desk work occupied a small portion of their time. Some of the research highlighted the concern expressed by principals regarding the administrative roles and responsibilities which, through the ever-increasing devolution of authority to schools, was on the increase. With principals used to being involved in most matters, especially educational ones, they were now finding it difficult to master different management skills to adapt to a changing role. The research also highlighted principals concern towards the changing role of principals since they were finding it hard to communicate for long stretches of time with their colleagues.

k. Teaching principals found teaching as asset in that it helped them to be directly involved in classroom practice and to some extent allowed them to develop stronger relationships and be more closely involved with children and staff. On the other hand principals were finding it difficult to find enough time to keep in touch with what was happening in other classrooms; there were too many interruptions throughout the day; and the administrative workload was on the increase. The role of principal was slowly but surely becoming more managerial in orientation and this was putting pressure on the existing multifarious role of the principal.

l. The Local Management of Schools (LMS) has enlarged the decision making arena in which principals operate, especially in the area of finance and resource management. The aim of increasing 'local' responsibility in this way is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of decision making, based on the premise that decisions taken at the local level will better meet the needs of the school and its environment. LMS has brought about major increase in administrative duties. These have been particularly felt in the primary schools, where there has been an undue pressure on time and work load. Senior management have been diverted from their roles as educational leaders, and, in

particular, principals have become more remote from classroom practice. One of the most notable beneficial effects of LMS in the area of management has been through the introduction of school development planning. This has enabled schools to give staff a better overview of their needs and a greater understanding of how to meet such needs. The attitudes of the principals towards LMS is complex but generally positive. There are naturally problems caused by the pressures on time and an increased workload. These effects appear to be greater in the primary sector and in the smaller schools. It is strongly felt that too much time is spent on administration, particularly financial matters rather than on educational matters. Principals are now less familiar with what is going on in the classrooms than they were before. The workload pressures seem quite high, though there is some evidence that these are lessening. Principals see their role as changing from that of a teacher to that of a manager. At the same time, however, it has to be stated that although this study has highlighted some of the work carried out after the introduction of the Education Reform Act of 1988, this has not been exhaustive.

m. The research, although demonstrating many commonalities, should not be regarded as final or in any way conclusive. One of the major difficulties encountered when reviewing these studies is the different ways by which the researchers have categorised the work principals do. Such is the nature of the principalship that a wide choice of activity categories is available. This makes data comparison both less valid and less reliable, particularly when the criteria adopted to allocate a particular action to a specific category can be subject to interpretation. A principal's discussion with a curriculum coordinator can be viewed by one researcher as a curriculum item, by another as an administrative matter, and yet another as part of the principals' management of interpersonal relationships.

Having considered the research literature on the subject a number of issues warrant further consideration. First, it seems pertinent to point out that the various studies reviewed have highlighted various factors, conditions and characteristics on the effective school and effective principalship in particular, at the same time pointing out various avenues for locally-based research in this unexplored area of study.

Secondly, the role of the principal is seen to be the key for creating an effective school. The studies have emphasised that effective school principals tend to portray particular traits. These traits may be important in exploring the role of the Maltese school principal.

Thirdly, with the move towards greater devolution of authority to the schools and the possible 'pressure' on principals having to change their roles, it seems appropriate to start off research by exploring how principals themselves perceive their role and how they actually perform. An analysis of the Maltese principals' perception of role and the daily routine they are involved in will shed light on existing qualities and behaviour patterns. This will help principals, policy makers, curriculum developers, and all those involved in the management development of principals, to review and analyse the role of principal within the context of school management and quality education in particular.

Taking cognizance of these and other issues, the present research is intended to investigate the following themes in the study of the principalship within a complete, compact context - that is, one sufficiently large to represent a whole educational system but sufficiently self-contained to allow a large number of principals to be involved.

- a. to enquire about the content and characteristics of the Maltese principal's work by investigating how such characteristics and dimensions are perceived by Maltese primary school principals.
- b. to undertake systematic observation of what principals actually do in their daily work within school.

The research will seek to address these themes at one particular level - the primary, and to do so by including all school principals in all types of schools to be found on the Maltese Islands (i.e. state, church and private). Essentially, therefore, this research represents an attempt at providing a comprehensive overview of how the principalship is currently perceived and lived by primary school principals. First, however, some important issues of methodology will be considered in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 5.1 Introduction

As evidenced by the review of the research literature in Chapter Four, in their attempts to investigate the role of the school principal researchers have employed various research designs and data gathering methods. Participant observation (Hargreaves, 1967; Lacey, 1970), structured observation (Davies, 1984; O'Dempsey, 1976; Kmetz & Willower, 1982; Willis, 1980) and ethnographic studies (Edwards, 1979; Kelly, 1974; Wolcott, 1973) have been carried out; as have a small number of time diary techniques (Clerkin, 1985), combined observation/diary methods (Harvey, 1986) and comparative studies (Johnson & Holdaway, 1990). Research methods employed take the form of self-administered, standardised questionnaires (e.g. Bullock & Thomas, 1994; Gunn & Holdaway, 1986; Jones, 1988; Webb, 1994). Typically, of these, the closed-form variety has been extensively used, although some studies have employed the open-ended format or a combination of both.

It is the purpose of this chapter to consider some of the research designs and methods, their merits and shortcomings, as well as to take cognizance of other equally important issues which came to bear on the researcher's choice of a research design and data-gathering techniques appropriate for the purpose of the present study.

#### 5.2 Methodological Approaches

Walker (1985) observes that a strong relationship exists between the research methodology and the context of its use and that the methods adopted by the researcher represent an act of faith on the part of the researcher. Denzin (1978) stresses that the usefulness of the research method is determined by the way in which it is applied and the rigour behind its application. There are two types of research: quantitative and qualitative. The distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is that whilst the former seeks to gather statistical and objective data about actual situations, the latter argues that there is no distinction between 'reality' and the way people see events.

Cohen & Manion (1982) and Shipman (1985) note that these methods emphasise the variability of human responses and can uncover meanings. And, as Cohen & Manion report, that, since "education is primarily concerned with the individual's physical, social, intellectual and emotional growth, qualitative research continues to occupy a central place in the methodologies used by the educational researcher" (1982, p.49). These observations outline the basis of the methodological approach of this study. Qualitative methods have been adopted because of the nature of this study which attempts to understand the 'world' of the principalship through the experience, beliefs and way of life of its participants (i.e. principals).

An examination of the literature on the role of principals reveals two major types of research methods which have been employed to some extent or other (cf. Coulson, 1988; Reynolds, 1992): descriptive methods and observational methods. Each of these two areas of research and some of the methods used will be discussed.

### **5.2.1 Descriptive methods**

Most educational research methods are descriptive, that is they set out to describe and interpret what is (Lovell & Lawson, 1970; Van Dalen, 1979). Descriptive research, according to Best (1970), is concerned with

conditions or relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, points of view, or attitudes that are held; processes that are going on, effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing. At times, descriptive research is concerned with how *what is* or *what exists* is related to some preceding event that has influenced or affected a present condition or event.

(cited in Cohen & Manion, 1982, p.48)

Descriptive methods tend to look at individuals, groups, methods and material in order to describe, compare, contrast, classify, analyse and interpret entities and events.

Self-reports of the principals' perception of their role and their role behaviour and conceptions, are undoubtedly the most widely used of the data-gathering methods. Of this type three forms of self-reports which have been employed to some extent can be identified: questionnaires, interviews and diaries.

## *Questionnaires*

By far the most popular with researchers into the school principalship are the self-completion questionnaires (cf. Chapter Four). This section will concentrate upon specific considerations about questionnaires. Cohen & Manion (1989) observe that self-completion questionnaires offer a practical and effective means of data collection. However, as Davidson points out, an ideal questionnaire needs to possess the same properties as a good law:

It is clear, unambiguous and uniformly workable. Its design must minimize potential errors from respondents ... and coders. And since people's participation in surveys is voluntary, a questionnaire has to help in engaging their interest, encouraging their co-operation, and eliciting answers as close as possible to the truth.

(cited in Cohen & Manion, 1982,p.80)

Furthermore, Sudman & Bradburn (1982) note that the effectiveness and success of a questionnaire is dependent upon the questions and the written instructions on how to complete it. They recommend neutral language so as to avoid consciously or unconsciously influencing the responses. Moser & Kalton (1978) suggest that appropriate but simple vocabulary is effective; whereas common professional terms may be suitable for particular groups because their meanings are singular and precise. They also note that specific care is required for questions which involve memory because the degree of accuracy is significant to the quality of the responses. Moser & Kalton (ibid.) argue that memory is dependent upon a time lapse and upon the significance of the event to the respondent. Belson & Duncan (1978) found that open-ended questions generated a lower rate of recall than check-list type questions. Whilst this problem was recognised in the compilation of the questionnaire, it was assumed that questions related to role dealt with events within their professional experience which would be significant enough to be remembered, especially if the events were satisfying. If events are insignificant, it could be deduced they will remain forgotten. It was recognised that memory and recall can be selective and, at times, distorted by emotions connected with the events. Sudman & Bradburn (1982) note a questionnaire is limiting because it needs written skills and is time-consuming to prepare.

In research on principals the main aim of self-completion questionnaire items appear to

yield a) information about the way principals perceive their job function, b) information about the skills behind the principalship, c) data on training needs and d) measures of the extent of principals' job satisfaction, which include the following:

1. A list of every-day job functions from which principals identify and then rank order those taking up most of their time (Jones, 1988).
2. A list of tasks and duties from which principals identify those they consider most important in their principalship and then rank order in order of importance (Gunn & Holdaway, 1985; Jones, 1988).
3. A score based on averaging across the reported severity of satisfiers listed in an inventory (Holdway, 1978; Johnson & Holdway, 1990; Rice, 1978). The instrument used by Johnson and Holdaway, for instance, consists of a list of 42 facets which principals are requested to rate to the following question: "Rate your degree of job satisfaction on each facet given below", on a four-point scale, ranging from highly satisfied to highly dissatisfied.

Insofar that they yield a composite measure based on a number of items such instruments are likely to yield a valid response. However, they have a number of limitations of which a major one has to do with the actual lists presented. It is most unlikely that any list or inventory would cover all, or at least the majority, of the most important facets/ tasks/ skills/ training requirements of the job for any given principal. To counter this source of error the researcher may choose to allow each respondent to add to the given lists; thereby ensuring that the most important facets/tasks/skills for the individual principal (not listed in the questions set) actually contribute to the overall picture one gets.

Another method used to overcome existing limitations of prescribed lists is through open-ended questions. The open-ended format of the questionnaire has been put to limited use in the area of the principalship (e.g. Jones, 1988). Jones used an open-ended instrument to collect detailed qualitative data reflecting principals' perception of what gave them greatest satisfaction and what caused them dissatisfaction.



## *Interviews*

Data regarding the principalship can also be collected through the individual interview method. Studies by Gunn & Holdaway (1985), for instance, have employed this method of investigation in conjunction with the survey questionnaire. The research interview has been defined by Cannell & Kahn (1968) as

a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him (sic) on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation.

(cited in Cohen & Manion, 1982, p.241)

Therefore the interview is an act of verbal communication for the purpose of eliciting information. Beyond this universally recognised feature a wide range of views on the essentials of interviews can be found. In fact, Black & Champion (1976) conclude, from a review of the literature, that none of the definitions permit a view of the full range of characteristics embodied in the interview.

As Cohen & Manion (1982) point out the interview techniques serves three purposes. First, it makes it possible to measure knowledge, information, investigate values, attitudes and beliefs. Second, it allows to test hypotheses or as an explanatory device to identify variables and relationships. Third, it provides the opportunity as a follow-up to other research methods, to probe deeper into certain areas.

As Schwartz & Jacobs (1979) note, there are two basic forms of interviewing - structured and unstructured. The distinction between the two lies in the researcher's predefinition of the purpose of the interview. In the structured interview the content and procedures are organised in advance. Whereas in the unstructured interview the content, the questions asked, sequence and wording are all in the hands of the interviewer. Researchers often take the middle road and adopt a semi-structured interviewing form by which the schedule listed questions the researcher thinks relevant to the topic and by which the conduct of the interview facilitates responses from the interviewees.

Unlike structured interviews, semi-structured interviewing is conducted by one

researcher only in order to ensure integrity and rigour of application. This method of data collection can still be controlled by the researcher by the use of the schedule and through the interaction. Thus the method offers a series of principles that provide a commonness to all the interviews while allowing the interviewee to explore some of the issues in depth or to raise issues of their own. Such an assumption raises questions about the ability to share and reflect upon experience, interpretation of language, and the effects of bias upon responses. The direct interaction that the interview allows is the source of its advantages and disadvantages.

Walker (1985) notes that the quality of the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee is highly significant to the effective collection of data. He recommends that an informal and conducive atmosphere needs to be established and therefore one needs to counter as much as possible constraints such as anxiety, suspicion and distrust. Denzin (1978) emphasises introspection as fundamental to the research process for achieving an understanding of self, response and conduct. By attempting to enter the minds of others, the researcher aims to present those worlds as comprehensibly as possible from a theoretical basis of their behaviour, language, ideas, feelings, motives and attitudes. Denzin defines this attempt as "naturalism" (1978, p.37). Its intention is to marry "covert, private features of the social act with its public, behaviourably observable counterparts" (ibid., p.38).

Interaction is also influenced by the extent to which the interviewee accepts the researcher. Acceptance is regarded by Bogdan & Taylor (1975) as an advantageous aspect of interviewing and see it as intrinsic to attaining flexibility, adaptability and freedom. They observe, however, that acceptance is dependent more upon personal rapport than upon explanations of the research purpose but point out that clear presentation of purpose can gain the trust and confidence of interviewees and, in turn, generate more objective and detailed data. The personal qualities of the interviewer can play a determining role in the type of interaction that will eventually take place.

Bogdan & Taylor (1975) and Walker (1975) emphasise that the values of the interviewee should dominate the interview rather than that of the interviewer. They also

note that observations which imply the researcher's authority, such as, posing intricate questions, giving apparently factual information, promoting a particular viewpoint, are constraining upon the interviewee. Walker (ibid.) notes that whilst the researcher brings individual experience into the situation the interviewee together with personal experience brings feelings, concerns, ideas and opinions. It is very difficult for the researcher to restrain from sharing his/her values and perceptions of the case under study, thus distorting data (Black & Champion, 1976; Lacey, 1978).

Within such a context the role of the researcher calls for self-awareness and control to achieve a non-committal and attentive approach. Bogdan & Taylor (ibid.) suggest a neutral and uncommitted stance as the researcher's code of behaviour in order to foster truthful reports. They note that truth is relative to the interpreter and prevailing circumstances and that unconscious feelings or intuitive responses to a situation can influence their interpretations. Walker (ibid.) notes that the capacity to recall events may vary and lead to inaccurate reports. All these issues are significant because each interviewee represents the researcher's observer. As Zelditch (1978) points out, each respondent knows and understands events outside the researcher's experience and the personal motives, the relationships and circumstances unique to those events. Thus, the questions posed should be real in order to gain a clear understanding of those events.

Schwartz & Jacobs (1979) argue in favour of the researcher who is unknown and unfamiliar with the topic under study so as to mitigate the researcher's level of interference. However, the literature suggests the teacher-researcher can enjoy particular advantages over unknown researchers. Cosgrave, cited in Walker (ibid.), for example, found that teachers are not only willing to be critical of their own practice but also to express their feelings to other teachers. She noted that communication between teachers can be effective because their shared interest generates a sense of ease. The relationship between practitioners and theorists can be a fruitful partnership, especially for questioning assumptions. Whitehead (1985) supports this view, emphasising the significance of context. Atkinson & Delamont (1985) propose that a teacher-researcher can employ particular skills and bring specific interests to observations about schools.

The quality of the interaction in an interview can be influenced by practical elements over which the researcher can exercise control. They include tape-recording, the interview room, and the construction of the interview schedule.

Tape-recording allows the interviewer to concentrate upon the quality of the interaction. Walker (ibid.) notes that it provides a careful monitoring of the interaction because it makes a full and accurate record of the interview. It generates ample material for analysis because of the opportunities it allows to follow through ideas. It could be argued that the quality of that material may depend upon the objectivity of the questions and the integrity of the interviewer. Bogdan & Taylor (ibid.), Schwartz & Jacobs (ibid.) and Walker (ibid.) observe that tape-recording is preferable to note-taking because it avoids early selection of data and interpretation before the process is complete. However, the same writers also observe that tape-recording may intimidate or inhibit interviewees.

Interaction has also been found to be influenced by the physical conditions within the interview room. Bogdan & Taylor (ibid.) emphasize the need for an appropriate atmosphere, one which is quiet and free from interruptions.

Another practicality which may affect the interaction is the interview schedule. Its design is important because qualitative methods accept the respondents' accounts as valid descriptions of experience.

The interview method has also particular inherent disadvantages. Of these, the most serious is the bias in the interviewee's responses due to ego-defensive processes which, due to the very nature of the interview, is likely to increase generally. This bias may be particularly acute in the case of principals who do not wish to admit (in the face-to-face situation of the individual interview) to certain deficiencies or to finding, for example, particular aspects of the job as sources of dissatisfaction. Indeed, it is quite conceivable that even if they would otherwise be willing to concede this, the face-to-face situation may prove too embarrassing for them to openly discuss certain issues. The researcher as an interviewer brings his/her own limitations to the research exercise.

His/Her overall reliability is quite limited. As Black & Champion (ibid.) point out the researcher can be tired, and at times distracted. Cicourel (1964) highlights the variations inherent to the interviewing context, with responses depending upon the trust developed between researcher and interviewer, status differences, differential perception, interpretations placed on questions and responses, and the control exercised by the interviewer.

Walker (ibid.) also identified time as a variable which could create problems. Time can be viewed as a constraint on two levels. Firstly, the researcher has to identify the time when it is appropriate to conduct interviews, whether during or after school hours. Secondly, interviews are quite time consuming, especially when transcribing recorded interviews.

To summarise, the interview as a technique is both advantageous for eliciting information more quickly and allows for greater flexibility in the process of questioning, but problematic in terms of objectivity and relative truth. It aims to allow the researcher to enter the interviewee's world. This presumes that people are reflective, are willing to share their reflections, and are going to be honest in doing so. Interviews run the danger of mis-reporting, of bias, and failure of rapport between researcher and interviewer. It therefore requires a lot of strength and perseverance on the part of the researcher in order to remain consistent and detached.

### *Diaries*

Diaries, as Down points out, "are records of specific professional activities kept over a limited period of time. They involve participants noting such things as what kinds of activities they are involved in, for how long and how frequently, or what kinds of problems or critical incidents have occurred" (1994, p.11). There are two kinds of diary methods: life diaries and time diaries. The diary method was introduced towards the end of the nineteenth century when "some academics began to realise that they could not argue endlessly about whether children were born with innate tendencies, ... or with Locke's 'tabula rasa' for a mind" (Coolican, 1990, p.68). The first steps towards a scientific method were taken by the famous 'baby biographers' of whom Charles

Darwin (1877) is probably the most notable. The data was a diary of daily observations on the growth and development of his own son. Most diaries were developmental records of the observers' own children. As Coolican points out:

A problem with these diary accounts was that each biographer had their own particular perspective to support and tended to concentrate on quite different aspects of their child's behaviour from other diarists. They also tended not to standardise the intervals between their recordings.  
(1990, p.68)

A consideration of the research literature indicates that, although diaries have been employed frequently in other disciplines (D'Arcy, 1990; Mintzberg, 1973), their use in the educational context, especially in relation to the role of the principal, is limited to a few studies. Time diaries have been used as an investigative technique, mainly in the field of industry, to generate insights into what managers do. Their first reported application was in 1951 in Sweden when Sune Carlson (1951) published a review of the activities of a group of industrial managers. In Britain, diary investigations of factory executives were developed later by Burns (1957), Horne & Lupton (1965) and Stewart (1967). Mintzberg (1973) recorded the practice in America in the early 1970s, including studies of hospitals as well as a school system. More recently the use of diaries in an educational context has been developed and refined by Lyons (1974), who analysed the administrative duties of heads and senior teachers in twelve large comprehensive schools.

A further use of diaries has occurred especially through participative research where participants themselves keep diaries of their activities and perceptions throughout a study. The researcher then subjects the diary content to some form of content analysis.

Time diaries have been criticised, mainly for reflecting a bias towards activities which can be recorded as simple, timed events. But Lyons reported that the principals in his study accepted the accuracy of the diary returns as:

.... indicators of real working patterns...and that such patterns are a major ingredient in the frustration expressed by staff - the pace and pressure of a host of minor matters which prevent sustained attention being given to more professional matters of long-term significance.

(reported in Clerkin, 1985, p.289)

Tandon (1981) also found that questionnaire data gathered was often at odds with diary records, with the latter being more congruent with the researcher's own field notes.

Time-diaries permit an investigation of the principal characteristics of the principal's tasks as well as how each person's interpretation of these influences priorities. Moreover, they provide a valuable opportunity to explore in a non-threatening way how far the individual's own personality together with his/her ideals can affect school management.

Finally, diaries facilitate an examination of some of the difficulties which could perhaps be avoided, while allowing consideration of aspects of the role that might be undertaken more effectively with better preparation and training.

At the same time the studies referred to above have shown limitations such as the inconsistency of managers in maintaining self-records and their varying interpretations of categories in the record.

### **5.2.2 Observational Methods**

As is evident from the review of the literature, and highlighted at the start of this chapter, a range of methods has been employed to examine school principals' use of their work time. A number of researchers have employed observational methods to study the principalship (e.g. Davies, 1984; Kmetz & Willower, 1982; O'Dempsey, 1976; Willis, 1980).

Observation is at once the most primitive and the most refined of modern research techniques. It is, undoubtedly, the first procedure of science, in as much as all scientific data must originate in some experience or perception. In the broadest sense, anyone involved in research is constantly observing persons' conduct. In certain types of research information can best be obtained by means of the observation of behaviour. In the broadest sense, researchers are constantly observing persons' conduct. Whether handling out questionnaires and watching people fill them out and listening to remarks being made, noticing certain expressions of respondents during an interview, or

scrutinizing the behaviour of individuals serving as subjects in experimental settings, investigators are not insensitive to the various ways people behave in the research settings in which they find themselves (Black & Champion, 1976). Indeed, sensitivity to the setting or locale of the study is a critical component of this mode of investigation. Knowing what to expect in advance comes largely from having been there before, regardless of the type of study being conducted. All serious investigators have some first-hand, on-the-scene contact with the study they are conducting. And, as Coolican (ibid.) points out, to appreciate the distinctiveness of observation, it is necessary to draw a line between observations made as a casual by-product of investigations and observations used as fundamentally a data-gathering tool. By observation in this narrower sense is meant watching and listening to other persons' behaviour over time without manipulating or controlling it and recording findings in ways that permit some degree of analytical interpretation.

### **5.2.3 Major purposes of observation**

A major purpose of observation is to capture human conduct as it actually happens. This allows us to view behaviour in process. How people respond in an interview or on a questionnaire does little more than tell us how they felt at a particular moment in time. We get a "static, snapshot comprehension of their activity" (Black & Champion, ibid., p.332). How people behave in actual situations, how they react, is missed. By recording information on how individuals actually go about the business of behaving in a social way relative to one another, observation seeks to address the nature of behaviour.

Another major purpose of observation is to provide more graphic descriptions of social life than can be acquired in other ways. In this connection, it is often used along with other data to lend a certain quality of life or reality to an investigator's overall research findings. Being on the scene allows the investigator to understand better the research setting being analysed. This will allow us to appreciate better a lot of the limitations prescriptive research faces (McCall & Simmons, 1969).



#### **5.2.4 Types of observation**

There are two principal types of observation - participant observation and non-participant observation. Participant observation has been described as a 'process of waiting to be impressed by recurrent themes that reappear in various contexts' (Cohen & Manion, 1982, p.108). Wolcott's (1973) account of the career of an elementary school principal well illustrates the 'waiting role' of the participant observer. In the former, the investigator engages in the very activities he/she sets out to observe, that is the investigator is part of the natural setting in which the observations are being made. An investigator may already be a member of a particular group or organisation and decides to observe it in one or more ways. Or the investigator may join a group for the express purpose of observing it in some way. Regardless of how the investigator comes to be part of the landscape, active participation is an integral feature of the researcher's conduct.

The objective of this particularly intensive form of participant observation has been cogently put by Diesing as follows:

The ... method involves taking data as they come, and they usually come in scattered, disconnected fragments. Unlike the experimentalist, who can demand evidence on a specific question from his subject matter, the participant observer must adapt his thinking to what his subject happens to be doing. He has to observe each casual interchange as it happens, participate in the ceremony of the day since it may not occur again for two years, talk to the informants who are available, and get involved in whatever problems and controversies are prominent at the moment. At the end of the day he comes home with a wealth of information on a variety of points, but nothing conclusive on any one point. Over the weeks and months his evidence on a given point gradually accumulates and the various points start to fit together into a tentative pattern.

(cited in Cohen & Manion, 1982, p.109)

A non-participant observer, on the other hand, stands aloof from the group activities he/she is investigating and eschews group membership. This means that the investigator observes the behaviour of others in a natural setting but is not an actual participant in the behaviour being examined.

Thus, a participant observer is to some extent a part of the group of individuals being

observed, whereas a non-participant observer observes from a distance and should have no effect on the behaviour being observed. This, as Coolican points out, is a 'dimension' since there are varying degrees of participation. There is also a dimensional aspect of disclosure in that persons observed can be more or less aware of the exact extent to which, or reasons for which, they are being observed (1990, p.61).

From this we can see that the observational approach is a controversial method of research (Bickman, L., in Selltiz, C., Wrightsman, L.S. & Cook, S.W., 1976). There are adherents of structured (systematic) and unstructured observations, of naturalistic observation and also of time-sampling and sustained patterns of observing. There is extensive debate over the level of influence of participation by the observer. Problems for the researcher employing such a procedure centre mainly on the role of the observer in the observation process, the effect of the observer on the subject(s) and the validity of the data so gathered. Recording the data raises the contentious issue of categorising behaviour before, during or after the observational period.

Various data gathering devices can be used to record behaviour such as film or video recording, audio tape and hand-written notes. Out of such devices a visual recording has the advantage that some aspects of behaviour can be analysed after the event at any required pace. All these methods might be used discreetly such that the participant is either completely unaware of the recording process (in which case ethical issues arise) or at least unable to see or hear the equipment during the observation session. This can be achieved with the use of screens or one-way mirrors through which observers or the camera, but not the participant, can see.

Whilst using a structured observation technique to examine the work behaviour of school principals non-participant observation procedures have often been adopted. It has been argued that such a procedure places those being observed in an awkward position and that their conduct will not be as natural as it would otherwise (Black & Champion, 1976). Others (e.g. Kidder, 1981) argue that the longer the observer spends in a research setting, where their aims and purpose are disclosed to group members, the less likely it is that their presence will influence or distort the behaviour

of the observed persons. This seeming paradox is explained by pointing out that, although group members may wish to appear in a certain light to the observer, if this behaviour is unnatural for them they will not be able to sustain it for long. Even if the observer does not recognise artificiality, colleagues and co-workers will, and the observer is likely to hear about it. Kidder adds that it is much easier for experimental, one-day subjects, whose identities remain anonymous, to distort reality by behaving quite uncharacteristically. So far as is known now, there is little argument with the fact that intervention in the actual social context creates some problems - the presence of an observer does change group behaviour to some degree. There is no evidence, however, that the presence of the non-participant observer will have any detrimental effect on the behaviour under study. Moreover, as Wolcott (1973) argues, although one might adopt a non-participant method of observation this approach in actual fact falls within the participant observation mode with the observations being of the kind termed 'participant-as-observer' - "a role in which the observer is known to all and is present in the system as a scientific observer, participating by his presence" (1973, pp.7-8). The observer, therefore, is a participant by virtue of his/her presence without necessarily being involved in discussions. Such observations enable the researcher to carry out his/her work at close quarters to the actions being observed, allowing the researcher to gain a deeper perspective of actions which cannot be observed/noted otherwise.

Since the purpose of direct observation is to determine the nature of typical behaviour, behaviour can vary over long periods of time. Not only that but the actual period of observation can have an affect and bearing on the results one gets. Certain events during the school year might effect, amongst other things, the type of interactions that take place between the subject being observed (e.g. the principal) and those around him/her.

This method also presents us with a high potential for observer bias. Actions viewed by different observers can be interpreted in different ways. As a result such research is not easy to replicate and it is difficult if not dangerous to generalise about the results obtained (cf. Wolcott, 1973).

It follows from the argument above that a more authentic observation of people can be made by being involved - directly or indirectly - in their day-to-day interactions within their normal network of human group relationships. The meaning of their behaviour becomes more accessible to the observer for "ecologically valid recording" (Coolican, 1990,p.69). Through the intensive and lengthy interactions that take place between researcher and the overall setting in which the observations are conducted leads to much richer information being collected. A deeper understanding of what principals do becomes more readily available. Also, the lack of formality between researcher and observer cum setting helps the researcher gain insights into the area under study made unavailable from any other approach.

To summarise, observation does not only help to highlight the various activities the observed are involved in and the duration of such activities. It goes well beyond that. Observation helps to identify the major activities which take up most of the time of the person under observation and tries to address the question why this is so (e.g. due to urgency; habit; lack of planning, management skills, etc.). It helps us to understand what type of activities these are - i.e. administrative and/or management oriented. Observation gives us a clearer indication of how the observed react to such activities - i.e. whether all activities are given importance as they arise or do they prioritise. At the same time, whilst being an excellent method for obtaining certain kinds of data, it cannot by itself provide the whole picture. This approach is a high-risk, low-yield adventure. It is high-risk because unless the fieldwork is eventually translated into a significant readable monograph, the only possible gain is that made by the researcher in terms of his/her own research experience. It is low yield because of the considerable investment of time and personal effort that has to be made in order to obtain basic and often commonplace data (Wolcott, 1973).

From the above it should transpire that each type of measure discussed has its strengths and weaknesses some of which are peculiar to it, others are shared with other forms of measurement. It would therefore appear that there is no single method of investigation which over-rides these weaknesses (and which most researchers would unequivocally endorse), such that the choice of one method in favour of another is tantamount to

essentially replacing one set of problems for another.

Bearing in mind the merits and shortcomings of the research designs and techniques employed by other researchers, some major issues of methodology related to the present project will be the concern of the next section.

### **5.3 The present study: general methodological issues**

There are many factors which come to bear on decisions regarding research design and methods, primarily their qualities (i.e. merits and limitations), the objectives of the study, availability of resources, and the constraints of time. This section deals with some of these issues, focusing primarily on those that are general to the two studies carried out in this project.

#### **5.3.1 Settings**

The project was carried out in Malta. This country presented what is perhaps an uncommon opportunity to investigate the role of principal within a complete, compact community; that is, one which would have all the characteristics of a whole country. Malta constituted a context sufficiently large to represent a whole educational system but sufficiently self-contained to allow all school administrators to be included in the study.

The Maltese school system, as has been seen in Section A, is run on highly centralised lines. For instance, educational policies, including curricula, are normally determined by senior educational officials with little consultation at the school level. Schools, moreover, are expected to adhere to such policies and to directives generally so that school administrators and teachers have restricted autonomy (especially in regard to educational policies). Church and private schools also have to work, to a large extent, round state-mandated directives. This state of affairs, therefore, contributes to what may be considered a generally homogeneous educational system.

An additional advantage arising from this choice of settings is that, although Maltese schools may be broadly classified as 'urban' or 'rural' this distinction is unlikely to

have any consequential or practical importance because of the small size of the country. Indeed, within the context of the present project, there do not appear to be any gross regional and socio-cultural differences which could potentially confound the findings (e.g. Borg, 1992).

### **5.3.2 Research design and method**

The present writer, having considered the research methodologies available and the major types of data-capture techniques (and weighed their strengths and weaknesses), came to the conclusion that it appeared that the questionnaire survey together with an observational study would serve best the purposes of this project. It was also decided that once the questionnaire survey to principals was conducted and analysed a questionnaire survey to a small group of newly-appointed deputy principals would also be conducted to a) verify the principals' responses to some of the main areas highlighted by the principals, and b) to identify the deputy principals' own views of the principalship and the role of principals today and tomorrow. The findings of the questionnaire survey with newly-appointed deputy principals would be reviewed in chapter Eight. It was also decided that the questionnaire would be of the self-completion type and completely anonymous. An observational study was undertaken on similar lines to those carried out by Willis (1980) and Davies (1984) in particular. There were several reasons which came to bear on these decisions, the most important of which are considered hereunder.

#### *Cross-sectional questionnaire survey*

Given the various methods available and reviewed it was far from easy to decide which methods would be best utilised. Given the methodological problems and threats to validity associated with a single-method self-report measurement approach (cf. Bailey & Bhagat, 1987), and since a multimethod approach (cf. Cohen & Manion, 1989; Rossi, Wright & Anderson, 1983), (involving, for instance, in-depth individual interviews), has been found effective to corroborate the findings drawn from one method, it was decided to undertake a three-pronged approach to study the principalship. Thus, through this approach it was the writer's intention to overcome the limitations of what Cohen & Manion (1989) call 'the generally more vulnerable'

single-method approach.

It was evidently clear that the questionnaire would be an automatic choice since it would offer the possibility of involving all Maltese primary school principals. And, bearing in mind the high rate of return that local researchers have experienced through self-completion questionnaires it was assumed that principals would find less objection to answering a questionnaire. More so, given that the questionnaire would be completed anonymously, it would encourage, as Cohen & Manion (1989) argue, greater honesty. Since the main aim of this study was to explore the perceptions of principals towards their role it was also deemed appropriate that the perceptions that other stakeholders had of the principalship would be worth exploring. This would help overcome some of the limitations posed if only one group's perceptions to a given role were explored. Such an approach would lead to a better and clearer understanding of the principal's present and future role. As such it was decided that a questionnaire survey would be conducted with a group of newly-appointed deputy principals.

Given the intention of gathering principals' perceptions and reflections on the content and characteristics of the principal's work, interviews and/or observations seemed also logical methods to utilise.

The interview was rejected on two counts. First, it was felt that some of the principals might have felt uncomfortable in answering particular questions, especially given the familiarity that exists between the researcher and the principals. Second, the time factor would have made it difficult for principals to spend a designated period of time in a peaceful and quiet atmosphere to conduct the interview. And, given the local context, conducting the interview after the school day was impossible and was also rejected as an option. Having discussed this issue with Department of Education officials it was agreed that the best alternative, to which no one could find objection, and which would also have limited contextual effect, was the observational study.

The observational method has its own strengths, the main one being that it allows the researcher to directly and personally experience, for a designated period of time, the life

of a principal. No other method can offer that. This opportunity, tied with the fact that at the time this research was initiated the writer had the possibility of spending long stretches of time in schools it was an opportunity not to be missed.

The diary method was also a research method worthy of adoption as this would have entailed 'direct involvement' of the principals in the research exercise. However, this method had to be discarded since another Maltese researcher chose this method as part of a comparative study between Maltese primary school principals and Irish primary school principals (see Mifsud, Ferris & McEwen, 1993).

### *Triangulation*

It has been stated that a multimethod approach will be adopted for the present study. The importance behind triangulation will be here highlighted. The important role of triangulation cannot be underestimated. As Cohen & Manion point out "the multimethod approach ... contrasts with the ubiquitous but generally more vulnerable single-method approach that characterises so much of research in the social sciences" (ibid., p.208). Triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of human behaviour. The single-method approach yields only limited and sometimes misleading data. It is only comparatively recently that the utility of the multi-method approach has come to be appreciated. In social research single observation (e.g use of interviews) provides a limited view of the complexity of human behaviour and of situations in which human beings interact. As Smith points out that since "research methods act as filters through which the environment is selectively experienced, they are never atheoretical or neutral in representing the world of experience" (1975, in Cohen & Manion, 1982, p.208). Therefore, exclusive reliance on one method may bias or distort the researcher's picture of the 'slice of reality' being investigated. Another reason behind the need for triangulation arises due to the problem created by what Boring (1953) has termed "method-boundedness" which arises as a result of the use of only one method or technique. For this reason the researcher decided to confirm some of the findings of the questionnaire survey by undertaking an observational study so as to see how far outcomes of both methods correspond. And, as already pointed out, in order to check out the principals'



perceptions of their role once the questionnaire was analysed a questionnaire would also be conducted with a small sample of newly-appointed deputy principals to get their own observations about the principal's role and the principalship in general.

Triangulation, therefore, is one way of overcoming the limitations of any one particular method used in a study. According to Denzin (1970) triangulation may be classified in six different ways: time triangulation, space triangulation, combined levels of triangulation, theoretical triangulation, investigator triangulation, and methodological triangulation. The use of these types of triangulation goes some way to meet the kinds of methodological criticisms or limitations already referred to. A summary of their purpose is briefly highlighted below:

- **Time triangulation:** this type attempts to take into consideration the factors of change and process by utilising cross-sectional and longitudinal designs.
- **Space triangulation:** this type attempts to overcome the parochialism of studies conducted in the same country or within the same subculture by making use of cross-cultural techniques.
- **Combined levels of triangulation:** this type uses more than one level of analysis from the three principal levels used in the social sciences, namely, the individual level, the interactive level (groups), and the level of collectivities (organisational, cultural or societal).
- **Theoretical triangulation:** this type draws upon alternative or competing theories in preference to utilising one viewpoint only.
- **Investigator triangulation:** this type engages more than one observer.
- **Methodological triangulation:** this type uses either (a) the same method on different occasions, or (b) different methods on the same object of study.

(Cohen & Manion, 1982, p.211)

This study has adopted what Denzin has termed "methodological triangulation". Denzin identifies two categories in his typology: within methods triangulation and between methods triangulation. Triangulation within methods concerns the replication of a study as a check on reliability and theory confirmation. Triangulation between methods involves the use of more than one method in the pursuit of a given objective. This is the category adopted for the present study.

In the initial stages of the study the writer had identified a number of research methods to be used. Apart from the questionnaire survey and the observational study it was felt that the interview method would be an ideal instrument to be used so as to corroborate the findings and points raised by the principals. The interview technique would also be helpful to corroborate these findings at different levels - i.e. with teaching staff and education department officials. However, as the study developed, it was felt that, given the state of flux the Maltese education system is in, especially with the trend towards greater devolution of authority to the schools, the interview method would not be able to confirm and/or assess particular issues and findings highlighted in the observational study and the questionnaire survey, rather it might in fact invalidate them. So this form of triangulation was abandoned.

#### *Response rate and characteristics of the questionnaire*

Further to these objections to, and the limitations of the single-method approach there is also the problem of obtaining an adequate response rate. Although, as Youngman (1982) argues, more often than not, the important criterion is not so much the response rate as the response representativeness, small response rates are still bound to render the validity of a study dubious.

By way of limiting the number of non-respondents it was felt that the questionnaire should have a number of characteristics, amongst other things. First, care had to be taken to ensure that the questionnaire would neither be too long nor too short in length as to have it immediately dismissed by subjects either on account of it being judged trivial, respectively. Secondly, the issue of completion time as well as data handling considerations argued in favour of primarily employing closed-form questions. The questionnaire had to be such as to gather whatever essential information was required without making it overly difficult for the respondent to complete it. Thirdly, the likelihood that most principals would find the subject of role potentially sensitive, and, indeed, in some cases threatening strongly suggested that complete anonymity was absolutely imperative, both for the sake of the effects that this may have on the accuracy of replies (and therefore the validity of findings) (cf. Borg & Gall, 1989), as well as the response rate (in the knowledge that the questionnaire was anonymous, more

respondents would probably care to complete it). Hence, a completely anonymous postal questionnaire was thought to be the most appropriate.

### *Theoretical stance*

In line with many researchers in the area of the school principalship, the theoretical stance assumed in this project emphasizes the central role of the principal's perception of his or her circumstance in the experience of role. Therefore, the experience of role is basically seen as a personal and idiosyncratic phenomenon (Harvey, 1986; McGill & Hendry, 1989; Walsh, 1984). One implication of this, of course, is that much individual and situational differences in the experience of role are to be expected (McGill & Hendry, 1989). The present writer argues that an investigation of role which does not involve some attempt to account for such differences by separating out subjects on the basis of some personal characteristics would not only be incomplete but it would very much be in danger of not adequately investigating the area. With regard to situational differences, moreover, as indicated in the literature review, there may be some school characteristics which can throw some important light on role. Since, as evidenced by the literature review (Johnson & Holdaway, 1990), the role of school characteristics has not received much attention further investigations in this regard are warranted.

From the perspective of the present theoretical position that the perception of role is a subjective experience, it follows that the use of subjective data assumes a central role in such investigations. While each type of measure has its own strengths and weaknesses self-report measures have proved to be quite useful (Gunn & Holdaway, 1986). Opponents and critics of the use of self-report measures, however, would point out that the inaccuracy of self-reports is a major weakness of this method of investigation. More specifically, there is the problem of how subjects interpret questions and, perhaps more so, that of faking when responding particular questions. On account of such disadvantages "... numerous social scientists find the use of questionnaires scientifically dubious and the results possibly spurious" (Furnham, 1986, p.397). However, following a critical review of the extensive literature on response bias in self-report data, Furnham goes on to argue that this fact alone (i.e. faking) is quite

insufficient 'to damn' (sic) self-report measures. Finally, criticisms of self-report methods regarding the distortion of responses due to the wider plethora of problems which fall under the generic term response bias - like acquiescence and its opposite ('nay saying'), extremity and mid-point response set (Cronbach, 1970; Furnham, 1986), and not least the problem of forgetting (Forman & Cecil, 1986) - should be borne in mind by any researcher intent on making use of such techniques.

It should therefore be emphasized that, although in employing this data-gathering technique it is here assumed that subjects are able and willing to supply valid and reliable self-reports, such data must be treated with caution. Hence, it may be argued that reliance on such data constitutes one of the limitations of this project.

In order to overcome some of the weaknesses behind data based on self-reports (i.e. indirect method of investigation using a questionnaire) it was decided to use an observational case study approach as well in this analysis of the role of the primary school principalship. The greatest potential benefit of such an approach accrues to the individual principal. Given that the primary school principal and more so the principalship have not received much attention (as witnessed in Chapter One and Four) there was a self-interest in generating data on how Maltese primary school principals fulfil their roles. It was felt that the ideal way of understanding the principalship, and in particular the content and characteristics of the principal's work, was by spending a designated period of time observing principals in action - i.e. in the school environment. More so, this would be the first time that a researcher spent 'direct time' with the subject under study directly observing practice. This method would provide data which no other method would have been able to disclose.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

The various research designs and methods employed by researchers to investigate the role of principal, as well as the merits and limitations of these approaches, and related issues, were considered with the view of determining which of these would best serve the purposes of the present project, within the various constraints imposed by such

factors as time and resources. It was concluded that a multimethod approach employing a self-administered questionnaire as data-gathering instrument and an observational study of a number of principals was the most feasible and appropriate for this investigation. More so a further questionnaire with deputy principals would help to verify what principals stated about their role and study their own perceptions towards the role of principal.

Further methodological issues, more specific to the studies carried out in this project, will be considered in the methodology section of the apposite chapters. Other issues of a more general nature like, for instance, the choice of statistical methods for data analysis and related decisions, will be set out in Chapter Six.

**SECTION C**

**RESEARCH STUDY  
AND ANALYSIS**

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SURVEY OF ROLE, TASKS AND SKILLS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

Changes to the principal's role have been a common theme in sociological and educational research (Earley & Weindling, 1987; Peters, 1976). It is recognised that the role of the principal is becoming increasingly diverse and complex (Fullan, 1992). As was clearly evident from the review of the literature the principal's role is conditioned to a large extent by what Evetts (1993) describes as the micro-political context in which they work. The working lives of principals is conditioned by the way people interpret, or as Woods (1983) points out perceive their contexts (in Evetts, 1993, p.53). At the same time it has been brought out that principals are key figures to the effective management of schools (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1992; Bolam, et al., 1993; Duigan & Macpherson, 1992; Holmes, 1993). Therefore, one way for understanding the context in which principals work in is by exploring the way principals perceive their work (Blease & Lever, 1991). This chapter is an account of perceptions of the Maltese primary school principal's role as seen from the point of view of principals themselves.

#### **6.2 Objectives**

As explained in the Methodology chapter this study involved a questionnaire survey and an observational study. This chapter reviews the findings of the survey, whereas Chapter Seven reviews the findings of the Observational Study. As such, the aims of this survey are:

- a. to discover how principals perceive their job.
- b. to enquire about the content and characteristics of the Maltese principal's work by investigating how such characteristics and dimensions are perceived by Maltese primary school principals.
- c. to see whether there exist particular differences for the demographic sub-groups of sex, age, length of experience as principal, and type of school.

Specifically it seeks to consider the following questions:

- a. What do principals perceive as their major job functions?

- b. Which functions are perceived by principals as taking up most of their time?
- d. What type of management training do principals perceive as essential for their professional development?
- e. What is their extent of job satisfaction?
- f. How is it believed that the current situation of principals can be improved, if necessary?
- g. How do principals perceive they ought to spend their time as against how they perceive that they actually spend it? (This question helps to supplement the Observational Study carried out with a small sample of principals - see Chapter Seven).
- h. Are there differences in a) to g) for the demographic characteristics of administrator sex, administrative experience, age, and type of school?

### **6.3 The pilot survey**

Some writers have taken exception to the practice of using predesigned questionnaires (e.g. Black & Champion, 1976) arguing that the design of such questionnaires may not have involved the relevant subject population and, consequently, they may distort the importance of certain facets or characteristics. In response to such criticism, Handy points out, researchers are increasingly developing questionnaires that are 'tailored' to specific working environments, thereby enabling the 'development' of "... more meaningful and precisely targeted questions" (1986, p.207).

As indicated in Chapter Five, section 5.2, a number of instruments have been devised in order to study the role of the principal. In view of the above criticism and the review of the various types of instruments used to study the principalship, a decision was taken to develop a questionnaire which is 'tailored' for use in the Maltese primary school context and which best serves the purpose of the study. The various instruments reviewed were used as guides in the construction of the present questionnaire.

The prototype questionnaire consisted of five sections. Demographic questions were located in the first section and requested background information regarding administrator sex and age, length of administrative experience, type of school (i.e. state, church or private), size of school (in terms of number of pupils on roll), type of qualifications held and whether or not they had attended or received special training in management prior to the principalship and after.



The second section comprised three items the first of which sought to identify from a given list (plus space for 'others') what principals considered to be their present major job functions and at the same time rank order the three job functions they see as taking up most of their time. The second item in this section requested respondents to identify what they believed to be the most important tasks and duties in the principalship and to rank order the top five in order of importance. The third item requested principals to identify, from a given list, those areas in which they required training/development opportunities and to rank the top five priority areas. These items have been successfully employed with principals in the U.K. by Jones (1988).

The third section aimed to identify the skills principals felt they ought to receive training in, again with a rank order facility.

The fourth section comprised four items, one closed and three open-ended questions. The first question called respondents to rate the degree of job satisfaction on 17 job facets on a four-point scale, labelled 'highly dissatisfied', 'moderately dissatisfied', 'moderately satisfied' and 'highly satisfied'. Responses were scored one to four. As indicated earlier, similar instruments have been used with administrators (Johnson & Holdaway, 1990; Jones, 1988; Rice, 1978). The open-ended questions sought to allow principals to write down those aspects of their role which gave them a) 'greatest satisfaction', b) 'greatest dissatisfaction' and c) called principals to suggest ways of improving their current situation.

The fifth and final section called respondents to reflect on 'job priorities' and to respond to the question: "Rank order the following tasks so as to show how you think you **ought** to spend your time and **how** you actually spend it. In the 'ought' column rank order the items according to level of importance you would like to give each. In the 'actual' column rank order the same items according to how you actually spend your time at present."

The primary reason for piloting the prototype questionnaire was, as Sudman & Bradburn (1982) argue, to identify design errors. Secondly, it was important to determine whether it was suitable for use in the Maltese primary school context. The questionnaire was pilot-tested among twenty educators (i.e. ten existing primary school principals, five retired principals and five teachers). Participants were requested to complete the questionnaire and to supply

feedback on any aspect of the questionnaire. Following the suggestion of some writers (e.g. Borg & Gall, 1989) space was provided for the respondents to enter their suggestions. The pilot questionnaire was completed anonymously.

All twenty educators who were invited to participate returned a completed questionnaire. In addition, it was thought pertinent to seek the advice of five experienced staff from the Department of Education (Malta) and the Faculty of Education (University of Malta), three of which were ex-principals, on the general suitability of the questionnaire. They were asked to review it for content validity, clarity, ambiguity and redundancy.

General comments in regard to the form, content and language used indicated that the questionnaire was suitable for use in the present context. Following some recommendations a few minor additions were made to the prototype version. a) Some new facet pertaining to the principal's role were added - in questions 15 and 18 respectively the items 'communicating with Department of Education officials' and 'contact with school support services' were added. No additional items were suggested (see Appendix D for the final version of the questionnaire).

## **6.4 Method**

### **6.4.1 Settings**

In Malta, primary state schools are co-educational and, where pupil numbers permit, these are organized in terms of the first three years and the second three years of primary schooling (as described in Appendix B), with a principal (and depending on the size of the school, deputy principal[s]) being assigned to each school. Principals and deputy principals are recruited on the basis of either efficiency and seniority, or merit and efficiency.

### **6.4.2 Subjects and procedure**

The survey was carried out among principals in all state, church and private primary schools in Malta and Gozo. The 120 principals were invited to participate by completing a self-administered, postal, questionnaire. The survey was carried out during the Autumn/Winter Term of 1992.

After permission was granted by the Department of Education, (see Appendix C for letter to

Department of Education) all the 120 principals on roll who, when the survey was launched, were responsible for a school were invited to participate by completing a self-administered questionnaire. For particular reasons, instead of mailing the questionnaire to each principal personally, it was decided to distribute them personally. Although this approach proved far more time consuming, it constituted a good public relations exercise insofar as establishing and strengthening personal contacts with schools as well as demonstrating the importance of the survey by 'going into the bother' of actually visiting the schools. This research heeded Sudman & Bradburn's (1982) suggestion of ensuring confidentiality and of presenting the research purpose succinctly. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter (see Appendix C) and a stamped addressed envelope. Questionnaires were anonymous and principals were requested to return the completed questionnaire by post thus the complete anonymity of respondents was assured. Two weeks after the questionnaires were distributed, sufficient copies of a follow-up letter (see Appendix C) for each principal together with an additional copy of the questionnaire were sent to all schools.

In all, 92 completed questionnaires were returned: a response rate of 76.7% (see Table 6.1). Since the questionnaire was completely anonymous it was not possible to follow-up the 28 non-respondents.

**Table 6.1: Response rate to questionnaire survey by type of school**

	Present Population	Response Rate	
		(N)	%
Total	120	92	76.7
Type of school			
State	81	60	74.1
Church	30	26	86.7
Private	9	6	66.7

## 6.5 Results

A number of decisions regarding most of the demographic variables was made before the analysis of data was undertaken.

The type of school principals were attached to was considered to have an important bearing on the results. Ideally, it would have been best to have three sub-groups representing the three

main bodies of schooling on the island, namely State schools, Church schools and Private schools. However, in view of the small number of private schools within the whole sample (ie. State schools: 60; Church schools: 26; Private schools: 6) it was decided to group Private and Church schools together. Therefore the two sub-groups which will be used for comparison will be state school principals and Church/Private school principals combined. The two sub-groups will be comprised as follows: State schools: 60 principals: Church/Private schools: 32 principals.

Age was another variable deemed important for this study. An inspection of the distribution of the ages of the respondents suggested that the sample should be grouped into the following two categories: '34 to 54 year olds', and '55 to 70 year olds', representing 55.4% and 44.6% of the sample respectively.

Respondents were also grouped into two categories representing years of experience. Those who had between 1 and 5 years experience (representing 46.7% of the sample), and those who had 6 years experience and/or more (representing 53.3% of the sample) were grouped separately.

The first section starts off with an overall analysis of the principals' responses to the questionnaire as a whole sample without differentiating between categories and demographic subgroups.

#### **6.5.1 Principals overall tasks**

Three questions in particular explored principals' views about their present role. They attempted to do this by looking into what principals perceived to be:

- a. their major job functions - from a general (i.e. free choice) level, and through rank ordering the three job functions which are seen to take up most of their time - Question 11 (refer to Table 6.2),
- b. the most important tasks and duties in their principalship - from a general (i.e. free choice) level and through rank ordering the five most important tasks in their job - Question 13 (refer to Table 6.3), and

c. those aspects of their job for which they would welcome training - Question 15 (refer to Table 6.4).

**A. Major job functions: how they are perceived by principals**

'Desk work' and 'discussions with parents' are the two main job functions Maltese primary school principals identify as taking up most of their time. Taken on their own, the general free responses tend to portray the Maltese principal as one who shares all the task categories as identified by Katz (1974) and Morgan, Hall and Mackay (1983): 1. technical (i.e. educational), 2. conceptual (i.e. operations management), 3. human relations (i.e. leadership and human management) and 4. external management (i.e. community relations and accountability).

Table 6.2 highlights some interesting findings. The general (free choice) responses bring out the principal as one who emphasises leadership and human management, that is planning, organising, co-ordinating activities, and in particular external management, that is in the main communicating with parents. Such responses seem to stress Hughes' model of the principal as both leading professional and chief executive. However, a look at the job function taking up most of the principal's time, and the three job functions taking up most of their time a different picture seems to emerge. 45 (49%) principals see 'desk work' as taking up most of their time. This is followed by 9 (9.8%) principals and 8 (8.7%) who see 'discussions with parents' and 'discussions with staff' respectively as taking up most of their time. It is glaringly obvious from this response that most Maltese primary school principals dedicate most of their time working in an office doing in the main administrative work. The top three functions taking up most of their time sees 64 (69.6%) principals identifying 'desk work', 61 (66%) principals identifying 'discussions with parents' and 29 (32%) identifying 'discussions with staff'. This response sees principals as clearly devoting most of their time doing administrative work and communicating with parents.

Other functions worth underlining are items such as 'observing classroom teaching', 'organising, planning, evaluating curricula', and 'organising activities' which sees them high on the general (free choice) list and within the top three functions. The results to the general response are extremely high on these functions and on a number of other functions. Such responses seem to identify all Maltese primary school principals as involved to one degree or

other in all these functions. And, as identified in other sections the principals currently involved in curriculum development are church/private school ones (e.g. see Table 6.35). However, the rank ordering helps to clearly identify what can be defined as the major job functions of Maltese principals - they are mainly occupied with administrative/ clerical work and involved to a large extent with parents, in the main discussing children's difficulties and their own problems, very similar to Webb's (1994) findings of the U.K. principal.

Table 6.2 Principals present job functions (N = 92)

General (Free choice for self)		Top three functions for principals in general taking up most of their time		First choice for principals in general taking up most of their time	
Tasks	f %	Tasks	f %	Tasks	N %
Discussions with parents	85 (92.4)	Desk work	64 (69.6)	Desk work	45 (49)
Discussions with staff	69 (75)	Discussions with parents	61 (66)	Discussions with parents	9 (9.8)
Desk work	65 (70.7)	Discussions with staff	29 (32)	Discussions with staff	8 (8.7)
Organising activities	64 (69.6)	Organising activities	28 (30.4)	Organising activities	8 (8.7)
Discipline	56 (61)	Observing classroom teaching	23 (25)	Staff appraisal and professional development	8 (8.7)
Observing classroom teaching	55 (60)	Organising, planning, evaluating curricula	21 (22.8)	Organising, planning, evaluating curricula	5 (5.4)
Organising, planning, evaluating curricula	55 (60)	Discipline	18 (20)	Observing classroom teaching	3 (3.3)
Discussions with children	52 (57)	Discussions with children	16 (17.4)	Discussions with children	3 (3.3)
Staff appraisal and professional development	45 (50)	Staff appraisal and professional development	12 (13)	Discipline	2 (2.2)

### B. Tasks and duties: how they are perceived by principals

While one question sought to identify those job functions which occupy principals' time including those which take-up most of their time, another question sought to identify those tasks which principals considered important in the principalship and to highlight the five most important tasks (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.3 shows that overall primary school principals emphasise the human relations dimension of the principalship both at the school level and with parents. In fact 'knowing the child' (f=91, 99%), 'establishing good parental/community relations' (f=86, 93.5%) and 'establishing good relationships with staff' (f=83, 90.2%), are considered by principals as the three most important tasks and duties that they have. The need to 'keep up-to-date' (f=82, 89.1%), 'building a team of competent teachers' (f=77, 83.4%), and 'having a school policy' (f=74, 80.4%) are also seen as extremely important tasks. On the other hand 'doing routine

office work' (f=22, 24%) is given the lowest rating, being seen as the least important duty they ought to fulfil. This contrasts with the previous table which sees principals stating that 'desk work' takes up most of their time.

This table highlights that priority is expressed towards 'knowing the child'. What is important to note is that while on the one hand the child, especially at primary level, seems to be placed at the centre of the educational process one notes that neither 'discussions with children' nor 'observing classroom teaching' (see Table 6.2) are considered as major job functions. This means that the type of relationship Maltese principals are here describing is very much in line with what Jones describes as managing pupils through 'contact', 'care', 'discipline', but to exclude, as much as possible, 'teaching' (1988, p.54).

'Establishing good parental/ community relations' is seen as an important task by 86 (93.5%) of the principals. This reinforces previous responses which shows that principals consider their rapport with parents as being extremely important, and they dedicate a lot of their time to cater for their needs.

Another important task highlighted in this study is that of 'establishing good personal relationships with staff' (83 respondents, 90.2%). This has also been highlighted as a major job function. This correlates with the response given by 70% of principals who see 'discussions with staff' as a major job function (cf Table 6.2).

The need to have a clearly defined school policy (f=74, 80.4%) together with all the ingredients necessary to see it through are all recognised as important tasks: these include the need to 'build a team of competent teachers' (f=77, 83.7%), the need to 'evaluate the work of the school' (f=77, 83.7%) and the need to 'introduce innovative ideas' (f=69, 75%). Table 6.3 shows that 'having a clearly defined school policy' is high on all the lists and 31 principals (33.7%) consider it to be the most important task they ought to address. This response highlights an important yet missing dimension in the existing role of the Maltese principal. The response is also in stark contrast to the response given to 'office work' where only 22 respondents (23.9%) consider it as an important task and is not given first choice by any principal. One here has to recall that 45 principals (48.9%) had identified desk work as the

main job function taking-up most of their time, and 65 principals (70.7%) saw it as a major job function (cf. Table 6.2). Principals seem to reinforce what has come out time and time again in various seminars and local studies (Unesco, 1988; Department of Education, 1989). Principals express constant indignation at having to fulfil routine office work which hampers what they feel they ought to be involved in. As in the case of this study principals specify specific managerial tasks which up to the present day have been ignored by policy makers, mainly that principals ought to be involved in 'creating a school policy', of 'building a team of competent teachers', to see that the policy, aims and objectives of the school are put into practice and that 'evaluation' of policies can take place.

Another significant finding is that only 57 (62%) of Maltese principals consider the need to be 'seen as a good teacher' as an important task. Such a response is in direct contrast to the strong Anglo-Saxon belief in the 'educational leader' role of the principal, where most principals in the primary sector in the United Kingdom still maintain direct classroom contact even though since the introduction of LMS principals in Britain are finding it hard to retain this role (e.g. Dunning, 1993; Webb, 1994).

Table 6.3 Principals most important tasks and duties (N = 92)

General (Free choice for self)		Top five tasks/duties for principals in general		First choice for principals in general	
Task/Duties	f %	Tasks/Duties	f %	Tasks/Duties	N %
Knowing the children	91 (99)	Knowing the children	76 (82.6)	Having a school policy	31 (33.7)
Establishing good parental/ community relations	86 (93.5)	Establishing good relationships with staff	75 (81.5)	Establishing good relationships with staff	25 (27.2)
Establishing good relationships with staff	83 (90.2)	Establishing good parental/ community relations	67 (72.8)	Knowing the children	13 (14)
Keeping up-to-date	82 (89.1)	Having a school policy	57 (62)	Building a team of competent teachers	13 (14)
Building a team of competent teachers	77 (83.4)	Building a team of competent teachers	56 (61)	Establishing good parental/ community relations	4 (4.3)
Evaluating the work of the school	77 (83.4)	Keeping up-to-date	55 (60)	Keeping up-to-date	3 (3.3)
Having a school policy	74 (80.4)	Evaluating the work of the school	43 (46.7)	Being seen as a good tcher	2 (2.2)
Introducing new ideas	69 (75)	Introducing new ideas	17 (18.5)	Evaluating the work of the school	1 (1.1)
Being seen as a good tcher	35 (38)	Being seen as a good tcher	8 (8.7)		
Doing routine office work	22 (24)	Doing routine office work	4 (4.3)		



### **C. Training needs as perceived by principals**

Another question explored what priorities principals gave to further training for particular aspects of their job. Table 6.4 sums up their response to this question. From the responses given to the type of training needs principals identify as essential for their role are those of 'staff appraisal and professional development' (f=66, 71.7%), 'planning' (f=65, 70.7%), and 'leadership' (f=55, 60%) in particular. These are followed closely by 'evaluation' (f=61, 66.3%), 'managing resources' (f=49, 53.3%), 'managing pupils' (f=61, 66.3%) and 'pupil assessment' (f=60, 65%). 'Communication with Department of Education officials' (f=18, 20%) is quite low. First choice is given to 'leadership' (f=18, 19.6%), 'managing relationships' (f=15, 16.3%) and 'planning' (f=14, 15.2%). On the one hand these responses can be seen as representing the identification of training opportunities for principals' present role and on the other for their future needs. Naturally, this will vary according to the present role being fulfilled by each individual principal. One can argue that since principals in the church/private sector are directly involved in areas like 'leadership' and 'planning' they see the need for ongoing training in such areas for their existing role. On the other hand one can argue that state school principals, who have restricted control over such areas (cf. Table 6.8), might regard training in such areas as essential for future needs.

'Staff appraisal and professional development' ranks highest on the list of training needs in the general, free choice. Forty-five principals had identified 'Staff appraisal and professional development' as an important job function compared to eight who saw it as the top task taking up most of their time (cf. Table 6.2). Not so much can be said about such a response because from the knowledge that the researcher has few principals go into classrooms to observe teachers let alone appraise them. More principals however encourage, and in some cases, financially support their teachers so that they attend professional development courses.

'Planning' comes high on the list of training needs, that is forward thinking, assessing, planning and deciding priorities. Such a response came as no surprise when one reads the principals' comments to the open-ended questions at the end of the survey (see Tables 6.8 and 6.9). The extent of the problems most principals have to face can be mainly attributed to, on the one hand, the bureaucratic system Maltese principals have to work in and the constraints it brings about, and secondly the problems principals have with self-management, particularly the

management of time. Forward planning can easily be squeezed out if the problems of day to day running becomes too pressing. Time to think equally gets out of the principals' weekly diaries. At the same time it is also surprising to find that planning (and for that matter other aspects of organising) came so relatively high among principals' training needs. From local observations, publications, seminars and workshops involving principals it has come out time and time again that principals have up to now no say in forward planning and thinking, in decision making and deciding priorities. Contrary to Everard (1986), Hellawell (1991), Jones (1988) and Southworth (1990), amongst others, who describe planning as an essential aspect of the way U.K. principals' work at present, in Malta the Maltese principal has had hardly any exposure or experience in this area. Only principals in the church/private sector are directly involved in planning and in determining, to a large extent, the future of their schools. The same cannot be said of state school principals. The high response explains the desire of all principals to receive training in an area they deem important for the future.

Table 6.4 Principals' training needs: rank orders (N = 92)

General (free choice for self)		Top five for principals in general		First choice for principals in general	
Training Needs	f %	Training Needs	f %	Training Needs	N %
Staff appraisal and professional development	66 (71.7)	Planning	55 (60)	Leadership	18 (19.6)
Planning	65 (70.7)	Staff appraisal and professional development	47 (51.1)	Managing relationships	15 (16.3)
Personal professional dev.	62 (67.4)	Leadership	43 (46.7)	Planning	14 (15.2)
Evaluation	61 (66.3)	Managing resources	43 (46.7)	Personal professional dev.	11 (12)
Managing pupils	61 (66.3)	Pupil assessment	37 (40.2)	Managing resources	8 (8.7)
Pupil assessment	60 (65)	Evaluation	34 (37)	Managing pupils	8 (8.7)
Managing relationships	55 (60)	Managing pupils	34 (37)	Staff appraisal and professional development	6 (6.5)
Leadership	55 (60)	Self management	34 (37)	Self management	3 (3.3)
Maintaining staff morale	55 (60)	Managing relationships	33 (35.9)	Evaluation	2 (2.2)
Self management	51 (55.4)	Personal professional dev.	29 (32)	Maintaining staff morale	2 (2.2)
Managing resources	49 (53.3)	Communication with parents	28 (30.4)	Communication with parents	2 (2.2)
Communication with parents	45 (49)	Maintaining staff morale	27 (29.3)	Pupil assessment	1 (1.1)
Communication with Dept. of Educ. officials	18 (20)	Communication with Dept. of Educ. officials	7 (7.6)	Communication with Dept. of Educ. officials	1 (1.1)

Another category of training needs given general high priority was 'leadership'. In the climate principals have to work in, which is dominated by their confinement in an office doing clerical work, and their desire to take a more active role in things, it is hardly surprising that principals feel they need further training in the task of leadership. The importance behind training in leadership takes greater significance when viewing the open-ended responses (see Table 6.8) where the majority of principals call for autonomous management at the school level. The type of leadership training called for is what Sammons and Stoll (1986) have described as 'purposeful leadership' which is the central factor behind instructional effectiveness and hence school effectiveness.

Another important area highlighted is that of 'managing relationships'. Responses have already indicated that Maltese principals clearly see and very much adhere to the human relations dimension of their roles especially in their relations with staff, pupils and parents. These responses seem to indicate that principals are requesting training in improving the interpersonal relations with their staff so as to establish and improve school development practices. Relations with staff, pupils and parents have also been identified as indicators of job satisfaction (see Tables 6.6, 6.7).

It is also indicative to note that only the item 'communication with parents' is given a low rating for further training and development. And, at the same time, 'establishing good parental relationships' (cf Table 6.3) and 'discussions with parents' (cf Table 6.2) have been indicated as being two of the most time-consuming aspects of their job. Such a response might be taken to mean that principals know and are confident as to how to handle parental relationships. One might also argue that principals in the church/private sector would see this as fundamental in their bid to attract parents to their schools. However, this would be true in a market economy model where schools are competing against each other to attract students. In Malta we find that the demand for places is far greater than the supply. On the other hand one cannot say the same thing of the item 'communication with Department of Education officials' which attracts a limited response and is the lowest on all the lists of their training needs. The Education Division per se, and the very policy-making process it adheres to, have been indicated as job dissatisfiers and therefore such a response comes as no surprise. This negative attitude towards Department of Education officials is mainly attributed to the clear lack of educational

support given by central authorities to the schools. Visits to schools by department officials are sporadic in nature and therefore do not follow any strict developmental plan to improve classroom practice. Communication with the Department of Education is mentioned almost totally in negative terms, as interfering and/or imposing on the school's autonomy. This negative view towards links with the Education Division comes out quite clearly in the open-ended questions where principals identify the 'lack of support from the Department of Education' as a dissatisfier. This is further reinforced by other administrative aspects such as 'the highly centralised system of education', 'too much office work' and 'no clerical staff' which have been identified as dissatisfiers (see Tables 6.6, 6.7 and 6.8).

'Personal professional development' is also high on the list of priorities for training. This is significant from a number of angles. From one angle this response is indicative as it highlights a lacuna in the present training opportunities offered to existing principals. One has to stress the word 'existing' since prospective principals and those interested in pursuing an administrative career have the possibility of doing so through a Diploma Course in Educational Management and Administration. However, those already holding an administrative post - principal or deputy principal - can hardly be said that they are availing themselves of this opportunity. What existing principals do attend are short courses and seminars organised during the scholastic year by the Education Division or Faculty of Education. A recent development has been the short course which newly-appointed principals are called to attend on appointment. From another angle this response might be indicating a vacuum in the type of professional development programmes offered to principals. Maybe a professional course leading to a recognised qualification might be what this response indicates. It might also help to entice existing principals to attend. One must recall that principals are not contract bound to attend particular courses at any stage of their career. Principals attend courses in the main on a purely voluntary basis. Having said this one finds that principals do not, later on, highlight 'professional training' as one of the ways of improving their existing situation (see Table 6.10). On another level this response is indicative when taking into consideration other responses which identify principals as desiring to take on a more active role in school management practices and yet at the same time do not necessarily have the skills or experience to take on such responsibilities. Thus, this response, like the rest for that matter, shows that principals do not only express a desire to take on different roles and responsibilities - and thus

effecting existing policy-making procedures (which at present exclude principals) - but also call for training in such fields.

Another item high on the list of priorities for training is 'management of resources': time, money, people and building. With principals calling for decentralisation and school autonomy (e.g. Department of Education, 1989; Farrugia, ed., 1994; Unesco, 1988), combined with a general lack of resources, this one is of great importance. From their comments many principals find particular aspects of this task (i.e. looking after buildings and grounds [maintenance]) irksome and in fact have identified it as a job dissatisfier (see Table 6.9). This could also mean that principals have no interest in this field. Most of the state school principals - 81.5% (see Table 6.8) in the survey found the management of resources exceedingly frustrating.

On the level of human resources principals are finding that their role in relating with oneself and others is becoming more demanding and because of their 'formation professionnelle' do not have the skills to tackle them properly. Looking at the overall figures for these training priorities it is clear that the external relations roles appears to be the ones rated least. The 'leading' categories are particularly apposite for the principal as 'leading professional' and the 'organising' categories for the principal as chief executive. What, however, appears to dominate most principals' working lives is human relations.

### **6.5.2 Skills behind the principalship as perceived by principals**

Up to this point the survey has mainly concentrated on 'content' and not enough on the skills which principals need if they are to lead their schools more effectively. Another question asked principals what particular skills they needed to develop and to put them in order of priority (see Table 6.5). The top two skills are 'team building' (f=79, 86%) and 'motivating' (f=75, 81.5%). They are followed closely by 'group work skills' (f=68, 74%), 'conflict resolution' (f=62, 67.4%) and 'delegating' (f=60, 65%). These are all particularly useful skills in personnel management, which is the second most time-consuming aspect of a principal's job today, and one which they all prefer. Furthermore, these skills, once developed, are also useful in the external relations role: in working with parents, Education Division and other agencies. Such a response reveals interesting management assumptions. Principals see that

the key to future changes and developments depend on how motivated their staff is, and hence their role in finding different ways and means of motivating them. They also understand that with their views towards taking on a more active role in managing their schools and the difficulties they have to encounter in fulfilling such a role, the importance of establishing teams to fulfil such tasks becomes crucial. Such a high rating for team-building also reinforces principals' opinion for decentralization which calls for a new management style, one which moves away from a hierarchical approach to managing schools both at central and school level, to one which involves a greater level of participation.

Sixty percent of the respondents perceive 'negotiating' as another important skill and a relatively high 46.7% consider it as one of the top five skills for which they need training. 'Oral communication' (f=25, 27.2%) and 'written communication' (f=15, 16.3%) skills are presumably the ones in which principals feel most confident and experienced. They are clearly not a priority for further training.

Table 6.5 Skills for the principalship (N = 92)

General (free choice for self)			Top five for principals in general			Top priority		
Skill	f	%	Skill	f	%	Skill	f	%
Teambuilding	79	(86)	Motivating skills	76	(82.6)	Motivating skills	21	(22.8)
Motivating skills	75	(81.5)	Teambuilding	66	(71.7)	Counselling	16	(17.4)
Group-work skills	68	(74)	Group-work skills	55	(60)	Team building	11	(12)
Conflict resolution skills	62	(67.4)	Counselling	54	(59)	Oral communication	10	(10.9)
Delegating	60	(65)	Conflict resolution skills	50	(54)	Delegating	9	(9.8)
Counselling	58	(63)	Delegating	49	(53.3)	Group-work skills	8	(8.7)
Negotiation skills	55	(60)	Negotiation skills	43	(46.7)	Conflict resolution skills	6	(6.5)
Oral communication	34	(37)	Oral communication	25	(27.2)	Negotiating skills	6	(6.5)
Written comm	32	(34.8)	Written communication	15	(16.3)	Written comm	3	(3.3)

Overall this response further reinforces the principals desire to move beyond a purely administrative role, taken up as it is by desk work, and their wish to receive training in particular skills which will help them organise and manage things from a more collegial perspective. It shows that principals want training which will help them improve intra and inter personal skills. Such a response is also highly significant, especially coming from principals

in the state sector where practically everything is practiced in isolation, in that it supports a collaborative/ participatory management structure. The implications are such that the response directs our attention to the way schools are currently being called to function by those at systems level.

### 6.5.3 Sources of satisfaction and frustration as perceived by principals

Three questions (one closed and two open-ended) explored the level of satisfaction/ dissatisfaction principals held towards particular facets of their job. The results are reported in Table 6.6 to Table 6.9. Table 6.6 presents the overall response to the question: "Rate your degree of job satisfaction on each facet given below using the following four-point scale: 1, highly dissatisfied; 2, moderately dissatisfied; 3, moderately satisfied; 4, highly satisfied".

Table 6.6 Principals' Level of Job Satisfaction (N = 92)

Job Facets	1		2		3		4	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>Occupation-Related matters</b>								
Salary	10	(10.9)	22	(23.9)	49	(53.3)	11	(12)
Hours of work/holidays	1	(1.1)	8	(8.7)	42	(45.7)	41	(44.6)
Physical conditions principals work in	23	(25)	14	(15.2)	29	(31.5)	26	(28.3)
Availability of clerical help	50	(54.3)	6	(6.5)	20	(21.7)	16	(17.4)
Availability & quality of custodial services	24	(26.1)	15	(16.3)	32	(34.8)	21	(22.8)
Recognition by others of principals' work	12	(13)	5	(5.4)	54	(58.7)	21	(22.8)
Existing system of promoting principals*	17	(18.5)	23	(25)	24	(26.1)	4	(4.3)
<b>Human Relations matters</b>								
Working relationships with teachers	1	(1.1)	1	(1.1)	24	(26.1)	66	(71.7)
Teacher attitudes towards curr & staff development	2	(2.2)	13	(14.1)	62	(67.4)	15	(16.3)
Staff morale	2	(2.2)	3	(3.3)	54	(58.7)	33	(35.9)
Personal & social relationships with pupils	2	(2.2)	2	(2.2)	33	(35.9)	55	(59.8)
Sense of accomplishment as a principal	1	(1.1)	8	(8.7)	59	(64.1)	24	(26.1)
<b>Role-Related matters</b>								
Level of authority linked with the principalship	5	(5.4)	6	(6.5)	47	(51.1)	34	(37)
Contact with Department of Education officials	8	(8.7)	26	(28.3)	42	(45.7)	16	(17.4)
Contact with school support services	25	(27.2)	19	(20.7)	28	(30.4)	20	(21.7)
School autonomy	14	(15.2)	18	(19.6)	30	(32.6)	30	(32.6)
Principals' involvement in policy making	43	(46.7)	26	(28.3)	20	(21.7)	3	(3.3)

1, highly dissatisfied

2, moderately dissatisfied

3, moderately satisfied

4, highly satisfied

\* 24 respondents did not answer this item presumably because they are not affected by it

The mean and standard deviation of the responses to the seventeen job facets are shown in Table 6.7. The means ranged from 1.82 to 3.68; standard deviations from 1.45 to 0.55. With regards to specific facets, practically all responses exceeded the four-point scale means of 2.0, with the exception of one item. The highest level of job satisfaction was registered on two 'Human Relations' facets: 'working relationship with teachers' (M = 3.68; SD = 0.55) and 'personal and social relationships with pupils' (M = 3.53; SD = 0.65) and the third being an 'Occupation Related' facet: 'hours of work/holidays' (M = 3.33; SD = 0.73). Principals are highly satisfied with their working relationship with teachers and at the same time acknowledge the need for training in 'motivation' and 'team building' in particular. This seems somewhat contradictory in nature. On the one hand principals desire a more collegial and collaborative approach to school practises and at the same time express satisfaction with their existing relationships with staff which tend to be quite minimal in character (Fenech, 1992). And, although principals do not spend a lot of time with children (cf. Table 6.2) they still regard the need to know the child as one of their most important tasks. This response also tends to reinforce previous studies (Borg, 1992; Farrugia, 1985) which show that people tend to join the teaching profession mainly because of intrinsic factors, one of which is that of being with children, and 'educating children'.

On the other hand principals expressed the highest level of job dissatisfaction with two 'Role-Related' facets: 'principals involvement in policy making' (M = 1.82; SD = 0.89), 'availability of clerical staff' (M = 2.02; SD = 1.21). This response tends to reinforce the opinion expressed by principals in various in-service courses and seminars (e.g. Farrugia, ed., 1994; Unesco, 1988), and by researchers (Bezzina, 1991, 1994; Mifsud, 1994) which concur that at the school level principals lack professional janitor services, and at the policy making level it highlights the neo-colonial attitude which still lingers in its administrators (Baldacchino, 1993; Fenech, 1992) which tends to ignore the important and essential role that people at the grassroots level can play in determining policy implementation. The present Minister of Education and Human Resources, an architect by profession, is already addressing this issue by looking into ways of a) embellishing the structural aspects and interior decor of primary state schools, b) improving the efficiency of the people in charge of maintaining cleanliness in our schools, mainly by seeing that on the one hand those presently employed are professionally supervised, and that those who are not capable of fulfilling the duties designated to them are



moved to other departments. The need for involving principals in policy making is also currently being addressed. The Minister of Education and Human Resources appointed a consultative committee with a brief of presenting a discussion document (Consultative Committee, 1995) which would act as a launching pad for further discussion at all levels of the education sector. Discussions with department officials, principals, university lecturers, teachers and other interested bodies from the community (e.g. trade unions, school councils) are currently being organised. This will lead to a National Conference (in 1996) where people will be asked to submit papers and proposals which would help to determine what educational reforms the government could introduce.

Responses are fairly equally distributed on the following two sets of facets: 'physical conditions principals work in' ( $M = 2.63$ ;  $SD = 1.15$ ) and 'availability and quality of custodial services' ( $M = 2.54$ ;  $SD = 1.11$ ); and 'level of authority linked with the principalship' ( $M = 3.20$ ;  $SD = 0.79$ ), 'sense of accomplishment as a principal' ( $M = 3.15$ ;  $SD = 0.61$ ), 'teacher attitudes towards curriculum and staff development' ( $M = 2.98$ ;  $SD = 0.63$ ), 'existing system of promoting principals' ( $M = 2.95$ ;  $SD = 1.45$ ), and 'recognition by others of principals work' ( $M = 2.91$ ;  $SD = 0.90$ ).

Two open-ended questions asked the principals to identify those aspects of their role which gave them greatest satisfaction and which they found frustrating. In order to get a sense of scale and understanding, the principals' comments were analysed and coded into a number of the identified tasks of the principalship. Statements which were common were given their own special coding. The number of main comments for each heading are given in Table 6.8. When the scores are aggregated for each task and put in rank order the results are as follows (see Table 6.9). The following are comments under each main task category.

Table 6.7 Level of job satisfaction: means and standard deviations for the whole sample (N = 92)

Job facets	Mean * (N = 92)	SD
<b>Occupation-Related matters</b>		
Salary you receive	2.66	0.83
Hours of work/holidays	3.33	0.73
Physical conditions you work in	2.63	1.15
Availability of clerical staff	2.02	1.21
Availability & quality of custodial services	2.54	1.11
Recognition by others of principals' work	2.91	0.90
The existing system of promoting principals	2.95	1.45
<b>Human-Relations matters</b>		
Working relationships with teachers	3.68	0.55
Teacher attitudes towards curr. & staff development	2.98	0.63
Staff morale	3.28	0.65
Personal and social relationships with pupils	3.53	0.79
Sense of accomplishment as a principal	3.15	0.61
<b>Role-Related matters</b>		
Level of authority linked with the principalship	3.20	0.79
Contact with Department of Education officials	2.72	0.86
Contact with school support services	2.47	1.11
School autonomy	2.83	1.05
Principals' involvement in policy making	1.82	0.89

\* 1, highly dissatisfied; 4, highly satisfied

Table 6.8 Frequency distribution of important indicators of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction for primary school principals (N = 92)

Job Satisfiers	Job Dissatisfiers
<b>Role-Related facets</b>	
<i>Leadership Management</i>	
• being in charge, 10 (10.9%)	• no real authority, 32 (34.8%)
• facilitator, 8 (8.7%)	• too much office work, 29 (31.5%)
• main representative, 4 (4.3%)	• roles thrust upon principals, 10 (10.9%)
• being there, 14 (15.2%)	• no time to settle in school, 6 (6.5%)
<i>Philosophy</i>	
• establishing school policy, 30 (32.6%)	• unable to articulate school policy, 50 (54.4%)
• achieving aims & objectives, 32 (34.8%)	• failure to reach objectives, 21 (22.8%)
	• emphasis on exams, 6 (6.5%)
<i>Innovation</i>	
• making decisions, 24 (26.1%)	• lack of consultation in dec. making, 51 (55.4%)
• creating initiatives, 18 (19.6%)	• centrally imposed changes 21 (22.8%)
• curriculum development, 15 (16.3%)	

*Organisation*

- creating the right learning environment, 29 (31.5%)
- organising and problem solving, 20 (21.7%)
- smooth system, 9 (9.8%)

*Planning*

- planning events, 20 (21.7%)
- planning curriculum, 22 (23.9%)
- planning new developments, 11 (12%)

*Evaluation*

- monitor success of pupils, 4 (4.3%)
- monitor success of staff, 12 (13%)
- monitor success of curriculum, 10(10.9%)

*Resources*

*Communication with Dept. of Education*

**Human Relations facets**

*Personnel Management*

- staff development, 24 (26.1%)
- good relationship with staff, 51 (55.4%)

*Pupils*

- help children develop on an individual basis, 47 (51.1%)
- contact with pupils, 38 (41.3%)

*Relationships*

- motivating/team-building, 24 (26.1%)
- conflict resolution/counselling, 12 (13%)

*Self-management*

- challenge and involvement, 12 (13%)
- variety, 7 (7.6%)
- freedom, 8 (8.7%)
- sense of accomplishment as a principal, 10 (10.9%)

**Occupation-Related facets**

*Communication with parents*

- pastoral care/ contact, 69 (75%)

*Developments*

- keeping up-to-date, 8 (8.7%)

*Organisation*

- bureaucracy, 35(38%)
- paper work, 33(35.9%)
- no structure to manage curriculum dev., 6(6.5%)
- check to the last detail, 12(13%)

*Planning*

- no say in planning school direction 30(32.6%)
- planning in unstable environment 12(13%)
- planning with uncertain resources, 6(6.5%)

*Evaluation*

- failure with particular pupils, 12(13%)
- saying 'no' to subordinates, 4(4.3%)

*Resources*

- looking after school buildings, 38(41.3%)
- lack of money, 10(10.9%)
- lack & quality of custodial services 27(29.3%)

*Communication with Dept. of Education*

- lack of support, 33(35.9%)
- interference, 12(13%)

*Personnel Management*

- no clerical staff, 30(32.6%)
- no time for staff development, 9(9.8%)
- lack of team-work among staff, 14(15.2%)

*Pupils*

- pupil discipline, 10 (10.9%)
- others, 4 (4.3%)

*Relationships*

- lack of teacher support, 10 (10.9%)
- meetings, 8 (8.7%)
- conflict resolution/counselling, 14 (15.2%)

*Self-management*

- pressures, demands, stress, no time, 28 (30.4%)
- no time for self, 10 (10.9%)
- isolation, 7 (7.6%)

*Communication with parents*

- criticisms, disputes with parents, 4 (4.3%)
- unsatisfactory parents, 13 (14.1%)

*Developments*

- negative attitudes of Dept. of Education officials, 6 (6.5%)

Table 6.9 Job satisfiers and job dissatisfiers for primary school principals (N = 92)

Satisfiers			Dissatisfiers		
	f	%		f	%
Pupils	85	(92.4)	Organisation	86	(93.5)
Personnel management	75	(81.5)	Leadership	77	(83.7)
Parents	69	(75)	Philosophy	77	(83.7)
Philosophy	62	(67.4)	Resources	75	(81.5)
Organisation	58	(63)	Innovation	72	(78.3)
Innovation	57	(62)	Personnel mgt	53	(57.6)
Planning	53	(57.6)	Planning	48	(52.2)
Self-management	37	(40.2)	Links with Dept of Ed	45	(49)
Leadership	36	(39.1)	Self-management	45	(49)
Relationships	36	(39.1)	Relationships	32	(34.8)
Evaluation	26	(28.3)	Parents	17	(18.5)
Developments	8	( 8.7)	Evaluation	16	(17.4)
Resources	0		Pupils	14	(15.2)
Links with Dept. of Ed.	0		Developments	6	(6.5)

### Role-Related Facets

#### • Leadership/Management

There were more than twice as many negative comments about their own opportunities for leadership as positive ones. In fact leadership is low on the satisfiers list but second on the list of dissatisfiers (see Table 6.9). The principals who made negative comments were mostly concerned with their own powerlessness and the lack of authority associated with their management role (f=32, 34.8%). They also complained of having to do too much office work (f=29, 31.5%). They complained that roles were just thrown upon them. Some principals (6.5%) pointed out the difficulties they were facing in “settling down” in their new position as principal. Among their complaints were:

“We are treated as glorified clerks”

“We are just expected to do everything”

“It is most frustrating having to look after the school buildings”

“I find the lack of support from Head Office quite frustrating”

“Having no one to do the clerical work is demeaning our status”

The positive aspects of leadership included those who defined their role in the traditional sense,

when they saw themselves as being in full charge of things (f=10, 10.9%). Others highlighted a more pastoral role as 'facilitator' (f=8, 8.7%), others as just 'being there' (f=14, 15.2%).

- Philosophy

The school philosophy was as such determined by policies set at a national level. Throughout the comments there was expressed a general feeling that there was too much interference from central authorities. Fear of central control, it seemed, was generally expressed by those who had not very strong ideas of their own. Principals do not like to be told what to do, but equally they clearly find it hard to work out what they should do. This is an area of critical importance especially at a time when the present government is calling for decentralisation in the administration of education. In a recent Forum the Minister of Education and Human Resources highlighted that "decentralisation was the best way to delegate the administration of schools to the principals of schools themselves" (Times of Malta, 1995, p.52). From one level one has to question whether reforms should be viewed purely as an exercise in decentralisation as against viewing improvements through the best possible combination of centralised and decentralised approaches. One has to investigate whether Maltese principals, and in particular the Maltese education system, suffers from what Johnson labels

the clash of interests inherent in the tensions (that) exist between the demands of professionalism (and autonomy) on one hand, and a developing system of corporate patronage of professional occupation on the other.

(1973, p.228)

From another level one has to view and study with great caution the understanding and interpretation of the word decentralisation at central level and the areas of responsibilities being delegated to schools. This will have a strong bearing on the role that principals are called to undertake.

- Innovation

A good number of principals (f=57, 62%) mentioned innovations as one of the most interesting aspects of their job. These principals liked the challenge of having to make decisions (f=24, 26.1%), of creating new ideas and initiatives (f=18, 19.6%), of introducing innovations in the curriculum (f=15, 16.3%), of managing change and development. Principals, both from the state and private sector, expressed an obvious satisfaction to this aspect of their role where they

could directly influence the direction of the school and that of others. The principals who expressed satisfaction in dealing with pedagogical matters are in the church/private sector. However, when the study was being conducted a group of state school principals were being involved in a primary school project being run by the British Council. The following quote illustrates their level of satisfaction

**“The introduction of the Primary English Programme (PEP)  
has been a most rewarding exercise for myself and  
most of the teachers involved”**

On the negative side there were around 72 (78.3%) comments. Many principals highlighted the strict parameters they had to work in. Most of the changes are decided upon at central level with principals never being involved in decision making and policy making involving schools. These principals express the difficulty of innovating when they still have to comply to the dictum of Head Office. Such comments show that the majority of the schools (i.e. state schools) still have to function within tight restrictions:

**“Our opinions as to how things can be improved are never sought”**

**“We are never consulted, and this is most frustrating”**

**“I just hate having to refer to Head Office every time I want to do things”**

#### **• Organisation**

The organising aspects of the principal's tasks came top on the list of dissatisfiers and at the same time quite high on the list of satisfiers. 58 principals found satisfaction in organisation and 86 found dissatisfaction. What stands out as quite significant is the great difference between the items listed as satisfiers and the items listed as dissatisfiers. On the positive side, 29 principals highlighted the importance behind creating the right environment for children under their care, 20 enjoyed solving organisational problems and 9 enjoyed running a smooth system.

**“I find great satisfaction in creating an appropriate environment  
for children to work in”**

Naturally, of these 58 principals expressing satisfaction, thirty-nine are in the church/private sector all of which avail themselves of clerical assistance.

On the negative side most of the comments have more to do with bureaucracy than with organisation in any real sense. 35 principals expressed their dissatisfaction with the excessive restrictions facing principals and the complete dependence on Head Office. In the same kind of category are 33 principals who specifically mentioned their dislike of filling in statistical returns and the loads of paperwork which had to be dealt with. This sort of work, instead of making principals feel powerful, too often makes them feel like clerks. In fact this view is reinforced by another response when 56 principals expressed 'high dissatisfaction' and 'moderate dissatisfaction' with regards to availability of clerical staff in the schools (see Table 6.6). Most work of a purely clerical nature has to be done by principals or deputy principals. Another 12 principals lamented the need to have to check the way things are done to the last detail.

These negative comments highlight the apparent trivialisation of the principal's role and the useless burning-up of energy in matters either of a routine nature or which could easily be done by others. The system seems to pay lip service to the old model of the principal as chief controller, coming close to Hughes' (1985) definition of chief executive. The general overall picture which seems to be emerging sees the principal as a civil servant who is often caught in between a supervisory role and a completely administrative cum clerical one.

**"I simply hate wasting my time filling in forms"  
[e.g. statistical returns]**

**"While everyone is calling for decentralisation the schools  
are still very much in the tight clutches of the Department"**

Record keeping can become a daunting task. The most common complaint made by principals was that they are inundated with paper work, and, considering that many schools do not have any clerical staff, the principals often find themselves lost in a tangle of clerical duties.

- **Planning**

Fifty-three principals enjoyed aspects of planning, though this was generally expressed in terms of planning for some specific event (e.g. preparing for an outing) rather than in terms of strategic planning as defined by Davies & Ellison (1992) and Rogers [ed] (1994), amongst others.

**"I enjoy planning things out and seeing them through"**

**“I enjoy planning activities with members of staff”**

Twenty-two principals (23.9%) talked of their role in planning the curriculum, whilst another 11 (12%) stressed the important role they have in defining where they want to go.

Faced with a nationally set curriculum principals in the state sector, more often than not, follow the curriculum and prescribed syllabuses, whereas those in the church/private sector work round the National Minimum Curriculum to fit their own school philosophy.

There are more positive comments to planning than negative ones. This also helps to highlight that even though the majority of principals are hindered from having a determining role in the philosophical and organisational aspects of school life they still seek ways and means of making their role a more dynamic one. The negative comments reflect the impossibility of planning in most areas because most decisions determining school planning was done by others; of resources which were uncertain and unpredictable; of the environment which was under the control of others.

**“I am unable to plan with confidence”**

**“I hate watching our plans being spoilt by ad hoc decisions  
by central authorities”**

**“One cannot really plan because others will always undermine  
our position”**

**“Planning is so essential but then there is so little time for it”**

There were strongly expressed feelings that outside events were stopping principals from getting on with their real job. Most of these events seem to originate from central authorities who seem to prefer determining how things ought to proceed. The principals' comments are a reflection of how they perceive their role - one mainly determined by others. Maltese principals are not encouraged to play a role in planning, in designing a school organisational set-up where the curriculum can be discussed round a school-based strategic plan of action. As one principal put it:

**“In my opinion we are not spending any time at school on planning ahead, on discussing curriculum matters, etc. I do not think this is because I am not interested, or my staff is not interested, far from it, but mainly because of the way schools are presently organised”.**



This certainly is the case with State school principals.

- Evaluation (i.e. school review/ personnel management)

There were 26 positive mentions and 16 negative ones. Evaluation did not figure out so high either on the satisfiers list or dissatisfiers one. This could be due to the fact that state school principals are not called to evaluate any aspects of school life (see Chapter Three). Evaluation, up to now, is officially not recognised as an essential function of school improvement practices. Often it is reduced to self-evaluation which every teacher is expected to undertake, but no monitoring is undertaken of this type of practice. Work done by teachers in class is monitored by principals quite informally and most teachers once they have established themselves with a particular level (e.g. 7-8 year olds) or ability ('average', 'bright', 'below average'), will remain with that class for quite a number of years. This means that teachers and teaching are taken for granted and they are allowed to practice their profession in isolation. The 24 positive comments were not about evaluation, but more about a feeling of success. Four principals enjoyed monitoring the success of pupils, twelve enjoyed monitoring the success of staff, and ten enjoyed monitoring the success of the curriculum. Principals tend to receive little direct positive feedback about performance, and, as Jones comments "at best, only long term positive results, which may or may not be attributed to the Head" (Jones, 1988, p.90). Therefore principals tend to seek success through much of their indirect contact with staff and pupils.

The sixteen negative comments seem to reflect a certain feeling of 'failure'. On the one hand principals in certain circumstances felt that they cannot communicate, they cannot get through to particular pupils. Principals are conveying their dissatisfaction towards this failure to succeed with pupils. Often this has to do with counselling and or disciplinary problems. Principals expressed frustration that they could not get through to some child, who, in spite of direct concern and encouragement failed to express improvement or change of habits/attitudes. The same kind of comments applies to 'saying No' to their staff which four principals said was something they did not enjoy. Probably there are more principals who in certain circumstances, on certain occasions, are faced with a situation where they have to put their foot down and say 'No' to their staff. Some principals might take this in their stride. They have got used to or simply do not mind saying 'No' to others, or else are more sensitive to other people's feelings. Obviously the answers depend on the situation. It is also an area which

requires further exploration.

- **Resources**

When it comes to the management of resources no principal expressed any satisfaction being derived from this part of the job. These responses again reflect the bureaucratic structures principals have to work in which limits their level of authority and control which in turn increases their level of powerlessness when dealing with particular decisions. 75 (81.5%) expressed dissatisfaction. Principals in the state sector remain with little or no say in the provision of resources (see Chapter Three). They are mainly required to requisition stores and maintenance works which is then supplied and/or looked into centrally. There has been an attempt to pass on a small sum of money to meet minor maintenance requirements, but dependence on Head Office is still very much there. And, when one analyses the level of satisfaction principals have with regards to certain items related to resources - in particular 'the physical conditions principals work in', 'the contact with school support services' one finds that the level of dissatisfaction is quite significant. On the one hand around 40% expressed a 'high' to 'moderate' level of dissatisfaction with regards to the physical conditions they have to work in; around 48% expressed a 'high' to 'moderate' level of dissatisfaction with the type of Support Services (e.g. peripatetic teachers, Psychological Services) they had; and over 42% expressed a 'high' to 'moderate' level of dissatisfaction with the availability and quality of custodial services (i.e. caretakers) they had at school (see Table 6.6). This response is a reflection of the low level of power and influence State school principals have on these facets of the job. This, as has been highlighted in a previous section in this chapter, is being currently addressed by the State authorities.

- **Communication with Department of Education**

There were 45 negative mentions and no positive ones. Thirty-three principals highlighted the lack of support they get from the school support services, whilst 12 principals passed negative comments about the way the Education Division interfered in particular ways principals did things at school level. This response rate reflects a very serious state of affairs with principals feeling so unsupported by particular contacts, sections or individuals within the Division.

**“There are too many administrators telling us what to do”**

**“I deplore the Department’s readiness to undermine particular decisions I take”**

**“I don’t enjoy the insecurity about when or whether resources are coming”  
“There are so many things lacking in our schools and hardly any support to solve them”**

**“I feel frustrated in identifying a need and then being unable to do anything about it due to bureaucracy or due to some incompetent official at Head Office”**

Most principals would recognise these comments as being typical of the way principals generally view the Education Division. The picture that these comments are portraying is one which identifies principals as lacking authority over the things they ought to have control over, as was brought out in Chapter Three. The comments also clearly bring out the serious lack of confidence principals have in the way local education authorities manage the education service.

These type of comments also tend to reflect a general tendency within educators who take on senior posts. Time and time again, in courses and seminars, teachers, for example, observe that as soon as a colleague takes on an administrative post (e.g. becomes a deputy principal) they tend to forget that they were once teachers. The same is evident of people who take on administrative posts within Head Office. This, in itself, is an important area of research, especially in the way we view the concept of control. Control is a dominant theme in the development of management practices on the island. And, bearing in mind Tannenbaum’s definition of control as “any process in which a person, or group of persons, determines, that is, intentionally affects the behaviour of another person, group or organization” (1968, p.5), it is closely related to the concept of ‘power’ and thus the relationship (or lack of it) that has resulted.

#### **Human Relations facets**

##### **• Personnel Management**

Personnel management was without doubt one of the categories about which principals had a lot to say, positively and negatively. There were 75 positive comments (81.5%) about relations with teachers: staff development (f=24, 26.1%), and good relationship with staff (f=51, 55.4%). In all probability these principals are in the church/private sector since these can determine how they develop their school programme, unlike state school principals who, to a large extent, tend to follow the calendar set by the Education Division. On the positive side principals spoke in favour of staff development practices and the pleasure they took in seeing them develop. Principals also gained high levels of satisfaction through the relationships they

developed with teaching staff.

Again, here one has to delve deeper into the issue. We have nothing to go on so as to explore the meaning of 'good relationships'. On one extreme this could mean that principals are happy with the limited contact they have with teachers. On the other extreme they are happy with the collegial relationships established with staff members. Where power to determine the organisational and curriculum development of the school is shared than relations tend to be collegial; where things are practised in isolation no collegial relationships can be established. One might argue, that even though teachers and administrators might spend limited time together, relations can be described as being good and effective. It is here worth noting that only church/private school principals talk of relationships with staff which involve staff development practices. This helps to highlight that the type of 'relationships' that principals in the two sectors are talking about are different in nature.

On the negative side of personnel management there were 53 comments (57.6%). Of these one finds the category 'no clerical staff' (f=30, 32.6%) which most principals in the State sector constantly complain about. Another category highlighted the 'lack of time for staff development' (f=9, 9.8%) with an allied category 'lack of team work among staff' (f=14, 15.2%). The way State primary schools are set-up at present allows for little to no opportunities for administrators and their staff to discuss matters about aims and objectives, and curriculum development in particular. 'Lack of teamwork' throws light on the type of teaching which takes place in our local schools. Teaching is still very much practised in isolation - each teacher in his/her own classroom with few schools considering alternatives. It also reflects on how certain teachers view their profession. Some are not that willing to go beyond what they are dutybound to give. Whereas the first category shows that principals want support at the administrative level so that their paperwork, correspondence, etc, is done by a clerk, the last two categories are mainly directed at the lack of rapport that exists between principals and teachers and between teachers themselves. What follows are some of the comments principals made about what they did not enjoy about personnel management.

**"Resolving petty issues"**

**"Dealing with unco-operative staff"**

**“Having to deal with staff who just do not want to do things  
in a different way, to consider alternatives”**

**“The fact that up to now we have been left with no clerical assistance  
makes it impossible for me to spend time with my staff”**

These type of comments reveal how principals perceive this dimension of their role. Far from being powerful, the principal is seen as having to do things on his/her own, and of sorting out petty problems, of doing clerical work, of not having enough constructive time to spend with their staff. These comments also throw light on the limited control principals have when dealing with particular members of staff. First and foremost, faced with a purely centralised system principals do not have a say in selecting their staff and when faced with difficult members of staff principals face great difficulties in having them disciplined or dismissed.

#### **• Pupils**

Principals seem to enjoy this aspect of their job most. Activities to do with pupils occupy the two highest places in the list of what principals get satisfaction from. ‘Helping children develop on an individual basis’ gets the highest mention with 47 (51.1%) mentions, followed by ‘contact with pupils’ receiving 38 mentions (41.3%). The writer is not altogether sure about how to interpret these comments. From the comments the writer gets from fellow principals, principals do not have all that much time to spend with pupils. In fact one of the comments forwarded by teachers is that school administrators often tend to forget that at one stage in their career they were teachers too. Most of the principals’ time seems to be devoted to administrative concerns. Perhaps distance lends enchantment. As the pupils are usually at least one step removed, perhaps it is easier to regard them positively in spite of their faults. What is clear is that to this open-ended question no principal mentioned their satisfaction of spending time in classrooms or their dissatisfaction of not spending time in the classrooms. This might be indicative of principals who, unlike their British counterpart (e.g. Bell & Morrison, 1988), do not see the necessity of taking on a class or simply being with teachers, as highlighted in research both in the U.S.A. (e.g. Bossert et al., 1982; Kmetz & Willower, 1982) and the U.K. (e.g. Holly & Southworth, 1989; Mortimore et al., 1988; Webb, 1994). Making time for co-operative teaching, observation, discussion and reflection with pupils and teachers about what they have learnt is still an area of concern which has been ignored by the Maltese authorities as pertaining to the role of the principal.

Most of the positive comments about pupils were couched in terms of “watching them grow”, “helping them out with problems”, and “just being with them”. The majority of primary school principals, like their teacher counterparts (Borg, 1992; Farrugia, 1985), seem to be primarily motivated by what Anderson (1974) has called “positive” orientations reflecting the intrinsic attractions to the post of principal. What seems to attract people to the teaching profession - the desire to work with young people, to practice what they regard as a highly stimulating and satisfying vocation, and to pass on the ‘right’ skills, values and attitudes to pupils - still hold fast to those in administrative posts.

“Working with children is the best reward aspect of my job”

“Knowing that I can influence pupils’ development gives me  
greatest satisfaction”

The contact, therefore, is concentrated on the personal and social level and does not enter the academic sphere.

This section received in all 14 negative comments (15.2%). Ten principals (10.8%) expressed negative comments on having to deal with the negative side of pupil contact, together with four other random comments. This maybe reveals that principals are to an extent protected from much of the aggravation and indiscipline of pupils by the teachers who normally deal with routine discipline.

“I hate having to discipline misbehaving pupils”

“I find it quite frustrating not being in a position to reach  
out to every child”

“I dislike having relatively little contact with the children”

Principals do not appear to take on this disciplining role with any degree of enthusiasm. Perhaps this is because they feel that they ought to maintain good, positive relations with everyone at all times or else because they find themselves facing particular problems which are beyond the powers of the school to change, and also lack the necessary support to solve them (cf. Table 6.7 and 6.8).

- **Relationships**

Principals enjoy motivating staff mainly through team building (f=24, 26.1%) and conflict resolution and counselling individual staff members (f=12, 13%). It was encouraging to have to devise a category for team building which indicates that certain principals (those in the church and private school sector) appreciate the value of team management.

Most church/private schools, although having to fulfil the stipulated number of contact hours with children dictated by the state, still establish a calendar which includes regular meetings between school administrators and their staff to discuss organisational and curriculum matters. On the other hand, state school principals follow a designated two-hour slot per term in which to conduct an 'official' staff meeting. The agenda is determined by each school and developments and moroso evaluation, if any, depends on each respective school. As yet, there is no central body to monitor or evaluate how and what is done during and after these meetings.

On the negative side there were some interesting comments. Ten (10.9%) principals identified 'teacher lack of support' as a problem they have to contend with. What can be considered an allied category 'meetings' was viewed negatively by 8 (8.7%) principals. Meetings with staff can be a rewarding experience but at the same time can be unrewarding and therefore frustrating. The very fact that few staff meetings are held in State schools might be the main reason behind this low response. Although twelve principals positively enjoyed conflict resolution, 14 (15.2%) did not. In a previous response (see Table 6.5) conflict resolution received a considerably high rating as a skill in which principals need training in. Unresolved conflicts can fester away and seriously undermine the work of a school. Comments in this section include:

“I simply dislike the type of meetings we have to organise”

“I hate the break-down of relationships when they occur”

- **Self-Management**

Self-management was without any doubt one of the most interesting categories about which

principals had a lot to say, both positively and negatively. The responses reveal some important characteristics about the principal's role and as such shows that self-management is a much more serious problem than principals reckoned in their assessment of their training needs (see Table 6.4). Thirty-seven (40.2%) principals mentioned self-management positively: 12 (13%) got satisfaction from the challenges and opportunities to involve themselves that the job offered; 7 (7.6%) liked the variety of activities they experienced; 8 (8.7%) expressed satisfaction to the "sense of freedom" related to the post of principal; and another 10 (10.9%) expressed great satisfaction with the 'sense of accomplishment' that the post gave them. Some principals find their job fulfilling:

**"I find great satisfaction in being in a position where I can provide opportunities for others"**

**"The uniqueness of each day is something I always look forward to"**

**"The great variety of tasks leaves no room for boredom"**

However, there are others who cannot stand the pressure of the variety and the fragmentary nature of their work, what Kmetz & Willower describe as "domino eruptions" (1982, p.73). In fact 28 (30.4%) principals passed negative comments about this aspect of their role and the relentless pressures it brings with it. Another 10 (10.9%) point to the lack of time for oneself. As one principal stated:

**"The constant unremitting pressure is really frustrating. I do not even have time to stop and think. One thing leads to another"**

Another 7 (7.6%) highlighted another important dimension of the principalship - isolation (see also Chapter Seven). In spite of being in contact with children and staff Maltese principals tend to spend quite a lot of time on their own and often their efforts and hard work are hardly acknowledged by anyone.

**"Being isolated from the staff for long periods of time really gets on my nerves"**

**"I really miss the common-room life I enjoyed in (the) secondary (sector)"**



## Occupation-Related facets

### • Communication with parents

Communication with parents stands third in the satisfiers list with 69 (75%) principals passing positive comments about their relationship with parents. This came as no surprise given that Maltese principals maintain an open door policy. Most of the relationships with parents dealt with day-to-day problems that had to, in most cases, be tackled there and then. Up to now the Maltese primary school principal is most accessible, unlike maybe his/her British counterpart which Jones describes as “king in a castle, with the drawbridge pulled up and access granted only by appointment” (Jones, 1988, p.102). This image, however, seems to be changing with the introduction of LMS (see Webb, 1994). Maltese principals, in the main, make themselves available to people at all times. The following comments were frequent:

“I really enjoy the feeling of being of help to others”

“I am finally pleased to see that our efforts with children and parents is bearing fruit”

“I find great satisfaction in establishing good relationships with parents”

The negative comments about parents were 17 (18.5%) and distributed as follows: ‘criticisms, disputes with parents’, 4 (4.3%); and ‘unsatisfactory parents’, 13 (14.1%). Coming across problematic parents can be a source of dissatisfaction and practically all principals are bound to meet with such parents. However, this factor does not seem to be a cause of much stress.

Communication between principals and parents is mainly of two kinds (see also Chapter Seven): parental visits to school and phone calls, both of which take place on a daily basis. Parents use these visits to discuss their children’s difficulties or specifically to confide in someone about their own problems and to seek help. This concurs with the findings of Webb’s qualitative research into the changing roles and responsibilities of primary schools in the U.K. (1994).

### • Developments

When it comes to keeping up-to-date with new educational trends the number of mentions is very low, registering only 8 (8.7%) mentions by principals as a satisfier. This does not come as a surprise since, as was brought out in Table 6.4, principals highlighted ‘personal professional development’ as one of the most important training needs. However, one might

argue that principals do not allocate any of their free time to reading and reflecting on practice. Few Maltese principals subscribe to any educational or professional journals. This means that exposure to educational developments abroad are quite limited. At the same time it is important to recall that most principals are middle-aged (45 years and over), female, and with the majority having family and/or social commitments (e.g. parish work, NGOs). This gives them little to no time for themselves. A similar finding was observed by Craig (1982) in Kent, England. At the same time the school day of a primary school in Malta is such that most schools finish at 2.30 p.m.(see also Chapter Seven). The literature reviewed does not highlight how principals keep abreast and up-to-date, although some of it (e.g. Bell & Morrison, 1988; Willis, 1980) shows that principals keep working after school hours or else take work with them at home. One might also argue that such a factor might become a significant satisfier. Among the positive comments one finds:

“I enjoy keeping abreast of things abroad even though  
this is quite difficult”

“I find that keeping up-to-date with developments abroad  
helps me to tackle things at school more professionally”

The negative comments, only six (6.5%) of them, were directed at the way national developments are introduced at the local level.

“I just hate the way the Department introduces changes in  
school without ever consulting us”

Such comments reinforce those passed on in answer to previous questions where principals expressed their indignation towards the way principals and their schools were treated. Although faced with such a situation, one which effects educators throughout their career (Farrugia, 1985), its extrinsic nature is such that it does not have such a negative bearing on the respondents.

#### **6.5.4 Improving the principals' current position as perceived by principals**

The third and last open-ended question in the questionnaire encouraged principals to suggest ways of improving the existing situation facing Maltese primary school principals. Table 6.10 presents their responses. The responses reinforce some of the main concerns already highlighted in previous responses. Principals expressed the need to review their role (f=62,

65.2%) and some suggestions are presented, mainly: involvement in policy making (f=54, 58.7%), decentralization (f=40, 43.4%), clerical assistance (f=36, 39%), principals to choose staff members (f=35, 38%), and receiving support when needed (f=34, 37%). These responses call for a major rethink of how the role of principal is presently conceptualised at systems level. The item which received the highest level of response was in-service courses (f=64, 69.6%). Principals are all in favour of the short, one-week courses. No-one mentioned an interest in attending, for example, the two-year evening diploma course in Educational Administration and Management. This could be mainly attributed to the fact that most principals have commitments after school-hours which would hinder them from opting to attend such courses. One may also attribute this to the way the diploma course is currently structured, which may seem too academic in nature and lacking in the professional and practical dimension.

Whilst 70% of the principals identified the importance of ongoing in-service education, 65% identified the need to review the existing role that principals have to play. Whilst in-service training goes some way at improving the role, other factors directly relevant to improving the existing role model of the Maltese principal are identified. Involvement in policy making is again highlighted by principals as one way of improving the existing role. Principals, in the main, want to be involved in issues which will directly influence schools. They also argue in favour of greater devolution of authority to schools. This process has already started. A number of principals (f=35, 38%) also want to be involved in staff selection. Whilst this has been the practice in British schools for years (staff applied to a school, were interviewed with LEA representative and then governors under advice made the appointment) more recently the LEA influence has been reduced and the decision has become that of the school. Whilst the researcher is of the opinion that principals ought to have a say in the selection of staff he has reservations as to how far one can go about fully adopting this procedure. Given the size of our country, with everyone knowing everyone else it can be argued that some principals will find it difficult to attract teaching staff to their schools. As a result some form of centralized form of control in staff deployment is essential.

Table 6.10 Ways of improving the primary school principals current situation (N = 92)

Suggestions forwarded by principals	f	%
In-service courses	64	69.6
Reviewing role	60	65.2
Involvement in policy making	54	58.7
Decentralization	40	43.4
Clerical help	36	39
Principals to choose their own staff	35	38
Receiving support when needed	34	37

### 6.5.5 Job priorities as perceived by principals

The final question called principals to focus on their present tasks. In an attempt to gain a picture of how principals thought they 'ought' to be spending their time and how they 'actually' spent it, principals were asked to rank order a given number of tasks plus 'others'. Secondly, they were also asked to rank order the same list of tasks as to how they felt they ought to spend their time. This question had a two-fold purpose. Firstly, it aimed at distinguishing between what principals did on a day-to-day basis and what they perceived their role ought to entail. Thus, on the one hand it would help us understand the principals present job functions and on the other hand what facets of their role they felt they ought to be concentrating on. Secondly, this question aimed at verifying, to some extent, the results of the Observational Study (refer to Chapter Seven). Thus, this question, as part of the triangulation approach, would to an extent help overcome one of the main drawbacks behind the observational method - that of observing only a few people over a short period of time. Responses to this question would allow us to view differences and similarities between the principals who were observed and those who answered the questionnaire.

Table 6.11 presents how principals state that they 'actually' spent their time based on their own perception of things. The item which gets top ranking and on which there seems to be major consensus, is 'doing routine office work' with 53 respondents (57.6%). Second on the list is 'discussion with parents' with responses falling mainly on the 2nd, 3rd and 5th rank order (f = 74, 80.5%). Third on the list being 'discussions with teachers' with the main responses divided between the 3rd and 4th rank order (f = 47, 51%). The item with the lowest rank order

being item four - 'run school-based development programmes' with responses spread between the 7th and 8th rank order (f = 55, 59.8%). 'Organising extra-curricular activities' figures out as being quite low with responses spread between the 5th and 8th rank order (f = 70, 76.1%).

This response reinforces the previous responses given in this questionnaire which highlights the main roles of primary school principals in Malta - one, that of an administrator doing in the main clerical work; second, the human relations facets which see principals mainly concerned with parents, children and teachers. Items which deal mainly with the organisation and management of the curriculum, running school-based development programmes and other qualitative aspects do not figure high on the list.

Table 6.11 How principals actually spend their time (N = 92)

Task	Rank Order *							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Discussions with parents	6 (6.5%)	33 (35.9%)	17 (18.5%)	6 (6.5%)	24 (26.1%)	4 (4.3%)	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)
Discussions with teachers	11 (12%)	13 (14.1%)	20 (21.7%)	27 (29.3%)	14 (15.2%)	6 (6.5%)	1 (1.1%)	
Observe classrm teaching	4 (4.3%)	15 (16.3%)	6 (6.5%)	9 (9.8%)	18 (19.6%)	8 (8.7%)	18 (19.6%)	14 (15.2%)
Run sch-based dev programmes	8 (8.7%)	3 (3.3%)	4 (4.3%)	11 (12%)	4 (4.3%)	7 (7.6%)	29 (31.5%)	26 (28.3%)
Provide guidance to children	10 (10.9%)	8 (8.7%)	7 (7.6%)	16 (17.4%)	5 (5.4%)	36 (39.1%)	5 (5.4%)	5 (5.4%)
Do routine office work	53 (57.6%)	4 (4.3%)	4 (4.3%)	6 (6.5%)	1 (1.1%)	9 (9.8%)	14 (15.2%)	1 (1.1%)
Organising extr-curr. acts.		3 (3.3%)	8 (8.7%)	11 (12%)	20 (21.7%)	19 (20.7%)	15 (16.3%)	16 (17.4%)
Look after sch bldings & grounds		13 (14.1%)	27 (29.3%)	6 (6.5%)	6 (6.5%)	3 (3.3%)	9 (9.8%)	28 (30.4%)

\* 1 = most important  
8 = least important

Table 6.12 How principals think they ought to spend their time (N = 92)

Task	Rank Order *							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Discussions with parents	2 (2.2%)	14 (15.2%)	21 (22.8%)	28 (30.4%)	16 (17.4%)	10 (10.9%)	1 (1.1%)	
Discussions with teachers	23 (25%)	39 (42.4%)	16 (17.4%)	9 (9.8%)	3 (3.3%)	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)	
Observe classrm teaching	25 (27.2%)	15 (16.3%)	22 (23.9%)	16 (17.4%)	6 (6.5%)	3 (3.3%)	4 (4.3%)	1 (1.1%)
Run sch-based dev programmes	32 (34.8%)	11 (12%)	15 (16.3%)	11 (12%)	11 (12%)	11 (12%)	1 (1.1%)	
Provide guidance to children	10 (10.9%)	12 (13%)	18 (19.6%)	10 (10.9%)	35 (38%)	6 (6.5%)	1 (1.1%)	
Do routine office work				8 (8.6%)	7 (7.6%)	7 (7.6%)	48 (52.2%)	22 (23.9%)
Organising extr-curr. acts.		1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)	9 (9.8%)	13 (14.1%)	51 (55.4%)	14 (15.2%)	3 (3.3%)
Look after sch bldings & grounds					3 (3.3%)	3 (3.3%)	20 (21.7%)	66 (71.7%)

\* 1 = most important  
8 = least important

On the other hand Table 6.12, which highlights how principals think they 'ought' to spend their time, brings out some important differences to the list just reported. The first three items, in order of priority, which figure out on this list are 'discussions with teachers' with responses spread on the first three rank orders (f=78, 84.8%). 'Observing classroom teaching' placed second with responses spread on the first four rank orders (f=78, 84.8%). Third task on the list came 'running school-based development programmes' with responses spread over six rank orders, most of which on the first three (f=58, 63.1%). This response seems to express a shift of attention towards issues dealing with the teaching-learning process, with principals not only being more involved in discussing matters with teachers but organising, planning and developing programmes at school level.

The items which received the lowest response being 'looking after school buildings' with sixty-six respondents (71.7%) ranking it last, and 'doing routine office work' with responses mainly spread on the 7th and 8th rank order (f=70, 76.1%).

From the findings in Table 6.11 and Table 6.12 one can note that principals expressed a desire to shift their attention to particular facets of work. The two major differences which stand out being a desire to devote much less time to 'doing routine office work' - First on the 'Actual' list to seventh on the 'Ought' list. Principals also expressed an interest in devoting more time to running school-based development programmes - Eight on the 'Actual' list to third on the 'Ought' list. In fact the main three items on the 'Ought' list entail more involvement in the teaching learning process: 'discussions with teachers', 'observing classroom teaching', and 'running school-based development programmes'. Holding 'discussions with parents' moves from second on the 'Actual' list to fifth on the 'Ought' list. At present most principals have an open-door policy which means that they are accessible to parents at all times during the day. This response seems to indicate a desire to shift the focus of attention and maybe organise their day better.

The mean and standard deviation of the responses to the eight job tasks are given in Table 6.13 and Table 6.14 respectively. The means showing how principals *actually* spent their time ranged from 2.85 to 5.90; standard deviations from 2.47 to 1.45. The means showing how principals believe they *ought* to spend their time ranged from 2.32 to 7.62; standard deviation

from 1.84 to 0.71. Further analysis were carried out to investigate the levels of correlation between the actual rank ordering and the ought. Spearman's rho was used to establish the level of correlation. A positive and significant relationship was found between two main tasks: 'run school-based development programmes' (at the .001 level) and 'provide guidance to children' (at the .01 level).

**Table 6.13 How principals actually spend their time: means and standard deviations for the whole sample**

Tasks	Mean* (N = 92)	SD
Discussions with parents	3.33	1.58
Discussions with teachers	3.46	1.45
Observe classroom teaching	5.04	2.19
Run school-based development programmes	5.90	2.26
Provide guidance to children	4.64	2.00
Do routine office work	2.85	2.47
Organise extra-curricular activities	5.66	1.67
Look after buildings and grounds	5.07	2.39

\* 1, highest level of importance  
8, least level of importance

**Table 6.14 How principals think they ought to spend their time: means and standard deviations for the whole sample**

Tasks	Mean * (N = 92)	SD
Discussions with parents	3.83	1.31
Discussions with teachers	2.32	1.21
Observe classroom teaching	2.92	1.72
Run school-based development programmes	2.95	1.84
Provide guidance to children	3.76	1.55
Do routine office work	6.75	1.16
Organise extra-curricular activities	5.80	1.03
Look after buildings and grounds	7.62	0.71

\* 1, highest level of importance  
8, least level of importance

### 6.5.6 Demographic characteristics

The study also investigated similarities and differences among the sample on various demographic characteristics: gender, age, experience and type of school. The following are the major findings according to each explored characteristic.

- *Gender differences (i.e. Males: 41 respondents; Females: 51 respondents)*

Not many differences can be observed in this study between female and male respondents. The two major job functions identified by both male and female principals are 'desk work' and 'discussions with parents' (Males: 71% and 61% respectively; Females: 69% and 70% respectively) (see Table 6.15). All other functions are well below the 50 percent mark, which goes some way to show that most of their time is dedicated to administrative work and dealing with parental needs and concerns. Responses are very similar on all other functions, except for two where a significant difference has been reported. On the one hand 27% of male respondents saw 'discipline' as one of the major tasks ( $p < .05$ ). Whereas 39% of female respondents, as against 22% of male respondents saw 'discussions with staff' as an important task ( $p < .05$ ).

Table 6.15: Principals major job functions by Sex

Tasks	Male n = 41 %	Female n = 51 %
Desk work	71	69
Discussions with parents	61	70
Discussions with children	17	17
Discussions with staff	22	39
Discipline	27	14
Observing classroom teaching	20	29
Organising activities	34	27
Staff appraisal and professional development	17	10
Organising, planning and evaluating curricula	22	24

There are some significant differences between the way males and females viewed their tasks and duties (see Tables 6.16 and 6.17). On the one hand male principals considered the following to be their main three tasks/duties: 'establishing good personal relationships with teaching and ancillary staff' (90%), 'establishing good parental/community relations' (85%), and 'knowing the children' (84%). Female principals, on the other hand, considered the



following three tasks as the most important: 'knowing the children' (84%), 'keeping up-to-date' (75%), and 'establishing good personal relationships with teaching and ancillary staff' (75%). Whilst both male and female principals are in agreement with regards to the importance of 'knowing the children' there is statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) on a number of items: 'establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff', 'establishing good parental/community relations', 'keeping up-to-date', and 'evaluating the work of the school'.

One may attest this response by viewing other differences between male and female principals in regard to the type of training programmes they identified as requiring training in (see Table 6.17). Differences, all of which are statistically significant, exist in five main areas: 'evaluation', 'managing relationships', 'staff morale', 'oral communication' and 'motivating skills'. 63% females, as against 42% males, requested training in 'evaluation' ( $p < .05$ ). 39% of female principals as against 17% of male principals requested more training in improving 'staff morale' ( $p < .001$ ). 37% of female principals, as against 15% of their male counterparts ( $p < .05$ ) identified the need for training in 'oral communication'.

Table 6.16: Principals most important tasks and duties by Sex

Tasks and duties	Male (n = 41) %	Female (n = 51) %
Having a clearly defined school policy	58	65
Building a team of competent teachers	58	63
Establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff	90	75
Establishing good parental/ community relations	85	63
Being seen as a good teacher	17	2
Keeping up-to-date of educational developments	42	75
Introducing new ideas	22	16
Doing routine office work	5	4
Knowing the children	81	84
Evaluating the work of the school	37	55

Table 6.17: Principals training needs by Sex

Training needs	Male (n = 41) %	Female (n = 51) %
Leadership	44	49
Planning	63	57
Evaluation	42	63
Managing pupils	39	35
Managing relationships	44	29
Self management	37	37
Communicating with Dept of Education officials	7	9
Communicating with parents	32	29
Staff appraisal and professional development	59	45
Maintaining staff morale	17	39
Pupil assessment	49	33
Managing resources	44	29
Personal professional development	22	33

On the other hand male principals expressed a greater need for training than their female counterparts in the following areas: 'managing relationships', 'managing resources', 'conflict resolution skills', and 'motivating skills'. 44% of male principals, as against 29% of female principals, requested training in 'managing relationships' and 'managing resources' respectively (both significant at the 0.05 level). At the same time 66% of male principals requested training in 'conflict resolution skills' as against 45% of female principals ( $p < .05$ ).

At the same time it is indicative that the response rates on most of the items are quasi identical with the highest level of response being directed to the same training needs - 'motivating skills' and 'team building' (see Table 6.18).

Table 6.18: Principals training needs (skills) by Sex

Skills	Male (n = 41) %	Female (n = 51) %
Verbal communication	15	37
Written communication	12	20
Counselling	61	57
Negotiating skills	56	47
Conflict-resolution skills	66	45
Motivating skills	93	75
Group-work skills	56	62
Team building	73	71
Delegating	49	57

Table 6.19 presents a summary of the highest ratings both male and female principals gave to various facets of their job.

The response to the way they perceived their role and how they spent their time is quasi identical. Minor differences can be observed in three facets of their job: males tended to give more importance to 'doing routine office work' (Male M = 2.41; Female M = 3.20) and 'looking after school buildings and grounds' (Male M = 4.66; Female M = 5.39). On the other hand, more female than male principals tended to give importance to 'developing school-based development programmes' (Female M = 5.47; Male M = 6.44). The results are to be found in Table 6.20. On the other hand, both male and female principals perceived the way they ought to spend their time in very similar ways (see Table 6.21).

Table 6.19: Highest ratings both Male and Female school principals give to various facets of their job (i.e. summary of Tables: 6.15 to 6.18)

Male	Female
<b>Major job functions</b>	
• desk work (71%)	• discussions with parents (70%)
• discussions with parents (61%)	• desk work (69%)
<b>Main tasks and duties</b>	
• establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff (90%)	• knowing the children (84%)
• establishing good parental/community relations (85%)	• establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff (75%)
• knowing the children (81%)	• keeping up-to-date (75%)
<b>Training needs</b>	
• Motivating skills (93%)	• Motivating skills (75%)
• Team building (73%)	• Team building (71%)
• Conflict resolution skills (66%)	• Evaluation (63%)
• Planning (63%)	• Group work skills (62%)

**Table 6.20 Job Priorities: How principals perceive their job - mean differences according to different demographic characteristics**

Tasks	Demographic characteristics							
	Sex		Age		Experience		Type of School	
	Male	Female	34-54yrs	55-70yrs	1-5yrs	6-30yrs	State	Church/Private
Discussions with parents	3.29	3.35	3.37	3.27	3.49	3.18	3.18	3.59
Discussions with teachers	3.71	3.25	3.71	3.25	3.63	3.31	4.07	2.31
Observe classroom teaching	4.83	5.22	4.83	5.22	4.98	5.10	5.47	4.25
Run school-based development programmes	6.44	5.47	6.44	5.47	5.88	5.92	6.52	4.75
Provide guidance to children	4.73	4.57	4.73	4.57	4.84	4.47	5.03	3.91
Do routine office work	2.41	3.20	2.41	3.20	2.60	3.06	1.92	4.59
Organise extra-curricular acts.	5.93	5.45	5.93	5.45	5.47	5.84	5.65	5.69
Look after buildings and grounds	4.66	5.39	4.66	5.39	5.12	5.02	4.08	6.91

The response to the way they perceived their role and how they spent their time is quasi identical. Minor differences can be observed in three facets of their job: males tended to give more importance to ‘doing routine office work’ (Male M = 2.41; Female M = 3.20) and ‘looking after school buildings and grounds’ (Male M = 4.66; Female M = 5.39). On the other hand, more female than male principals tended to give importance to ‘developing school-based development programmes’ (Female M = 5.47; Male M = 6.44). The results are to be found in Table 6.20. On the other hand, both male and female principals perceived the way they ought to spend their time in very similar ways (see Table 6.21).

The response given to the level of job satisfaction on various facets of work (see Table 6.22) supports this explanation and counters the previous one.

**Table 6.21 Job Priorities: How principals perceive they ought to spend their time mean differences according to different demographic characteristics**

Tasks	Demographic characteristics							
	Sex		Age		Experience		Type of School	
	Male	Female	34-54 yrs	55-70yrs	1-5yrs	6-30yrs	State	Church/Private
Discussions with parents	3.63	3.98	3.94	3.68	3.93	3.73	3.92	3.66
Discussions with teachers	2.27	2.35	2.41	2.20	2.23	2.39	2.35	2.25
Observe classroom teaching	2.63	3.16	3.08	2.73	2.70	3.12	2.38	3.94
Run school-based development programmes	3.15	2.78	2.65	3.32	2.49	3.35	2.92	3.00
Provide guidance to children	4.07	3.51	3.82	3.68	4.44	3.16	4.10	3.13
Do routine office work	6.80	6.71	6.84	6.63	6.88	6.63	6.98	6.31
Organise extra-curricular acts.	5.73	5.86	5.69	5.95	5.74	5.86	5.67	6.06
Look after buildings and grounds	7.63	7.61	7.49	7.78	7.56	7.67	7.67	7.53

Table 6.22 looks into sex differences on the level of job satisfaction on various facets of work. With regards to specific facets, responses of both male and female principals exceeded the four-point scale mean of 2.0 with the highest mean recorded being 3.81 and the lowest mean recorded being 1.59. Overall female principals expressed a higher level of job satisfaction than male principals on most facets with female principals scoring highest on eleven facets and male principals on six facets. Female principals reported moderate to high levels of job satisfaction on fifteen facets, whilst male principals reported moderate to high levels of satisfaction on eleven facets. Female and male principals expressed a similar level of job satisfaction on:

two Occupation Related facets: 'salary', 'hours of work',

one Role Related facet: 'level of authority', and

five Human Relations facets: 'relationships with teachers', 'attitudes of teachers', 'morale of staff', 'relationships with pupils', and 'sense of accomplishment'.

Female principals scored the highest level of job satisfaction on:  
one Occupation Related facet: 'hours of work' (M = 3.31), and  
two Human Relations facets: 'relationships with teachers' (M = 3.59), 'relationships with pupils' (M = 3.43).

They scored the lowest level of satisfaction on:  
one Occupation related facet: 'availability of clerical staff' (M = 2.37), and  
one Role Related facet: 'involvement in policy making' (M = 2.00)

Whereas male principals scored the highest level of satisfaction on:  
one Occupation related facet: 'hours of work' (M = 3.34), and  
three Human Relations facets: 'relationships with teachers' (M = 3.81), 'relationships with pupils' (M = 3.66), and 'morale of staff' (M = 3.34).

Lowest level of satisfaction was recorded on:  
two Occupation Related facets: 'availability of clerical staff' (M = 1.59) and 'availability of custodial services' (M = 2.32).

Female principals reported significantly higher levels of job satisfaction on the following facets: 'availability of clerical staff' ( $p < .002$ ); 'freedom to develop educational programme' ( $p < .001$ ), 'involvement in policy making' ( $p < .025$ ), 'recognition by others' ( $p < .03$ ) and 'system of promoting principals' ( $p < .03$ ).

From these responses one can conclude that both male and female principals' major job functions are taken up by 'desk work' and 'discussions with parents'. At the same time male and female principals expressed an interest in establishing closer relations with their staff so that they could discuss school matters. They also expressed the need for further training in 'motivating skills' and 'team building' which are crucial if different approaches to school life are to be considered. This argument would hold given the fact that at present there is little to no contact between teachers and principals on educational matters.

Table 6.22 Gender differences on the level of job satisfaction on various facets of work

Job facets	Mean <sup>+</sup>		difference bet means	t-value <sup>++</sup> (df = 90)	p-value
	Males (n=41)	Females (n=51)			
Salary	2.51 (0.71)	2.78 (0.9)	-0.27	-1.58	< .12(NS)
Hours of work	3.34 (0.76)	3.31 (0.71)	0.03	0.18	< .86(NS)
Physical conditions of work	2.41 (1.12)	2.80 (1.15)	-0.39	-1.63	< .11(NS)
Shortage of clerical staff	1.59 (1.07)	2.37 (1.22)	-0.78	-3.25	< .002
Shortage of custodial services	2.32 (1.11)	2.73 (1.10)	0.41	-1.77	< .08(NS)
Relationships with teachers	3.81 (0.40)	3.59 (0.64)	0.22	1.89	< .07(NS)
Attitudes of teachers	2.95 (0.63)	3.00 (0.63)	-0.05	-0.37	< .72(NS)
Morale of staff	3.34 (0.53)	3.24 (0.71)	0.10	0.80	< .43(NS)
Relationships with pupils	3.66 (0.66)	3.43 (0.64)	0.23	1.67	< .10(NS)
Level of authority associated with post	3.32 (0.57)	3.10 (0.92)	0.22	1.33	< .19(NS)
Contact with Dept of Ed officials	2.56 (0.84)	2.84 (0.86)	-0.28	-1.58	< .12(NS)
Contact with Support Services	2.34 (1.06)	2.57 (1.15)	-0.23	-0.97	< .34(NS)
Freedom to develop school programme	2.44 (1.07)	3.14 (0.94)	-0.70	-3.33	< .001
Involvement in policy making	1.59 (0.84)	2.00 (0.90)	-0.41	-2.27	< .025
Sense of accomplishment	3.20 (0.60)	3.12 (0.62)	0.08	0.60	< .55(NS)
Recognition	2.68 (1.08)	3.10 (0.67)	0.42	-2.25	< .03
Promotion system	2.56 (1.12)	3.25 (1.61)	-0.69	-2.34	< .03

<sup>+</sup> 1, highly dissatisfied; 4, highly satisfied

<sup>++</sup> two-tailed test

• Age (i.e. 34-54 year olds: 51 respondents; 55-70 year olds: 41 respondents)

Few differences exist between the way the 'younger' (34-54 year olds) and the 'older' (55-70 year olds) principals perceived their role. The two major job functions reported by both categories were 'desk work' and 'discussions with parents'. As Table 6.23 brings out they

stand far apart from the other tasks. What is interesting but difficult to explain is that there is statistical variance ( $p < .05$ ) on the task 'observing classroom teaching' with 31% of younger principals, as against 17% of the older principals, seeing it as an important task. On the other hand there was statistical variance between the older and younger principals on 'organising activities' ( $p < .05$ ).

Table 6.23: Principals major job functions by Age

Tasks	Principals 34-54 yr olds (n = 51) %	Principals 54-70 yr olds (n = 41) %
Desk work	69	71
Discussions with parents	67	66
Discussions with children	20	15
Discussions with staff	33	29
Discipline	16	24
Observing classroom teaching	31	17
Organising activities	25	37
Staff appraisal and professional development	14	12
Organising, planning and evaluating curricula	22	24

Younger and older principals were also practically in agreement with regards to the tasks and duties they considered as most important for the principalship (see Table 6.24). Both categories considered the following tasks as the three most important: 'knowing the children', 'establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff', and 'establishing good parental/ community relations'. It is also worth noting that 'doing routine office work' was given extremely low ratings by both categories, which goes a long way to highlight their discontentment towards a role which, especially in the state sector, is dominated by desk work (cf Table 6.2). 'Being seen as a good teacher' was also not regarded as an important task.



Table 6.24: Principals most important tasks and duties by Age

Tasks and duties	Principals 34-54 yr olds (n = 51) %	Principals 55-70 yr olds (n = 41) %
Having a clearly defined school policy	59	66
Building a team of competent teachers	67	54
Establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff	80	83
Establishing good parental/ community relations	75	71
Being seen as a good teacher	4	15
Keeping up-to-date of educational developments	61	59
Introducing new ideas	14	24
Doing routine office work	6	2
Knowing the children	80	85
Evaluating the work of the school	51	42

Younger and older principals saw the need for further training in the following areas: 'motivating skills' 'team building', and 'evaluation' by the younger principals, and 'motivating skills', 'team building' and 'counselling' by the older principals. As can be seen from Table 6.25 and Table 6.26 respectively few other items went beyond the 50 percent mark. Variance was identified between age and 'evaluation' ( $p < .05$ ). 67% of the younger principals expressed the need for training in this area as against 37% of the older principals. 'Managing resources' was also identified by the younger principals as an important area for training ( $p < .05$ ). And so was 'conflict resolution' ( $p < .05$ ).

Table 6.25: Principals training needs by Age

Training needs	Principals 34-54 yr olds (n = 51) %	Principals 55-70 yr olds (n = 41) %
Leadership	41	54
Planning	63	56
Evaluation	67	37
Managing pupils	33	42
Managing relationships	39	32
Self management	35	39
Communicating with Dept of Education officials	8	7
Communicating with parents	24	39
Staff appraisal and professional development	53	49
Maintaining staff morale	33	24
Pupil assessment	35	46
Managing resources	43	27
Personal professional development	33	29

Table 6.26: Principals training needs (skills) by Age

Skills	Principals 34-54 yr olds (n = 51)	Principals 55-70 yr olds (n = 41)
	%	%
Verbal communication	27	27
Written communication	14	20
Counselling	55	63
Negotiating skills	51	51
Conflict-resolution skills	65	42
Motivating skills	84	81
Group-work skills	61	59
Team building	69	76
Delegating	55	51

So, whilst both younger and older principals tended to view their role in similar ways (see Tables 6.23 and 6.24) they tended to view their training/developmental needs in somewhat different ways. The major differences being in the way they viewed 'evaluation'.

Table 6.27 represents a summary of the highest ratings both younger and older principals gave to various facets of their job.

Table 6.27: Highest ratings both 'younger' and 'older' school principals gave to various facets of their job (i.e. summary of Tables: 6.23 to 6.26)

Principals 34-54 yr olds (n = 51)	Principals 55-70 yr olds (n = 41)
<b>Major job functions</b>	
• desk work (69%)	• desk work (71%)
• discussions with parents (67%)	• discussions with parents (66%)
<b>Main tasks and duties</b>	
• establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff (80%)	• knowing the children (85%)
• knowing the children (80%)	• establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff (83%)
• establishing good parental/community relations (85%)	• establishing good parental/community relations (71%)
<b>Training needs</b>	
• Motivating skills (84%)	• Motivating skills (81%)
• Team building (69%)	• Team building (76%)
• Evaluation (67%)	• Counselling (63%)
• Conflict resolution skills (65%)	• Group work skills (59%)

Hardly any differences exist between the way the younger and older principals perceived their role and how they actually spent their time. Table 6.20 highlights the means for the way principals reported spending their time. The older principals tended to give higher ratings (although below the eight-point scale mean of 4.0) to 'observe classroom teaching' than the younger principals. On the other hand both older and younger principals perceived the way they ought to spend their time in very similar ways (refer to Table 6.21). The main difference being on the higher rating that the younger principals gave to 'running school-based development programmes'.

Table 6.28 sets out the differences between the younger and older principals on the level of job satisfaction on various facets of work. With regards to specific facets, respondents of both categories exceeded the four-point scale mean of 2.0 with the highest mean recorded being 3.78 and the lowest mean recorded being 1.80. The major finding from this table is that there are no differences of statistical significance in the level of job satisfaction expressed by the respondents in the two categories.

The younger principals expressed a higher level of satisfaction on nine facets and the older principals on eight facets. The younger principals reported moderate to higher levels of job satisfaction on fifteen facets whilst the older principals reported moderate to high levels of job satisfaction on fourteen facets. All principals expressed a similar level of job satisfaction on practically all facets.

The younger principals scored the highest level of job satisfaction on:  
one Occupation related facet: 'hours of work' (M = 3.39), and  
two Human Relations facets: 'relationships with teachers' (M = 3.61), 'relationships with pupils' (M = 3.55).

They scored the lowest level of satisfaction on:  
one Occupation Related facet: 'availability of clerical staff' (M = 2.12), and  
one Role-Related facet: 'involvement in policy making' (M = 1.82).

The older principals expressed the highest level of job satisfaction on:

one Occupation Related facet: 'hours of work' (M = 3.24),  
three Human Relations facets: 'relationships with teachers' (M = 3.78), 'relationships with pupils' (M = 3.55), and 'morale of staff' (M = 3.24).

They scored the lowest level of satisfaction on:

one Occupation Related facet 'availability of clerical staff' (M = 1.90), and  
two Role Related facets: 'involvement in policy making' (M = 1.80), and 'contact with support services' (M = 2.39).

Given the context in which educational development has taken place in Malta, with a system based on age (i.e. seniority) one would have expected to see particular differences between the two age categories. This, however, is not evident in this study, similarly experienced in another local study by Borg (1992). The major differences which stand out are in the way younger and older principals viewed their training needs; the younger being more orientated towards those areas essential for school development.

- *Experience (i.e. 1-5 years experience: 43 respondents; 6-30 years experience: 49 respondents)*

Both categories saw the two major job functions taking up most of their time as being 'desk work' and 'discussions with parents'. As can be seen from Table 6.29 these two functions are far apart from the other functions, all of which are below the 50 percent mark. The two categories also shared similar responses to the tasks and duties they saw as important for the principalship (see Table 6.30). The principals with few years experience identified the following four main items: 'establishing good personal relationships with teaching and ancillary staff' (86%), 'knowing the children' (79%), 'having a clearly defined school policy' (70%), and 'establishing good parental/community relations' (67%). On the other hand the more experienced principals saw the following tasks as most important behind the principalship: 'knowing the children' (86%), 'establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff' (78%), 'establishing good parental/community relations' (78%), and 'keeping up-to-date' (69%).

Table 6.28 Age differences on the level of job satisfaction on various facets of work

Job facets	Mean <sup>+</sup>		difference bet means	t-value <sup>++</sup> (df = 90)	p-value
	Principals 34-54yrs (n=51)	Principals 55-70yrs (n=41)			
Salary	2.61 (0.90)	2.73 (0.74)	-0.12	-0.71	< .50(NS)
Hours of work	3.39 (0.70)	3.24 (0.77)	0.15	0.97	< .34(NS)
Physical conditions of work	2.57 (1.14)	2.71 (1.17)	-0.14	-0.58	< .57(NS)
Availability of clerical staff	2.12 (1.07)	1.90 (1.22)	-0.22	-0.84	< .41(NS)
Availability of custodial services	2.55 (1.12)	2.54 (1.12)	0.01	0.05	< .96(NS)
Relationships with teachers	3.61 (0.53)	3.78 (0.57)	-0.17	-1.50	< .14(NS)
Attitudes of teachers	2.96 (0.60)	3.00 (0.67)	-0.04	-0.30	< .77(NS)
Morale of staff	3.31 (0.58)	3.24 (0.70)	0.07	-0.52	< .61(NS)
Relationships with pupils	3.55 (0.50)	3.51 (0.81)	0.04	0.27	< .80(NS)
Level of authority associated with post	3.18 (0.71)	3.22 (0.88)	-0.04	-0.26	< .80(NS)
Contact with Dept of Ed officials	2.69 (0.86)	2.76 (0.86)	-0.07	-0.39	< .70(NS)
Contact with Support Services	2.53 (1.17)	2.39 (1.05)	0.14	-0.59	< .56(NS)
Freedom to develop school programme	2.88 (1.01)	2.76 (1.11)	-0.12	0.57	< .57(NS)
Involvement in policy making	1.82 (0.84)	1.80 (0.95)	0.02	0.10	< .92(NS)
Sense of accomplishment	3.14 (0.63)	3.17 (0.59)	-0.03	-0.26	< .80(NS)
Recognition	3.04 (0.77)	2.76 (1.02)	0.28	1.51	< .14(NS)
Promotion system	2.90 (1.43)	3.00 (1.48)	-0.1	-0.32	<.75(NS)

+ 1, highly dissatisfied; 4, highly satisfied

++ two-tailed test

Table 6.29: Principals major job functions by Experience

Tasks	Principals 1-5 yrs exp (n = 43) %	Principals 6-30 yrs exp (n = 49) %
Desk work	74	65
Discussions with parents	65	67
Discussions with children	14	20
Discussions with staff	21	41
Discipline	21	18
Observing classroom teaching	28	22
Organising activities	37	25
Staff appraisal and professional development	14	12
Organising, planning and evaluating curricula	23	22

Principals shared similar responses on most items with variance of statistical significance being identified on two items: 'having a clearly defined school policy' where the majority of the less experienced principals (70%) saw it as an important task, as against 55% of the more experienced principals ( $p < .05$ ). On the other hand, and to some extent, surprisingly so, was the response expressed to 'keeping up-to-date'. Whilst 69% of the more experienced principals saw this as an important task, only 49% of the less experienced principals saw the need for keeping up-to-date ( $p < .05$ ).

Table 6.30: Principals most important tasks and duties by Experience

Tasks and duties	Principals 1-5 yrs exp (n = 43) %	Principals 6-30 yrs exp (n = 49) %
Having a clearly defined school policy	70	55
Building a team of competent teachers	63	59
Establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff	86	78
Establishing good parental/ community relations	67	78
Being seen as a good teacher	9	8
Keeping up-to-date of educational developments	49	69
Introducing new ideas	19	18
Doing routine office work	7	2
Knowing the children	79	86
Evaluating the work of the school	51	43

Both categories shared quite similar opinions on the type of training they require (see Table 6.31 and 6.32). Whilst the less experienced principals highlighted the importance of 'motivation skills' (88%), 'team building' (77%), and 'planning' (65%), the more experienced principals saw the importance of 'motivation skills' (78%), 'team building' (67%) and 'group work skills' (63%). A few differences can be observed in a number of areas. On the one hand the less experienced principals stated the need for training in 'managing resources' (51%) as against 22% of the more experienced principals ( $p < .05$ ), and 'conflict resolution skills' (61%) as against 49%. Whereas the more experienced principals called for training in how to 'manage pupils' - 45% compared to the 28% of the less experienced principals. This difference may be attributed to the inability of the more experienced principals to adapt to demands and pressures of a society which has changed over the years. The type of situations, problems, etc., that children are facing at home and outside influence the way they react at school. On their part teachers and principals are not being adequately trained or supported to tackle such problems.

Significantly low on training needs requirements is 'communication with the Department of Education' (9% for the less experienced; 6% for the more experienced).

Table 6.31: Principals training needs by Experience

Training needs	Principals 1-5 yrs exp (n = 43) %	Principals 6-30 yrs exp (n = 49) %
Leadership	47	47
Planning	65	55
Evaluation	49	47
Managing pupils	28	45
Managing relationships	35	37
Self management	30	43
Communicating with Dept of Education officials	9	6
Communicating with parents	28	33
Staff appraisal and professional development	51	51
Maintaining staff morale	26	33
Pupil assessment	47	35
Managing resources	51	22
Personal professional development	30	33

Table 6.32: Principals training needs (skills) by Experience

Skills	Principals 1-5 yrs exp (n = 43) %	Principals 6-30 yrs exp (n = 49) %
Verbal communication	23	31
Written communication	16	16
Counselling	51	65
Negotiating skills	58	45
Conflict-resolution skills	61	49
Motivating skills	88	78
Group-work skills	56	63
Team building	77	67
Delegating	58	49

Table 6.33 represents a summary of the highest ratings both less experienced and more experienced principals gave to various facets of their job.

Table 6.33: Highest ratings both the 'less experienced' and the 'more experienced' school principals gave to various facets of their job (i.e. summary of Tables: 6.23 to 6.26)

Principals 1-5 yrs exp (n = 43)	Principals 6-30 yrs exp (n = 49)
<b>Major job functions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• desk work (74%)</li> <li>• discussions with parents (65%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discussions with parents (67%)</li> <li>• desk work (65%)</li> </ul>
<b>Main tasks and duties</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff (86%)</li> <li>• knowing the children (79%)</li> <li>• having a clearly defined school policy (70%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowing the children (86%)</li> <li>• establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff (78%)</li> <li>• establishing good parental/community relations (78%)</li> </ul>
<b>Training needs</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivating skills (88%)</li> <li>• Team building (77%)</li> <li>• Planning (65%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivating skills (78%)</li> <li>• Team building (67%)</li> <li>• Group work skills (63%)</li> </ul>

Table 6.34 reports the difference between the less experienced and the more experienced principals on the level of job satisfaction on various facets of work. With regards to specific facets, respondents of both categories exceeded the four-point scale mean of 2.0 with the highest mean recorded being 3.78 and the lowest mean recorded being 1.78. Overall the more



experienced principals expressed a higher level of job satisfaction than the less experienced principals on most facets, with the more experienced scoring the highest on fifteen facets and the less experienced principals scoring highest on only one facet. The experienced principals reported moderate to high levels of satisfaction on sixteen facets, whilst the lesser experienced principals expressed moderate to high levels of satisfaction on fifteen facets. Both groups expressed dissatisfaction on the same facet 'involvement in policy making', whilst the less experienced principals also expressed dissatisfaction on the facet 'availability of clerical staff'.

Both categories expressed a similar level of job satisfaction on:

four Occupation related facets: 'salary', 'physical conditions of work', 'shortage of custodial services', and 'promotion system';

five Role related facets: 'level of authority associated with post', 'contact with Dept of Ed officials', 'contact with Support Services', 'freedom to develop school programme', and 'involvement in policy making'.

three Human Relations facets: 'relationships with teachers', 'attitudes of teachers', and 'morale of staff'.

The less experienced principals expressed the highest level of job satisfaction on:

one Occupation related facet: 'hours of work' (M= 3.14),

one Role related facet: 'level of authority associated with post' (M= 3.14), and

two Human Relations facets: 'relationship with teachers' (M= 3.58), 'relationship with pupils' (M= 3.39).

They scored the lowest on:

one Occupation related facet: 'availability of clerical staff' (M= 1.79), and

one Role related facet: 'involvement in policy making' (M= 1.86).

Whereas principals with more experience scored the highest level of satisfaction on:

one Occupation related facet: 'hours of work' (M= 3.49), and

three Human Relations facets: 'relationships with teachers' (M= 3.78), 'relationships with pupils' (M= 3.65), and 'morale of staff' (M= 3.37).

Table 6.34 Differences on the level of job satisfaction on various facets of work measured on experience

Job facets	Mean <sup>+</sup>		difference bet means	t-value <sup>++</sup> (df = 90)	p-value
	Principals 1-5yrs (n = 43)	Principals 6-30yrs (n = 49)			
Salary	2.56 (0.91)	2.76 (0.75)	-0.2	-1.14	< .26(NS)
Hours of work	3.14 (0.83)	3.49 (0.58)	-0.35	-2.36	< .02
Physical conditions of work	2.53 (1.18)	2.71 (1.12)	-0.18	-0.75	< .46(NS)
Shortage of clerical staff	1.79 (1.17)	2.22 (1.23)	-0.43	-1.73	< .09(NS)
Shortage of custodial services	2.65 (1.11)	2.45 (1.12)	0.2	0.87	< .39(NS)
Relationships with teachers	3.58 (0.63)	3.78 (0.47)	-0.2	-1.70	< .10(NS)
Attitudes of teachers	2.93 (0.59)	3.02 (0.66)	-0.09	-0.68	< .50(NS)
Morale of staff	3.19 (0.55)	3.37 (0.70)	-0.18	-1.37	< .18(NS)
Relationships with pupils	3.39 (0.66)	3.65 (0.63)	-0.26	-1.91	< .80(NS)
Level of authority associated. with post	3.14 (0.77)	3.25 (0.80)	-0.11	-0.26	< .06(NS)
Contact with Dept of Ed officials	2.60 (0.93)	2.82 (0.78)	-0.22	-1.19	< .24(NS)
Contact with Support Services	2.44 (1.26)	2.49 (0.98)	-0.05	-0.20	< .84(NS)
Freedom to develop school programme	2.77 (1.15)	2.88 (0.97)	-0.11	-0.50	< .62(NS)
Involvement in policy making	1.86 (1.04)	1.78 (0.74)	0.08	0.46	< .65(NS)
Sense of accomplishment	2.98 (0.64)	3.31 (0.55)	-0.33	-2.67	< .01
Recognition	2.79 (0.77)	3.02 (1.02)	-0.23	-1.23	< .23(NS)
Promotion system	2.88 (1.35)	3.00 (1.54)	-0.19	-0.38	< .71(NS)

<sup>+</sup> 1, highly dissatisfied; 4, highly satisfied

<sup>++</sup> two-tailed test

Lowest level of satisfaction was recorded on:

one Occupation related facet: 'availability of clerical staff' (M= 2.22), and

one Role related facet: 'involvement in policy making' (M= 1.78).

Principals with more experience reported significantly higher levels of job satisfaction on the following two facets: 'sense of accomplishment' ( $p < .01$ ) and 'hours of work' ( $p < .02$ ). It is not easy to interpret or comment on these differences. Perhaps as principals get older and gain in experience they tend to achieve more results and see the fruits of their efforts. Or, with experience principals become less idealistic and set out goals which are more realistic to achieve and as a result their sense of accomplishment is greater. Both categories expressed a high level of similarity with the more experienced principals expressing a higher level of job satisfaction than the less experienced ones.

• *Type of School (i.e. State school principals: 60; Church/Private school principals: 32)*

Undoubtedly major differences can be observed between church/private school principals and state school principals, and so on quite a number of variables. The major job functions identified by state school principals were 'desk work' (83%) and 'discussions with parents' (68%). Whereas, with church/private school principals the major job functions were 'discussions with parents' (63%) and 'discussions with staff' (50%) (cf. Table 6.35). It is interesting to note that there is statistical variance on a number of items. More principals in church/private schools considered it more important to spend time 'discussing matters with staff' ( $p < .05$ ), and 'organising, planning and evaluating curricula' ( $p < .05$ ). On the other hand more state school principals considered it more important to do 'desk work' ( $p < .05$ ) and 'organising activities' ( $p < .05$ ). This supports previous results which highlighted that principals in the state sector do not spend time with their staff to discuss school matters unlike their church/private school counterparts.

Table 6.35: Principals major job functions by Type of School

Tasks	Principals State (n = 60) %	Principals Church/Private (n = 32) %
Desk work	83	43
Discussions with parents	68	62
Discussions with children	13	25
Discussions with staff	21	50
Discipline	20	18
Observing classroom teaching	23	28
Organising activities	38	15
Staff appraisal & professional development	13	12
Organising, planning & evaluating curricula	11	43

State school principals identified ‘establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff’ (88%), ‘knowing the child’ (85%), and ‘establishing good parental/ community relations’ (73%) as the main tasks/duties behind the principalship. Church/private school principals saw the need to keep up-to-date (84%), ‘knowing the children’ (78%) and ‘establishing good parental/ community relations’ (72%) as the main tasks/duties behind the principalship (see Table 6.36).

Here variance is significant on two items. Most principals in church/private schools considered it more important to spend time ‘keeping up-to-date’ ( $p < .05$ ) than state school principals ( $p < .05$ ). On the other hand more state school principals stated the need for ‘establishing good parental/community relations’ ( $p < .05$ ). If church/private school principals spend time discussing curriculum matters with their staff (Table 6.35) it is obvious that principals will need to keep up-to-date to improve classroom practice. On the other hand state school principals tend to devote more time addressing parental concerns. This can be explained due to the fact that they are mainly concerned with administrative and pastoral concerns as against curriculum ones.

Table 6.36: Principals most important tasks and duties by Type of School

Tasks and duties	Principals State (n = 60) %	Principals Church/Private (n = 32) %
Having a clearly defined school policy	58	69
Building a team of competent teachers	62	59
Establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff	88	69
Establishing good parental/ community relations	73	72
Being seen as a good teacher	12	3
Keeping up-to-date of educational developments	47	84
Introducing new ideas	17	22
Doing routine office work	0	0
Knowing the children	85	78
Evaluating the work of the school	48	44

There are also some differences between the way state and church/private school principals viewed training needs. State school principals identified the following main areas in which they would like training: ‘motivating skills’ (98%), ‘team building’ (78%), ‘negotiating skills’

(68%), 'conflict resolution skills' (65%), and 'planning' (65%). Whereas church/private school principals identified the following main areas: 'counselling' (72%), 'delegating' (66%), 'group work' (59%), and 'team building' (59%). As can be seen from Tables 6.37 and 6.38 respectively that, overall, state school principals identified more training requirements than their church/private counterparts.

Table 6.37: Principals training needs by Type of School

Training needs	Principals State (n = 60) %	Principals Church/Private (n = 32) %
Leadership	43	53
Planning	65	50
Evaluation	45	53
Managing pupils	27	56
Managing relationships	38	31
Self management	42	28
Communicating with Dept of Education officials	0	0
Communicating with parents	27	28
Staff appraisal and professional development	57	41
Maintaining staff morale	23	41
Pupil assessment	38	44
Managing resources	47	16
Personal professional development	38	19

Table 6.38: Principals training needs (skills) by Type of School

Skills	Principals State (n = 60) %	Principals Church/Private (n = 32) %
Verbal communication	15	50
Written communication	10	28
Counselling	52	72
Negotiating skills	68	19
Conflict-resolution skills	65	34
Motivating skills	98	56
Group-work skills	60	59
Team building	78	59
Delegating	47	66

Variance is significant between the way church/private and state school principals viewed training opportunities. More state school principals highlighted the need for training in the following areas: 'motivation' ( $p < .05$ ), 'team building' ( $p < .05$ ), 'negotiating skills' ( $p < .05$ ),

'managing resources' ( $p < .05$ ) and 'personal professional development' ( $p < .05$ ). Whereas, church/private school principals highlighted the following areas: 'delegating' ( $p < .05$ ), 'managing pupils' ( $p < .05$ ), 'verbal communication' ( $p < .05$ ), 'staff morale' ( $p < .05$ ) and 'counselling' ( $p < .05$ ).

This may be explained by the fact that state school principals spend limited time with their teachers to discuss matters, and with their desire to take on a more direct role with their staff realise the need for specific training in particular areas which deal directly with staff relations.

Table 6.39 represents a summary of the highest ratings both state and church/private school principals gave to various facets of their job.

Table 6.39: Highest ratings both State and Church/Private school principals gave to various facets of their job (i.e. summary of Tables: 6.35 to 6.38)

**State School Principals**

**Major job functions**

- desk work (83%)
- discussions with parents (68%)

**Main tasks and duties**

- establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff (88%)
- knowing the children (85%)
- establishing good parental/community relations (78%)

**Training needs**

- Planning (65%)
- Staff appraisal and professional development (57%)
- Motivating skills (98%)
- Team building (78%)

**Church/Private School Principals**

- discussions with parents (63%)
- discussions with staff (50%)

- keeping up-to-date (84%)
- knowing the children (86%)
- establishing good parental/ community relations (72%)

- Managing pupils (56%)
- Leadership (53%)
- Evaluation (53%)
- Counselling (72%)
- Delegating (66%)

Table 6.40 reports the difference between state school principals and church/private school principals on the level of job satisfaction on various job facets. With regards to specific facets, respondents of both categories exceeded the four-point scale mean of 2.0 with the highest mean recorded being 4.44 and the lowest mean recorded being 1.43. The major finding from this table is that there are major differences of statistical significance on the majority of facets. Overall, church/private school principals expressed a higher level of job satisfaction than their

state school counterparts on most facets with church/private school principals scoring the highest on fifteen facets and state school principals on two facets. Church/private school principals reported moderate to high levels of satisfaction on all seventeen facets, whilst state school principals expressed moderate to high levels of satisfaction on sixteen facets. State school principals expressed dissatisfaction on only one item: 'availability of clerical staff' (M= 1.43). Both categories expressed a similar level of job satisfaction on the following items:

one Occupation related facet: 'hours of work', and  
four Human Relations facets: 'relationships with teachers', 'attitudes of teachers', 'morale of staff', and 'relationships with pupils'.

Church/private school principals expressed the highest level of job satisfaction on:

one Occupation related facet: 'promotion system' (M= 4.44),  
two Role related facets: 'freedom to develop school programme' (M= 3.56), and 'level of authority associated with post' (M= 3.53), and  
one Human Relations facet: 'relationships with teachers' (M= 3.66).

They scored the lowest on:

one Role Related facet: 'involvement in policy making' (M= 2.22).

State school principals scored the highest level of satisfaction on:

one Occupation Related facet: 'hours of work' (M= 3.28), and  
two Human Relations facets: 'relationships with teachers' (M= 3.70), and 'relationships with pupils' (M= 3.58).

Lowest level of satisfaction was recorded on:

two Occupation Related facets: 'shortage of custodial services' (M= 2.18) and  
'availability of clerical staff' (M= 1.43), and  
one Role Related facet: 'involvement in policy making' (M= 1.60).

Table 6.40 Differences on the level of job satisfaction on various facets of work measured on type of school

Job facets	Mean <sup>+</sup>		difference bet means	t-value <sup>++</sup> (df = 90)	p-value
	State Principals (n = 60)	Church/Private Principals (n = 32)			
Salary	2.37 (0.76)	3.22 (0.66)	-0.85	-5.36	< .001
Hours of work	3.28 (0.67)	3.41 (0.84)	-0.12	-0.77	< .50(NS)
Physical conditions of work	2.18 (1.10)	3.47 (0.67)	-1.29	-6.04	< .001
Shortage of clerical staff	1.43 (0.95)	3.13 (0.83)	-1.7	-8.51	< .001
Shortage of custodial services	2.18 (1.13)	3.22 (0.71)	-1.04	-4.72	< .001
Relationships with teachers	3.70 (0.56)	3.66 (0.55)	0.04	0.36	< .72(NS)
Attitudes of teachers	2.92 (0.62)	3.10 (0.64)	-0.18	-1.29	< .20(NS)
Morale of staff	3.20 (0.61)	3.44 (0.67)	-0.24	-1.73	< .09(NS)
Relationships with pupils	3.58 (0.65)	3.44 (0.67)	0.14	1.02	< .35(NS)
Level of authority assoc. with post	3.02 (0.85)	3.53 (0.51)	-0.51	-3.12	< .01
Contact with Dept of Ed officials	2.55 (0.81)	3.03 (0.86)	-0.48	-2.65	< .01
Contact with Support Services	2.13 (1.02)	3.09 (1.03)	-0.96	-4.30	< .001
Freedom to develop school prog.	2.43 (0.96)	3.56 (0.80)	-1.13	-5.67	< .001
Involvement in policy making	1.60 (0.85)	2.22 (0.83)	0.62	-3.36	< .001
Sense of accomplishment	3.05 (0.65)	3.34 (0.48)	-0.29	-2.25	< .03
Recognition	2.68 (0.97)	3.34 (0.55)	-0.66	-3.57	< .001
Promotion system	2.15 (0.82)	4.44 (1.16)	-2.29	-10.98	< .001

<sup>+</sup> 1, highly dissatisfied; 4, highly satisfied

<sup>++</sup> two-tailed test

Church/private school principals report significantly higher levels of job satisfaction on:  
 six Occupation Related facets: 'salary' (p <.001), 'physical conditions of work' (p <.001),  
 'availability of clerical staff' (p <.001), 'availability of custodial services' (p <.001),



'recognition' ( $p < .001$ ), 'promotion system' ( $p < .001$ ), five Role Related facets: 'level of authority associated with post' ( $p < .01$ ), 'contact with Dept of Ed officials' ( $p < .01$ ), 'contact with Support Services' ( $p < .001$ ), 'freedom to develop school programme' ( $p < .001$ ), and 'involvement in policy making' ( $p < .001$ ), and one Human Relations facet: 'sense of accomplishment' ( $p < .03$ ).

The response that church/private school principals expressed higher levels of job satisfaction on 'contact with Dept of Ed officials', 'contact with Support Services', 'freedom to develop school programme', and 'involvement in policy making' can be mainly attributed to the fact that they have, to a large extent, all the freedom to determine their school programme and the contact or lack of it with central authorities does not effect their development. It is evidently clear that church/private school principals 'believe' in their occupation/role as principal more strongly than state school ones. In fact the former express significantly higher levels of satisfaction on three important occupation/role factors, mainly: 'recognition', 'sense of accomplishment', and 'level of authority associated with post'. Again, this response highlights the sense of powerlessness state school principals feel in their role as principals. It is also obvious that differences cut across the three job facets identified and used throughout this study, mainly Occupation Related matters, Role Related matters and Human Relations matters. Therefore, any work to improve the level of job satisfaction of state school principals will have to take into account all areas relevant to the principal's role.

#### **6.5.7 Relationship between the main job functions behind the principalship and other tasks/duties and training needs**

The association between the job functions behind the principalship and other job functions was investigated using the rank ordering technique. The nature of the data was such that it did not allow for the use of the Pearson's product-moment correlation technique (since most cases were coded 0 or 1). However, since most of the questions requested rank ordering the use of Spearman's rank ordering technique was possible. It is to be stated that the correlations need to be considered with great caution since rank ordering was in most cases limited to 1 to 5 and in one case 1 to 3.

'Discussions with staff', 'Observing classroom teaching', 'Organising activities', 'discipline'

and 'staff appraisal and professional development' were five of the main tasks with high levels of correlation with other items. Table 6.41 shows that these five tasks behind the principalship correlated with items relating to tasks and duties behind the principalship and training needs for principals.

'Discussions with staff' correlated positively with the task 'having a clearly defined school policy' and the following training needs: 'managing relationships', 'managing resources', 'counselling', 'negotiating skills', and 'group work skills'.

'Observing classroom teaching' was positively correlated with the following training needs: 'leadership', 'planning', 'managing relationships', 'personal professional development', and 'counselling'.

On the other hand, 'organising activities' was positively correlated to the following tasks: 'being seen as a good teacher', 'introducing new ideas' and 'knowing the children'. It was also correlated positively with the training needs 'pupil assessment', 'negotiating skills' and 'conflict resolution skills', and negatively with 'counselling'.

'Staff appraisal and professional development' was positively correlated to two training needs/skills: 'planning' and 'written communication'; and negatively correlated with the duty 'knowing the children'.

Finally 'discipline' was negatively correlated to 'introducing new ideas', 'staff appraisal and professional development' and 'team building'.

The rank order correlations are indicative in that they tend to highlight a principalship somewhat different from the existing one. Those principals who saw 'discussions with staff' as an essential task behind the principalship were the ones who saw the need to have a clearly defined school policy, who stressed the importance of managing relationships. Those who highlighted the important task of 'organising activities' saw this as an opportunity to be seen as a good teacher, as one who introduced new ideas, and was therefore able to assess the pupil and know the child better. On the other hand 'discipline' was negatively correlated to 'introducing new ideas', 'staff appraisal and professional development' and 'team building'.

Although discipline did not figure out as a function taking up most of the principals' time (refer to Table 6.2) the results tend to highlight that when time is spent on disciplinary problems principals find it difficult to introduce new ideas and spend time with their staff (i.e. conduct staff appraisal and professional development and team building).

Table 6.41: Relationship between the main job functions behind the principalship and other tasks/duties and training needs: correlation for the whole sample

Job functions	Tasks/ duties	Training needs
Desk work		communication with DoEd 0.2750 * personal professional development 0.3295 *
Discussions with parents	Evaluating work of school - 0.3122 *	Self-management 0.2893 * Counselling - 0.3215 *
Discussions with children	Building a team of competent teachers - 0.2765 *	
Discussions with staff	Having a clearly defined school policy 0.2766 *	Managing relations 0.3025 * Managing resources 0.3180 * Counselling 0.3728 ** Negotiating skills - 0.2754 * Group work skills 0.2946 *
Discipline	Introducing new ideas - 0.3905 **	Staff appraisal & prof development - 0.2905 * Team building - 0.3359 *
Observing classroom teaching		leadership 0.3749 ** planning 0.3339 * managing relations 0.2989 * personal professional development 0.3825 ** counselling 0.4269 **

Organising activities	being seen as a good teacher	pupil assessment
	0.3789 **	0.3695 **
	introducing new ideas	counselling
	0.2817 *	- 0.3384 **
	knowing the children	negotiating skills
	0.4860 **	0.4148 **
		conflict resolution skills
		0.3452 **
Staff appraisal & prof development	knowing the children	planning
	- 0.2804 *	0.3532 **
		written communication
		0.3657 **
Organising , planning & evaluating the curriculum		counselling
		0.2675 *

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\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .001$  (two-tailed)

In order to study the level of relationship between the different facets of the principal's work a chi-square test for two independent variables was undertaken. Table 6.42 sums up the responses given to the level of job satisfaction on the various facets of the principal's work for the four demographic characteristics studied. This table also helps to bring together the responses presented in Tables 6.19, 6.27, 6.33, and 6.39 respectively.

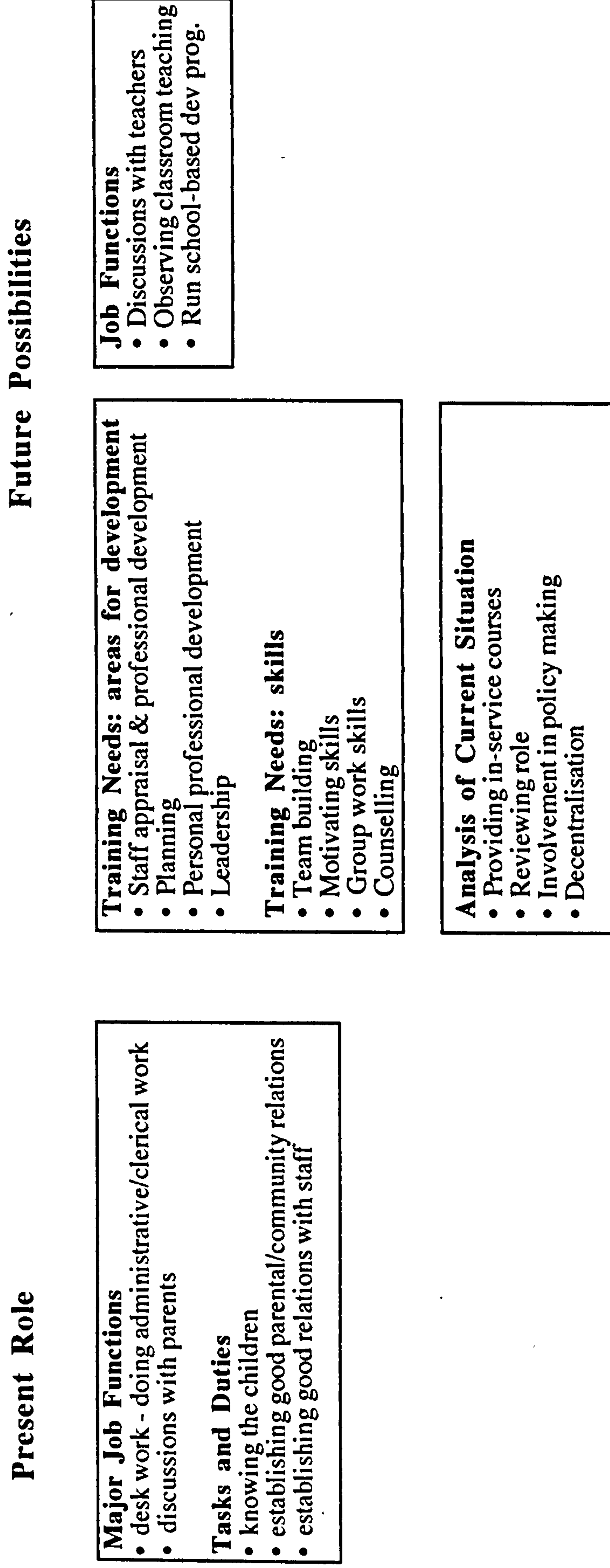
This table helps to reconfirm that there exists the strongest level of correlation between various job facets and type of school. This is followed to a lesser extent with gender.

The present study has shown the current situation Maltese primary school principals are in and the desired one. The overall picture is presented diagrammatically for easy reference and hopefully a clearer understanding of the current situation and the desired one (see Figure 6.1). This is followed by a brief discussion.

Table 6.42: Level of relationship between various job facets by demographic characteristics (N = 92)

Job Facet	Sex			Age			Experience			Type of School		
	x <sup>2</sup>	df	p =	x <sup>2</sup>	df	p =	x <sup>2</sup>	df	p =	x <sup>2</sup>	df	p =
Salary you receive	11.29	3	NS	3.33	3	NS	4.29	3	NS	27.63	3	.001
Hours of work/ holidays	3.83	2	NS	4.06	2	NS	4.43	2	NS	2.83	2	NS
Physical conditions you work in	3.43	3	NS	0.76	3	NS	1.80	3	NS	29.91	3	.001
Availability of clerical staff	15.17	3	.002	1.64	3	NS	3.81	3	NS	47.66	3	.001
Availability and quality of custodial services	4.06	3	NS	0.23	3	NS	0.92	3	NS	19.50	3	.002
Working relationships with teachers	3.62	3	NS	7.05	3	NS	5.31	3	NS	2.54	3	NS
Attitudes of teachers towards curr and staff development	0.17	3	NS	7.65	3	NS	4.73	3	NS	3.30	3	NS
Morale of the staff	1.83	3	NS	4.08	3	NS	9.62	3	NS	5.70	3	NS
Personal and social relationships with pupils	6.25	3	NS	8.14	3	NS	6.18	3	NS	3.71	3	NS
Level of authority associated with the post	5.13	3	NS	2.86	3	NS	1.56	3	NS	9.50	3	.02
Contact with Ed Dept officials	4.38	3	NS	3.14	3	NS	4.51	3	NS	23.13	3	.001
Contact with school support services	2.23	3	NS	3.64	3	NS	8.90	3	NS	20.54	3	.001
Freedom to develop the school programme according to the particular needs of the school	12.38	3	.001	1.16	3	NS	2.85	3	NS	34.85	3	.001
Your involvemet in policy making	6.11	3	NS	1.95	3	NS	10.60	3	NS	13.58	3	.001
Your sense of accomplishment as a principal	1.30	3	NS	5.15	3	NS	6.82	3	NS	6.10	3	NS
Recognition by others of your work	8.60	3	.03	8.87	3	NS	1.63	3	NS	11.51	3	.001
The existing system of promoting principals	14.33	4	.03	1.91	4	NS	2.35	4	NS	68.61	4	.001

Figure 6.1: Primary school principals' perception of role: an overall picture



## **6.6 Discussion**

The present study has brought out that principals believe that 'desk work' is the main job function taking up most of the Maltese primary school principals' time. This is followed by 'discussions with parents'. The Maltese principals stressed the human relations dimension of the principalship. They felt that their most important tasks/duties ought to centre round 'knowing the child', 'establishing good parental relationships' and 'establishing good relationships with staff'.

On the other hand, whilst 'doing routine office work' was identified as the main job function taking up most of their time, a characteristic particular to this study in the literature, though principals did not consider it to be an important task. Principals also highlighted the importance of 'having a school policy', of 'building a team of competent teachers', of 'evaluating the work of the school' as important tasks. This response brought out an important and missing dimension in the existing role of the principal. To a large extent the Maltese principal adheres to Hughes' (1985) 'chief executive' role, as against the 'leading professional' who emphasises the centrality of teaching and learning via his/her teaching commitment, the persistent interest in the children's work and development through attention to teachers' plans, practice, reflections and evaluations, amongst others, as suggested in the school effectiveness literature (e.g. Coulson, 1986, 1988; Mortimore et al., 1988; Johnson and Holdaway, 1990; Southworth, 1990).

Principals in the main expressed a desire for training in the following areas: 'planning', 'staff appraisal and professional development' and 'leadership'. This response expresses the principals' interest in taking more direct control over areas as yet outside their sphere of influence and at the same time in line with those cited for British primary school principals (Craig, 1982; McGill and Hendry, 1989).

Investigation into the type of skills principals identified as important for their role the two main skills which stood out were: 'team building' and 'motivating skills'. This is followed closely by 'counselling' and 'conflict resolution skills'. This result is comparable to that reported by Jones (1988).

The research findings have shown that state school principals in particular are calling for a critical evaluation of their existing role. The survey has highlighted that principals are mainly involved with low value tasks of an administrative/clerical nature, with a positive slant on some form of human interaction with parent, teachers and pupils. However, the results also highlighted the concern expressed by principals that the non-educational role tended to supersede any participation in curriculum matters and the classroom needs of pupils and teachers. Findings from the present study suggest that state school principals are sacrificing their prime role as educators to that of an administrative one. Some of the findings, especially those contrasting state school principals and church/private school principals, suggest that non-curricular pressures are squeezing out curricular activity. This emphasises the limited leadership focus that state school principals are currently restricted to. The research also indicates that the policy makers and planners have first and foremost largely failed to understand and accommodate the situational difficulties of principals, and secondly that principals, in both the state and church/private sector, have never been approached so as to participate in the reform process. This has led to a situation where principals in the state sector in particular are left inundated with paper work and limited opportunities to develop professionally so as to review current school practice. Whilst the evidence is not conclusive, it does suggest that policy makers are trying to retain the status quo in state schools by limiting the span of power and control of the principal. Evidence from this survey has shown that relationships are strained and may deteriorate further unless the educational authorities take positive steps to redress the situation. Much will depend on the willingness of central authorities to appreciate the central role that principals can play in improving the quality of education being provided.

The training needs identified by principals are ones which seem to express a desire to foster a strong team spirit, team commitment and promote staff morale. This desire to explore particular areas of management, and in particular, collaborative management, raises important questions and implications regarding the very culture which seems to embrace current school life. The researcher wonders how far principals understand the implications of a decentralised system, which they desire, based on a participatory and collaborative model. Such a model implies a management focus on the curriculum with a strong emphasis on curriculum matters and the classroom needs of pupils - that is addressing issues, roles and responsibilities which



currently are outside the domain of state school principals.

In line with Knutton and Mycroft (1986) and Borg (1992) the present study attests to the relatively high level of job satisfaction among school principals. The highest level of job satisfaction was registered on two human relations facets: 'working relationships with teachers' and 'personal and social relationships with pupils'; and one occupation-related facet: 'hours of work/ holidays'. Job dissatisfaction was expressed on two role-related facets: 'principals lack of involvement in policy making' and 'shortage of clerical staff'. Such a response again reinforces principals perceptions of their role which sees them mainly involved with teachers and children. Again, it has to be stressed that the relationship that principals have with their staff is quite shallow in nature, often not following any structured debate on curriculum matters. These relationships exclude the management cycles which characterise Adelman and Alexander's self-evaluating school (1982) or Caldwell and Spinks's self-managing school (1989). On the other hand the main dissatisfiers help to highlight some of the restrictions facing local principals. The open-ended questions also sought to identify those aspects of role which gave principals satisfaction and/or frustration. These again helped to reveal the principals' main concern towards human relations facets, whilst at the same time expressing dissatisfaction towards the way schools are organised, the restricted scope for leadership, the lack of a school policy, and the need to look after school maintenance at the same time without having adequate custodial services to do so.

The last open-ended question sought to determine what principals felt would help to improve the primary school principalship. This study has shown that around 70% of the principals identified the need for management training courses as a prerequisite for improving the current situation. This response is substantially higher than the proportions reported in other studies (e.g. Craig, 1982; Jones, 1988). Such a high response can be mainly attributed to a lack of a management training policy. Other items singled out as important are role related - mainly the need to review the existing role of principal and more specifically the need to involve principals more directly in policy making. Principals seem to lack relevant training and/or opportunity to retrain during their career as principals, even though they are being given the opportunity to pursue a diploma course at University. The research has clearly shown that principals are in favour of short courses which will furnish them with the concepts and skills necessary for

managing schools.

Principals also expressed how they perceived they ought to spend their time. The response shows a definite shift towards a role model which sees principals directly involved in identifying their mission, goals and development plans and a shift away from purely administrative responsibilities.

In support of other studies (e.g. Borg, 1992; Kelly, 1988; Wilson and Otto, 1988), the present study attests to the various aspects of the principal's job which have dissatisfaction (i.e. stress) implications. It is perhaps understandable that of the identified facets the greatest source of dissatisfaction was derived from the 'shortage of clerical staff', the 'shortage of ancillary staff' and the 'lack of involvement in policy making'. It would appear that lack of, or inadequate, human resources are such a major impediment to the smooth running of a school that the ensuing problems and demands can potentially give rise to relatively high levels of dissatisfaction, especially when repeated attempts to procure such support prove futile.

The marked sex difference on the level of job satisfaction owing to 'shortage of clerical staff' and 'involvement in policy making' is difficult to explain. It is not clear why male principals should report greater dissatisfaction from these facets than their female colleagues.

Contrary to other local studies (Borg, 1992) the present study has shown that length of administrative experience is not related to greater dissatisfaction. The most experienced administrators reported greater levels of satisfaction on most job facets, except for two. With experience school principals have learnt how to handle better the various demands of their job. The two areas where this is not the case are: 'availability of ancillary staff' and 'involvement in policy making'. Again, two recurring facets affecting most principals.

One demographic characteristic where no differences of statistical significance is reported in this study is that of age. This is an interesting finding but difficult to explain. In a country where seniority has always played an important role one would have expected some obvious differences in the responses given. One significant difference does stand out and this lies in the preference that younger principals gave to areas like 'school development programmes' and

'evaluation'. Younger principals perceive the need to spend more time on school development practices and evaluation procedures. Whilst the evidence is not conclusive, it does suggest that younger principals are more inclined or at least prepared to seriously consider ways of improving teacher performance and the quality of learning in the classroom. Their willingness to consider 'new' ways of approaching school life can be a result of the impact training is having on the younger principals.

The major differences which are highlighted by this study are those relating to type of school. Church/Private school principals tended to emphasise management tasks with focus on the child, the teacher and the curriculum. On the other hand, their state school counterparts tended to emphasise the administrative/ pastoral role. Overall church/private school principals expressed a higher level of satisfaction than state school principals. Main differences are related to occupation and role-related facets of the job. State school principals expressed greatest dissatisfaction towards the 'availability (i.e. lack) of clerical staff', 'availability (i.e. lack) of ancillary staff', the 'physical conditions' they have to work in, the 'lack of involvement in policy making', and the 'limited contact with Education support services'. To a large extent the differences between types of school can be attributed to the inadequate and lack of resources and support state school principals have to contend with, the physical conditions they have to work in, and the limited involvement in policy making. This, to some extent, reflects the limited span of influence state school principals have on educational reform, especially those affecting schools. This is reinforced by the low ratings state school principals gave to areas such as: 'freedom to develop school programme' and 'contact with Department of Education'. These research findings emphasise the level of powerlessness felt by state school principals who have to operate within present parameters which often excludes them from the management of change.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

The present study has brought out the multi-dimensional nature of the principal's role. At the same time results also attest to particular differences between Maltese principals in different sectors and those abroad. In the main the Maltese primary school principal adheres closely to what Hughes describes as the 'chief executive'. More specifically, the following are some answers to the research questions set out in section 6.2.

- a. **'Discussions with parents' (92.4%), 'discussions with staff' (75%) and 'desk work' (70.7%) have been identified by principals as their main job functions.**
- b. **49% of the respondents rated 'desk work' as the major job function taking up most of the principals' time.**
- c. **Overall, principals identified 'knowing the children' (99%), 'establishing good parental/community relations (93.5%), and 'establishing good relationships with staff' (90.2%) as the main tasks/duties behind the principalship. However, 33.7% of principals regarded 'having a school policy' as their most important task; 27.2% expressed as their first choice the need to 'establish good relations with staff', and 14% saw as their first choice the need to 'build a team of competent teachers'.**
- d. **'Planning' (60%), 'Staff appraisal and professional development' (51.1%), and 'leadership' (46.7%) were the three aspects of the job highlighted as the principals main training needs. On the other hand 'motivating skills' (82.6%) and 'team building' (71.7%) were the two main skills principals felt they needed training in.**
- e. **The principals expressed a moderate to a high level of satisfaction on most facets of their work. The highest level of satisfaction was registered on two human relations facets: 'working relationships with teachers' and 'personal and social relationships with pupils'; and one occupation-related facets: 'hours of work/ holidays'. The main job satisfiers were the 'pupils' and 'personnel management'.**

**Job dissatisfaction was expressed on two role-related facets: 'principals involvement in policy making' and availability (i.e. lack) of clerical staff'. The main dissatisfiers were related to the 'organisation', 'leadership' and 'philosophy' facets surrounding the principal's role and school in general.**

- f. 70% of the respondents expressed the need for 'management training courses' in order to improve the principals' current situation; 65.2% expressed the need to 'review the present role principals are being asked to perform'; whilst 58.7% expressed the need to be 'involved in policy making'.
- g. Whilst principals stated that they actually spent most of their time doing routine office work, holding discussions with parents and teachers, they would like to perceive their role as one which sees principals at the centre of the 'organisation', 'leadership' and 'planning' process of the school and therefore shifting from an administrative and clerical role to an educational and managerial one. As has been pointed out this perceived role model which sees a radical shift from an administrative role to a more educational one raises a lot of questions as to the true understanding of the implications that such a shift implies. At the same time this desire to take on a leadership role in managing the school calls for policy makers to review their current views and practices of centralised and decentralised policy making and for further exploration on how principals would go about putting this 'leading professional' model into practice if and when given the opportunity.
- h. Few statistically significant demographic differences were observed in the various areas researched owing to three of the four major facets observed, i.e. sex of principal, age of principal, and experience of principal. Significant differences were attributed to type of school, the fourth major factor observed.

The first part of this study has attempted to explore and investigate what Maltese principals have to say about various facets of their occupation and role. The literature on the role of the principal presents two basic dimensions, mainly the educational or professional dimension and the managerial dimension. The traditional view of the principal's role has been that of the educational leader, but as Hellowell (1991) has argued that since the Education Reform Act, which introduced the National Curriculum and the Local Management of Schools, there have been increasing pressures to take on a more managerial role rather than a professional one. Bell & Morrison go on to argue that "primary school headteachers are caught in a web of

conflicting and constraining pressures” (1988, p.203), what Hellowell describes as the “role conflicts ... endemic in primary headship” (1991, p.328). This survey, however, has highlighted that the Maltese principal cannot claim to be following the leading professional model. He/She adheres more closely to the chief executive model with major emphasis being on administrative/clerical work. These findings raise particularly interesting observations. Whilst in the U.K. one can see that, in the main, principals want to safeguard their educational role in spite of encroaching managerial functions, the Maltese principalship is faced with a situation which is quasi-diametrically opposite. The survey shows the Maltese principal falling within the chief executive model. The principal’s duties related largely to the division and allocation of work, the co-ordination and control of organisational activities, communication with parents and staff, maintaining discipline and order, and maintaining the level of resources and plant upkeep. The recent government initiatives towards decentralisation show the principal having to contend with more functions within the chief executive model and therefore moving him/her further away from the leading professional model. This survey, however, shows that principals want to take on functions within the leading professional model.

These findings clearly demonstrate the need for central authorities to stop and reflect on their current practice to initiate change at the school level. The research findings indicate that policy makers have failed to understand the problems that schools face, and in particular have not realised the important role that principals can play in managing change. If central authorities really want to bring about quality improvement at school level then this research helps to show that a lot of work still needs to be undertaken at the macro and micro level in order to understand the best combination that is required between centralised and decentralised practices.

The next chapter reviews the findings of the observational study conducted with a small group of primary school principals in order to identify what principals actually do on a daily basis. This will be done through an observational study of eight primary school principals which the researcher studied over a period of ten consecutive school days each. This will help confirm and/or revoke some of the major findings of the questionnaire survey.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **THE ROLE OF PRINCIPAL IN MALTESE PRIMARY SCHOOLS: AN OBSERVATIONAL STUDY**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The literature review highlighted that scant attention had been paid to researching the work content of the principal, especially in the primary sector. Most descriptions of the principal's role have been based on indirect methods of investigation using questionnaires and surveys. It was decided that in conjunction with a postal questionnaire (cf. Chapter Six) an observational case study approach in the analysis of the role of the primary school principal would help to check out some of the perceptions principals held towards their role and to add another dimension to the overall picture by identifying what principals actually did in their daily life at work. This chapter reports the results of the observational study which looked into the work patterns of eight primary school principals in the state sector.

#### **7.2 Objectives**

This observational study aimed to:

1. check and confirm the validity of some of the responses principals gave to the postal questionnaire especially in the areas of tasks and job priorities. This would be done by looking into the major job functions principals performed and how they spent their time performing their duties through observation.
2. provide empirical data which identifies the type of activities Maltese primary school principals were involved in.
3. provide a record of how a sample of Maltese primary school principals spent their time which is independent of principals' perceptions of how time was allocated.

Such a study would lead towards a better understanding of school management practices in Malta and the role that principals are expected to play; would explore what it

means to be a principal in Malta, and find out whether the principalship is in a position that matches authority with responsibility, or, as some have suggested, a position without any real power (Unesco, 1988., pp.159-175).

Given the handful of empirical studies that have been referred to in the literature review and the state of educational development in Malta it is assumed that an observational study of the work of a small sample of principals would provide valuable in-depth study material. Such research should help to highlight the utility of undertaking observational studies for studying and understanding the behaviour of principals in the administration of their schools.

The major influences on this study were similar research conducted by Wolcott (1973) and Martin and Willower (1981) in the United States; O'Dempsey (1976) and Willis (1980) in Australia; Edwards (1979) in New Zealand; and Davies (1984), Harvey (1986) and Hall et al., (1986) in the United Kingdom.

The study utilised and adapted Mintzberg's system of structured observation he used in the investigation of the manager's day in the USA (1973). It was decided to observe, continuously, the full work performance of eight primary school principals for ten consecutive school days each. The researcher would record details that related to the variables of the principal's work :- duration, medium, purpose, location, personal contacts and other factors that would contribute to knowledge about the content of their work, and, subsequently, the nature of their work. Such data would be reported in terms of two main properties: the duration and the frequency of activities involved.

With the present study it was a methodological assumption that the minimum degree of participation by the researcher would produce a more valid account of the principals' work. Such a procedure would serve to restrict any control or manipulation of the principals' performance that might occur through interactive and evaluative feedback from the researcher. To try and ensure as authentic a picture as possible of the principals' duties and activities it was decided to carry out the observation for two weeks. There were no interviews because these were thought to be inappropriate by the Education Division and they would have had to occur at the end of the school day,



and by tradition, this would be unacceptable as all teaching staff leave school at the end of the school day.

Teaching staff and/or parents were not interviewed as this was thought to be inappropriate when the study was introduced. As highlighted in Chapter Six permission to undertake this study was (and had to be) granted by the Department of Education. Therefore, to a large extent, one has to work within the parameters stated by the authorities. Given the nature of the research, bearing in mind that it was the first of its kind, this was regarded as a sensitive area which had to be explored with care. In fact, given other Maltese studies which adopted one research methodology, the granting of permission to conduct a questionnaire survey and an observational study was considered as quite a step.

### **7.3 Methodology**

A list of principals was first drawn up bearing in mind the following factors:

- a) the schools to have different school populations; (ranging between 200-500 pupils)-representing the different populations to be found in Maltese primary schools;
- b) the schools to be representative of the two main types (i.e. Yr. 1-3; Yr. 4-6) of primary state schools;
- c) the principals to be reasonably experienced in the job (i.e. at least five years experience as principal).
- d) to maintain a gender balance between the sample of principals chosen (i.e. four male and four female principals).
- e) for the schools to be as representative as possible of the different communities on the island of Malta.

The first eight primary school principals were initially contacted by phone seeking their acceptance and assistance. This was followed by a letter where the researcher explained the scope of the exercise (see Appendix D). Each principal was interviewed in October 1991 to explain the study, gather background information, and build rapport. Dates were established for the two-week observation. Two principals were observed in November 1991, one during December 1991, two in January, one in February, and

two in March 1992.

Table 7.1 illustrates some background information about the schools where the observational studies were conducted.

Characteristics	Sex of principal	Years as principal	Number of teachers	Type of school	Age range of pupils	School population
School						
1	Female	10	14	Yrs 1-3	5-7/8 yrs	284
2	Female	22	11	Yrs 1-3	5-7/8 yrs	267
3	Female	12	9	Yrs 1-3	5-7/8 yrs	220
4	Male	6	19	Yrs 1-3	5-7/8 yrs	498
5	Female	11	21	Yrs 4-6	8-10/11 yrs	547
6	Male	8	15	Yrs 4-6	8-10/11 yrs	331
7	Male	7	14	Yrs 4-6	8-10/11 yrs	373
8	Male	9	11	Yrs 4-6	8-10/11 yrs	262

The following is a brief profile of each principal and the principal's school setting.

Principal A (school 1): Ms A was in her early 50s and was currently principal of a small primary school of over 200 pupils located in a densely populated town. Like all other principals she had begun her career as a primary school teacher after having graduated from the Teachers College. She served in a number of primary schools before being first promoted to deputy principal in 1972 and then promoted to principal in 1981. She has been serving at the present school for the past three years. The school provides provision for the first years of schooling - at kindergarten level, catering for three and four year olds, and the first three years at primary level.

Principal B (school 2): Ms B was in her late 50s, heading a developing-area school with over 250 pupils. The town had experienced an influx of families from other parts of the Island, most of which lived in government housing (i.e. flats and apartments) close to the school. The principal had thirty years administrative experience at the primary level, twenty-two of which as principal. Like Principal A this principal had graduated from Teachers College and had taught in a number of primary schools before taking on an administrative post.

Principal C (school 3): Ms C was principal of a small rural school having 220 pupils. The school premises were relatively 'new', compared to most of the other primary schools, being built at the turn of the century. Although the area had been developing over the past few years the area still maintained its unique quiet characteristics. Like Principal A and Principal B, Principal C spends most of her time in the office.

Principal D (school 4): Mr W was principal of a school having just under 500 pupils. The school was situated in one of the most densely populated areas on the island. This principal was the youngest of the eight principals in the sample, and with 22 years in education including six years in his present position. Mr W delegated practically all of the work to his deputies. He did a lot of moving about during the day and made it a point to visit a few classrooms daily.

Principal E (school 5): Ms D was also principal of a densely populated school of over 500 pupils. The area was still expanding and could not cope with the growing numbers of new residents demanding a state education. The three-storey school was shared with the other primary school, a kindergarten and a post-primary school. This meant that some areas, including the yard, had to be shared. Like school 4, which had similar characteristics, this caused quite a number of problems for the principal.

Principal F (school 6): Mr X was principal of a school with just over 300 pupils. After having taught for a considerable number of years at secondary level he was promoted to an administrative post at primary level around twelve years ago. After four years as deputy principal he was promoted to principal and has been attached to the present school ever since. During the observation period Mr X spent most of the time attending to curriculum related matters.

Principal G (school 7): Mr Y was in his late 40s, heading a rural school of just under 400 pupils. He was quite a jolly person, and always ready to crack a joke. Like most male principals Mr Y had spent just over 15 years teaching in secondary schools, which also included the post of Head of Department, before taking on the principalship at primary level. The school was situated in a fast developing suburban

area which also shared some of its facilities with other schools within the same building.

Principal H (school 8): who was 55, served as principal of a school with just over 250 pupils. The school was situated in the heart of a middle-sized town. Mr Z had nine years administrative experience at primary level. Most of the teachers came from the same town or nearby areas.

#### **7.4 Problems and limitations**

The observation study was conducted in a manner such as to overcome at least two of the four limitations identified in similar research work by Davies (1984), Willis (1980, 1980a), namely:

**1. Duration of observation:** Identifying what could constitute as an 'appropriate time' for observing principals at work has been one of the main concerns facing researchers using this research approach. Finding the ideal balance between a 'too short a period' and a 'too long a period' of observation is not easy. On the one hand the period of time spent in each school must provide sufficient data, yet, on the other hand, not constitute an overlong intrusion upon the principal causing undue strain on the subject and possible contamination of the data. A period of two weeks of observation time for each principal was chosen. Given the literature on the area this was considered to be sufficient to give as complete a picture as possible of what the principals were doing on the job.

**2. Co-operative subjects:** Finding subjects who are prepared to undergo scrutiny of their work performance as they continued to behave 'normally' in their responsible positions is not easy. Moreover, gaining both acceptance into the school and trust from the principal, both essential prerequisites for achieving naturalness in the actual research period, is a highly delicate matter.

The only factors which could not be addressed were the following:

**3. Resource limitation:** The amount of time a single researcher could devote to

such a form of research was conditioned by at least two factors:

- a) How often could one researcher return to the same setting to observe the same principal over a longer stretch of time.
- b) The time constraints facing the researcher due to other highly probable pressures of work.

**4. Parallel factor :** The number of principals who could be observed by one researcher at a similar stage of the scholastic year was naturally restricted to one.

The eight state primary schools chosen would permit the drawing of a composite picture of state school principals' activities but at the same time constitute a population from which generalising would be severely limited. Thus, as Richardson (1973) points out in her case study of one English school, there is the great risk of either falling into a swamp of generalisations or that of intruding into a private world.

The present study was exploratory, aimed at gathering fresh, first hand information, in a situation of near uncertainty, about the work behaviour of primary school principals.

### **7.5 Procedure**

Each of the principals was observed during the entire two weeks (i.e. ten working days). The observer accompanied the principals as they went about performing their daily routines. Principals were closely observed at work with careful recording of the time length of each activity, the people with whom interactions were made, and the location, nature and purpose of each activity. This meant that principals were shadowed by the observer wherever they went. When the principal was in the office the observer was allocated a table close to the principal's desk. The observational data was recorded as activities occurred. Four record sheets were designed to assist in the accuracy of the record made:

- a. an activity form for the chronological record of activities at work;
- b. three forms showing activities (with specific headings) in percentages of *what* each principal did, *with whom* and *where* during the period of observation.

The forms were designed so as to yield a comprehensive record of the principals' activities and also for the convenience of the observer. The process adopted gave structure to the often unstructured components of data collected.

## **7.6 Findings**

Despite the procedural problems involved in observing and recording the behaviour of people at work, the observation of the eight principals provided an intimate experience of school life. Whilst differences were observed between the principals, there does appear to exist a great degree of commonality in the role of all eight principals. The scope and limitations of this observational approach obviously prevent generalisations being made, but the large amount of data collected, furthermore supplemented by the questionnaire survey undertaken as part of this study (refer to Chapter Six), provides enough material to illuminate aspects of the principal's role as well as presents insights into the complex world of the primary school system.

Like busy executives in complex organisations (Mintzberg, 1973) the eight principals studied during the observation period used a range of media in the process of performing tasks and transmitting information. Over a period of sixteen weeks of observation, amounting to just over 525 working hours the principals worked an average of 32.8 hours per week.<sup>1</sup> This shows some similarity to Willis' (1980) secondary school heads (39.6 hour week), however is well below the results of Lyons' (1976) 44-45 hour week, or Davies' 46.2 hour week. During the whole observation period the principals undertook a composite total of 4,240 activities with a daily average of 53 tasks. These activities were quite varied in nature, such as face-to-face discussions with other people, telephone conversations, tours and visits, attendance at various types of meetings, sessions of paper work in their offices, and other preparatory work. The proportionate expenditure of their time is shown in Figure 7. 1 and detailed in Table 7.2.

### **7.6.1 The Principal's Media of Work**

The largest proportion of the principals' time at work was spent alone doing desk work

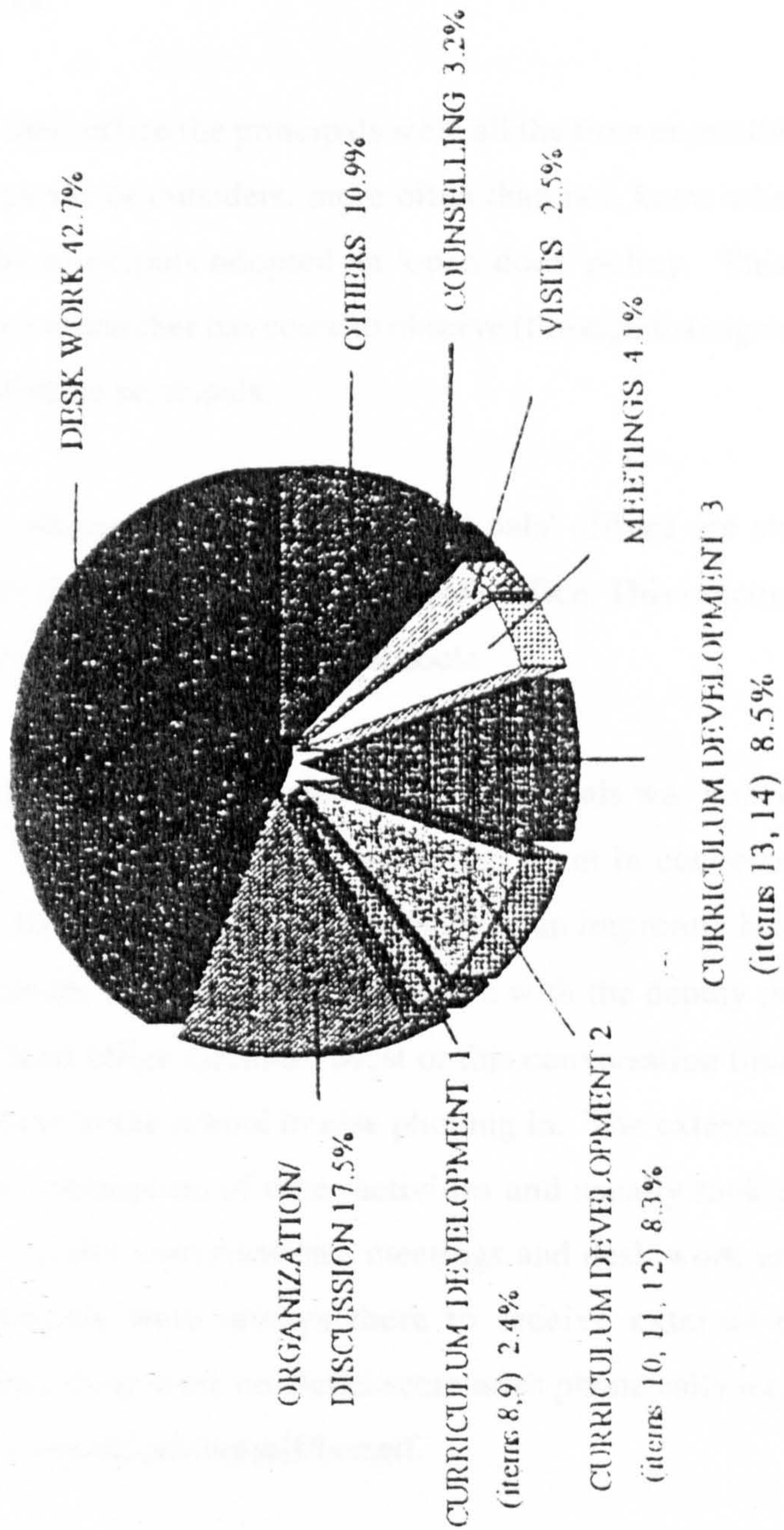


FIGURE 1: THE PRINCIPALS' TIME SPENT ON THE MAIN MEDIA OF WORK DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

in their office (42.7%). This entailed answering mail, filling in forms, returns, etc., reading miscellaneous material, handling files and other tasks, and annotating their diaries. It is to be noted that none of our primary schools had the services of a qualified full-time secretary. What most (not all) schools enjoy up to now are part-time services of clerks who have to be shared in various schools during the scholastic year. There is a short supply of clerks in the government service in general and so few are actually sent to schools. During the observation period the researcher did not encounter any of these clerks.

When in their office the principals were all the time accessible to other people. People, whether pupils or outsiders, more often than not, knew where to locate the principal. In fact the principals adopted an 'open door' policy. This seems to be the general attitude the researcher has come to observe (through management training programmes) in most Maltese principals.

Even the physical setting of the principals' offices are such that anyone can have practically direct access to the principal's office. This is actually made easier due to the lack of secretarial services in the schools.

Another medium of exchange used by principals was conversation. A total of 91.56 hours (17.5%) of their time at work was spent in conversation. These face-to-face contacts, labelled discussions, ranged from an impromptu half-minute chat with a pupil in the corridor to a 15-minute discussion with the deputy principal to discuss parents day or a head office circular. Most of this conversation time was occupied by parents coming over to the school or else phoning in. The external phone call was a frequent source of interruption of other activities and usually took precedence over any other activity, usually conversations, meetings and desk work in the principal's office. In fact principals were always there to receive external calls. Since, as already highlighted, there were no clerks/secretaries phone calls were answered by the deputy principal or principal himself/herself.

Principals spent a small amount of time, 43.34 hours (8.3%) undertaking classroom



visits and actual teaching. Most of the teaching involved the principal going in mainly to support one or some of the underqualified staff members recruited as teachers. None of the principals or deputy principals in Malta are officially called to take on classroom duties. They can do so if they so wish when teachers are away (e.g. on a one-day seminar or on sick-leave). They also spent around the same time, just under 45 hours (8.5%), organising activities and preparing teaching materials for classroom use. They had to do this because of the existing lack of clerical help.

Meetings were classed as more formal gatherings and were either ad hoc or prearranged. Principals spent just under 22 hours (4.1%) at meetings. Most of these meetings took place during the mid-morning half-hour lunch break where most of the principals observed made it a point to meet his/her staff where they could discuss issues which cropped up during the day (e.g. a head office circular or phone call), or else to discuss some future event or activity. Most of the so-called 'formal' meetings in the school took place in the most informal of environments (e.g. the school yard).

#### **7.6.2 Type of work activities**

The coding of the type of work activities was the most exacting and most subjective stage of post-categorisation. The basis of this variable was the observer's judgment, at the time the activity occurred, of the essential purpose of what was happening from the viewpoint of the principal. This problem might have been resolved by interviewing the principals, however, it was the observer's aim throughout the observation period to minimise interactions with the principals. The purpose of work activities is summarised in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3 reinforces what was brought out in Figure 7.1, in that it highlights that principals spent most of the time in their office doing all forms of paper work. They also spent a substantial amount of time in personal contacts with other people. While 130.28 hours (24.8%) could be described as directly involving the principals in the verbal transmission of information, the amount is really higher as communication also occurred in other kinds of activities such as 'planning', 'project work', 'organising activities', and 'teaching'. Communication was both informational and interpersonal.

From this study of Maltese principals and the literature reviewed certain clear-cut distinctions can be drawn between the way the Maltese primary school principal spent his/her time and the way foreign principals spent it. The major feature that stands out is that Maltese principals spent a considerable amount of their time (42.7%) in their office, when compared to other principals (e.g. the U.K. principal on average spends around 20%). Maltese principals tended to spend a substantial amount of time in personal contacts with various others (i.e. averaging 33%). This is practically half and even less than half when compared to the British and Australian/North American studies respectively. At the same time it is only fair to recall the previous observation that Maltese principals practically lack all forms of clerical help.

The fact that Maltese principals spent little time in classroom teaching (1.4%) and in classroom contact (5.3%) is evidence of the fact, on the one hand, that, although they might officially express (cf. Chapter Three) that they truly believe in the leading professional role U.K. principals are committed to (e.g. Davies, 1984) they are not really doing much about it. At the same time, the very fact that one can be shifted to a new sector (cf. Chapter Three) once promoted to principal it is obvious that it is quite difficult for the principal to take on the leading professional role that Hughes talks about. Here it is the case of having to consider other skills, mainly management ones, which the principal needs in order to cope with such a situation.

Table 7.2: Distribution of each Principal's Time during the day through Observation

Percentage of observation period spent on each activity during the two weeks

Item No. Activities undertaken by Principals	Schools									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Av.	
<b>Organisation</b>										
1. Desk work (i.e. filling in forms, returns, etc.)	34.40	31.20	29.20	27.20	24.40	24.20	27.40	23.50	27.54	
2. Discussion (i.e. encounters with staff and children)	2.20	2.25	2.35	2.42	6.05	3.20	3.20	2.50	3.12	
3. Discussion (i.e. encounters with parents and phone calls)	4.20	4.26	4.19	4.00	4.00	4.05	6.00	4.50	4.30	
4. Discussion (i.e. encounters with caretakers/ charwomen)	2.32	2.00	3.00	1.03	5.20	2.00	3.05	2.32	2.41	
5. Assembly	1.02	1.04	1.03	1.05	1.00	1.04	1.02	1.04	1.03	
6. Meetings (i.e. prearranged or regular meetings with staff, outside)	1.20	5.00	5.00	4.00			1.20	5.05	2.43	
7. Visits (i.e. education officers [HMIs], medical doctor, boards, etc)	2.00		1.00	5.00	0.30		1.00	4.00	1.41	
<b>Total time</b>	<b>48.14</b>	<b>46.15</b>	<b>44.18</b>	<b>45.10</b>	<b>41.35</b>	<b>34.39</b>	<b>43.27</b>	<b>44.06</b>	<b>43.29</b>	
<b>Curriculum</b>										
8. Discussion with staff on curriculum matters (i.e. planning, exchanging ideas, discussing children's work)	1.30	0.20	2.20	0.30	0.40	0.45	0.45	0.50	0.57	
9. Discussion with children on curricular matters (i.e. discussing work samples, projects, etc.)	0.45	0.30	0.42	0.35	0.25	0.52	0.54	0.31	0.39	
10. Observation of classroom teaching										
11. Classroom visits	3.40	3.20	4.00	4.00	4.40	4.00	3.34	3.20	3.49	
12. Teaching of children		6.30		2.30		4.00			1.38	
13. Preparation of teaching materials (i.e. photocopying)			6.00	4.30					1.19	
14. Organising activities	2.10		2.40	4.10	7.18	10.00	3.30	4.32	4.17	
<b>Total time</b>	<b>8.05</b>	<b>10.40</b>	<b>15.42</b>	<b>16.15</b>	<b>13.03</b>	<b>19.37</b>	<b>7.43</b>	<b>9.13</b>	<b>12.32</b>	
<b>Children's Behaviour</b>										
15. Discussion - children's behaviour (i.e. encounters with children)	2.40	1.20	1.05	0.25	4.00	2.00	3.40	2.00	2.90	
<b>Other Matters</b>										
16. Maintenance - Supervision	2.30	3.00	2.55	2.00	2.20	6.00	3.00	3.20	3.80	
17. Lunch break/ Overseeing children during break	5.00	4.00	2.20	2.45	3.28	3.00	4.27	5.00	3.45	
18. Personal contacts/ phone calls			0.40	0.15	0.32		0.33		0.15	
<b>Total time</b>	<b>10.10</b>	<b>8.20</b>	<b>7.00</b>	<b>5.25</b>	<b>10.20</b>	<b>11.00</b>	<b>11.40</b>	<b>10.20</b>	<b>9.17</b>	

Table 7.3: The Purpose of the Principals' Work Activities

Office work	Discussions with staff, children, and caretakers	Discussions with parents	Assembly	Meetings
223.10 hrs	47.9 hr	36 hrs	8.24 hrs	21.45 hrs
42.7%	9.0%	6.9%	1.6%	4.1%
=====				
Curriculum development, Planning	Organising activities	Preparing materials for teachers	Counselling	Teaching
7.4 hrs	34.20 hrs	10.30 hrs	17.10 hrs	13 hrs
1.4%	6.5%	2.0%	3.2%	2.5%
=====				
Classroom visits	Project work with children	Overviewing (a)	Social (b)	Other (c)
30.34 hrs	5.14 hrs	25.5 hrs	32 hrs	13.30 hrs
5.8%	1.0%	4.8%	6.0%	2.6%
=====				
525.30 hrs = 100%				

Notes:

- (a) 'overviewing' - overviewing maintenance work
- (b) 'social' - lunch breaks, overseeing children during break
- (c) 'other' - visits from outside.

Another main observation is that whilst principals in the U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand (e.g. Willis, 1980; Edwards, 1979) might not officially have classroom contact like their British counterparts they still do spend a considerable amount of time with their staff discussing curriculum development. This is also not a characteristic of the Maltese principal (cf. Table 7.2).

### 7.6.3 Location

Perhaps predictably the location for a highly significant amount of the principals' work was their office. Over 398 hours (75.9%) amounting to 3400 activities (80%) were spent there. The office is the hub of the principals' life in Maltese schools, the central place where most of the activities take place. It is the place where they can easily be located and where tasks await them. Most interactions, whether with people or paper work, take place there (see Table 7.4).

Although for most of the time principals were in the office doing a variety of tasks, pressures and duties called them to move about during the day. Most of the interactions, whether taking place in the office or elsewhere, were of the conversational type bringing out the *people-oriented nature* behind most of their work. They were mainly involved in one-to-one or group contact. The principals also expressed an apparent preference for direct contact rather than resorting to other means of communication (e.g. written notes or circulars) to communicate to/with staff.

Table 7.4: Time spent in Various Places during the School Day

Office	Corridors	Classrooms	School grounds
398hrs 52m	41hrs	43hrs 36m	42hrs 2m
75.9%	7.8%	8.3%	8.0%
3,400 acts.	454 acts.	100 acts.	286 acts.

525hrs 30m = 4240 acts.

Table 7.5 illustrates in greater detail where each principal spent his/her time during the period under observation. It shows that there are no major or marked differences between the way principals spent their time. The greatest segment of each principals' day found them in their office. Solo work at their desk accounted for a substantial period of this time (av. 42.7%). The remaining office work entailed a variety of activities mainly involving encounters with parents, teachers, children and ancillary staff (av. 33.2%). Time spent observing classroom teaching or else directly teaching pupils amounted to 8.3% of their time. Other contacts with teachers and pupils mainly took place in the corridors, 7.3%; playgrounds, 6.2%; and during assembly, 1.6%.

Table 7.5: Distribution of each Principal's Places of Interaction with Individuals or Groups of People during the observation period

Site of interaction	Percentage of observation period spent at each site								Av.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Office/ desk work (alone)	46.6	49.3	44.0	38.9	37.2	38.0	43.5	43.2	42.7
Office (with other people)	31.5	20.1	37.6	37.4	40.1	30.6	32.2	36.0	33.2
Corridors	6.8	8.0	6.6	8.0	7.0	12.5	8.3	5.2	7.3
Playgrounds	7.5	6.1	4.5	4.5	6.2	4.5	8.0	7.9	6.2
Assembly	1.3	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.6
Storeroom	0.8		0.7	0.4	0.9	1.1	1.2	0.8	0.7
Classrooms	5.5	15.2	5.9	9.7	7.2	12.2	5.7	5.2	8.3

#### 7.6.4 Personal contact

The school and its external environment provided a wide range of people with whom the principal came in contact with. Despite the huge amount of time principals spent on their own their work is essentially a people-centred job. Contact with other people occupied 48.7 percent of their time. Table 7.6 summarises their time with people. Table 7.7 shows the times spent with other people internal to the school, whilst Table 7.8 shows the principals' environmental contacts.

Table 7.6: Time spent Alone and with Other People

Alone	School Personnel (internal)	Non-school Personnel (external)
269hrs 23m	179hrs 41m	76hrs 36m
51.3%	34.2%	14.5%
1,320 activities	2,374 activities	546 activities

525hrs 30m = 100% = 4,240 activities

Table 7.7: Time spent with School Personnel

Deputy Principal	Teachers	Pupils	Classroom	Staff and Pupils	Ancillary Staff
15hrs 9m	42hrs 37m	27hrs 9m	43hrs 34m	30hrs	21hrs 12m
2.9%	8.1%	5.2%	8.3%	5.7%	4.0%
507 acts.	713 acts.	340 acts.	104 acts.	556 acts.	154 acts.

179hrs 41m = 2374 acts. = 34.2% of time at work

Table 7.8: Time spent with Non-school Personnel

Parents	Visitors (a)	Workers (b)	Phone-calls (c)
36hrs 1m	13hrs 20m	25hrs 5m	2hrs
6.8%	2.5%	4.8%	0.4%
476acts.	27acts.	31acts	12acts.

76hrs 26m = 546 acts. = 14.5%

- Notes: a) Medical doctors/ nurses or Education Officers (ie. HMIs)  
 b) Workers on site doing construction/ repair work  
 c) Principals making phone calls

The distribution of each principal's interactions with individuals or groups of people during the observation period is shown in Table 7.9. This table sums up the previous three tables (i.e. Tables 7.6, 7.7, 7.8), presenting in more detail the type of interactions the eight principals were involved in.

Excluding the time spent on their own and the combined grouping of staff and pupils (as in assembly) and discussions with ancillary staff, the principals spent 128.29hrs (24.5%) with subordinates in the school in personal conversations, internal tours and meetings. This is a significant amount and it helps to present another important dimension in the role of the principal. In spite of the constraints facing principals and the amount of administrative work they have to carry out on their own they strongly

identified with the people-centred facets of their job. In this dimension principals interacted with a varying number of people.

The duration of contacts with one other person added to a weighty 23.9 percent. From the intimacy of contacts with one other person, the principals' expenditure of time with other declined somewhat markedly until large groups of around four other people. The time spent with numbers of others is described in Figure 7.2.

Table 7.9: Distribution of each Principal's Interactions with Individuals or Groups of People during the Observation Period

	Percentage of observation period spent with each type								
People encountered by principal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Av.
Time spent alone	59.4	52.8	50.2	48.3	50.1	50.4	50.6	49.2	51.3
Deputy principal	1.5	1.2	1.7	2.1	4.9	6.1	4.8	0.9	2.9
Teachers, individually	1.8	1.9	2.1	2.3	3.9	2.3	2.4	2.9	2.4
Teachers, small groups	4.3	8.2	10.9	6.7	1.0	2.1	3.1	9.3	5.7
Classroom visits	5.5	15.0	5.9	9.7	7.2	12.2	5.7	5.2	8.3
Children, individually & small groups	5.6	3.4	3.5	2.5	8.7	4.9	7.8	5.3	5.2
Staff and pupils	6.5	5.5	5.8	4.9	5.5	4.7	6.0	7.0	5.7
School ancillary staff	3.8	3.0	4.5	1.5	8.2	3.0	4.8	4.0	4.0
Visiting parents	6.3	6.7	6.4	5.8	6.0	6.1	9.3	7.5	6.8
Workers	3.8	4.6	4.4	3.0	3.6	9.2	4.8	5.2	4.7
Medical doctor/ nurse	3.0			5.9				6.3	1.9
Education Officers			1.5	1.5	0.8		1.6		0.7
Personal contacts			1.0	0.4	0.8		0.9		0.4

### 7.6.5 Dealing with the Mail

The principals dealt with a total 244 items of mail, an average of 30 per principal. While much of their time on desk work included attention to correspondence both reading incoming items and drafting outward mail it is argued that unlike Mintzberg (1973), O'Dempsey (1976), and Willis (1980) that state that mail does not appear as a vital segment of executive work Maltese principals are at present involved in mounds of paper work (Aquilina and Portelli, 1987). Table 7.10 summarises the class of mail, whether incoming or outward.

It seemed that, like telephone calls, the mail constituted a priority item in the principals' work. Paper work, together with telephone communications, parental visits and day to day administrative problems seem to be drastically limiting the principals' available



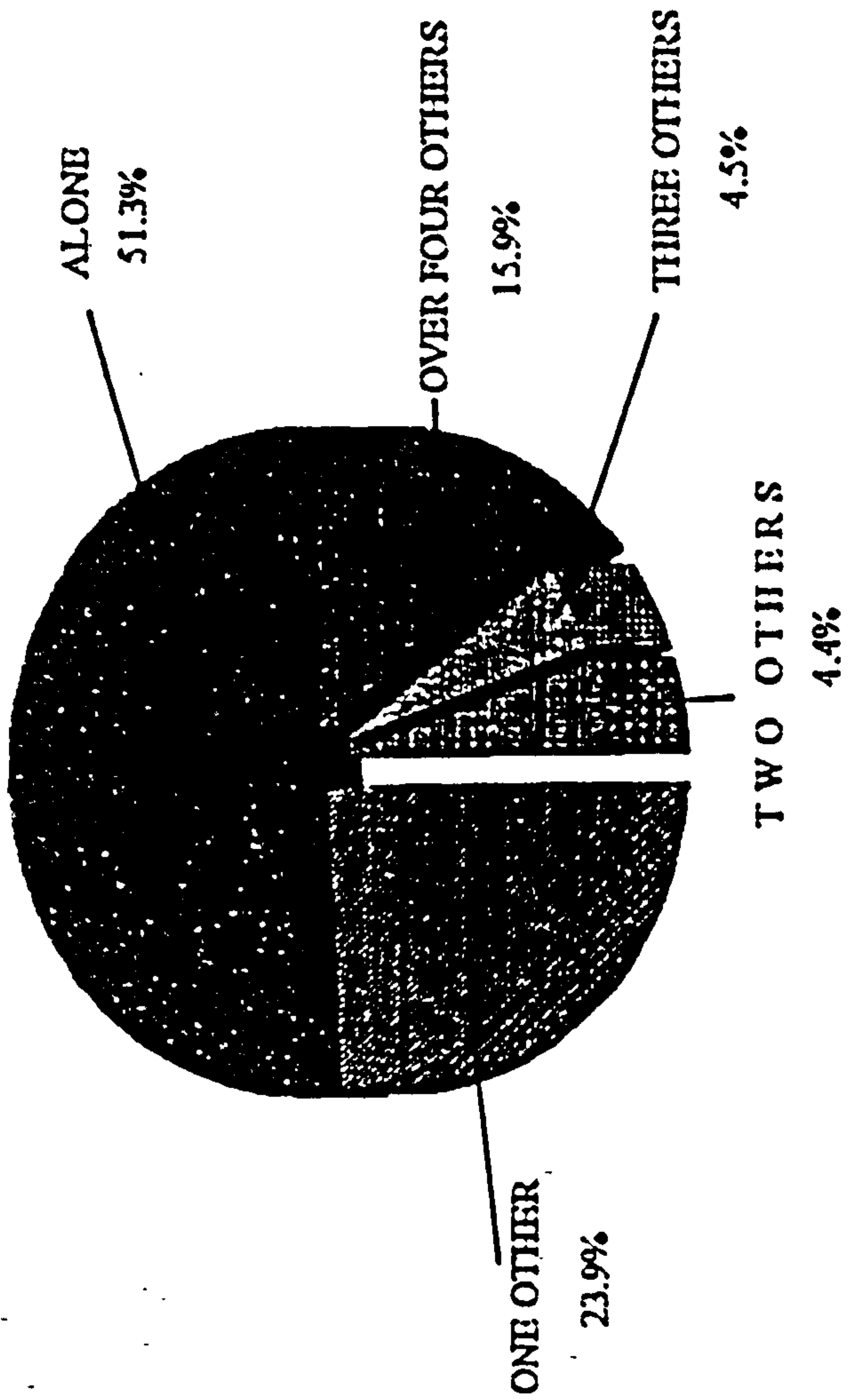


FIGURE 2: THE PRINCIPALS' AVERAGE TIME WITH NUMBERS OF PEOPLE DURING THE OBSERVATION PERIOD

time to engage in professional interaction with staff and pupils. Thus, the Maltese principal faces difficulties in fulfilling the role of the leading professional in the school as defined by Hughes (1975) or Davies (1984). The administrative cum secretarial duties principals have to perform are often more paramount to the more intrinsic educational ones. It is only where principals have deputy principals on their staff that they are 'relieved' from most of this administrative burden. This allows them to devote more time to classroom contact. Table 7.9, for example, highlights how the principals in schools 2, 4 and 6, in particular, devoted more time to classroom visits than those who have limited administrative assistance. Time and again principals have expressed their concern for clerical help to relieve them from too much office work (Unesco, 1988; Department of Education, 1989). Nothing as yet has come out from their recommendations to improve school secretarial services.

Table 7.10: Analysis of Mail: Input and Output

	Incoming	Outward	Total
Letters	96	40	136
Circulars/notices	20	4	24
Returns/forms	30	38	68
Brochures/pamphlets	10		10
Others	6		6
	N=162	N=82	N=244
	66.4%	33.6%	100%

## 7.6.6 Work Characteristics

### 7.6.6.1 Variety, Brevity and Fragmentation

...managers work at an unrelenting pace, that their activities are characterised by brevity, variety and discontinuity ... (and) they seem to jump from issue to issue, continually responding to the needs of the moment.

(Mintzberg, 1975, pp. 50-51)

Through this opening statement Mintzberg captures some key characteristics of managerial responsibilities. The work of organisations is rarely rational and is often chaotic, disrupted and confusing and to a large extent the principals' activities were frequently of short duration (see Time Log A at the end of this chapter). Such activities tended to arise spontaneously out of the milieu of the daily life of the school. A

substantial amount of a principal's work appeared to involve what may be termed 'putting out fires', as principals responded to situations arising throughout the school day. The trend was for them to move from one encounter to another, both by their own choice and because of the pressure of events. In handling rapidly occurring events, each principal tended to function as an 'instant executive'. Decisions were made, information was communicated and leadership given, at times in a somewhat disjointed fashion, as Edwards (1979) and Willis (1980) highlight in their own research work. Even though some work had been pre-scheduled, due to interruptions, such tasks often took longer than anticipated to execute. Naturally, much depended upon where the principals were located at any given moment. Since, for most of the time they were in their offices, there they were accessible to everyone and everything at most times.

Observations of these principals at work demonstrated a range of problems facing these administrators. Constant interruptions resulted in principals being involved only briefly in any activity. The quantity, quality and variety of tasks principals had to respond to allowed little time for serious professional work (i.e. high value tasks) with teachers and children (cf. Time Logs A and B at the end of this chapter).

The principals had an assortment of behavioural options - to inform others or to be informed, to attend and participate, to plan, to teach, to counsel, to socialise, and so on. The demands were constant and heterogeneous, calling for what Willis (*ibid.*) describes as chameleon-like performances throughout the day. Moreover, the variety continued with the people with whom the principals came in contact. Apart from differences in personal relationships with the principals, these people interacted from a range of organisational standpoints - senior staff to classroom teachers to pupils - and from environmental positions - parents, Education Department officials, or manual workers involved in maintenance work.

The peripatetic nature of the job was shown by the fact that 24.6 percent (cf. Table 7.5) of the activities marked a change of place for the principals' work. It was apparent that, despite prolonged sessions in the office, the principals frequently shifted among various places in their search to deal with preplanned activities, to deal with situations

as they arose, or because of their impulsion to get things done. Although the office is the focal point of the principals' work, they realised that for effective performance and communication to take place, they needed to move frequently around the school. This was partly to initiate the quest for information and not always to be the recipient of information, at other people's discretion. This, as Lyons (1976) has suggested, helps principals create and maintain a network of understanding, information and relationships.

Diversity of work experiences lay in the purpose of the many activities enacted by the principal. Time Log B, for example, shows how activities can vary from a chat with pupils to organising school activities with deputy principals. Activities were such that, at one time or another, principals had to be jack-of-all-trades, ready and flexible enough to confront any situation of whatever nature. These findings resonate closely with Hall et al ., (1986) findings, Handy's (1984) and Jones' (1988), amongst others, in the U.K.

The actual content of activities met each day provided a varying and often enlivening set of experiences. A person entering the office might mean simply a request to make a telephone call, a caretaker's announcement that the workers had arrived, a parent's complaint, a pupil asking for the tape recorder, the return of a circular, a pupil confiding about a personal problem, and so on. What might happen next was a continuous open question. In fact every day seemed to offer something new.

The principals' activities could also alternate between school affairs and external business. The overall impression given was that the principal was beginning, in the middle of, and ending numerous issues all at the one time, some dormant but any of them likely to reemerge in their demand for attention.

Overall it seems safe to conclude that the principals accepted these short bursts of work activity. On no occasion was there any overt sign from the principals or others in the 'disturbed' situations that such shortened attention to an issue was anything but an everyday phenomenon for the principal.

The brevity of the principals' activities is shown in Table 7.11.

Table 7.11: Duration of Work Activities

Activities lasting up to and including:	1 minute	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	20 minutes	Over 20 minutes
No. of acts.	587	1402	1316	692	24	228
Percentage	13.6	33.1	31.0	16.3	0.6	5.4

In addition, the principals were often uncertain of the duration of an activity and of its outcome. For example, whilst a conversation might expire in a minute or so the visitor might stay for a while and the conversation might rove over a number of issues and perhaps diverge quite markedly from its original point. Such indeterminate occurrences seemed to combine to rob the principal of some degree of control over his/her work time. Moreover, the principals usually seemed reluctant to terminate these exchanges, even though they had been probably interrupted in their work. Perhaps this revealed a concern by the principals to maintain a favourable level of interpersonal relationships and consequent information flows.

A significant determinant of the varied and curtailed nature of the principals' work was the occurrence of interruptions that contributed to the sense of discontinuity in the principals' performance. Conversational periods and sessions of desk work were the main victims of interruption. In their office work, the principals may have wished to deal with their work seriatim but they had to cope with the constraints and limitations on their own control over their time and work, the uneven pace of its appearance and with the juxtaposition of scheduled and unscheduled events.

Table 7.12 shows the mixture of their proportions of time, scheduled and unscheduled, spent on the various media. The table shows, on the one hand, high scheduling directed at desk work, conversation and meetings, and on the other high unscheduling for the occurrence of various kinds of phone calls and visits.

Table 7.12: Proportion of Scheduled and Unscheduled Time Spent on the Work Media

Percentage

Scheduled	44.7	96.3	10.5	3.6	11.6	85.8	79.6
Unscheduled	55.3	3.7	89.5	96.4	88.4	14.2	20.4

The brevity of the principals' work, that contributed to the superficiality of approach noted in other studies, was related to their control over their work. Table 7.13 shows the distribution of the principals' time according to who initiated activities (i.e. the principal himself/herself, another person, or the clock) and whether the activities were scheduled. A total 337.22 hours (64.2%) of the principals' work time was self-initiated, most of which followed a scheduled programme, 34.3 percent, but with a significant percentage of unscheduled events, 29.9 percent. Another 106.9 hours (20.2%) of the principals' work time was initiated for them by other people. This was in addition to the 81.58 hours (15.6%) that were clock-initiated, such as scheduled class visits, meetings and assemblies.

Table 7.13: Percentages of Scheduled and Unscheduled Work Time According to the Initiation of Activities

Initiated by:	Scheduled Time			Unscheduled Time	
	The Principal	Other People	The Clock	The Principal	Other People
	34.3%	4.1%	15.6%	29.9%	16.1%
100% = 525hrs 30m					

Thus the principal might well commence a work day with a number of tasks for his or

her attention, but invariably the day will have turned out to be a mixture of such events together with a substantial proportion of unplanned and often unexpected happenings initiated both by the principal himself/ herself, spontaneously, and by others with whom he/she interacted.

This fact was also noted by Clerkin (1985), Copeman (1963), Davies (1987), Luijk (1963), O'Dempsey (1976), Stewart (1967) and Willis (1980). In particular Stewart pointed to the resultant "grasshopper" approach to work. The experience of the Maltese principals confirms the view expressed by Haigh that the management task facing the principal is similar to

...the task of the plate juggler who at the climax of his act, places plates upon long flexible canes and spins them ... To give one micro-second of extra attention to any single plate is to invite a chain reaction of disaster.  
(1981, p.101)

#### 7.6.6.2 Invisibility

The eight principals seemed to agree that it was quite possible that most of the staff in the respective schools did not really know (more so appreciate) what the principals did on the job. This feeling was also expressed by other principals interviewed casually during formal and informal occasions. Similar findings have also been reported in other studies (e.g. Edwards, op.cit.; Willis, op.cit.). There was an aggregate of activities and time spent that constituted the 'invisible' work of the school principal. The very nature of the principal's job meant that much of the work effort was unseen by the staff for a weekly average of around 17 hours for each principal. This invisible work comprised work that was done by the principal alone in his/her office, during and after hours. The 'invisible' work of the school principal is summarised in Table 7.14.

Table 7.14: The Principals' 'Invisible' Work

Work done 'alone'	After-hours work	Total
252hrs 20m	17hrs 3m	269hrs 23m

269hrs 23m = 51.3% of complete workload  
(i.e. school hours and after hours)

Since the principals in this study worked an average of 32.8 hours per week which included 17 hours of 'invisible' work this means that for around 51 percent of their working time school staff practically did not know what the principals were doing. This comes quite close to Willis (1980) who reported principals as doing 59 percent of invisible work. It is important to find out the type of repercussions, if any, this is having on principal-staff relationships. It is also worth noting here that such a high level of 'invisibility' may also be due to the fact that Maltese principals do not take on any active teaching duties, with contact with teachers and pupils being informal and of an ad hoc nature.

Recent studies in the UK on the effects of LMS on school life also indicates that principals are having to spend more time away from the classrooms and even from the schools themselves. Their role is changing, for the time being, from an inward orientation to an outward orientation. This means that the existing relations with teachers is changing. Therefore, the repercussions have to be studied in light of this 'new' and 'evolving' role. Within any context the invisible nature of the principal's work needs to be carefully studied.

## **7.7 Discussion**

A portrait of how a small but diverse sample of primary school principals spent their day-to-day practice over a two-week period has been presented. The findings cannot claim to represent an overall pattern of organisational activity across a school year nor fully allow for individual problems and interests. It is nevertheless clear from the analysis of the data that during the sixteen-week period all eight case study principals spent much of their time working at a high intensity of tasks characterised by discontinuity and in some instances by apparently non-essential commitments (i.e. low value tasks) as shown in Time Logs A and B at the end of this chapter. As far as its overall results are concerned, the present study confirms the picture of administrative work found by Mintzberg and by other investigators using the structured observation methodology. The principal's day was generally hectic in pace, varied in its composition, discontinuous and superficial in any pursuit of tasks, with the unexpected always as one of the few certainties of the job. Principals tended to be more reactive than proactive in the way they went about their business. Findings from the present



study, although not to be regarded as conclusive, show that principals do not manage their time rather the unfolding of events do.

The pattern of work of all eight principals seems to imply that this can sometimes lead to situations where the majority of a principal's energy is devoted to keeping the school ticking over in the short run with only limited opportunity to consider important long term issues. Events ordinarily controlled the principals rather than the other way round. In other words, the principals had not worked out means for deliberately allocating their attention. They seemed to spend little time thinking about the activities in which they were engaged or attempting to anticipate and give meaning to future ones. This appears to be true of administrators generally. Whilst the Mintzberg-type studies stress the fast paced, unrelenting nature of administrative work, others have underscored the kaleidoscopic, garbage can character of decision making (March & Olsen, 1976). In the face of the tide of every day events that more or less seems to engulf the school administrator, the safeguarding of deliberate and thoughtful administrator action and decision making becomes problematic (Clerkin, 1985; Willower, 1982). This finding helps to reinforce the non-reflective role of principals. They are mainly called to react to daily events which, although important and essential to tackle in their own right, raise doubts as to how far principals are involved in curricular issues and the pedagogical needs of teachers and pupils.

The literature review supports this argument, that one of the main features behind the principalship is the relentless pace of school life. There is practically an endless variety of activities with precious little respite. This observation raises particular questions about principal work patterns and the need for each and every principal to undertake his or her own analysis of their day-to-day practices. That is, the main question that principals need to address is how far are they pro-active and how far are they re-active to the demands of the job? From there one can move on to identify the reasons behind the responses they give. This is important for at least three main reasons. The first and maybe most obvious is to develop an awareness of time management (Wilkinson, in Bennett et al., eds, 1992). Given the pressures of work principals need to appreciate and analyse existing use of time. Such an analysis will help each principal identify the

areas they are currently giving importance to and hopefully identify real and/or underlying reasons behind this. Unless principals reflect on current practice then it will be quite difficult to improve existing roles. Time management is slowly becoming a crucial aspect of school life which principals just cannot ignore. Principals need to be aware of their own mode of behaviour and know the reasons behind such behaviour. Only then can one develop a different or even better work pattern. Secondly, one can identify better the effects existing work patterns are having on them. Thirdly, another question one might address is whether ongoing training in educational administration and management will allow them as Clerkin (1985) argues, to improve their work patterns.

This study points to the primary school principals undertaking numerous functions which make up their role. Prominent among the characteristics of the principals' work described have been Mintzberg's (*op. cit.*) gestalt of variety, brevity and fragmentation in work activity (Handy, 1984; Hall et al., 1986). The school principal does not enjoy the luxury of undisturbed time to deal with and complete the tasks that face him/her. It is a conclusion of this study and others in the literature that the principal's work is marked by uncertainty. Despite any effort to plan the day ahead and the presence of scheduled events, the principal faces the uncertainty that i) such scheduled events may have to be postponed or cancelled because of the appearance of new factors demanding attention, and ii) there is usually little, if any, indication of what may happen next as the day proceeds. Lyons (1974) rightly describes principals as rarely able to plan their day in other than nominal terms, inevitably leaving a large part of it free in anticipation of the many minor crises that will occur. Thus the principal's day will generally be hectic in pace, varied in its composition, discontinuous in any pursuit of tasks, with the unexpected always one of the few certainties of the job. For survival, the principal must cope with such an array of ambiguity, frustration and disruption.

Executives in various types of organisations have been shown to have a marked preference for 'live' information and to live in a 'verbal world' (e.g. Cohen & March, 1974; O'Dempsey, 1976; Lyons, 1976; Davies, 1987). The present study confirmed this characteristic and, further, showed that much of this personal contact was with one

other person ( see Figure 7.2). The principal would seem to be the centre of the information network of the primary school and as such is in a unique position to have knowledge of what goes on in the organisation. It would also appear from the large number of requests and the number of times principals are kept informed that primary school staff perceive this function of the principal's role as being legitimate. This aspect was emphasised by the large number of decisions the principal had to make during the observation period, most decisions, even those of a relatively minor nature, being referred directly to the principal. Their people-oriented styles meant the principals were able to keep in touch with everything that went on in the school. These findings identify the principal as a person who likes and wants to be involved in all matters, whatever they may be. At the same time the observations highlight that principals spent little to no time on curriculum matters. There is no sign, for example, of the Oldroyd and Hall (1991) INSET management cycle which is essential to improve teacher performance and the quality of learning in the classroom.

In addition to the need for being an articulate spokesperson for the organisation, the principal is faced with the problem of superficiality as a work condition. Peterson (1978) has referred to "decision-press", resulting from the immediacy and variability of tasks facing the principal, as an important characteristic of the principal's work. The job may call for abundant social intercourse but much of this will be inhibited. The pressure of events and commitments, the range and variety of activities, the frequency of interruptions and the simple matter of the unexpected being ever-present, all contribute to the short-lived, lack of in-depth experience in much of the principal's work. Mintzberg referred to the manager's "proficient superficiality", a state of near-expertise in dealing with a world of shallow involvement, where a relationship can be sustained only for a limited period before curtailment or, at least, interruption. This fact was also noted, amongst others, by Copeman (1963), Stewart (1967), O'Dempsey (1976), Willis (1980), and in the present study. In particular, Stewart warned that the fragmented day was often the laziest day or:

... the day that demands the least in terms of mental discipline, though the most in nervous energy ... It is easier to be a grasshopper jumping from one problem to another, than a beaver chewing at a tough task.

(1967, p.154)

Brewer and Tomlinson made a similar criticism, stating that managers choose problems that can be solved most readily and rapidly or "those that they consider most likely to affect the stability of the system" (1964, p.196). The familiarity and security of the administrative orientation may be more comfortable for many incumbents of the principalship than the greater uncertainties of the management orientation with its consequent contacts with people not in subordinate positions. Also, the pressures of the job give the principal little opportunity for the "beaver-like" work behaviour to which Stewart referred.

The work patterns evolved by the principal and observed in this study is very indicative at a time when decentralisation is high on the agenda of the present Maltese government. This implies that principals will be called to take on a more managerial role than the existing administrative one. In this respect Brewer & Tomlinson's observations take on added significance. Moreso, when both the questionnaire survey and the observational study highlight the Maltese primary school principal as not falling into the instructional leader or the leading professional model. Such an analysis must go beyond Willis' suggestion that principals ought to be taught how "to cope with the job" (1980, p.50) and move closer to Clerkin's call for principals to "profitably investigate" (1985, p.294) their role. Such an investigation will allow principals to investigate which administrative duties might be undertaken or supervised by others. Clerkin is of the opinion that principals need to reflect on their practice which currently sees the majority of a principal's energy devoted to " 'keeping the school ticking over' in the short run" (ibid., p.298). This puts great limits to the type of 'effective leader' the principal can be.

Throughout the total sixteen weeks of observation, it was a lingering impression with the present researcher that the principal's job was a thankless one. Principals often commended the actions of others during personal conversations, meetings and assemblies, incidental encounters, and in passing during tours. However, never was this noticed to be reciprocal. It was as though the principal should express appreciation of the work of others in the organisation but was not entitled to receive similar approval from others of any part of his/ her work performance. It was evidently taken for

granted that the principal would and should perform well and needed no approbation.

Much of human learning depends on the reception of valid and timely feedback on one's behaviour. The present study indicated that the principal is denied feedback about his/her performance and must proceed with the job unchecked until, perhaps unknowingly, offence is caused, a norm violated, a particular policy enforced, communication forgotten or a lapse in others' expectations of one's performance occurs.

The present researcher hesitated to try to identify stress in the eight principals observed. However, apart from the hectic disjointed and constant pressure of work on these people, it was noted that at times they appeared fatigued, that the battery of demands upon them persisted and that, in addition, they had to deal with what Clerkin defined as "non-essential commitments" (1985, p.292) (e.g. running a stencil, locating keys, examining broken furniture).

A number of characteristics of the eight principals' work have been noted. Many of these represented pressures upon the principals - the brevity, variety and discontinuity of their work generally, the proportion of unscheduled activities, the work content that was essentially controlled through initiation by other people or by the clock, the frequent variation in the location of work and the frequency of interruption bringing an unexpected event.

Despite the pace of the work and the dynamic characteristics already noted, each work activity is a one-off event. The principal's work is a "custom technology" for virtually each activity is unique and makes a new demand on the principal's personal resources. Each encounter had its own special character - its duration, its location, its time of day, its relationship to the other experiences that the principal had had that day or on other days with the same person, the matter of initiation and the scheduling of the activity, its purpose and, finally, the particular chemistry of the interpersonal interaction. The principal's behaviour would be a function of the messages flowing in the interaction between himself/herself and the other participant(s).

In Thompson's (1967) typology, the intensive nature of this work means that not only is standardisation of performance inappropriate but the principal faces a unique experience in most of his/her work activities. Each one depends upon feedback from the other participant in that activity. The nature of such feedback is uncertain. For example, what does the caller at the office want and what will be his/her reaction to the principal's behaviour as the encounter proceeds? In the present study, a composite 48.7 percent of the principals' work involved close, conversational interactions with other people, let alone the time in contact by telephone, at meetings and on tours.

It would seem that the results of this study correspond to much of what is postulated in the literature as being the role of the primary school principal (e.g. Waters, 1979; Whittaker, 1983; Davies, 1984). They also point to similarities between the role of the primary school principals who were observed in this study and the role and the work characteristics analysed in studies within both other educational institutions and industrial contexts. For instance, the work patterns displayed in the execution of a series of brief, varied, fragmented activities often undertaken at an unrelenting pace with a preference for involvement in interpersonal action are evident in the role aspects of secondary school principals (Jones, 1988; Lyons, 1976), high school principals in both Australia and America (Willis, 1980; O'Dempsey, 1976; Martin & Willower, 1981), and shows similarity to the functions of chief executives (Jenkins, 1985; Mintzberg, 1973), and to the role of other middle managers (Burns, 1957; Lawler, Porter & Tennenbaum, 1968; Stewart, 1967).

There are however some marked differences between Maltese principals and principals in other countries. Maltese principals spend a considerable amount of time (42.7%) working in their office doing administrative/clerical work. One specific reason behind this is that administrators at school level lack clerical assistance. However, another observation is that principals who have deputy principals at their school end up sharing, and in most cases doing, the clerical work. One would have expected that if principals delegated such responsibilities to their deputies, it would have allowed them more opportunities to attend to other areas, such as curriculum development and policy, staff development and teaching. During the period of observation none of this was

observed. And, the responses given to the questionnaire survey helps to support the observational study.

However, one can work further on this scenario as it allows one to conceptualise more and varied opportunities for Maltese primary schools given the necessary clerical support. The fact that principals tend to 'delegate' the clerical work to their immediate subordinates does not solve the nature of the problem. It only helps to indicate the need to further review the role that school administrators, in particular, are being called to undertake. It is obvious that with the appropriate clerical assistance school administrators can have a considerable amount of time at hand to devote to more important matters which fall under the leading professional model. At the moment some of the principals observed used their deputies to an extent that it allowed them time to visit teachers in the class. This finding is also indicative of some of the results of the questionnaire survey in which principals expressed their desire to take on a more active role in school development matters.

As a result Maltese principals cannot be described as the leading professionals of the school, the change agent, as was highlighted in quite a number of studies abroad (e.g. Davies, 1984; Green, ed., 1994; Harvey, 1986; Hughes, 1975; Stalhammar, 1994). Maltese principals hardly spent time, alone or with teachers, negotiating or discussing items regarding policy and the curriculum of the school. Few, if any, meetings were of a pedagogical nature. In fact Maltese principals only spent around 8.3% of their time visiting classrooms and actually teaching - as against, for example the principals studied by Davies (1987) who spent around 50% of their time in classrooms. Clerkin (1985), through his interviews and time diaries, also highlighted the principal's involvement in curriculum development. However, Clerkin expressed his concern that "the diaries [did] not give a full picture of the nature of the head's involvement ... but the evidence suggests that much activity in school centred on such things as preparing policy documents or discussing the curriculum with individual teachers" (1985, p.297). However, he goes on to add that

... initial interviews and subsequent discussions reveal that there was little planned discussion of the curriculum in groups and practically no clearly

defined, on-going INSET activity in any subject area. Moreover, conversations with the heads afterwards indicated that it was this type of work that suffered most at times of stress or when the school's resources were under pressure from other quarters.

(*ibid.*, p. 297)

These observations are most indicative since the study was conducted before the introduction of LMS, and helped to highlight some of the problems U.K. principals are facing today (e.g. Hellowell, 1991).

Clerkin also made a somewhat similar observation to that found in the local study. He had found that whilst "it was not the heads who planned or directed office management procedures" (1985, p.295) they "became over-involved at times with relatively minor tasks rather than delegating these to other appropriate persons" (*ibid.*, p.295). Thus, in spite of the generous help and secretarial assistance provided still the principals Clerkin studied wanted to be in the thick of things. Due to the way they conceptualise their job principals want to be ultimately involved in the administrative aspects of the job.

Another area of difference is that of 'after-hours work'. The Maltese principals did not report any after-hours work during the period for observation, contrary to the literature which sees foreign principals (e.g. Clerkin, 1985; Davies, 1987; Willis, 1980) doing work after school hours. In fact Willis reports that the principals he had observed did a substantial amount of work at home or in other venues. This in fact made up 46.9% of total contact time.

After-hours work is one aspect which has been completely ignored by this study and one which also merits serious attention. It would be desirable to employ, in conjunction with the observational study approach, a diary record. Principals could be encouraged to keep a simple time diary record of work related to activities carried on after school hours. Although such an approach is more subjective and less reliable than the observer's record of their daily work, as evidenced in the Clerkin study, it can help us fill one important gap in this field of study.



Another important difference emanating from the previous one is that although most Maltese principals are chosen because they have a good track record in the classroom hardly any of this expertise is then utilised once they become administrators. So, unlike their U.K. counterparts where teaching still plays an important role, whether directly through classroom teaching or else indirectly through instructional leadership (Davies, 1987; Southworth, 1987; Bell & Morrison, 1988; Hellawell, 1991), the Maltese principal hardly uses the expertise gained in the classroom.

This study also shows the lack of preparation principals and deputy principals have for this varied and complex role. Hopefully recent initiatives in the provision of managerial in-service training courses might go some way towards remedying this defect. The study in itself also raises particular implications for training. This will be discussed in the next Section.

Another aspect related to management training is that since the effective leader (e.g. Coulson, 1986; Day, Whitaker & Johnson, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1984) is most likely to be a person who successfully manages to combine long-term considerations with more immediate tasks there is good reason to look for ways to encourage the principal to involve other staff more fully in school matters. This becomes even more possible through a greater emphasis on a collegial approach to school development (Coulson, 1985; Southworth, 1990). Such an approach might also help to overcome Willis' conclusion that "for both personal survival and effectiveness as head of an institution, the principal must cope with such an array of ambiguity, frustration and disruption. That is both the nature and the price of the job." (Willis, 1980, p.4).

While this study goes some way towards the provision of some illumination of the role of the primary school principal, it has, of course, inherent limitations. Such an observational study is essentially the quantification of work activities. It tells us little or nothing about culture, symbols, context and meaning. It tends to ignore the crucial one-time event that might be highly significant in favour of repeated trivial ones. Further research might fruitfully be undertaken utilising a larger sample with observations taking place on a longitudinal-periodic basis.

## **7.8 Conclusion**

The findings of this observational study can be articulated in the following points:

- There is a range of media through which school principals may express their work and different types of activities made up their work. However, such work is susceptible to interruption, superficiality of treatment, and shifts of location. All of this contributed to the general discontinuity of the work.
- The principal's job is mainly of an administrative/clerical nature with a predominance to solo work in the office.
- The principal's work is characterised by variety, brevity and fragmentation. Principals tended to function as instant executives, dealing with things as they arose. As a result their day tended to be dictated by others and events rather than by planned activities.
- Most of the principal's work is invisible because it is done alone in the office. It tends to be thankless and lacking in personal feedback.
- As chief executives school principals' work has two main interwoven orientations - internal and external.
- The core element of the principal's work is administrative, although this is followed by communication. Communication is both interpersonal and informational, for it depends on human relationships and the flow of information.
- Principals are not instructional leaders with little to no involvement in professional issues at the classroom level (e.g. curriculum development, classroom management) and those at the institutional level (e.g. curriculum design, staff development, strategic planning).

This study endeavoured to record some aspects of the school lives of a small group of principals in state schools in Malta. The intent was to provide 'a slice of what

principals actually do' and to provide data which identifies the type of activities which they are involved in and how they spend their time. As a result of this study, and particularly the methodology adopted, certain important themes which characterise the principalship have emerged. Particular attention is drawn to the relentless pace of school life which conditions how far principals can be reflective individuals. The pressure of events, the range and variety of activities, ranging from trivial to serious commitments, the frequency of interruptions, the open-door policy maintained throughout the school day, and the simple matter of the unexpected being ever present, all contribute to the short-lived, lack of in-depth experience in much of the principal's work. It is also crucial to recognise the force that the setting exerted on the principal's behaviour. The principals seemed to be moved about through most of the day by little problems brought to him/her or created for him/her by others rather than by any grand design of his/her own of what he/she wished to accomplish. Furthermore principals seemed to 'love' being at the centre of things and school events. This adds to Stewart's (1967) claim that principals end up being grasshoppers jumping from one issue to another as against the beaver-like attitude which is essential if principals really wish to tackle more important issues such as curriculum development. Willis (1980) further argues that principals have to accept that it is impossible for them to plan and programme their time due to the occurrence of the unexpected and an acceptance of the inevitability of uncertainties as part and parcel of the principal's work. The present writer is of the opinion that if principals really want to take on a more leading role at school (as suggested in Chapter Six) they have to challenge this conceptualisation. Things can only improve once principals are in a position not only to have a clear perception of their role, but also to challenge and improve upon it.

The focus on the individual gained in the study leads the writer to believe that individuals who are able to bring to bear on their work a clear perception of their own relevant experiences, strengths and weaknesses, may find themselves to be more successful in their incumbency of the principal's role.

In spite of its many limitations, the observational study has provided an interesting record of how a sample of primary school principals spent their time. It is a record of

time actually spent that is independent of principals' perception of how their time was allocated, which eliminates at least one kind of error. Obviously, that record might have been altered somewhat with another sample or if compiled at another time of the school year. And one must also look into the possibility of conducting such a study in the church and private schools for comparative purposes, since this study focused on state school principals. In the long run, the results of a number of observational studies can provide a portrait of the work of educational administrators. However, these studies must be placed in context with other research using other methods if genuine theoretical gains are to be made.

The questionnaire survey has helped to put into perspective quite a lot of the questions raised by the observational study and thus to some extent uncover some of the uncertainty raised over a number of issues.

As the research got underway it was felt that, although the study was quite comprehensive in that it looked amongst other things into what principals perceived their role to be, and aimed to verify this through an observational study, some indication of how 'others' saw the principalship was deemed essential. Bearing in mind the present period of change and development of school management practices in Malta, it was felt appropriate to seek feedback from deputy principals whose own role was undergoing change. It was decided to approach a small group of twenty newly-appointed deputy principals who had all undergone management training, to view how they perceived the role of the principal. At the same time it would seek to identify the perceptions of their own role, and get an indication of how they would view the principalship in the future. This, it was felt, would help us see how Maltese administrators in general viewed their role. The next chapter reviews the findings of this survey.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> The school day in Maltese state schools are of six (6) hours duration, starting at 8.30a.m. and finishing at 2.30p.m.. This includes two short breaks of 15/20 minutes and 30 minutes respectively.

## Chapter Seven: Time Log A

Time	Location	Activity involving principals	Duration
8.15-8.20a.m.	Office	Exchanged greetings with staff	5 minutes
8.20-8.30	Office	Answered phone call/ prepared for assembly	10 minutes
8.30-8.38	Corridors	Assembly:: prayers recited, songs sung	8 minutes
8.38-8.43	Corridors	Watched children walk into their classrooms	5 minutes
8.43-8.45	Office	Talked to caretaker about parent's day	2 minutes
8.45-8.47	Desk	Answered phone call; sick pupil	2 minutes
8.47-8.52	Desk	Parents came in to talk to teacher	5 minutes
8.52-8.56	Desk	Parents came in to register child for kindergarten	4 minutes
8.56-8.57	Desk	Sent for caretaker; checked whether gate had been closed	1 minute
8.57-9.00	Desk	Answered phone call	3 minutes
9.00-9.03	Desk	Phoned neighbouring principal	3 minutes
9.03-9.21	Desk	Talked to student-teacher re the school's filing system	18 minutes
9.21-10.00	Desk	Filled in forms on unserviceable /used furniture	39 minutes
10.00	Desk	Rang bell for first lunch break	
10.00-10.03	Desk	Answered phone call; sick pupil	3 minutes
10.03-10.30	Playground	In playground with other teachers	27 minutes
10.30-11.15	Office	Clerical work; explained items to student-teacher	45 minutes
11.15-11.18	Office	Parents came in to register child to kindergarten	3 minutes
11.18-11.30	Office	Work with student teacher resumed	12 minutes
11.30-11.35	Desk	Pupil came in with individual work; rewarded	5 minutes
11.35-11.41	Desk	Postman came in with mail; Principal went through it	6 minutes
11.41-11.46	Desk	Talked to kindergarten assistant	5 minutes
11.46-11.48	Desk	Answered phone call	2 minutes
11.48-11.54	Desk	Phoned up the Department of Education	6 minutes
11.54-12.00pm	Desk	Principal and student-teacher discussed classroom visits	6 minutes
12.00-12.30	Playground	Mid-day lunch break	30 minutes
12.30-12.40	Office	Talked to teachers about student-teacher's visits	10 minutes
12.40-13.02	Office	Short discussion with spiritual director	22 minutes
13.02-13.08	Office	Teacher came in for some books	6 minutes
13.08-13.10	Office	Child in pain; phoned up mother	2 minutes
13.10-13.15	Office	Sent for caretaker; letters to be posted	5 minutes
13.15-13.55	Classroom	Watched student-teacher conduct a lesson	35 minutes
13.55-14.03	Office	Talked to other student-teachers re some forms	8 minutes
14.03-14.16	Office	Talked to driver about some transport problems	13 minutes
14.16-14.30	Desk	Talked to parents about child's misbehaviour	14 minutes
14.30-14.40	Corridors	Saw children off home	10 minutes
14.40-14.45	Office	Cleared desk	5 minutes
14.45		Homeward bound	

## Chapter Seven: Time Log B

Time	Location	Activity involving principals	Duration
8.16-8.24a.m.	Office	Talked with maintenance workers re pending work	8 minutes
8.24-8.30	Office	Exchanged greetings with incoming teachers/ preparation for Assembly	6 minutes
8.30-8.38	Playground	Assembly: prayers recited, songs sung, news of the day	8 minutes
8.38-8.42	Outside office	Discussed relief for absent teacher with deputy principal	4 minutes
8.42-8.43	Desk	Reviewed diary - checking items requiring immediate attention	1 minute
8.43-8.44	Desk	Answered phone call; sick pupil	1 minute
8.44-8.45	Desk	Filling in pupil absentee form	1 minute
8.45-8.55	Desk	Parents came in to discuss matters related to exam results	10 minutes
8.55-8.56	Desk	Sent absentee form to classroom concerned	1 minute
8.56-8.57	Office	Answered phone call, another sick pupil, took note	1 minute
8.57-9.10	Classrooms	Classroom visits re Lenten talks	13 minutes
9.10		Interrupted by caretaker - the maintenance workers had arrived	
9.10-9.25	Office	Talked to architect re school maintenance work	15 minutes
9.25-9.50	Classrooms	Resumed classroom visits	25 minutes
9.50-9.51	Outside office	Stopped pupils running in the corridors	1 minute
9.51-9.52	Desk	Phoned U.B.S. re transport for following week	1 minute
9.52-9.53	Office	Talked to visiting parents - wanted to see teacher	1 minute
9.53-10.00	Office	Pupil came in asking for metric ruler; filled in absentee form and sent it to classroom concerned	7 minutes
10.00	Office	Rang bell for first lunch break	
10.00-10.08	Outside office	Talked to a couple of teachers and some pupils	8 minutes
10.08-10.10	Office	Endeavoured to phone the department's Media Centre	2 minutes
10.10-10.15	Outside office	Talked to parents	5 minutes
10.15-10.16	Office	Asked deputy to phone Media Centre	1 minute
10.16-10.20	Desk	Had coffee and lunch	4 minutes
10.20-10.24	Desk	Got through to Media Centre - talked to Mr X needed some tapes for school event	4 minutes
10.24-10.44	Office	Prepared programme; consulted with deputy principal; talked to secretary about layout	20 minutes
10.44-10.50	Office	Sent for pupil who had misbehaved in class	6 minutes
10.50-10.52	Office	Pupil came in asking for dental card	2 minutes
10.52-11.30	Storeroom	Principal had a rehearsal session with group of underachievers for school play	38 minutes
11.30-11.33	Desk	Answered phone call	3 minutes
11.33-11.40	Desk	Went through the mail	7 minutes
11.40-12.00pm	Desk	Reviewed some pupil work for publication in the school magazine	20 minutes
12.00-12.30	Office	Had mid-day break lunch	30 minutes
12.30-12.42	Office	Talked to student-teacher	12 minutes
12.42-12.50	Office	Discussed forthcoming Lenten talks with deputy principal	8 minutes
12.50-13.15	Office/corridor	Saw parent	25 minutes
13.15-13.21	Desk	Talked on phone with neighbouring principal re maintenance work	6 minutes
13.21-13.28	Office	Secretary handed in typed programme, together with other correspondence; some amendments made	7 minutes
13.28-13.30	Office	Looked for circular	2 minutes
13.30-13.34	Desk	Talked to deputy principal re form filling	4 minutes

13.34-13.38	Office	Talked to caretaker re maintenance work done	4 minutes
13.38-13.42	Desk	Answered phone call	4 minutes
13.42-13.43	Desk	Noted on diary name of lecturer coming to school the following day	1 minute
13.43-13.45	Office	Talked to teacher re Science handouts	2 minutes
13.45-13.56	Corridor	Went to see how the maintenance workers were getting along	11 minutes
13.56-14.01	Desk	Back in office; answered phone call	5 minutes
14.01-14.09	Desk	Made phone call to parish chaplain re Lenten talks; time finalised	8 minutes
14.09-14.10	Desk	Noted on diary	1 minute
14.10-14.12	Office	Told deputy principal that hours for Lenten talks had been finalised	2 minutes
14.12-14.13	Office	Pupil came in asking for a stapling machine	1 minute
14.13-14.15	Office	Checked that circular had been seen by all teachers	2 minutes
14.15-14.30	Office	Talked to visiting Education Officer	15 minutes
14.30-14.38	Corridor	Saw children off home	8 minutes
14.40		Homeward bound	

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **PERCEPTIONS OF DEPUTY PRINCIPALS**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

The study of the perceptions of Maltese primary school principals has been conducted during a period of change in the management of primary schools. We are still far away from the experiences of LMS, however, the local changes which include the devolution of some financial responsibilities to the school authorities, the training that newly-appointed principals and deputy principals are receiving, and the changes within the management structure at central level, calls for a clearer and better understanding of the changing work culture surrounding the principalship.

#### **8.2 The pilot survey**

This questionnaire (see Appendix F) was, like the questionnaire survey, first pilot tested among a group of educators. Twelve educators were approached (i.e. four primary school principals, four deputy principals, and four Education Division officials). Participants were requested to complete the questionnaire and provide feedback on any aspect of the questionnaire. All twelve returned a completed questionnaire. Advice was also sought verbally from two retired deputy principals. The twenty newly-appointed deputy principals were first contacted by phone where the researcher explained to them the scope of the exercise. They all agreed to participate. The questionnaire was then posted to each one of the participants. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter and a stamped addressed envelope. Questionnaires were anonymous and the deputy principals were requested to return the completed questionnaire by post thus the complete anonymity of respondents was assured. Two weeks were given to complete this exercise. In all twenty completed questionnaires were returned, that is a response rate of 100%. The survey was conducted during the summer term of 1995.

The questionnaire survey with the latest group of newly appointed deputy principals in Maltese state primary schools, although being a small sample, brought out some



interesting findings. First, it has to be stated that the sample was 'selective' in that they were the latest group of newly-appointed deputies; they have been in office for just two scholastic years; they have all undergone specialised management training programmes, including the two-year Diploma course in Educational Administration and Management. So, in quite a number of ways they are a unique group of school administrators. They have been together in courses, discussed administrative and management issues from a theoretical and practice base which, the researcher feels, has gone a long way towards influencing how they view the role of school administration. Second, this group can, through the results of the survey, indicate present and future challenges for the Maltese principalship. Third, such a survey also helps us to contrast the principals' own perceptions of their role with the way deputy principals perceive their role. This, in itself, is an important point which has been raised in this research. Future studies in this area have to consider other peoples' perceptions of the role of principal (and that of others). The study will also highlight how deputy principals perceive their own role in the schools they are in.

### **8.3 Perceptions held by newly-appointed deputy principals on the principalship**

From the responses given by this group of newly-appointed deputy principals to the question "Which, from the following list, do you consider to be the principal's present major job functions?" the picture we get is very similar to the picture highlighted by the principals themselves. Again, it is interesting to note that principals are seen to devote a lot of their time to 'desk work', holding 'discussions with parents' and 'managing pupils'. Areas like school policies, curriculum development and pedagogical matters, again, are quite low on the list (see Table 8.1). It seems that the picture has not changed that much since the start of this research. In fact, this response not only supports the findings of the questionnaire survey but also supports the arguments put forward in a recent national conference on primary education (Farrugia, ed., 1994).

The responses given to the question "Which of the following tasks and duties do you see as being the most important for principals today?" is quite illuminating. Deputy principals highlight the task 'doing routine office work' as the most important task.

This is directly opposite to the response given by principals. So whilst principals perceived ‘office work’ as the least important aspect, deputy principals perceive the act of spending so much time on those aspects of the job as meaning it is an important facet. The other items high on the list are similar. These include ‘building a team of competent teachers’ and ‘establishing good personal relations with teaching and ancillary staff’ (see Table 8.2).

**Table 8.1 Major job functions of principals as perceived by newly-appointed deputy principals (N = 20)**

Principals job functions in order of importance (1 = highest ranking; 10 = lowest ranking)		First choice of job taking most of the principals time as perceived by newly appointed deputy principals	
Job function	Average Ranking	Job function	f %
Desk work	1.3	Desk work	17 (85)
Discussions with parents	3.1	Discussions with parents	3 (15)
Managing pupils	3.1		
Organising activities	4.3		
Discussions with staff	4.6		
Developing a school policy	6.4		
Organising, planning, and evaluating curricula	6.6		
Observing classroom teaching	8.3		
Staff appraisal	8.9		
Teaching	9.2		

The survey also sought to identify how this group of deputies perceived their existing role and the principalship in the years to come. This was deemed important since it was felt that given the background and experience gained over the years deputy principals might perceive their role and that of principals differently. And, if that was the case, in which ways.

Newly-appointed deputy principals perceived the existing role of the principal as one mainly directed towards doing administrative work, dealing with parents and seeing to pupils’ immediate needs. Therefore, the job facets taking up most of the principals’ time were role directed and human related (see Tables 8.1 and 8.2), calling for leadership which is transactional and expressive. Deputy principals themselves also seemed to be mainly involved in role related and human relations facets of work: ‘desk

**Table 8.2 Principals most important tasks and duties as perceived by newly-appointed deputy principals (N = 20)**

Principals tasks/ duties (1 = highest ranking;; 10 = lowest ranking)		Principals most important task/duties as perceived by newly appointed deputy principals	
Tasks/duties	Average Ranking	Tasks/duties	f %
Doing routine office work	2.5	Office work	12 (60)
Establishing good relations with staff	2.7	Building a team of competent teachers	6 (30)
Establishing good parental/ community	3.5	Establishing good relations with teachers and ancillary staff	4 (20)
Knowing the child	3.8	Having a school policy	4 (20)
Building a team of competent teachers	4.9	Introducing new ideas	3 (15)
Keeping up-to-date	5.6	Establishing good parental community relations	1 (5)
Introducing new ideas	6.7		
Evaluating the work of the school	6.9		
Being seen as a good teacher	7.2		
Having a school policy	8.0		

work' and 'managing pupils' being the two most time consuming activities they are involved in (see Table 8.3). However, further analysis underlined an important point of departure. Deputy principals were of the opinion that the principalship of today needed to focus on having a clearly defined school policy, of establishing good relations with staff, for establishing team spirit among teachers, and for keeping up-to-date (see Table 8.4). These results portrayed a role which emphasised role related, human related and occupation related facets, with focus on the school as an agent of change, very much in line with the way Fenech (1994), and Caldwell (1990) identified the school and yet which runs against the responsibilities currently assigned to the principal (Ministry of Education, 1993, p.11).

A 'new' picture is slowly emerging. As other responses attest (see Tables 8.5 - 8.9) tomorrow's principalship is one which involves school administrators in defining school policy, in "having a clear vision" (as one deputy principal put it), in setting aims and objectives with the school administration directly at the helm of educational discourse at school level. However, in spite of this emerging scenario one finds that areas which are essential at improving school practice and eventually leading to

**Table 8.3 Deputy principals present job functions (N = 20)**

<b>Job functions (1 = highest ranking; 10 = lowest ranking)</b>	<b>Average Ranking</b>
Desk work	2.2
Managing pupils	3.1
Discussions with parents	3.6
Organising activities	4.7
Discussions with staff	5.0
Teaching	5.9
Organising, planning and evaluating curricula	6.1
Developing a school policy	7.3
Observing classroom teaching	8.5
Staff appraisal	8.7

devolution of decision-making as described by Fenech (1994) were not yet given high ratings. This, the researcher feels, reflects the level of inconsistency in some of the responses in the survey. The responses given here seem to reflect the lack of a clear understanding of the implications behind schools taking on a more direct and influential role in determining their future. So, whilst deputy principals, like principals in the survey, are of the opinion that principals should determine where they are going and have a policy of how to get there, do not highlight some of the necessary 'internal mechanisms' required for schools to fulfil such a role. Areas like evaluation of curriculum programmes, discussions with teaching staff, observation of teaching, staff appraisal are given low ratings. This is indicative for a number of reasons. First, in spite of the courses and training programmes the newly-appointed deputy principals have undertaken they did not rate the importance of such areas in the perception of the role of school administrators. So, whilst agreeing that principals ought to become change agents, educational leaders and leading professionals, these terms remain quite vague when studying other responses. The respondents do not, or give limited importance to the necessary areas that any principal, as change agent, would have to look into. For example, areas like classroom management and practice, teacher collaboration, curriculum evaluation, are given low ratings (see Tables 8.8 and 8.9). Such findings run counter to pre LMS studies conducted in the U.K. with principals spending quite a lot of time in or visiting classrooms. In fact Davies has gone so far as to state that

It is difficult ... to perceive the role of headship in a primary school being fulfilled adequately other than by someone with teaching experience since a significant proportion of the decision making roles relies on past experience in the classroom.

(1987, p.46)

In Malta we are faced with a situation which is completely the opposite of this scenario. Principals, once appointed, can practically call to an end any direct contact with the class and hence the teaching-learning process. So, even though these results indicate a desire to move towards a collaborative and collegial approach, it is evident - even through the responses of the deputy principals - that their role perception and aspirations do not embrace an important dimension for school development to take place. This raises doubts as to the type of training/courses that principals and prospective principals are getting. Maybe, if not the content of such courses, it raises questions as to how far they can help influence and change existing attitudes, habits and frame of minds.

Table 8.4 Most important tasks of the principalship as perceived by newly-appointed deputy principals (N = 20)

Tasks behind the principalship (1 = highest ranking 10 = lowest ranking)		Most important tasks of the principalship as perceived by newly-appointed deputy principals. First choice for newly- appointed dep. principals	
Task	Average Ranking	Task	f (%)
Having a school policy	2.2	School policy	10 (50)
Building a team of competent teachers	2.3	Building a team of competent teachers	4 (20)
Establishing good relations with teachers	3.3	Establishing good relations with teachers	4 (20)
Keeping up-to-date	4.1	Keeping up-to-date	2 (10)
Establishing good parental/ community relations	5.8		
Introducing new ideas	6.1		
Evaluating the work of the school	6.4		
Knowing the child	6.7		
Being seen as a good teacher	7.4		
Doing routine office work	9.8		

Second, such a response can be attributed to the way principals often relate to their deputies. In a number of seminars, conferences and in-service courses deputy principals have raised the point that, more often than not, deputy principals often end up doing clerical work for or with their principals. And, if and when teachers are absent from school, usually deputy principals often take over a class. Hence the low rating 'teaching' receives. Most deputy school principals are very much against this procedure - maybe so because, as yet, deputy principals do not have any job description to follow. Their role very much depends on the leadership styles adopted by the principal and the directives he/she gives. This attitude tends to perpetuate the ill feeling that often is felt between teachers and school administrators. Time and again teachers have complained that once a teacher becomes a school administrator they tend to forget that they were once teachers. Again, this point raises concern on the type of criteria adopted when choosing principals and deputy principals. If one of the recommendations put forward in the latest conference that principals should participate in "the monitoring of young/untrained teachers" (Farrugia, ed., 1994, p.255) then their existing attitude towards classroom practice has to be addressed. If school administrators are to be "effective consultants" in pedagogical issues (ibid., p.253) then a suitable strategy has to be worked out for this to take place.

Table 8.5 Job facets which give deputy principals greatest satisfaction (N = 20)

Job facets	f	%
Communicating with staff (establishing healthy relations)	12	60
Acting as link between principal and teachers	11	50
Evaluation	9	45
Contact with children	7	35
Communicating with parents	6	30
Organising activities	6	30
Monitoring new teachers	6	30
Introducing new ideas	6	30
Establishing school policy	6	30

**Table 8.6 Job facets which give deputy principals least satisfaction (N = 20)**

Job facets	f	%
Office work	20	100
Limited time to discuss with staff	8	40
Dealing with irresponsible ancillary staff	6	30
Petty clashes between teachers	6	30
Coping with irate and unreasonable parents	5	25
Lack of support from Education Division	5	25
Lethargic principal	3	15
Non teaching role	3	15

**Table 8.7 Required changes within the role of principal as perceived by newly-appointed principals (N = 20)**

Facets	f	%
Review current 'administrative' roles	13	65
Principal as manager	9	45
Principal as mentors	9	45
Principal as change agent (one who looks into staff & curriculum development)	9	45

**Table 8.8 Ways of improving the primary school principals' current situation as perceived by newly-appointed principals (N = 20)**

Facets	f	%
Clerical assistance	18	90
Decentralisation	15	75
Deputy principals to have a clearly defined role	15	75
In-service courses in school management	12	60
Principals to have suitable administrative qualifications	11	55
Long tenure of office in a particular school	10	50
Building a team of competent teachers	9	45

**Table 8.9 Roles, responsibilities and duties for tomorrow's principalship as perceived by newly appointed deputy principals (N = 20)**

Roles and Responsibilities	f	%
Educational leader/ leading professional	16	80
Change agent	14	70
Setting school policy	13	65
Co-ordinate work of staff	13	65
Assessing, evaluating the teaching-learning process	10	50
Having a clear vision	10	50
Establishing an administrative structure for teachers to discuss educational matters	9	45

#### **8.4 Conclusion**

The aim behind this survey conducted with deputy principals was to illuminate the ways in which they viewed their role and more importantly that of principals and the principalship. Considering how others view the principalship has provided important data which went beyond the way principals perceived their role and how the researcher himself viewed and recorded aspects of the lives of a small group of principals.

Overall deputy principals share similar views both in the way they see the role of the principal today and in the way they would like to see their role in the future. Deputy principals see the principal as an administrator mainly involved in educational/clerical work with an inclination towards communicating with teachers, parents and children throughout the performance of their work. At the same time they express concern towards the accumulation of administrative work which centralised policy makers have done nothing to overcome. Deputy principals feel that their role and that of principals now and the future, has to focus on a different model - one which sees school administrators directly involved in deciding the policies and aims of the school. However, little to no attention is directed towards a role model which sees principals as 'managers' who, with the help of others, establish a school policy which determines where the school is heading and the management structures to get there; and as 'educational leaders' who are directly involved in determining curriculum development and implementation at school and classroom level.

This is the major inconsistency in this study. The picture here illustrated by the responses of the deputy principals is one which shows their growing concern towards more administrative responsibilities being given to principals and their desire for more direct control over school matters. What is lacking from this scenario is the will or desire of deputy principals towards addressing the crucial issues which will help principals, deputy principals and staff to assess the quality of education being provided. This concern will form the basis of the discussion in the concluding section.



# **SECTION D**

## **CONCLUSION**

## CHAPTER NINE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 9.1 Main findings

As outlined in Chapter One the main purpose of the present study was to enquire into the role of Maltese primary school principals. More specifically, this investigation aimed at:

a. Initiating a critical discourse on the present role of the primary school principal in Malta.

To achieve this, the research objectives were:

- i. to enquire on the content and characteristics of the Maltese principal's work by investigating how such characteristics and dimensions are perceived by primary school principals;
- ii. to undertake systematic observation of what a sample of principals actually do in their daily work within school;
- iii. to contrast the way principals perceive their job with what they actually do;
- iv. to see whether there exist particular differences for the demographic sub-groups of sex, age, length of experience and type of school;
- v. to compare and contrast these findings with the opinions of a sample of newly-appointed deputy principals.

Results from the main study, the questionnaire survey, showed that the major job functions taking up most of the Maltese primary school principal's time is 'desk work', doing administrative/clerical work, and 'discussions with parents'. 'Discussions with staff', 'organising, planning and evaluating curricula', and 'observing classroom teaching' received little to no mention by state school principals.

The human relations dimension behind the principalship was identified as very important for Maltese principals. Ninety-nine percent of principals reported 'knowing the child' as one of their most important tasks. This was followed by about 94% who saw 'establishing good parental/community relations' as an important duty and 90%

who saw the need to 'establish good relationships with staff'. However, in spite of these response rates one notes that the principal's relationships with pupils only covered areas which Jones (1988) describes as 'contact', that is 'care' and 'discipline' but excluded the important areas which are essential for the child's existence in school - i.e. learning. So pupils are 'managed' from a distance. No talk of quality development (West, 1992); on the need to establish what Osborne & Thorn (1992) call a quality learning environment; on effective delivery of the curriculum, curriculum audit (Nias et al., 1992), etc., are mentioned. This finding is highly significant at a time when we are currently on the crest of another wave calling for a new vision for Maltese primary schools (Farrugia, ed., 1994; Consultative Committee on Education, 1995). If, as attested in the literature, the principal's vision, leadership styles and quality are central to quality education, than any new vision which incorporates schools need to understand the role of the principal (e.g. Dean, 1993; Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991).

At the same time one notes that 'having a school policy', 'building a team of competent teachers', 'evaluating the work of the school', and 'introducing innovative ideas' all received high levels of response. This indicates missing dimensions in not only the role of the principal but also that of the school.

The main training requirements identified by principals were: 'staff appraisal and professional development', 'planning', 'personal professional development' and 'evaluation'. This response identified present areas most principals (i.e. state school principals) are not involved in. Principals also identified 'team building skills', 'motivating skills', 'group work skills' as the skills they needed training in to improve their role. The findings seem to endorse the value of a collegial approach, even though 'delegation' - an important area for collegiality to be nurtured - is not so high on the list. And, the findings in both studies show principals as maintaining full responsibility of all matters, administrative and others, and seem not so willing to relinquish any form of control. This is the type of inconsistency which has been present throughout this study. Whilst principals have expressed the desire to overcome the sense of powerlessness which they have to contend with due to the rigid, centralised system of education, the feeling the writer gets through this feedback is that their desire is to take

over the control of the school per se. It is not clear whether principals, whilst wishing to move towards a decentralised system of education at school level, want it to be based on collegial models which assume that organisations determine policy and make decisions through a process of discussion (e.g. Campbell, 1985; Campbell & Southworth, 1993). This is an area which needs to be thoroughly explored and understood at a time when principals are being faced with ever increasing demands on their time and energies. The persistent model of the principal as 'owner' of the school, as Mortimore (1988) pointed out, has to be challenged. Hellowell's call for increased delegation on managerial functions is essential to make the principal's job manageable and effective (1991, p.336).

While training was identified as an important method of improving current practice there was no data expressing an interest in the current evening diploma course in educational administration and management. This response supports evidence of the need for such courses to be as practical and as close to life as possible. The responses by the newly-appointed deputy principals, who had all undergone this diploma course, supports this line of thought since their responses did not differ from those of principals showing, to some extent, that the existing course played a limited role in influencing practice. The evidence from this research calls for programmes that are more practical in orientation and that require field- and performance-based instruction. The training needs identified by principals and deputy principals call for a collaborative and co-operative working culture which, as other findings highlighted, are not evident in Maltese state schools. This supports the argument that if any changes at school level are to be successfully introduced and implemented then policy makers need to radically review the role of schools and how the educators in schools are being called to perform and relate. There is research evidence from this study that changes and improvements are desired and can take place within schools if a collegial approach is adopted and this requires that administrative and teaching staff receive appropriate training in areas like team building and group work skills.

The survey also highlighted the high level of dissatisfaction principals have of the Education Division. Overall the research indicated that policy makers and planners at

systems level have largely failed to understand and accommodate the needs of principals and their schools.

The principals reported moderate to high levels of job satisfaction on practically all facets of work. The highest level of satisfaction was reported on a) two Human Relations facets: 'working relationships with teachers' and 'personal and social relationship with pupils'; and b) one Occupation Related facet: 'hours of work/holidays'. They expressed the highest level of job dissatisfaction on two Role Related facets: 'involvement in policy making', and 'availability of clerical staff'. From these type of responses it is also clear that principals do not clearly understand the implications behind their responses. Whilst, on the one hand, principals and deputy principals express a desire to be more involved in policies which effect them they are quite satisfied with the level and type of relations that currently exist with their staff. However, as the literature review highlighted, one implication behind a greater control of school development is that principals (and deputy principals) will need to devote more time during and after school hours on management and educational issues than they currently are. The observational study showed that the day is quite short for teachers and principals alike, with teachers mainly involved in classroom teaching and principals dealing, in the main, with administrative matters. No time was devoted for staff meetings/sessions. Principals and teachers have limited time to discuss how things are unfolding, what aims they are trying to achieve, where they are succeeding/failing, etc. However, greater devolution to the schools implies authority and accountability to school members which, in turn, calls for a greater level of commitment (i.e. time and energy) on matters which as yet are not being addressed. Such issues remain unclear and require further study.

The study also explored differences and similarities on demographic characteristics. With regards to gender this study found little to no differences. Some differences were evident in the training needs identified, although nothing conclusive can be drawn as to why there are such differences. Since there are statistically significant differences on particular items further analysis is warranted.

Age and experience reflected few differences. Given the context in which educational developments have taken place in Malta, with a system based, up to some years ago, on age and experience, one would have expected to see some differences between the categories. On the other hand major differences were observed between church/private school principals and state school principals. The major and most obvious differences between the two categories was that whilst state school principals, as has been brought out in both studies, spent most of their time doing administrative work and devoting time to pastoral care, church/private school principals were also concerned with curricular matters. Since church/private school principals are accountable for what they do, and more so private schools who work in a market economy, their administrative set-ups are usually such that administrative and financial concerns are dealt with by bursars or administrative staff. This allows principals time to devote to high value tasks related to long term planning, curriculum development and support. This falls in line with pre- and post-LMS research in the U.K. (e.g. Clift, Nuttall & McCormick, 1989; Davies & Ellison, 1992; Emerson & Goddard, 1993) and the various European models of school leadership (e.g. Blum & Butler, 1989; Hopes, ed., 1989).

Both categories also highlighted interesting differences in the type of training needs required. Whilst state school principals expressed an interest in areas like 'planning', 'motivating staff' and 'team building', church/private school principals seemed to be in another stage of development with an emphasis on areas like 'delegation', 'evaluation' and 'counselling'. This is an interesting finding in that it shows that principals in the church/private sector tend to benefit from better organisational structures at school level which allows for school-based INSET and more opportunities for personal and professional development outside. This is further reinforced by the finding that church/private school principals have higher levels of job satisfaction in most job facets. The main attributes to this being Occupation and Role related facets. It is evidently clear that the two categories do not work within similar working conditions and working environments. As a result further research into the differences between the two categories are warranted as they can provide interesting findings which can be of benefit to educational development in general and policy making and strategic planning in particular.

Both the questionnaire survey and the observational study aimed at reinforcing some of each others' results.

The observational study aimed at providing information about what principals actually do. In support of other studies elsewhere (e.g. Davies, 1987; Willis, 1980) the observational study attested to the multi-varied nature of the principal's role. The principal's day was generally hectic in pace, varied in its composition, discontinuous and superficial in any pursuit of tasks, with the unexpected always as one of the few certainties of the job. The principal's energy was observed as being devoted to keeping the school ticking over in the short run with hardly any time being devoted to discuss matters of direct relevance to the teaching-learning process, such as classroom practice, curriculum review and update. Everyday events, as Kmetz & Willower (1982) had pointed out, engulfed the principal, making deliberate and thoughtful action problematic. In fact most of the principal's actions were controlled by events (Harvey, 1986). Most of the time the principal ended up doing low-value maintenance tasks, adopting a short-term/ immediate perspective to the management of things. Principals made little effort to cut down on interruptions. In fact, they enjoyed being 'up and about' (Clerkin, 1985) and in the thick of things. Coulson (1976) described this close supervision of every aspect of school as paternalism. This supports the previous argument put forward that principals want to take over control from central authorities, and whilst portraying a desire to move towards decentralisation they really want to retain a 'top down' perspective on leadership (Bush, 1995). These findings illustrate the transactional leader (Burns, 1978) who is fixing things, managing and coping in order to maintain the smooth operation of the organisation. As highlighted in both questionnaire surveys principals devoted their time to administrative, pastoral care and communication with parents. Little to no time was stated as being devoted to high value tasks such as strategic planning and curriculum review. The portrayal of Maltese primary school principals is that they are not so much reflective or transformational leaders (e.g. Beare et al., 1992; Burns, 1978; Foster, 1986; Leithwood & Jentzi, 1990). Rather, they are chronically busy, reactive as against proactive, and caught up in, and tied down by the unceasing demands of others for their attention. The present research seems to have identified the transactional nature of leadership as the main

medium of interaction that the primary school principals opted for. As Southworth (1993) argues both dimensions are needed. The two need to go hand in hand.

leadership is filtered, transacted and transformed through the myriad brief, fragmented, everyday routines or 'chores' that are part and parcel of complex organisational life.

(Duignan, 1988, p. 3)

The two are therefore mutually dependent and complementary. This is the dimension of leadership which makes it particular to educational management. For this reason the importance of conducting further observational studies stands out. Leadership is more complex, subtle and interactive than one can imagine. The local observation study in fact showed that few of the principal's interactions affected classroom practice; few observations were made of the interaction between teachers and curriculum development (e.g. Nias et al., 1992); that school development requires clear-cut policies; that plans are produced, resourced and implemented; that classroom organisational arrangements are reviewed; that parents are involved; that allowances are made for changes - human or otherwise, etc. (Holly & Southworth, 1989; Southworth, 1993). None of these were observed. However, most of these activities were seen as important areas for improving schools. Principals are devoting too much of their time on following one dimension of leadership at the expense of others. Duignan's assertion that transactional and transformational leadership are mutually dependent and complementary worries the researcher who feels that this can lead to principals accepting things as they are and not doing much to analyse and improve current practice. As Sergiovanni (1990) and Foster (1991) amongst others argue, the researcher is of the opinion that principals, through a thorough analysis of their current role, need to identify priorities and allocate sufficient time to tackle them. Transactional leadership does not allow for such management. Proper management has to address this issue.

From the observational study it was noted that the principals' management of schools was negatively affected by high levels of interference (Harvey, 1986). In fact, the principal's day-to-day work was characterised by 'an unrelenting pace', 'brevity, variety and fragmentation'. This aspect of the job sees the majority of the principal's



energy devoted to 'keeping the school ticking over' in the short run, of 'putting out fires'. Such a picture, which is very much in line with studies conducted abroad (e.g. Clerkin, 1985; Davies, 1987; Willis, 1980), shows a dimension of work which is characteristic of the school manager who is deeply involved with practically all aspects of work, unlike say a manager in a bank or in industry. To add to this scenario the Maltese principal is inundated with a lot of low value activities including a lot of clerical work. This seems to be typical of the Maltese principal who has limited to no time for less pressing but more valuable forward planning and curricular matters. This 'Maltese' scenario supports the observation Knight put forward, who states that:

time logs usually show too much time on administration and day-to-day affairs, too little on the strategic management functions of long term planning and organisation, team building and evaluation.  
(1990, p.174)

The present research findings show principals expressing dissatisfaction towards the way the Education Division and education officials view the realities of the school. School staff have struggled to keep pace with the requirements presented through education circulars. Furthermore, teaching is very much practised in isolation (e.g. Fenech, 1992; Unesco, 1988). Therefore, we find both school administrators and teaching staff getting together in order to fulfil a managerial role. On the one hand teaching staff has practically full ownership of what takes place in the classroom, whilst principals, adopting an executive role, are limited to dealing with the varied day-to-day issues as highlighted in the observational study.

This summarises the situation in our state schools. With principals not directly responsible for the quality of teaching and learning in the school, particularly in the light of the job description given to principals (see Chapter Three), one finds few principals wanting to question this position and do not feel the necessity to move into the classroom. This is still largely the domain of the teacher and pedagogic matters are primarily the teacher's responsibility. Such a picture disclaims the power-authority model facing schools following a bureaucratic system. Whilst policy is seen to be laid down by central authorities and expected to be implemented in schools, the structures and assigned responsibilities to people within the various levels of the hierarchy

excludes the issue which matters most - the learning process. Teaching is still very much practised in isolation (Farrugia, ed., 1994) and central authorities, as yet, do not see the need to look into this issue which in turn will effect the role that principals will take on.

Through the questionnaire surveys the researcher found substantial support amongst the cohort of principals for school-based development programmes [even though it is premature to state how far Maltese principals understand the principles and the implications behind school-based, school-focused programmes (e.g. Hargreaves, et al., 1989; Reynolds, 1992)]. Furthermore, the questionnaires and the observational study affirmed the fact that administrative pressures have caused principals to bypass the process of staff participation and employ strategies which reduce the time taken to produce 'returns'. As Bush (1995) points out a collegial model to school development implies that educational authorities and school members will have to challenge the 'formal models' in which the system is entrenched.

As the literature review brought out school improvement requires a collaborative approach with both principal and teachers actively involved in the educational process.

[the] process of change is as important as its substance. By introducing, for example, a new science programme throughout the school in a systematic way and as part of a deliberate policy, members of staff are not only learning about how to change but also increasing their own capacity for change.

(Clerkin, 1985, p.116)

Willing and informed staff participation would appear to be the key to successful and lasting reform which is overdue in Maltese primary schools. Without full staff participation the chances are that innovations, or desired changes at school level, will only meet with limited success. It appears that most of the primary schools researched do not have the time, expertise, resources or personnel to manage any wide-ranging curricular reviews which are expected to face up to developments in the educational field.

The principals in the questionnaire survey highlighted a number of issues which clearly

call for a power shift in the way school reform is presently enacted. Principals highlighted the need for central authorities to review the role of the principal within the school structure; to decentralise; to provide principals with clerical assistance; to involve principals in policy making, especially areas directly influencing the schools; and the need to receive the necessary support (human and physical) when required. Evidence from the survey has shown that relationships are strained and may deteriorate further unless the appropriate bodies take positive steps to redress the situation. Much will depend on the willingness of decision makers to appreciate and make allowance for the daily demands of school life and timetable the implementation of any educational reform accordingly. One must also state that the recognition of the teaching profession by Government legislation (1988) was a step in the right direction, but entails added responsibility on the part of school staffs. Present government initiatives to review and re-structure the set-up of central authorities (i.e. the Education Division) could lead towards eventual school restructuring.

Schools do not appear to have sufficient time to permit all members of staff, including the principal, to adopt a collegial approach to school management. There is a real possibility that the impact of any planned reforms will be less successful than intended because schools would have been given insufficient time and insufficient quality training in the management of change. It appears that principals are feeling pressurised, frustrated and overworked. The responses to the open-ended questions brought this out quite clearly. As a result most principals (especially state school ones) are currently devoting their time to administrative and pastoral duties. Principals are neglecting the necessary planning and consultation with staff so vital for the effective analysis and implementation of any curriculum directives coming from central authorities. Moreover, there are no internal management/organisational structures which allow and call for school-based curriculum review and development as suggested in the school improvement and school effectiveness literature (e.g. Hopkins & Sebba, 1995; Reynolds & Packer, 1993; West, Hopkins & Beresford, 1995). However, as already highlighted through the questionnaire surveys with principals and deputy principals and the observational study, the call is mainly one directed towards a power shift from central authority at systems level to central authority at school level, with a limited call

for principals and deputy principals to control the development of the curriculum at the school level. Such findings reflect the way principals see change and the parameters of change they would like to explore. Robbins & Alvy argue that for principals to “honour the school’s meaning” (1995, p.63) they have to adopt a collegial model of management in which principals and staff “collaborate to ensure a coherent approach to teaching and learning” (Bush, 1995, p.53). Only principals in the church/private sector reflect this model. Future in-service courses and management development courses for school principals have to address these issues. There is a need to create opportunities aimed at rebuilding principal’s (and teacher) confidence and at developing relevant management skills to help all principals handle effectively the ‘restructured’ primary schools of the 1990s.

Pre- and post-LMS research on the principalship and leadership talk of the importance of having a vision (e.g. Beare et al., 1992; Miles, 1987; West, 1993). It is a vision which emerges from the leader, who articulates and communicates it so that it becomes part of the shared values of the community, celebrated through rituals, symbols, ceremonies and policies. Schools need positive leadership (HMI, 1977) from the principal in setting and achieving goals. As Miles argues:

The need for a vision of what a school should look like is affected by two preconditions: the principal must exercise leadership in promoting a vision but the staff must be willing to accept some shared set of goals.

(1987, p.187)

Such visions and values need to be converted into development plans (e.g. Davies & Ellison, 1992; Goddard & Leask, 1992; Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991). The observational study and the questionnaire survey highlighted that principals expressed little to no concern to the quality of education being provided in their schools. Only church/private school principals expressed concern towards total quality learning (Lessem, 1991; Oakland, 1993; West-Burnham, 1992, 1994). There is no exhaustive data on how this is being done. However, the responses to the questionnaire indicated that principals in the church/private sector are involved in curriculum matters. How this is done and what affects these are having on quality has yet to be researched.

Collaborative school cultures can make an important contribution to both the success of school improvement processes and the effectiveness of schools (Little, 1981; Mortimore et al., 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989). Principals' leadership has also been shown to be related to school effectiveness and the success of school improvement efforts (e.g. Day, Whitaker & Johnson, 1990). Other research has highlighted the important role of the principal in fostering collaboration among teachers (e.g. Campo, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1984, 1990).

The U.K. principal after LMS can be described as in a state of transition (Murphy, 1992). Recent reports (Bullock & Thomas, 1994; Webb, 1994) show that there has been a tendency for LMS to divert senior management in schools from their role as educational leaders. The role of the principal has, as a result, become more extended and more demanding in the current educational climates. Principals are being called to reassess their managerial role. Under LMS, principals and their staff are more obviously accountable, and have more scope to plan and to control their resources and expenditure (e.g. Levacic, [ed], 1989; Purvis & Dennison, 1993). Evetts argues that "changing and increasing the contexts for micro-political activity have ...dramatically changed the orientation of the headteacher's role and have thereby affected the culture of head teaching as work" (1993, p.63).

This research on the principalship has highlighted this critical dimension that Evetts here refers to. Reforms, even the most well-intentioned ones, cannot take place without a clear understanding of school life. The present research merely helps to scratch the surface of a dimension of leadership of which we have a relatively meagre understanding. Any form of decentralisation will necessarily effect the actors within schools. Up to now, as Southworth argues, primary school leadership has been discussed on the basis of a limited knowledge base and conceptualised from within a single, bureaucratic paradigm (1993, p.85). This research helps to highlight the need to review our thinking of leadership and offers the perceptions of principals themselves.

The survey also explored the training needs of principals. The responses given

expressed the principals concern about their present role. The areas identified, including 'professional development of staff', 'planning', 'leadership' and 'evaluation' shows that principals expressed a desire to move beyond the transactional leadership styles and experience transformational and what Etzioni (1964) and Nias (1987) describe as instrumental ones. The preparation, certification and training of principals needs to be taken seriously. The issue needs to be addressed at least on two levels. On a national/systems level it will help us understand the organisation and micro politics of the school, the nature of the environment surrounding the school, and the principal's role within the school. At the school/grass-roots level it will help schools develop the high quality leadership they need to create school development practices, to become effective, and the capacity to set goals and meet them as Dubin (1987), Glatter (1983) and Stego et al., (1987) have illustrated.

## **9.2 Main themes**

From these findings the following main themes, which the researcher feels are central to this study, can be drawn out:

- The Principal as administrator
- The transactional nature of leadership
- The micro-political context of the principalship.

Each item will be in turn discussed.

- The Principal as administrator

The major finding of this study, and one which is unique to the literature on the principalship, is that most of the principal's time was taken up with administrative work, which was mainly clerical in nature. Although in the questionnaire surveys principals and deputy principals expressed their dissatisfaction towards their present role which entailed low value tasks, other responses and the observational study do not reflect a model which involves principals and others in professional matters. In fact, whilst principals and deputy principals were mainly concerned with administrative matters, and teachers were concerned with teaching, the two had little to no contact with each other. Therefore, the management styles and management structures adopted were quite unlike those of the 'effective leader' described in the literature review as one who

emphasised the formulation and achievement of goals; as one who effected decision making involving curriculum development and instruction; as one who organised and co-ordinated the curriculum programme and created an evaluation system to review educational goals.

Bush argues that “the management of professionals cannot be based simply on a bureaucratic structure but has to acknowledge the expertise of teachers as individuals, and as a group of staff within an institution” (1995, p.11). This, the writer feels is an important statement which needs to be addressed at the national level. Development in schools, and educational development in particular, cannot be addressed professionally unless a collegial and collaborative model of management which effects practice (e.g. Bush, 1993; Campbell, 1985) is adopted. As yet the Maltese authorities are still very much embedded in the bureaucratic/ hierarchical management model and this is reflected in the way principals managed their schools. The responses, although to some extent, highlighted a desire to move towards a more collaborative approach to dealing with school matters, this can be mainly attributed to principals in the church/private sector who are already doing so. State school principals and deputy principals, through both the questionnaire responses and the observational study are portrayed as mainly involved in administrative matters with limited involvement in professional issues. Unlike the Hughes’ (1976) model which encompasses the principal’s dual role as chief executive of a school and the leading professional within it the Maltese principal falls mainly under the chief executive model. More recent developments in Malta, as expressed through the devolution of some financial responsibilities to school principals, have raised further concern towards the type of ‘new’ roles expected of principals (Farrugia, ed., 1994).

It is the researcher’s opinion that the principalship is still viewed by administrators and prospective ones as a post which brings with it prestige. Bearing in mind that the majority of principals are appointed on the basis of seniority (see Chapter Three) reflects a principalship which calls for a person who is prepared to take on an administrative post rather than a managerial or leading professional one. The job description (see Chapter Three) and the data from this study which shows that

principals do not teach, do not actively and genuinely participate in what and how teaching and learning take place indicate that the post of principal is primarily to be conceived as a post that brings status and prestige. Principals who reflect this attitude tend to consider their role as one of privilege rather than commitment to managing the teaching-learning process.

It is not merely a question of whether principals are, or are not, competent to take on the leading professional role model, but also that the present conceptualisation of the school principal does not embrace such a model. What is being perpetuated is a formal role model of leadership where the possibility of opposition, indifference or change is not acknowledged. Thus, principals in Maltese schools are called to support this characteristic of unidimensional leadership (Bush, 1995) which comes from outside the school.

To some extent, recent educational developments in Malta recall the educational reforms of the late 1980s in the U.K. The U.K. principal is finding it extremely difficult to sustain this dual role of 'professional as administrator', the shift being towards the 'chief executive' or 'managerial' model. In Malta, in the state sector, we are faced with principals who, once they take on an administrative post, hardly ever step into a classroom let alone assess and evaluate the quality of education being provided. In this respect Hellowell's findings in the U.K. can help us redress this situation. However, redressing the local situation will not be easy and cannot be done in the short term. As a result this is a major challenge to any policy maker (i.e. in the main politicians and high-ranking civil servants) who often think and look for short term innovations or changes in the educational field. If school administrators are to take on the leading professional model, which as Hughes (1990) and Hellowell (1991) argue is essential, a more creative and dynamic role is required. The results of the surveys show that principals, to some extent, wanted to create management cycles which were based on a more collaborative framework. This was mainly evident in the responses given by the newly-appointed deputy principals who perceived the role of the future principal as one which adhered to a more collegial model and one directly involved in working out school policies, in defining and reassessing aims and goals, and in evaluating the



curriculum.

The next theme develops this point further.

- The transactional nature of leadership

Both the questionnaire surveys and the observational study highlighted a principal who was mainly involved in dealing with matters as they arose. The principal's day was characterised by brevity, variety and fragmentation, with principals tending to be mostly reactive as they attempted to address all issues of school life. Principals wanted to be at the centre of all things and as a result ended up being deeply involved in a lot of low value tasks. The responses to the questionnaire surveys showed that principals were to some extent preoccupied with this situation. They highlighted the need for clerical assistance in order to overcome most of their desk work. However, their responses do not show an inclination towards the transformational leader. In fact there are no results which show that Maltese principals in the state sector were involved, directly or indirectly, in instructional leadership. Principals, in all probability, due to the systems they have been brought up in, are not willing to relinquish their control of a lot of things they were currently involved in. It is the writer's feeling that their desire to be involved in all matters and decisions, as witnessed in the observational study, reflects the way principals viewed control and hence how they conceptualised power. One way of maintaining power and therefore control over others is by being involved in as many issues as possible.

Bearing in mind the questionnaire response and the results of the observational study, the writer's own experiences as a principal, and the discussions held with many principals over the years the writer is very much concerned about this issue. Unless principals are well and truly prepared to address this issue it will not be easy to ever change the present roles and responsibilities that principals are currently involved in. It is so easy for a principal, whether willingly or unwillingly, to be taken over by the ways things unfold at school level. However, the writer is of the opinion that if the local authorities do seriously consider Hellowell's (1991) suggestion to delegate responsibilities to deputy principals and ancillary staff than principals would be in a

better position to view their role of educational leaders. Even this assumption, however, cannot be taken for granted. Things will not just happen. The mechanism both at central and school level has to be there - this will need to include the human network which will be needed for principals to take on the leading professional role. This is the main challenge which awaits school reform on the island. Changes at the school level will not take place unless instigated by central authorities. It is hoped that this research, together with other research studies, will help the local authorities to reflect on aspects of school life, in particular the role that principals are being called to undertake. This research provides policy makers with data on the present management models (i.e. bureaucratic/ hierarchical ) being adopted in schools; the lack of a quality discourse in the way principals manage the school, and the lack of direct involvement and/or control of the curriculum.

It also provides policy makers with data which goes beyond the school parameters. It shows, amongst other things, that education officials have strained relationships with school principals, and that this is due to at least two main reasons: a) policy makers have failed to understand and accommodate the situational difficulties principals face; and b) few education officials visit schools, let alone support them in their educational or administrative needs. As a result the Maltese education system has developed over the years without ever anyone stopping to consider the role of the schools, mainly that of providing a quality education to children. This implies that the present role of principal can be challenged so as to become one which is more creative, dynamic and the 'leading' type of professional as described by Hughes (1990) only when central authorities understand the serious implications that the current situation is having on the education being provided.

- The micro-political context of the principalship

Another major finding within this study was the glaring differences between state school principals and church/private school principals. It is obvious that both categories work in different micro-political contexts. State school principals seem to be more vulnerable to environmental pressures as expressed through centralised policy making and implementation at school level. As a result the level of dissatisfaction is

higher amongst state school principals and this is mainly due to the lack of support principals are getting from central authorities. As Bush (1995) argues, “the management of schools and colleges is dominated by resource issues” (p.13). This seems to be the major handicap confronting state school principals. Their relationship with education officials are strained and may deteriorate further unless positive steps are taken to redress the situation. It is clear that whilst the move by central authorities has been for greater autonomy to the schools this has not been accompanied by increased authority for principals. The culture one is working in determines to a large extent the way principals view and perform their work (Evetts, 1994). The results of this research seems to portray a context in which state school principals have a limited say in how school policies are drawn up and how they are implemented. This has led to a situation which sees principals mainly concentrating on low value tasks which in the end do not require a principal to implement. This ‘culture’ has taken years to mature and has naturally affected how principals view change and development. State school principals seem to be burdened by non-educational demands associated with administration which has led to them sacrificing their prime role as educators. On the other hand, church/private school principals assume a more direct interest and participation in curriculum matters and this is mainly attributed to the fact that they themselves are involved in the strategic planning of school policies which they themselves have to implement. Such an important distinction between the way state and church/private school principals perform their job leads to the argument that central authorities need to reflect on these differences. The results also show that principals in the church/private sector have better relations with their staff, relations which involve greater staff participation in determining school issues and outcomes. Although not conclusive, the data through the questionnaire survey, present interesting findings that should provide central authorities with a lot to reflect upon. Observational studies conducted with a group of principals in the church/private sector would also be extremely useful as this would provide first-hand information as to how principals in this sector spend their time, and, at the same time provide comparative data.

### **9.3 Limitations and significance of the research study**

It is a truism to say that an investigation of this nature has a number of limitations.

Although these limitations are often inevitable, and indeed often shared with other similar investigations, they should nevertheless be acknowledged and borne in mind. Cognizance of the limitations should help place in a proper perspective the importance of the present study generally and the significance of the findings in particular.

The major limitations of this research arise from the research methodology and the data-gathering techniques used. The main instrument used was a questionnaire survey approach, collecting data through the use of self-administered instruments. Although the general strengths and weaknesses of these have been discussed in some detail in Chapter Five, further consideration is warranted.

The main line of argument assumed in this research is that in order to understand the role of the principal one dimension which cannot be ignored is that of perception. Perception, therefore, assumes a central role in such an investigation. The study aimed at exploring the role of principal mainly through the principals' own perception of role. The accuracy of the study and the validity of the findings is limited by the extent to which respondents made valid and reliable responses. In employing the self-administered questionnaire it was assumed that respondents would be able and willing to answer the questions frankly, honestly and truthfully and that responses would not be affected by such factors as ego-defensive processes. This, of course, was a mere assumption and although it is not easy to see how one could have verified the respondent's 'willingness' or 'ability' to provide accurate and frank responses, it may be argued that this 'blind' faith in respondents constitutes a major shortcoming.

Of its very nature the type of instrument employed to collect data regarding the role of principals was limited in so far that it was basically a self-report of role perceived by the respondents. Although valid in its own right one may legitimately argue that such data surely do not replace the need for more 'objective' measures. Indeed, the importance of having self-report data corroborated by other forms of measurements was taken into consideration. It was decided to use an observational study approach (in spite of the criticism directed at this method of research) in the analysis of the role of primary school principals. This was felt essential in order to overcome some of the limitations

behind a single-method approach, and in this case an indirect method.

It was the opinion of this writer that this research methodology provided a unique opportunity for the researcher to 'live' with the role incumbent for a brief period of time. This would provide the researcher an opportunity to verify some of the main points highlighted in the questionnaire survey. This method of research would also help the researcher to appreciate the 'reality' of aspects of school life, and to help to some extent bridge the gap often associated between researchers and practitioners.

Furthermore, a further questionnaire was conducted with a 'special' group of respondents directly involved with principals (i.e. deputy principals) and who therefore have their own perceptions, their own ideas and ideals about the role of principal.

A further limitation is that it ignored to explore how other parties who have vested interest in the school - i.e. teachers, education department officials, parents - perceived the principal's role.

A third limitation is inherent to the observation study technique. While this approach goes some way towards the provision of some illumination of the role of the primary school principal and supports the findings of the questionnaire survey, it has, of course, inherent limitations, mainly the relatively small number of principals involved in the study and the fact that the study took place during a designated period of time and did not look into longitudinal effects.

In spite of the above limitations, and other legitimate ones which one could think of, the present research is significant in a number of ways. The following are perhaps the most worthy of note.

The research investigated the role of principals in a context which, while retaining all the characteristics of an educational system, allowed all the entire eligible population of subjects to be incorporated in the 'sample'. This enabled a relatively wide range of personal and context variables to be included in the design. Thus, all primary school

principals were invited to participate in the questionnaire survey with, as indicated above, a relatively high response rate.

Insofar that the present project has provided additional data on the role of the primary school principal carried out in a country 'new' to literature on the principal's role, and therefore as such it may be instrumental in aiding international comparisons, attests to its significance. Moreover, information about the characteristics of a primary school principal's work as revealed in the present investigation should prove invaluable to researchers of the area in the Maltese context. For instance, the amount of time spent with children, and the time involved (or lack of it) with pedagogical matters, in a time of national changes, such information should enable researchers and policy makers in the present context, as Holdaway & Ratsoy point out, to place more emphasis "...upon the selection, preparation, evaluation, and continuing education of principals" (1991, p.5). Finally, the present study is significant in that it may constitute the first step in primarily sensitising the Maltese political and educational establishments to the problems facing school principals if their role is not studied carefully in line with any desired changes at school level. This will definitely effect the quality of education provided in the schools.

#### **9.4 Recommendations for future research**

It is often said that research raises more questions than it answers. In this regard, the present study is no exception and while it is hoped that adequate answers have been given to some of the research questions there are clearly other questions and issues which warrant further investigation. What are presented hereunder are some recommendations which hopefully may prove practical and useful, to some extent. These recommendations ideally ought to be addressed at both systems and local level. That is, Education Division officials need to reflect on how they view the principalship in particular and the devolution of authority to the school generally. At the local level (i.e. individual/ group) principals need to reflect on their own past and current practices of the principalship. At the same time caution is called for in making statements about principals' behaviour, because, as we have seen, that behaviour must be congruent with their value system/ culture (Hopes, ed., 1989).

With increasing demands on the time and energies of principals from an administrative and managerial perspective, together with the research findings of this study that principals want to assume a greater interest and participation in curriculum and class matters, one will need to understand how issues, which are new to the Maltese cultural/work setting, such as 'delegation', 'collaboration', 'consultation' and 'participation' are interpreted by educators and how they are translated into action. Such an examination seems important and significant for future change.

The argument that the researcher is advancing from this research is that there must be a thorough analysis of school administrators' roles in general so that there is first a clear understanding of the differences that exist between managerial responsibilities and educational ones. This will in turn lead to responsibilities being 'shared' or 'delegated' to various individuals. This research highlights that principals have little to no concern of curriculum/ pedagogical issues, unlike their British counterpart. Whilst British researchers (e.g. Hellowell, 1991) call for greater delegation of managerial functions, in Malta we need to move away from administrative low value tasks to educational or leading professional concerns which have never been seen as falling within the principal's role.

The present exercise by central authorities to delegate more and more financial decision making to the school, although laudable, is only helping to direct the principal's role to more administrative concerns. This research and present trends at systems level help to reinforce the argument that policy makers at central level are constantly failing to understand the implications behind school effectiveness and improvement and the role principals have to play in it. Bearing in mind school effectiveness research and school improvement practices (e.g. Bollen & Hopkins, 1987; Reynolds & Cuttance, 1993) policy makers need to redefine reform practices and study their effects on the 'actors' concerned.

The observational study provided an interesting and worthwhile method of enquiry into a particular aspect of school life. This study needs to fall within a structured framework such that a longitudinal approach is adopted. It is here being suggested that

a sample of principals are selected and observed during particular periods of the school year and over a designated period of time (e.g. five-years ). This will allow us to study how role and perception of role are influenced by changes at the personal/ professional level and systems level. Furthermore, this method of inquiry would be enhanced if more researchers got together to conduct these studies. This in itself would be a unique experience. Up to now researchers in Malta have very much worked on their own.

The study, through the questionnaire survey, has shown that there are obvious differences between state and church/private school principals, especially in the leadership orientation adopted with church/private school principals knowing (or learning) how to balance the leading professional aspects and the chief-executive aspects of the role of school leader. It seems imperative that church/private school principals are observed in action. This would lead to a comparative study which can go a long way to see how both sectors can help each other improve the principalship and hence effectiveness of the education being offered on the Maltese islands. More detailed close-up studies of principals in action to show the complexity of their work in greater relief, as Southworth (1993) suggested, are definitely needed. Bearing in mind the observational study conducted, more focused, in-depth studies of particular aspects of the principal's role would provide us with research material to guide decision making at central level and practice at school level.

It has also been suggested that a variety of research methods are used. Up to now the Maltese primary school principal has been observed through a questionnaire survey and the observational study. Currently another researcher is conducting research using a diary technique (Mifsud, 1994). Feedback from such research should be used for discussion purposes during seminars, conferences which involve principals, so their deliberations together with the findings would help enlighten further developments in the field.

This is not an easy exercise. As has often happened locally, principals' own ideas have had limited effect on how principals can function in the school. The proceedings of two conferences held between the span of seven years (i.e. Unesco, 1988; Farrugia,



ed., 1994) help to bring out mostly similar, if not identical, concerns. This helps to highlight one of the major hurdles we have to overcome (Darmanin, 1991; Fenech, 1992).

Our history of education is replete with examples of reforms imposed from above, of reforms implemented without a proper assessment of its possible effects, and change which does not respect the stake-holders in education. We need to inculcate a collaborative action research approach within the whole educational system. Policies need to be research-directed. This implies that the present system of introducing change has to be challenged.

One way of creating this culture is by sharing such research findings with the concerned parties themselves through national seminars, fora and debates. An informed public can encourage a different approach to policy making.

Another area of concern is the type of training programmes being offered to principals. Current courses need to be critically analysed and feedback sought from both those who have pursued the course and course lecturers themselves. Any changes need to be based on such feedback.

The role of the Maltese principal as executive figured strongly in the present study. The Maltese principal stands out as one who has to be involved in practically all matters of school life. We are faced with a principal who is trying to control almost everything, but, at the same time, has little real power. Hunter (1979) beautifully describes the 'climate' the Maltese primary school principal is working in:

The Head is not vested with the concomitant power that would benefit a dominant position as an accepted 'democratic dictator' in schools. Rather it seems as if he (sic) is continually trying to create room for manoeuvre within severely delineated limits imposed from outside the school. The process of policy making over which he (sic) presides appears to be reduced to minor adaptations within a complex framework which takes for granted assumptions or premises for action.

(in Jones, 1988, pp.47-48)

The present research has identified this dichotomy facing school reform. Whilst the educational authorities want to decentralise at the same time they have not allowed themselves time to 'understand' the how and why behind the way schools are currently operating. Understanding current conceptualisations of leadership is important if the Maltese education system wants to introduce decentralisation seriously. The argument that the present researcher is putting forward is that school reforms cannot be seriously and successfully implemented without understanding the realities of school life. This can only take place through ongoing collaboration with the members of schools. This, up to now, is very limited. The present research brought out the high levels of dissatisfaction principals have of central authorities. Most principals agreed with Craig who recommends that:

a large centralised bureaucracy based at country hall is clearly not going to provide the services that schools expect and demand. The thrust of the change taking place is to delegate responsibility as far down the line as possible. Therefore, support for that delegation would have to take place as locally as possible consistent with the authorities' ability to have people of stature and credibility in sufficient numbers.

(1989, p.38)

Furthermore, with increased devolution of authority to the schools this needs to be followed by increased delegation of managerial functions at the school level. Principals cannot expect to manage the school effectively if they do not introduce increased staff consultation and involvement in decision making. This will not be easy for principals. It means, amongst other things, that principals recognise their reluctance to give staff power as Jenkins (1991) observes. However, from what we know about managing and implementing change teacher empowerment is necessary (Fullan, 1992; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1992) and is the way forward.

The present research, therefore, identifies the need to investigate further how decentralisation is being introduced and how this is effecting the way schools are managed, how school personnel relate to each other, and how they work together.

The research represented an attempt at investigating the principalship through observing the principals in action and through two questionnaire surveys. The research was

carried out within a compact context - the primary sector - one which, effectively, was large enough and at the same time sufficiently self-contained to allow all principals to be surveyed. Although the research has provided what may arguably be considered a comprehensive account of how principals perceive their role and how principals 'live' their day-to-day practices within schools, it is the opinion of this writer that, as far as the Maltese context is concerned, this essentially constitutes a first important step in understanding the principal's role especially within an educational context calling for decentralisation. Clearly, further investigations along the above lines are warranted. Finally, the present writer believes (and is optimistically confident) that such knowledge and understanding may stimulate discussion and debate on how devolution of authority to schools can take place.

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# APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

A sample of letter circulars and guidelines from the Department  
of Education to school principals

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS  
NOV 1920

From *Master & Mistresses*  
*(Arcisk)*  
To *D. E. S.*

From  
To

99 - 11 - 1920.

1920.

*We submit the  
annexed Time Tables  
for your approval.*

*G. Hamana  
Chuccia*

*Please submit last  
year's Time Table &  
Programme along  
with these.*

*C. H.  
22/11/20.*

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No.        19

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS' OFFICE—MALTA.

16 December, 1920

Mistress - *Asciak*

The undermentioned pupil teachers will form part of the class for New Pupil Teachers.

Classes will be held every Saturday, commencing from the 19th. inst., at the Elementary School Office at 7.45 a.m. and afterwards at the Valletta School.

Mr. Scuderi will also teach by correspondence.



Director of Elementary Schools.

*Mrs. Emma Margaret*

Elementary Schools Office  
Colombo 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1921.

Head Masters,

Please inform me:

- (a) How many candidates from your school sat at the recent Ceylon Examination.
- (b) With what result.
- (c) Account for the failures, if any.

W. H. S. S. S.  
Director of Elementary Schools.

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Education Department, Schools' Office,  
on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 1921.

All Head Teachers  
(Elementary)

Please report:

- (a) How many infants were promoted to your school from the Infant stages?
- (b) From which stage?
- (c) If from Stage I, why?
- (d) In what Standard have you placed them?
- (e) If not in Standard, in what?  
(Please detail your reply to (a), particularising subjects and pointing out deficiencies)

The replies to reach me before the 30<sup>th</sup> inst. marked "Despatch".

To the Director of Elementary Schools.

1853, Ottobre 3.

Abbia pieno vigore il seguente Regolamento delle Conferenze mensili de' Maestri di primaria educazione;

### REGOLAMENTO.

1mo. Le conferenze dei Maestri di primaria educazione si tengono nel secondo dì d'ogni mese; ovvero quando questo è impedito, nel giorno seguente.

2do. Questi incontri hanno luogo nella sala contigua alla Scuola Normale Infantile della Valletta, ovvero in altri luoghi che a tempo proprio indicati saranno dal Principale Direttore delle Scuole.

3zo. A queste riunioni presiede il Principale Direttore, ovvero uno dei Maestri da lui temporaneamente a ciò deputato.

4to. Queste conferenze si prolungano per tanto tempo quanto crede proprio la persona che le dirige.

5to. Alle medesime conferenze sono obbligati d'intervenire tutti i Maestri delle Scuole di Malta.

6to. Niuno può esentarsene senza speciale permesso ottenuto dall' Ufficio del Principale Direttore.

7mo. Saranno ammessi come semplici ascoltatori ancora gli assistenti delle Scuole medesime.

8vo. In ciascuna di queste conferenze ogni Maestro dee essere pronto a dare, se chiesto, informazione di tutte le particolarità che riguardano la sua Scuola.

9no. Forma principale soggetto di queste conferenze la discussione di tutto quello che può influire sul miglioramento dei Metodi e della Disciplina scolastica.

10mo. Possono essere discussi tutta altra sorta di argomenti, che in qualunque siasi modo riguardare possono il progresso delle Scuole.

11mo. Al principio di ogni conferenza si legge il rendiconto della conferenza precedente, il quale non facendone reclamo alcuno dei Maestri presenti, rimane approvato; di guisa che tutti i Maestri dovranno darsi ogni premura possibile onde conformarsi alle deliberazioni che ne saranno prese.

12mo. Al termine di ogni conferenza si propone il soggetto della conferenza seguente.

# Reading.

General Principles to be followed in the teaching of Reading.

Reading is a triple task; there are the idea in the mind, the spoken words, and the symbols representing those words. That is, there are the idea, the sound, and the symbol. If the idea is translated by sounds we get spoken language; if by written or printed symbols we get reading. The teacher's work is to form the combination between the words and the symbols [and the ideas also in Malta]. As in all other subjects of instruction the sequence in teaching must be observed. The teacher must proceed from the known to the unknown, or from the simple to the complex.

A beginning must be made with words, and not with letters [Garlick]

The method of teaching reading which harmonises with the method of learning is one which begins with words, which connects writing with reading, which introduces phonic analysis later as a help to the recognition of other words, and above all, which continually connects visible symbol with idea. [Wellton].

.....the children will not begin reading till they have acquired facility in speech, and a fairly large vocabulary.

The chief aim at this stage [first lessons in reading] should be to obtain familiarity with the look of a large number of common printed words. The teacher will do well to select for the first lessons in reading words which from their connection with the child's stories, pictures, or surroundings have a natural interest for him. As soon as the children have mastered a large number of common words printed on the blackboard or on reading-sheets, but not before, they should be given a primer or easy story-book. [Board of Education Suggestions]

## The Combined Analytic Method.

This method of teaching reading follows the general principles laid down above. (a) The word which is to be taught in the reading lesson is first to be learnt [connection of sound & idea] in the colloquial lesson, and then revised in the story which forms the introduction and rouses the interest of the children.



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(a) New words are printed on the B.B. by the teacher, and printed in the margins of their slates, whilst a simple drawing beside the printed word, and the repeated pronunciation of the word by teacher and pupils all help to connect sound, idea or symbol.

(b) After a certain number of carefully selected words [such as dog, mat, pot, can, box, rat, fan] the letters of which can be regularly and distinctly sounded are made familiar to the child; the teacher proceeds to analyse each word into its component sounds [d-o-g, m-a-t, p-o-t, c-a-n, b-o-x, r-a-t, f-a-n] until they (the child) are able to associate the sounds (not the names) with the letters (sounds of d, g, m, p, t, c, n, b, x, r, f, o, a.)

(c) New words (the sound & meaning of which have been previously learnt in the colloquial lesson) are formed by the teacher from these sounds and printed on the B.B. The children, unaided, should be able to connect the sounds and say the complete word. In no case must they be told the word - they must be allowed to find it out. The teacher makes as many fresh combinations out of the "known sounds" as possible [mop, cat, pot, bat, tap, rag, top, bag, cat, box, map, fat, man, pan, cap, ran, etc.]

(d) Then she proceeds as in (a), (b), (c), (d) with words which contain new sounds. This procedure continues until all the regular consonant & short vowel sounds have been taught. The second list of words to be taken might be those containing the new sounds of i, e, h, w, j, e.g. pit, lot, hen, wig, pig, fig, pen, pin, men, tin, ten, jam (to be followed by combinations formed by the teacher).

The third list of words might include the sounds of v, s, k, u, j, w, as in van, sun, kit, lip, Sam, kid, pug, mug, pup (to be followed by combinations made by the teacher.)

When all the sounds of the alphabet have been taught in this way words of four and even more letters may be attempted for example - lamp, stand, tent, sister, etc.

All regular words are taught by the Look and Say Method.

**TEXT CUT  
OFF IN  
ORIGINAL**

Aim. - To teach the children to read the words dog, pan, mat previous knowledge. The pronunciation & meaning of the three words

Steps.

Matter & Method.

1. Story told by the teacher to arouse interest & to revise the words dog, pan, mat.

The following story should be told, in Maltese, in a very interesting and lively manner. - A few weeks ago I went to the village of - (name a village close by) to spend a few days with some friends. They had two dogs - a large dog and a small dog. [say the word dog very distinctly in English.]

blackboard

pan

mat

dog



The big dog did not like me but the small dog made friends with me at once, and I spent my time in playing with him. He used to follow me about everywhere. One evening, Maria - my friend - who had been washing the clothes left the pan [say 'pan' in English] in the yard. The little dog was curious & wanted to look into it. Maria's naughty brother Beppo who was very mischievous gave the little dog a push & he fell head-first into the pan. I heard the noise & rushed out. I rescued the poor little dog, took him into the house & wiped him dry. Poor dog! He was shivering, so I put him on a mat to sleep in the sun.

Revision of words.

After relating the story & revising the words dog, pan, mat ask questions on the story to impress the words still more. e.g. What used to follow me about? (dog) Into what did he fall? (pan). On what did I put him to sleep? (mat)

Learning to read the words.

Show picture of a small dog & make a simple drawing of it on (t.b.). Tell chdn. that you have drawn a portrait of the dog. Now tell them you are going to print the name dog by the side. Let chdn. draw & print on their slates or papers and let them repeat the printed word after you whilst they look intently at their slates, etc.

Next draw a pan on (t.b.) and print the word 'pan' by the side. Point to the word and let chdn. repeat it after you. The chdn. will now draw & write on their slates. Let them point at the word and repeat it. Mat should be done in like manner.

## APPENDIX B

### THE MALTESE EDUCATION SYSTEM

#### Part 1: Introduction

##### 1.1 A geographic, demographic and historical background

The Maltese Islands are located in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea, only 94km south of Sicily and about 350km north of Tripoli, North Africa. The area of the Maltese Islands is around 316 sq km. With a population of around 360,000 Malta has the highest population density of any country in Europe averaging at 1,094 persons per square kilometre. (This is accentuated by the irregular population distribution). Overall population figures are considerably increased by a heavy tourist inflow (estimated for over 900,000 for 1992) which is spread throughout the year but more heavily concentrated during the period from May to October. Malta is a small nation with a distinctive language, culture and domain. History and geography made its population cosmopolitan, while a flourishing tourist industry continues to reinforce this national trait.

It is not at all surprising that the strategic position of the Islands should have attracted the ambitions of powerful 'neighbours' and mighty empires. Indeed, its history is one long saga of one domination replaced by another - the Phoenician, the Carthaginian, the Roman, the Arab, the European feudal landlords, the Knights of St. John, the French and the British - before achieving full responsibility of sovereignty through Independence in 1964, gaining Republican status in 1974. As a result Malta has an extremely rich neolithic inheritance, ancient and mediaeval cities and citadels surrounded by excellent examples of military architecture and fortifications, several fine and rich churches, besides folklore and traditions.

##### 1.2 Socio-economic development

The geographically strategic position of the Maltese Islands has always attracted the attention of world powers, and, for several centuries, the country depended heavily on the income generated by the presence of foreign military bases. With the growth of political awareness, the Maltese people slowly reduced their dependence on foreign military spending, and the country actively sought new sources of foreign exchange through a series of bold and imaginative development plans.

Malta's drive to erect a new economic structure has been influenced by the international economic climate, as is to be expected of a small economy. In general, and despite occasional setbacks dictated by a turbulent world economy, Malta has made real and significant progress in creating a stable and vigorous economy.

The main objectives of economic restructuring sought (and still seek) the creation of an internationally competitive industrial environment. Successive Governments have developed attractive incentive schemes, allied with intensive skills-oriented training programmes, in an effort to diversify the production structure and to increase levels of efficiency.

The present production structure mirrors the success of these schemes, so that local industry ranges from high-tech export-oriented facilities, through shipbuilding (a traditional mainstay of the economy), to craft-based small enterprises. At the same time, and as part of the same economic restructuring exercise, the tourism industry has been developed to a level where it competes very favourably with that of other Mediterranean resorts.

At the present time, the country is also giving attention to developing the tertiary sector,

and is vigorously presenting itself as a centre of a wide range of offshore activities. In fact Malta has recently developed a modern port in the south of the Maltese Islands offering transshipment and storage facilities.

The ultimate objective of economic development is social progress, and Malta has made serious efforts to ensure that rapid economic growth is paralleled by greater equity and social justice. As a result, the Maltese people have achieved a high standard of welfare and of living through a broad range of social measures.

### **1.3 The growth of the educational system**

It is clear from the preceding account that human resources are by far the Island's principal resource, so that the development and efficient deployment of human resources is a primary concern of the Maltese educational system. Although other educational systems share this same goal, and the Maltese educational system shares the same problems in achieving this goal, there are a number of constraints which arise out of the smallness of the Maltese community and out of its limited resources.

The urgency to diversify and strengthen the Island's industrial output, allied with the drive to develop the country as a service centre, naturally require a diversification in educational provision. In turn, this creates a continuing demand for upgrading of teaching skills, learning materials, workshop and laboratory equipment and institutional buildings. The necessity to create appropriate structures, so as to ensure the validity of educational provision and to avoid the very real danger of isolation from mainstream educational development, also places heavy demands on the country.

Financial constraints, naturally, are imposed by the several demands made on the national budget by a welfare service as understood in advanced Western democracies, and by other demands created by the need for considerable infrastructural development. Over the past several years, financial provision for education has consistently represented between 6 and 7 per cent of the national budget (climbing from US\$50 million in 1986 to US\$75 in 1990). However, this has gone up quite significantly up to 12.3 per cent in 1992 (\$105 million).

Financial constraints are compounded by the need to cater for a rapidly changing skills profile of the Island's manpower, on the one hand reflecting the success of the Island in attracting new technologies and services, while on the other hand creating new pressures on the education system.

## **Part 2: Legal Framework**

The main aims and objectives of the Maltese educational system are laid down in the Constitution and in the Education Act of 1988 (Act XXIV of 1988), which is the latest in a series of similar acts.

### **2.1 The Education Act (1988)**

The Education Act of 1988 is the main legal instrument governing educational provision in the Maltese Islands. It introduces a number of major innovations over previous acts, and the following sections explain the main provisions of the Act.

In conformity with the constitutional provisions, it is the State that is held responsible for educational provision required by the Act. In Section 2 of the Law, the duties of the State are explained as follows:

- a) to promote education and instruction*
- b) to ensure the existence of a system of schools and institutions accessible to all Maltese citizens catering for the full development of the whole personality including the ability of every person to work; and*

c) to provide for such schools and institutions where these do not exist.

The Law acknowledges the right of the State to establish a minimum curriculum for all sectors of the educational system, irrespective of whether schools are administered by the State itself or by private individuals or organisations. Similarly, the State has the right to establish minimum conditions which both its own and private schools have to fulfil.

The Law also recognises basic individual and parental rights:

- *'it is the right of every citizen ... to receive proper education and instruction without any distinction of age, sex, belief or economic means'* (Art 1)
- *'it is the right of every parent of a minor to give his decision with regard to any matter concerning the education which the minor is to receive'* (Art 4)

Until 1987, education in Malta was compulsory between the ages of six and sixteen; the 1988 Act extends this provision in two important ways:

- education is now compulsory between the ages of five and sixteen, effectively recognising current Maltese perceptions of the importance of education. (Most children start attending pre-school at the age of three years).
- the Minister of Education now has the power to extend the period of compulsory education for certain courses as he may prescribe by regulation.

Another section of the Law (Art 6) provides any person with the right to apply to the Minister of Education for the grant of a licence to establish and operate a school. In turn, the Minister is obliged by the Law to grant a licence where the applicant is either the Catholic Church (which represents the official religion of the country and which operates a large number of schools) or where the applicant is a voluntary society of a non-profit making character. In both cases, of course, the applicant has to ensure that these schools conform with the national minimum conditions.

The law also recognises the professional status of teachers (Art 9), so that *'no person may exercise the profession of a teacher in a school and receive remuneration therefore without a warrant from the Minister'*. Warrants are basically granted to persons having the necessary professional training as recognised by the University of Malta, or to persons having second and higher degrees. In order to satisfy demand for particular skills (and to make transient provisions for incumbent staff without professional training), the Minister may also grant temporary warrants to suitably qualified persons.

## **2.2 The University**

The 1988 Act obliges the State to provide free university education to all students with the necessary entrance qualifications. Subject to fulfilling course entry requirements, any student has the right to register in a course of his or her own choice, with no barriers placed by numerous clauses or other factors. However, the University is not obliged to provide any course on a regular basis, so that some courses (e.g. medicine) are available every other year (because of the restrictions imposed by available teaching facilities) so as to ensure adequate standards.

The Law gives a large degree of autonomy to the University (founded in the late sixteenth century) in formulating its statutes, regulations and bye-laws; in the administration of its funds (both those which the law requires to be appropriated by Parliament, and which the University may secure from other sources); the provision of courses, and in the appointment of staff. At the same time, however, the Minister has the right by law to instruct auditors to examine the books and accounts of the University and to report to him. The Registrar of Examinations, an official within the Ministry of Education, is empowered by the Law to monitor examinations held by the University.

The highest office of the University is that of Chancellor, who is appointed by the President of Malta acting on the advice of the Prime Minister after he has consulted the Leader of the Opposition. The Chancellor may appoint a Pro-Chancellor. On the other hand the Rector of the University is an elected post. The Rector, in turn, may appoint a Pro-Rector. The Secretary of the University is appointed by Council. Deans of Faculties are also elected officials. All of the University offices are held for a determined period of years, ranging from seven years for the Chancellor to one year for the Pro-Rector.

The governing body of the University is the Council, which normally acts on the advice of Senate (responsible for academic matters and usually acting on the advice of the respective Faculty Boards), but which also has responsibility for appointing faculty, promulgating regulations, overseeing and approving expenditure, and for ensuring that the University responds to the needs of the country as perceived by Government. The last function is given considerable importance in the Law, so that the Government (through the Prime Minister) has the right to nominate a majority of members to the Council.

### 2.3 Objectives

The Education Division comprises all State schools and educational institutions.

The Education Act of 1988 lays down specific goals for the Department, primarily to ensure an effective and efficient system of schools, ensuring education and training in areas which are of relevance to Maltese society. Within the terms of the Act, the right of the individual to develop all his or her cognitive, affective and operative skills is considered as a moral obligation on the part of society, and a necessary investment in the continued development of the nation.

In addition, the Department is also empowered by law to implement and monitor those articles of the 1988 Education Act which refer to education in all institutions (state and private) outside the University.

During the period under review, the Education Division provided formal education for **58,320** students subdivided in the following sectors:

Pre-primary:	64	kindergarten centres,	7060	children
Primary:	82	schools,	26142	pupils
Secondary (Grammar/ Comprehensive):	25	schools,	15591	students
Trade:	24	schools,	5438	students
Post Secondary:	10	schools,	2469	students
Technical Institutes:	7	schools,	1215	students
Special Education	8	schools,	404	students

A parallel educational service is provided by a number of private schools, the majority of which belong to the Catholic Church. These offer schooling to students at:

Pre-primary:	4253	children
Primary:	10757	pupils
Secondary:	7190	students
Higher Secondary:	399	students

The diagram on the next page shows, in broad outline, how the Maltese educational system is structured.

The Education Division also provides a wide range of support services through



specialised units normally attached to Head Office: School Psychological Services, Career Guidance and Counselling, Educational Welfare Service, Assessment and Test Construction Services, Media Education Centre, Drama Unit, School Library Service, Youth Service Organization, Language Teaching Resource Centres, Peripatetic Service (Art, Music, Physical Education, Science), Instructors Training Unit, and Remedial Education Unit.

### **Part 3: Management and Training**

#### **3.1 Management function**

The Maltese educational system is highly centralised and individual schools have limited freedom of action in most areas of management, including staff recruitment and curriculum design and development. The management at the Education Division therefore fulfils all functions associated with managing a school, except for the actual day to day running of a school.

The Department is responsible for the following functions:

- recruitment, promotion and deployment of staff;
- curriculum design and development and prescription;
- selection, procurement and deployment of learning materials;
- design of assessment procedures;
- setting of annual examination papers;
- allocation of students to schools;
- preparation of specifications, procurement of equipment, etc., and its deployment;
- maintenance of premises and equipment;
- organisation of national student activities;
- organisation and running of in-service programmes;
- provision of school support services.

In most of these functions, the responsible officers are generally assisted by ad hoc committees drawn from serving teachers and principals.

#### **3.2 Staff**

The Education Division currently employs two categories of teaching staff, as follows:

- professional staff which have been professionally trained either at a teachers' training college or a faculty of education in a University; staff with second or higher degrees not necessarily in the field of education, are also accorded professional status;
- non-professional staff, designated as Instructors, who possess either a technical or vocational qualification or a number of O levels and one A level.

Entry into the professional service is in the grade of teacher, which enjoys the same status as other professional officers (e.g. doctors, architects, civil engineers) employed within the Civil Service.

#### **3.3 School Management**

The day to day running of a school is in the hands of a Principal (or, in cases where the population is below 150, a Deputy Principal), who may be assisted by one or more Deputy principals depending on the size of the school population.

The principal is usually responsible for:

- allocation of classes to teachers;
- keeping of student and staff records;
- supervision of staff and pupils;

- distribution of learning materials and other resources;
- relations with parents;
- organisation of school activities;
- ordering of equipment, etc.
- administration of assessment and school-based testing.

More generally, of course, the Principal has responsibility for ensuring that the school under his or her charge achieves an acceptable level of performance.

### **3.4 Support Services**

The Department provides a wide range of services to schools, and efforts have been made over the past years to improve the quality of these services - mainly by providing training grants to suitable staff.

### **3.5 Teacher Training**

Teachers (i.e. professional staff) are trained at the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta. Entry to the Faculty requires students to possess three subjects at A level (similar to that of British Boards) and five O levels. The four-year University course leads to a Bachelor of Education Honours degree, and students are required to specialise in Education (i.e. Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology), a main and a subsidiary subject (taught in conjunction with the appropriate faculty and equivalent to general degree level in the main subject); students also need to present a dissertation on a subject of their choice in order to fulfil the degree requirements.

Instructors (i.e. non-professional teaching staff) are recruited directly from 'suitably qualified' persons. In the case of instructors teaching in technical and vocational education, entry qualifications are generally at technician level, although craft level training in some areas is acceptable. In the case of Instructors engaged as supply teachers, qualifications are usually somewhat lower, so that five O levels and one A level would be acceptable for non-technical subjects. At present the Department is running certificate courses for all Instructors mainly to improve their pedagogical skills.

## **Part 4: Educational Structure**

### **4.1 General**

Education in Malta is compulsory between the ages of five and sixteen. The state provides entirely free education, including free textbooks and school transport in the primary and secondary schools, as well as study grants to practically all students in post-compulsory education. Several private schools also exist, almost entirely run by religious orders, and these cater mainly for students within the compulsory school-age bracket, except that they do not provide any form of technical education.

Church schools currently charge no fees for primary and secondary education, and are subsidised by the State which covers all their teaching salaries. Parents, however, still contribute term 'donations' in order to cover all other expenses. Students in Church schools following University entrance courses (leading to A levels) are also paid a study allowance so long as they have minimum qualifications established for entry into comparable State institutions.

Historically, the Maltese educational system was closely patterned on the English model, and indeed, a number of Maltese teachers at all levels have received professional training in the United Kingdom. In recent years, in an effort to cater more precisely for the needs of Maltese society, there have been some modifications to the traditional pattern of education, and new institutions as well as new educational patterns have been introduced. At present, most terminal courses (at sixteen and at eighteen, as well as technician level courses) lead to appropriate examinations set by English examination

boards. The University of Malta offers terminal examinations in some curriculum areas. Presently, the University and the Education Division are involved in developing a local examination system catering for the needs of all school leavers, at the several terminal levels of the education system.

In general, the Maltese educational system aims to cater for the needs of all students, irrespective of their academic abilities or vocational interests. At the later stages of secondary education, and more particularly, at the third level, courses are closely related to the demands of the employment market.

The following sections briefly describe the various levels of the education system in Malta.

#### **4.2 Kindergarten education**

Kindergarten education is available for children who have attained the age of three years. The Law requires the State to provide a primary school in each village, and kindergarten centres are attached to each primary school. Attendance is entirely voluntary, and it is estimated that approximately 90 per cent of three year-olds and 95 per cent of four year-olds are enrolled for kindergarten education whether in State or Private schools.

Kindergarten teachers (known as kindergarten assistants) are recruited from persons (almost entirely female) who are a minimum of eighteen years old and who have a minimum of four O levels, to include passes in Maltese, English and Mathematics. The Department organises an induction course for newly appointed KAs, as well as several seminars and workshops during the scholastic year.

There are several private nursery schools, sometimes operated by religious orders but equally frequently by private individuals.

There is a national minimum curriculum for all kindergarten schools, published in 1989. In broad terms, the national minimum curriculum lays emphasis on the socialisation of the child, and encourages opportunities for guided intellectual, emotional and physical development. At this stage the stress is on play.

#### **4.3 Primary education**

Primary education lasts for six years, and co-educational primary schools generally cater for the needs of a particular self-contained community. Classes in primary school never exceed 30 pupils, and the majority of teachers (75%) are professionally trained.

Primary education is broadly divided into two cycles each of three years, with the first three years emphasising social skills and pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills, gradually progressing to more formal skills. In this cycle of primary education, where pupils are generally under the pastoral care of a separate principal, all classes are of mixed ability and assessment is carried out by the school itself. Monitoring services, such as psychology assessment, are also provided, and remedial education is also available. Promotion is based on age, rather than on school attainment, but principals can, at their discretion, require a child to repeat if they feel this would be to his or her advantage.

The second cycle of primary education is also of three years, and lays more emphasis on 'academic skills' as children progress to secondary education. Assessment at this stage is more formal, and children are streamed during the last two years of primary school according to their performance in nationally set annual examinations. The end point of primary education is a qualifying examination leading to entrance into secondary education, with pupils who are successful in the examination being admitted to Grammar schools, with all the other pupils being admitted into Comprehensive schools.

All primary schools 'benefit' from the services of peripatetic teachers assisting class teachers in the area of art, music, drama and physical education.

Private primary schools have no formal division into cycles, although most private schools tend to stream children somewhat more rigidly than State schools, and according to criteria established by the schools themselves. Assessment is also carried out independently by individual schools, and there is increasing use of the monitoring services provided by the State.

A national minimum curriculum for primary schools was established in 1988, which all schools, State and Private, are expected to follow.

#### **4.4 Secondary education**

Secondary education is available to all students who successfully complete their primary education. The State provides single-sex education, of which there are two types:

- students who satisfy the requirements of a qualifying examination are admitted into Junior Lyceums (Grammar schools);
- other students are admitted into area secondary schools (Comprehensive schools).

The qualifying examination requires satisfactory performance in Maltese, English, Mathematics, Religious Knowledge (students may opt out of this examination on grounds of conscience), and Social Studies. The breadth of the examination being intended to ensure adequate emphasis on all areas of the primary curriculum. Currently, about 48 per cent of girls and 38 per cent of boys finishing primary schools qualify for entry into the Junior Lyceums.

In both types of school, the secondary course is five years long, divided into two cycles as follows:

- an introductory two-year cycle where students follow a common curriculum which is compulsory and serves to orientate the student towards later studies;
- a more determinative second cycle of three years, during which students elect to study a number of subjects alongside a compulsory core curriculum. In general, students are allowed to choose a range of subjects which will help them realise their vocational and higher education expectations.

In secondary schools, classes in the first two years have up to 30 students each; in the last three years the class size is a minimum of 25 students. Each class has a form teacher who undertakes to monitor the progress of students under his or her care.

There are no major differences in the curriculum for Junior Lyceums and for Area Secondary Schools, but Junior Lyceum students are stretched somewhat more than their peers in area secondary schools. In both cases, secondary education leads to the General Certificate of Education at Ordinary Level. The University of Malta offers these examinations in a limited range of subjects, but students enter for several subjects at examinations offered by English Boards (generally London and Oxford).

A particular feature of the Maltese education system is the emphasis it places on the acquisition of skills in a number of languages, so that all secondary school students study a minimum of four languages (including Maltese and English); Physics, Mathematics, Religious Education, Social Studies, and Physical Education are also compulsory subjects. Student electives allow them to prepare for careers of further studies in several fields: science-oriented careers, secretarial and administrative careers, business oriented careers, as well as careers requiring an education in the humanities.

A National Minimum Curriculum for Secondary Schools was established in July 1990.

Private secondary schools follow roughly the same pattern of education, and are obliged to conform to the National Minimum Curriculum. One can note a new trend in some private (non church) schools which are opening co-educational secondary schools.

#### **4.5 Technical education**

Technical education is available in a number of different schools, which generally fall under four main categories: Trade schools; Technical Institutes; Specialised Training Centres; and the Extended Skills Training Scheme. The latter three categories provide post-sixteen education and will be described in section 4.9.

Trade schools provide a craft-level technical education with a heavy vocational bias. Students generally enter trade schools (which are single-sex) after the first cycle of secondary education, and is at the students' option, although aptitude testing has recently been introduced. The course is of four years duration, with the first year consisting of a series of modules in various trade bands.

Courses are available in a wide range of trades, including: woodwork, automobile mechanics and electric, automobile body work, electrical installation, refrigeration, plumbing (domestic, industrial and marine), bench fitting and general metalwork, electronic servicing, tailoring, hotel housekeeping, and traditional hand crafts. In each case, the curriculum contains a core of academic studies alongside trade-related theory and workshop practice.

The National Minimum Curriculum for Secondary schools is also prescribed for Trade schools, having minor modifications to cater for the generally lower abilities and motivation of students and to allow sufficient time for mastery of practical trade skills.

At present, there is no private provision for technical education, except that some large corporations (e.g. shipbuilding) have in-house training programmes. Most recruits into these industries tend to come from Trade schools or some other branch of technical education, so in-house training programmes are more strictly considered as being aimed to teach a limited range of skills.

Instructors in trades schools are recruited from the trades themselves, so that very few have appropriate pedagogical training. At present the Education Division is running a number of Certificate courses in education with a strong bias on pedagogical training. There is also a specialised unit responsible for the production of learning materials and the continued training of instructors.

#### **4.6 Post-secondary education**

Institutions at this level fall into the following main categories:

- those providing university entrance courses;
- technical institutes;
- vocational schools;
- Extended Skills Training Scheme.

Almost all students at this level are awarded State grants on a sliding scale, and, in general, are expected to engage in productive work for a minimum of one month each calendar year, with opportunities for longer work experience for interested students during which time they are paid at the minimum rate of full-time personnel.

All education at this level is provided by the State, except that a number of private schools provide university entrance courses.

Post-sixteen education is available to all students satisfying minimum entry requirements. However, although university entrance courses are equally popular with both male and female students, very few female students currently enrol for technician

courses, except in traditionally 'female' areas such as hotel, housekeeping, tailoring and hairdressing.

#### **4.7 Higher Secondary (Upper Lyceums)**

The Upper Lyceum is comparable to the English Sixth Form, with a two-year course of study leading to the Advanced Level of the General Certificate of Education. As in the cases of O levels, the University of Malta offers examinations in a limited range of subjects, so that most students enter for examinations set by British Examination Boards (generally London, Oxford, and the Associated Examination Board). However, as already mentioned, foreign examinations will be slowly phased out as a local one will be introduced.

Entrance to the Upper Lyceum requires six passes at O level, including Maltese, English, Mathematics and Physics. Students study three other subjects out of a wide range of science and arts options, together with a subsidiary subject known as Systems of Knowledge and designed to provide an interdisciplinary education particularly in areas complimentary to the student's selected field of study. The examination is set by the University of Malta, and is a requirement for entry into all courses at University.

At the time of writing the current Upper Lyceum is being abolished and the new Institution to take over will, as from October 1995, be run by the University of Malta and no longer by the Education Division.

Somewhat complimentary to the Upper Lyceum is the Upper Secondary School, effectively providing a second chance to students who fail to obtain sufficient O level passes for entry into the Upper Lyceum. Students follow courses of study at both O and A levels, with most students transferring to the Upper Lyceum after obtaining the necessary O level passes.

There are currently three Upper Lyceums on the Island, with the latest being established in September 1989, to cater for those specialising in Computing Studies and Banking Studies. There are also a number of Private Sixth Form Colleges. All schools at this level are co-educational, and staff are trained to at least first degree level.

#### **4.8 Technical Institutes**

Technical Institutes, of which there are three, provide courses at technician level, leading to qualifications of the City and Guilds of London Institute, and Maltese students have performed consistently well in these examinations. Courses are available normally on either a full-time or part-time basis, and are usually of four years full-time equivalent duration. The two Technical Institutes in Malta specialise respectively in telecommunications, and in mechanical engineering, with the single institute in Gozo, providing tuition in both areas.

Technical Institutes also provide ad hoc courses in a number of areas as needed from time to time by the public and private sector industries.

Enrolment in Technical Institutes is predominantly male, and despite several efforts to encourage young women to enrol for technician courses, female enrolment to date has been negligible.

#### **4.9 Vocational schools and Others**

Several specialised training centres provide vocational training at approximately technician level, most of them leading to national certification. An Extended Skills Training scheme, launched in 1980 with ILO assistance, takes the more successful trade school graduates for extended training at a level somewhat beyond craft level. Trainees are employed by Government Departments, para-statal corporations or private industry, and divide their time roughly equally between on-the-job training and formal

studies at an appropriate institution.

There are a number of other institutions which are designed to cater more closely for the needs of individual students.

Opportunity Centres and Craft Training Centres are designed to provide remedial basic education and basic craft training for primary school graduates who have particularly low motivation or academic skills. Here the curriculum concentrates on basic numeracy and literacy, while providing elementary craft level training in a limited range of trades.

Special schools are an important sector of Maltese education, and provide education for children with physical or mental handicaps, as well as for children with serious behaviour problems.

#### **4.10 The University**

The roots of the University go back four centuries, and important changes have been introduced twice during the last ten years or so. The Education Act of 1988 contained important provisions about the University, outlined in Part 2 of this Appendix. The main provision is that the University is obliged to admit all students with the minimum necessary entry requirements without recourse to any numerous clauses. Current entry requirements are: 3 A levels, two of which must be at Grade C or better, and one at Grade D or better; 5 O levels, and a pass in Systems of Knowledge. The University, however, is free to decide which courses to offer, and some courses, notably in the Faculty of Medicine and in the Faculty of Architecture, currently admit students every other year, due to constraints of space and equipment.

The University is organised in ten faculties, as follows: Theology, Arts, Science, Medicine and Surgery, Dental Surgery, Law, Education, Engineering, and Economics, Management and Accountancy. Degrees are offered at Bachelor level, at either general or honours level, with higher degrees offered in some faculties. Most faculties also offer several diploma-level courses, generally through evening courses.

In Malta one can observe an upward trend of students wishing to further their studies at tertiary level. While in 1981 only 1200 students (3.2%) of the 18-25 years age group were enrolled at the University, this has steadily gone up over the years.

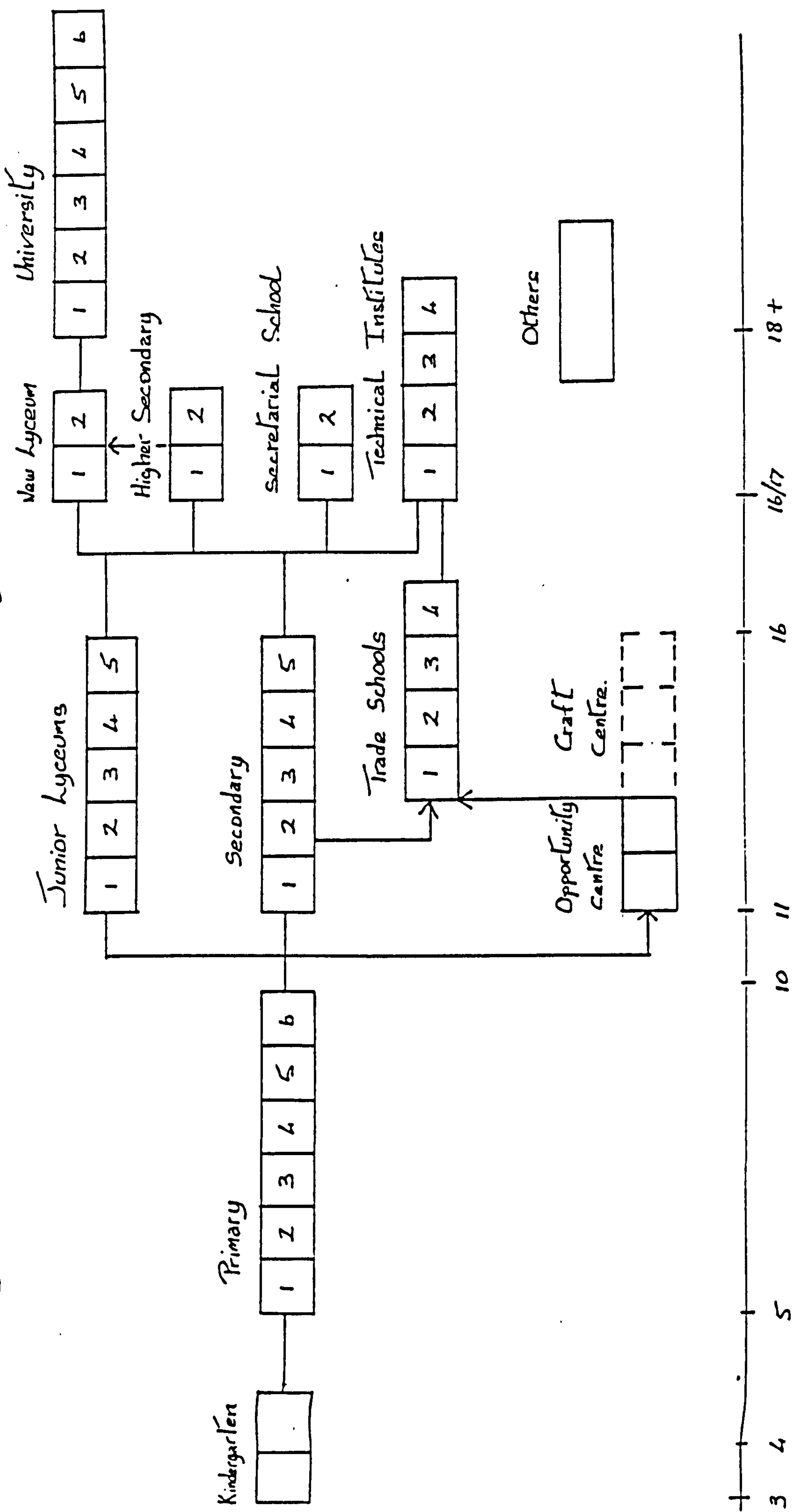
#### **4.11 Non-formal education**

The Education Division organises evening classes in a wide range of academic, technical and leisure areas. Most courses are designed to terminal qualifications and to provide an opportunity for students to make up for lost opportunities during their formal education period.

The Education Division has an Adult Education Unit which is engaged in a programme of education through several programmes, including courses at specially organised centres, and distance learning, using radio, and, to a lesser extent, television. The main thrust of the Unit is presently to provide basic literacy and numeracy skills to adults.

There are also a number of other organisations, some of them privately run, which provide adult education, the most important of which is the Employment and Training Agency, designed to provide skilling and re-skilling to persons already in employment or registration for employment.

# Organization of the School System in Malta





## APPENDIX C

### COVER LETTERS - SURVEY OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

#### *Cover letter for granting of permission to conduct questionnaire survey*

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12th October 1992

The Director  
Mr F Fearne  
Department of Education  
Floriana.

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed a copy of the questionnaire I would like to distribute amongst all primary school principals which we had discussed some time ago.

The questionnaire has already been pilot-tested and amendments made on the ideas and comments I received.

Naturally, once the questionnaire results have been compiled and analysed a detailed report will be forwarded to the Department of Education.

I thank you for your support and look forward to your reply.

Best regards.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher BEZZINA

encl: questionnaire

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*Cover letter used in the pilot survey*

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University of Malta  
Faculty of Education  
Msida.

Dear Colleague,

I am currently carrying out research on the role of primary school principals at Brunel University, England. By way of making my research more relevant to the Maltese educational context I hope to carry out a survey of all primary school principals in state, church and private schools. In preparation for this survey I am desirous of your opinion on the enclosed questionnaire.

I would therefore be most grateful if you could read through the questionnaire and provide feedback on any of its aspects (e.g. its format and presentation, items which you think should be included or excluded, potentially ambiguous questions, etc.). Please feel free to write any remarks or suggestions beside each item or at the end of the questionnaire. Your response will be held in strictest confidence. Kindly return the questionnaire in the stamped, addressed envelope enclosed prior to the 4th October 1992.

I cannot emphasize enough how much I appreciate your cooperation.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher BEZZINA

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*Cover letter used in the survey of primary school principals*

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University of Malta  
Faculty of Education  
Msida.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently carrying out research on various aspects of the principalship. The attached questionnaire aims at determining the Maltese principals' perception of their role, and investigate the levels and important determinants of job satisfaction of all primary school principals in State, Church and Private schools in Malta and Gozo.

You can help with this research by answering the questions as honestly as you can. If you do so the answers will provide a good picture of the opinions and feelings Maltese principals have about the issues under study. The study will provide research material into school effectiveness and educational administration in particular. It will also provide policy makers with tangible results and facts as to how educational improvement, especially at school level, can be brought about.

I wish to emphasize that full anonymity will be maintained and therefore your name must not be included in the questionnaire. You are kindly asked not to discuss the questionnaire or your responses with others.

As I am particularly desirous of obtaining your responses could I ask you to complete the questionnaire and return it directly to the undersigned by using the envelope provided. Postage is prepaid. I would be most grateful if the completed questionnaire is returned by not later than Monday 16th November 1992.

Thank you for your support and kind cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Christopher BEZZINA

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*Follow-up letter used in the survey of primary school principals*

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University of Malta  
Faculty of Education  
Msida.

Dear Sir/Madam,

If you have completed and returned the questionnaire on the principalship, then once more thank you for your prompt cooperation.

If not, I courteously urge you to do so. I need to have as many completed questionnaires as possible. Otherwise all the effort, time and resources devoted to this survey would have been in vain.

I trust you would return your completed questionnaire as soon as possible.

Many thanks and best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Christopher BEZZINA

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**APPENDIX D**

**QUESTIONNAIRE RE THE ROLE, JOB SATISFACTION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF MALTESE PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

This is a questionnaire concerning various aspects of the principalship. The first part of the questionnaire asks for factual information about the background to your principalship. The major part is designed to help you articulate your views on your role, training needs, etc., as practising principals. There are five parts:

- Background information
- Generic overall skills
- Skills for principalship
- Levels of job satisfaction
- Job priorities.

Please try to answer the questionnaire as accurately and honestly as possible. No name is required and the completed questionnaire will be treated in strictest confidence.

**A. Background Information**

1. Type of school

2. Sex of principal

Please circle one number below:

Please circle one number below:

- State: school 'A'..... 1
- school 'B'..... 2
- school 'C'..... 3
- Church ..... 4
- Private ..... 5

- Male .....1
- Female .....2

3. Age of principal:  
..... years

4. How long have you been a principal?  
..... years.

5. What are your qualifications? Please list.  
.....  
.....

6. Number of pupils on roll:  
..... pupils

7. Number of teachers:  
a. Fully qualified: .....  
b. Casual/P.T Instructors: .....  
c. Kindergarten Assts: .....

8. Did you ever receive any special training before becoming a principal? .  
.....

9. Have you attended any specialised courses in management? Please list.  
.....  
.....

10. Were you appointed principal by selection or by seniority?  
(This question applies to State school principals only)  
.....

**B. Principal's overall tasks**

11. Column 1: Which, from the following list, do you consider to be your present major job functions. Tick as many as you like.  
Column 2: Rank order the 3 job functions which take up most of your time ( 1 = the function taking most of your time  
3 = the third function taking most of your time)

Job functions	Major job function	Rank 1 - 3
Desk work (filling in forms, returns, etc.)		
Discussions with parents		
Discussions with children		
Discussions with staff		
Discipline		
Observing classroom teaching		
Organising activities		
Staff appraisal and professional development		
Organising, planning and evaluating curricula		
others: .....		
.....		

12. Any comments?

.....  
.....  
.....

13. Column 1: Which of the following tasks and duties do you consider most important in your principalship. Tick as many as you like.  
 Column 2: Pick the top five and rank them in order of importance  
 ( 1 = the most important task/ duty  
 5 = the fifth most important task/ duty)

Tasks and duties	Most Important Task/ duty	Rank 1 = 5
Having a clearly defined school policy		
Building a team of competent teachers		
Establishing good personal relationships with teaching and ancillary staff		
Establishing good parental/community relations		
Being seen as a good teacher		
Keeping up-to-date on educational matters		
Introducing new ideas		
Doing routine office work		
Knowing the children		
Evaluating the work of the school		
Others: .....		
.....		

14. Any comments?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

15. Column 1: Tick if you would like training/development opportunities in this aspect of the job. Tick as many as you like.  
 Column 2: Pick, out of the total list, the top five priority areas for further training and rank them in order of importance:  
 ( 1 = the most important priority for training  
 5 = the fifth most important priority)

Tick if more  
 training is  
 desirable      Rank  
    1 = 5

Leadership Providing leadership for the work of  
 the school

Planning Foresight, assessing, planning and  
 deciding priorities

Evaluation Evaluating effectiveness of policies,  
 systems, methods and people

Managing pupils Contact, care, discipline and  
 communication

Managing relationships Managing interpersonal,  
 intergroup and group relations

Self-management Stress, time, leisure, personal  
 relationships, health

Communicating with Department of Education officials

Communicating with parents

Staff appraisal and professional development

Maintaining staff morale

Pupil assessment

Managing resources Time, money, people, building

Personal professional development

Others: .....

.....



**C. Skills needed in the principalship today**

16. Column 1: Tick if you would like training/ development opportunities in this skill.  
 Column 2: Tick as many as you would like.  
 Pick out the top five priorities for principals' further training and rank these 1 - 5 ( 1 = most important; 5 = least important)

	Tick if more training is desired	Rank 1 - 5
Verbal communication		
Written communication		
Counselling		
Negotiating skills		
Conflict-resolution skills		
Motivating skills		
Group-work skills		
Team building		
Delegating		
Others: .....		
.....		

17. Any comments?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

**D. Level of job satisfaction**

18. Rate your degree of job satisfaction on each facet given below using the following four-point scale: 1, highly dissatisfied;; 2, moderately dissatisfied; 3, moderately satisfied; 4, highly satisfied.

Please tick appropriate column.

Job facet	1	2	3	4
-----------	---	---	---	---

Salary you receive

Hours of work/ holidays

Physical conditions you work in

Availability of clerical staff

Availability and quality of custodial services

(e.g. charwomen, handymen) in the school

Working relationships with teachers

Attitudes of teachers towards curriculum and staff development

Morale of the staff

Personal and social relationships with pupils

Level of authority associated with the post

Contact with Education Department officials

Contact with school support services

Freedom to develop the school programme according to the particular needs of the school

Your involvement in policy making effecting educational reform in Malta

Your sense of accomplishment as a principal

Recognition by others of your work

The existing system of promoting principals

Others: .....

.....

19. What are the main aspects of your role as a principal which give you greatest satisfaction? Please list.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

20. What are the main issues that you find most frustrating in your career as a principal? Please list?

.....  
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.....  
.....  
.....

21. Can you suggest ways of improving the current situation you are facing as a principal? Please list.

.....  
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.....  
.....  
.....

**E. Job priorities**

22. Rank order the following tasks so as to show how you think you *ought* to spend your time and how you *actually* spend it. In the 'ought' column rank order the items according to level of importance you would like to give each. In the 'actual' column rank order the same items according to how you actually spend your time at present.

Tasks	Ought Rank	Actual Rank
1. Discussions with parents		
2. Discussions with teachers		
3. Observe classroom teaching		
4. Run school-based development programmes		
5. Provide guidance to children		
6. Do routine office work		
7. Organise extra-curricular activities		
8. Look after buildings and grounds		
9. Others: .....		
.....		

Any final comments you would like to raise about particular issues which have not been covered in this questionnaire and you consider relevant to your role and your professional development?

.....

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.....

Thank you for your time and trouble.

**APPENDIX E**

**COVER LETTER - OBSERVATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

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University of Malta  
Faculty of Education  
Msida.

Dear .....

**OBSERVATIONAL STUDY OF MALTESE PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

Further to our telephoneconversation I am submitting a formal letter for your approval with regards to the Observational study I would like to conduct in your school for a two-week period (i.e. ten school days) between the ..... and .....

During this time I would like to observe how you spend your day. I intend to do this by:

- putting down in chronological order the activities you are involved in, be it with people, doing paper work, classroom visits, etc.
- shadowing you wherever you go.

Through such a study I hope to gain a better understanding of the Maltese principalship.

Naturally the information collated during this observational study will remain strictly confidential.

Thanking you for your support and kind cooperation. I look forward to your communication.

Yours sincerely

Christopher BEZZINA

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## APPENDIX F

### QUESTIONNAIRE RE THE ROLE OF THE MALTESE PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL: PERCEPTIONS OF NEWLY-APPOINTED DEPUTY PRINCIPALS

#### General Directions

As part of my research studies where I am looking at the way principals perceive their role I am also interested in learning how newly-appointed deputy principals view the principalship and their own personal visions, aspirations and perceptions of their future positions as principals.

You can help with this research study by answering the following questions as honestly as you can. If you do so the answers you give will provide us with new information about the role of principals and the principalship of tomorrow as viewed by prospective principals themselves.

Naturally the information you provide will remain strictly confidential and anonymous.

I would highly appreciate it if you could send the completed questionnaire to the undersigned in the enclosed self-addressed envelope by not later than Friday 14th July 1995.

Thank you for your support and kind cooperation.

Christopher BEZZINA  
Principal  
St Martin's College  
Antonio Schembri Street  
Kappara SGN 06

**Section A: Principals Overall Tasks**

**1. Overall Tasks**

Column 1: Which, from the following list, do you consider to be the principal's present major job functions. Rank order the major job functions taking up most of the principal's time  
( 1 = the function taking most of their time  
10 = the tenth function taking most of their time)

Column 2: Rank order the major job functions taking most of your time.

Job functions	Principal's major job functions Rank 1 -10	Your own major job functions Rank 1 - 10
Desk work (filling in forms, returns, answering telephone calls, etc.)		
Discussions with parents		
Managing pupils (contact, care, discipline and communication)		
Discussions with teaching staff		
Developing a school policy		
Organising, planning and evaluating curricula		
staff appraisal		
Observing classroom teaching		
Teaching		
Organising activities		
Others: .....		
.....		

Any comments?

.....  
.....

2. Column 1: Which of the following tasks and duties do you see as being the most important for principals today?  
 Rank them in order of importance:  
 ( 1 = the most important task/duty  
 10 = the tenth most important task/duty)

Column 2: Which ones would you consider the most important.  
 Pick the top five and rank them in order of importance:  
 ( 1 = the most important task/duty  
 10 = the tenth most important task/duty)

Tasks and duties	Principal's most important tasks/duties Rank 1 - 10	Principal's most important tasks/duties as seen by you Rank 1 - 10
------------------	--	--

- Doing routine office work
- Having a clearly defined school policy
- Building a team of competent teachers
- Establishing good personal relationships  
with teaching and ancillary staff
- Establishing good parental/community  
relations
- Being seen as a good teacher
- Keeping up-to-date on educational  
developments
- Introducing new ideas
- Knowing the children
- Evaluating the work of the school
- Others: .....
- .....

Any comments?

.....  
 .....



3. What are the main aspects of your role as deputy principal which give you greatest satisfaction? Please list.  
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.....
  
4. What are the main aspects of your role as deputy principal which give you least satisfaction? Please list.  
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.....
  
5. In your opinion in what areas is change required within the role of the principal so that present and future challenges could be faced?  
.....  
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6. Can you suggest ways of improving the current situation facing principals? Please list.  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....
  
7. In your opinion what are the main roles, responsibilities and duties of the principalship of tomorrow?  
.....  
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.....
  
8. Any final comments you would like to raise about particular issues which have not been covered in this questionnaire and you consider relevant to the role of the principal.  
.....  
.....  
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.....

Thank you for your time and trouble.