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CANBERRA COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

MASTER OF EDUCATION PROGRAM

FIELD STUDY :

THE EVOLUTION OF THE GENUS PRINCIPAL :

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

PART I - THE LITERATURE REVIEW

PART II - THE SURVEY

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## ABSTRACT OF FIELD STUDY

The review of the literature, which constitutes Part I of the Field Study, sees the changing role of the principal as an evolutionary process, and traces this process from the early years of the nineteenth century (when schooling was private and independent) through the middle years of this same century and onwards (the growth of public education) up to modern times.

The review studies in depth the literature of the past fifteen to twenty years, and avers that the literature of this period indicates that the expected role of the principal, today, is one of leadership. It discusses the behaviour characteristics of leadership and suggests that, depending upon the degree to which these characteristics are present in the leader's behaviour, various typical leaders may be described.

Finally, the review postulates future trends in the role of principal and predicts also, the possible eventual demise of this administrative position.

Part II of the Field Study contains the findings of a survey of the primary school principals of the Australian Capital Territory - both government and non-government. This survey, which involved the completion of a questionnaire consisting of three sections, was designed to provide information regarding the role - functions and work-load of the principal, his leadership characteristics, and his perceptions and predictions regarding change. From this information significant inferences are drawn concerning the role-perceptions and role-expectations of the primary principal in the A.C.T.

Inferences drawn from the data of Section A of the questionnaire concern time priorities of various role-functions, preferred

approaches to role-functions involving human relationships, the degree of acceptance of the implication of the policies of the A.C.T. Schools Authority, and attitudes towards professional development.

The data of Section B provides information from which inferences regarding the leadership characteristics of the principals are drawn, and Section C data provides material lending support for the postulates of both the previous sections.

The concluding section discusses the implications of these findings for the present and future roles of the principal in the A.C.T., and suggests possible areas for further research.

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