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Characteristics of Successful Teaches of the Disadvantaged (As Identified by School Principals)

Lubomyr Zapar

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CHARACTERISTICS OF
SUCCESSFUL TEACHERS OF THE DISADVANTAGED
(AS IDENTIFIED BY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS)

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty of
The University of Richmond

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by
Lubomyr Zapar
August 1970

APPROVAL SHEET

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
The Statement of the Problem	2
The Definition of the Problem	2
Definitions of terms	3
Delimitations of the research	3
Assumptions inherent in the study	4
Educational theory foundational to the study	5
An Evaluation of the Study	6
Need and value of the study	6
Objectives of the study	6
Review of Related Readings	7
II. PROCEDURE, METHOD, TECHNIQUE, AND INSTRUMENT	9
Procedure	9
Method	10
Technique	11
Compilation of the sample of schools	11
Administration of the instrument	12
Tabulation of the responses	12
Instrument	13
III. FINDINGS	15
Analyses of the Responses	15
Assignment	16

CHAPTER	PAGE
Qualifications	18
Academic	18
Professional	22
Personal data	24
Social background	24
Sex	25
Marital status	26
Age	27
Intellectual level	28
Stature	29
Personal qualities	30
Classroom Conditions	31
Disciplinary atmosphere	31
Room appearance	33
Learning emphasis	34
IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	36
Summary	36
Conclusions	37
BIBLIOGRAPHY	39
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A. Cover Letter for Survey	41
APPENDIX B. A Survey of Characteristics of Successful Teachers of the Disadvantaged: As Identified by School Principals	42

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. Basis for Assigning Teachers to Work With the Disadvantaged	16
II. Academic Qualifications Possessed by Teachers Working With the Disadvantaged	18
III. Essential and Desirable Academic Qualifications for Teachers of the Disadvantaged as Indicated by Principals	20
IV. Analysis of Professional Experience Preferred by Principals for Teachers Working With Disadvantaged	22
V. Analysis of Sociological Background of Teachers Working With the Disadvantaged and Corresponding Preferences by Principals	24
VI. Analysis of Sex Factors of Teachers Working With the Disadvantaged and Corresponding Preferences by Principals	25
VII. Analysis of Marital Status of Teachers Working With the Disadvantaged and Corresponding Preferences by Principals	26
VIII. Analysis of Age Levels of Teachers Working With the Disadvantaged and Corresponding Preferences by Principals	27

TABLE	PAGE
IX. Analysis of Intellectual Level of Teachers Working With the Disadvantaged and Corresponding Preferences by Principals	28
X. Analysis of the Stature of Teachers Working With the Disadvantaged and Corresponding Preferences by Principals	29
XI. Analysis of Personal Qualities Desirable for Teachers Working With Disadvantaged Students as Identified by Principals	30

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. A Comparison of Academic Qualifications Possessed by Teachers of the Disadvantaged and Those Considered Essential and Desirable by Principals	21
2. Analysis of Classroom Disciplinary Atmosphere to be Maintained for Maximum Effectiveness in Working With the Disadvantaged as Identified by School Principals	32
3. Analysis of Classroom Appearance to be Maintained for Maximum Effectiveness in Working With the Disadvantaged as Identified by School Principals	33
4. Learning Skills to be Emphasized in Teaching the Disadvantaged as Identified by School Principals	34

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

"The heart of the educational process is found in the skill, dedication, and personality of the teacher."¹ Such a statement, though not profound, is widely accepted by most educators at all levels of education. If the role of the classroom teacher is, therefore, of such paramount importance for the success of any educational program in which most students possess good mental and sociological attributes, should not this same premise be doubly true when working with students who are disadvantaged?

Although there seems to be general agreement that greater skill and better preparation is essential for working with the disadvantaged, in reality there appears to be some divergence between the existing and the ideal characteristics of the teachers working with these students.

A knowledge of preferred characteristics, and the degree of divergence which exists, would enhance the success of current and future programs for the disadvantaged.

¹Educational Policies Commission, Education and the Disadvantaged American, A Report Prepared by the National Education Association (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1962), p.19.

The Statement of the Problem

It was the problem of this study to identify basic characteristics which teachers of the disadvantaged should possess in order to achieve maximum effectiveness in their teaching. Also, the study attempted to discover and reveal factual data on the disparity which exists between the characteristics which teachers presently working in this capacity possess, and those characteristics which are preferred.

The Definition of the Problem

Although studies have been made and certain characteristics have been found to be desirable in all teachers, emphasis was placed in this study on identifying those characteristics preferable for a select group of teachers: those teaching disadvantaged adolescents. In accordance with Gordon and Wilkerson, the problem inherent in the failure of many programs is not simply one of teaching, but of teaching the disadvantaged.²

The definition of the problem for this study is further explained in the subsequent discussion of (a) the terms used, (b) the delimitations of the research, (c) the assumptions inherent in the study, and (d) the educational theory foundational to the study.

Definitions of terms. The definitions of the terms used in the research study were as follows:

²Edmund W. Gordon and Doxey A. Wilkerson, Compensatory Education for the Disadvantaged (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1966), p.57.

The term disadvantaged was used to refer to those students who had demonstrated a lack of success in standard academic programs and who subsequently were placed in special programs. Their lack of success can be attributed to any one, or a combination, of the following factors:

1. Intellectual deficiencies.
2. Emotional problems.
3. Environmental-geographic isolation.
4. Home-family influences.
5. Racial discrimination.
6. Socio-economic deprivation.
7. Disciplinary-behavioral shortcomings.

The term middle school was used in referring to those public schools which interchangeably are referred to as junior high or intermediate schools. These schools are designed to facilitate the transition for students from elementary to senior high schools.

Delimitations of the research. The investigator's desire to identify preferred characteristics of teachers working with the disadvantaged needed to be partially restricted to those teachers working with adolescents. This restriction arose with the realization that teachers not only had preferences for working with a particular age level, but that their effectiveness closely corresponded to their preferences.

Middle schools were selected as the predominant sample because of the uniqueness of many of the problems which are inherent in working with adolescents.

School principals were selected to be respondents to the study because of the availability of a relatively large number of such qualified persons within a select group. More importantly, however, principals were selected because of the opportunity they have for first-hand and day-to-day observations of teacher successes and failures. Such observations are extremely more valuable than theoretical speculation.

The sample was confined only to Virginia schools because of the fortunately wide cross-section of schools available.

Assumptions inherent in the study. The effectiveness of the operation of most schools is dependent upon the skill, personality, and ability of the principal. Since the principal is normally selected as an educational leader on the basis of proven ability, the investigator assumed that the principal would be the one most eminently qualified to furnish appropriate factual information and judgmental preferences. He would also be the one most knowledgeable about his teachers' qualifications and personal data.

It was further assumed that the principals would have a first-hand knowledge of factors which influence successful interaction with students, and teacher qualities which make such interaction possible.

Also, since public schools are composed of a broad spectrum of student abilities, and numerous varieties of problems, the principals were likely to have had some experiences in coping with such problems.

The educational theory foundational to the study. The investigation was based upon the educational theory that staffing problems are

experienced in those schools which strive to provide programs for the disadvantaged. There is great reluctance on the part of many teachers to work with such students. Consequently, not only is recruitment difficult, but teacher turnover and dissatisfaction tend to be high because of their relative failure in working with these students. Often, desperate attempts are made to provide an adequate number of personnel with insufficient regard for the likelihood of such placement being successful.

Unless new approaches are accepted to identify, select, and train teachers for the responsibility of producing worthwhile citizens out of disadvantaged students, present methods will leave unresolved existing staffing problems and subsequent failure of potentially sound programs.³

An Evaluation of the Study

The evaluation of the study was made in terms of statements on (a) the need and value of the investigation, and (b) the objectives of the investigation.

The need and value of the study. The investigator's desire to identify preferred characteristics of the teachers working with the disadvantaged originated as a need which arose out of his work as an assistant principal of a junior high school. Early in his career as

³Ibid., p.54.

an administrator, he realized that not only were the students problematically unique at that level, but also that a special type of person was required to interact successfully with adolescents who were in any way disadvantaged, and as a result placed into special programs.

The need for this study stems from the many failures of otherwise good classroom teachers to be effective with this caliber student. The value in identifying the characteristics of the type of teacher which would be more likely to succeed would be determined by the extent to which errors in the selection and placement would be reduced by the respective principals or school system personnel departments. Better selection will most likely decrease student frustrations, as well as reduce teacher disenchantment and accompanying turnover.

The objectives of the study. It was an objective of the investigation to help principals, personnel departments, and teachers to be in a better position to help disadvantaged students to become wholesome citizens in our democratic society. Student development is largely determined by the worthwhileness of the experiences they encounter while in school. It logically follows that since the classroom teacher is the single most important factor influencing these experiences, the educational objective of helping the disadvantaged can best be achieved through the selection of the best qualified teachers to work in this capacity.

In order to select appropriate personnel, educators must have a thorough understanding of necessary qualities prospective teachers should possess.

Review of Related Readings

The following synopses of related readings complement the statements of the need for this study as stated previously:

Arlen Westbrook, in his recent study of teachers' roles in dealing with problem behavior of students, emphasized the importance of the teacher in recognizing and properly handling such problems. He acknowledges the need for greater training as basic to overcoming learning problems, but accentuates the role of the teacher by stating that if schools are to meet children's needs in areas in which there may be difficulty, they must rely upon the classroom teacher.⁴

In Rodman's study, which deals with a representative sample of young men who were dropouts from public schools, recommendations were made to re-design existing curriculums to make them more relevant to the needs of those students who do not succeed in standard academic programs. Program revisions will enable potential dropouts to experience success, and should develop in them a greater degree of motivation. Although counseling is a constant necessity in such programs, the most important ingredient is still the classroom teacher.⁵

The investigator also found much reinforcement of basic concepts of the study from John B. Adams' research report pertaining to traits possessed by outstanding teachers. The qualities mentioned

⁴Arlen Westbrook, "Teachers' Recognition of Problem Behavior and Referrals of Children to Pupil Personnel Services," Journal of Educational Research, Vol.63, No.9 (May-June, 1970), 52-54.

⁵Lloyd Besant, "The Rodman Experience with Dropouts," Today's Education, LV11 (February, 1969), 52-54.

most by a sizeable sample of students are being listed for the benefit of interest and relevance to the study.

Ten Most Frequently Described Traits of Classroom Teachers.⁶

1. Has a personal interest in his students.
2. Conducts an interesting class.
3. Teacher's own enthusiasm motivates others.
4. Has a good sense of humor.
5. Knows his subject well.
6. Commands and gives respect.
7. Shows a love of teaching.
8. Holds students to high standards.
9. Has a good general intelligence.
10. Has good personal appearance.

⁶John B. Adams, "What Makes a Good Teacher Great," National Elementary Principal, XLIX (November, 1969), 39.

CHAPTER II

PROCEDURE, METHOD, TECHNIQUE, AND INSTRUMENT

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PROCEDURE, METHOD, TECHNIQUE, AND INSTRUMENT

The procedure, method, technique, and instrument used in this study of the Characteristics of Successful Teachers of the Disadvantaged: As Identified by School Principals may be presented as follows:

Procedure

To obtain those characteristics for teachers of the disadvantaged which are essential for a successful interaction with such students, responses were solicited from principals of predominantly middle schools, and an equal number of elementary and high schools. This statewide selection of schools, which was based upon a list compiled by the Title I Office at the Virginia State Department of Education, consisted of schools which had special education programs: programs coming under the investigator's definition of "disadvantaged."

In order to obtain relevant and meaningful data, the investigator devised a questionnaire on which principals supplied factual data pertaining to the teachers currently employed at their schools in such capacity. The questionnaire also enabled the principals to state their preferences to various questions where factual data differed from their concepts of ideal characteristics. The analysis of this data provided the basis for the investigator's conclusions.

Method

The investigator felt that a valid study of personal characteristics must make use of both the descriptive and the valuational methods of research.

The descriptive analysis was basic to the study since it emphasized the present status of teachers, and studied facts and conditions as they existed, in such categories where such information was readily available to principals without undue research. With this information as a basis, subsequent relations and correlations were established.

Since the investigator had attempted to determine the relative importance of professional experience, personal characteristics, personal qualities, and classroom conditions, the analytical method was also used to establish corresponding ratings and profiles.

By using such a framework, the investigator attempted to make this study more meaningful through a combination of both objective and subjective responses. This blend of information was quite apparent and necessary, since it was reasonable to anticipate that not all teachers currently working with the disadvantaged possessed ideal characteristics.

Technique

The survey technique was used in this study of teacher characteristics because of the qualitative and quantitative nature of the investigation. In order to reach a widely scattered group of busy school principals with an equally great variance in programs and personnel, some form of standardization of responses was imperative. The nature of this study precluded that any valid conclusion reached must be based upon thorough information from a relatively select group of educators. To elicit an adequate response from a limited number of school administrators required a statement, in the form of a short cover letter, which captured their interest, and an instrument to which they could quickly and easily respond.

Compilation of the sample of schools. Since the investigator placed particular emphasis on identifying the characteristics of those teachers working with middle school students, a predominance of these schools was included in the study. The complete sample of schools for this study was selected on the basis of an annotated copy of the Virginia Educational Directory, 1969-70. It was made available to the investigator through the cooperation of the Title I Office of the Virginia State Department of Education. This copy had appropriate notations of all schools in Virginia which had been registered as having special education programs. All "Junior High Schools" so noted were included in the sample. Also other schools not classified as "Junior High", but which contained at least two of grades 7, 8 or 9

were made a part of the sample. These schools were classified in the directory as "Elementary", "Combined", "Secondary", or "Special Education."

Administration of the instrument. To administer the instrument, the investigator mailed a letter to the principal of each school. In each envelope was enclosed a cover letter explaining the purpose for the study, a questionnaire, a self-addressed, stamped return envelope, and a label which principals could address if they desired a copy of the findings.

A copy of the letter sent appears in Appendix A.

Tabulation of the responses. All the responses of the principals were tabulated in accordance with the type of response requested in the instructions preceding each part of the questionnaire. A total of 129 valid responses was tabulated and analyzed. A detailed breakdown of these responses is found in Chapter III of this report.

Instrument

A two-page questionnaire was designed to obtain relevant information about teachers who are currently employed to work with disadvantaged students. In devising this instrument, the investigator emphasized clarity and ease of response to obtain a satisfactory return, without sacrificing pertinent questions. Emphasis was also placed on relative availability of information to the principals, since any time-consuming research necessary to answer any of the questions would likely have decreased the chances of the questionnaire's being completed and returned.

This questionnaire was divided into three basic areas: assignment, qualifications, and classroom conditions.

In "Assignment", the manner in which teachers were selected and the frequency with which these methods were used was requested.

The "Qualifications" section was subdivided into four component areas: academic, professional, personal data, and personal qualities. A combination of objective and subjective responses was solicited. Factual data was not requested for "Professional Qualifications" since such information would have required considerable research for the principals, especially those who had a relatively large number of such teachers. Also, certain assumptions could prudently be made with the factual data indicated for "Academic Qualifications." A similar premise was used in the "Personal Data" section, especially since fine distinctions would not have made the study any more valid.

To obtain knowledge of the relative importance of various "Personal Qualities", principals were asked to rate a selection of seven qualities in a descending order of importance.

Although "Classroom Conditions" is not actually an intrinsic teacher quality, the investigator included this analysis in the study because of the inseparableness of such conditions and the teacher's influence.

A final notation was made to the principals, offering them a copy of the findings of this study for their cooperation. A copy of the questionnaire appears in Appendix B.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

The findings of this investigation on "Characteristics of Successful Teachers of the Disadvantaged: As Identified by School Principals" were organized on the basis of the responses to the questionnaires from school principals. The investigator organized these responses in the form of tables and charts with emphasis on derived conclusions rather than on fine details which would detract from continuity of thought on the part of the reader.

Analyses of the Responses

Sufficiently valid responses of 129 school principals from throughout the state of Virginia were used as a basis for the body of this report. The scope of their observations took into consideration factual data of 517 teachers who were assigned to teach the disadvantaged. Details of this data are found in the subsequent discussions.

ASSIGNMENT

It is of inestimable value to have a staff which wants to be where it is, and in the capacity in which it teaches. However, one of the biggest problems for many school systems is to equalize the quality of teaching among the many different types of schools, and programs within schools. Since teachers have preferences, and they have a right for consideration for their preferences, there is a tendency to gravitate towards the preferred schools, or to steer away from programs which are somewhat challenging and often less desirable.⁷ Teaching the disadvantaged is frequently one of these more challenging and less desirable assignments. The bases for assigning teachers to such classes in Virginia is shown in Table I.

TABLE I
BASIS FOR ASSIGNING TEACHERS
TO WORK WITH THE DISADVANTAGED

Criteria	Number of First Choices	Frequency Count	Order of Assignment
Teacher Preference	45	171	1
By School Principal	41	208	2
By Personnel Department	34	245	3
Similar Work Experience	8	286	4
Teacher Rotation	1	314	5
Total	129	---	-

⁷Joan I. Roberts, School Children in the Urban Slum (New York: The Free Press, 1967), pp.555-557.

Ideally, and as the table indicates, the most frequently used basis for assigning teachers to work with disadvantaged students is teacher preference for such a position. Normally, the teacher making such a preference feels confident in his ability to cope successfully with the inherent challenge, and more than likely has had some specific preparation.

Assignment, based upon the school principal's judgment, is the next most frequently used basis, with the personnel department of the school system following. The logic of this order lies in the observations a principal normally makes of his staff, and therefore is in a position to render a valid analysis of which staff member would serve best in such capacity. When no apparent choices are available, the personnel department must supply a qualified person to fill the position.

Similar work experience in guidance, welfare, or social work does not necessarily qualify one to work with the disadvantaged; however, such experience is of great help, and a position can be filled with some degree of anticipated success.

The method of assignment least likely to be used is teacher rotation. This is a "last resort" method of assignment which implies that there is no candidate for the position. Very often, where such assignment procedures are used, the youngest and least experienced teachers are selected.

QUALIFICATIONS

Academic

With some improvement in the salary scale for teachers, the field of education has been increasingly fortunate in having a larger number of college graduates selecting the teaching profession. Until recent years, selection of teachers was rather limited to the relatively inadequate number of applicants who possessed the necessary academic qualifications.

The following analysis shows the levels of academic achievement possessed by those currently working with the disadvantaged.

TABLE II
ACADEMIC PREPARATION POSSESSED BY
TEACHERS WORKING WITH THE DISADVANTAGED

Academic Preparation	Number of Teachers	Percent of Total
Bachelor's Degree	310	60.0
Master's Degree	157	30.3
Post Graduate Certificate	26	5.0
Non-Degree Training	12	2.3
Normal Professional	10	2.0
Doctorate	2	.4
Total	517	100.0

As had been stated previously, the teacher who works with the disadvantaged has an extremely challenging job. He must remedy their intellectual difficulties and educational handicaps, assuage their anxieties and fears, and prove false their suspicions and distortions.⁸ With such an array of obstacles, any educator is bound to have difficulties. Proper academic preparation will lessen the severity of the difficulties when they arise, and prevent others through a better insight into potential problem areas.

The prevalence of teachers with Bachelor's degrees corresponds to today's accreditation standards for schools, as well as school system minimums. An increasingly large number of teachers possess Master's degrees in specific areas, recognizing the need for specialization, as well as salary and opportunity benefits. The relatively few remaining teachers who possess normal professional degrees, or no degree, are being phased out. The older teachers are permitted to continue until retirement, while the younger ones are increasingly meeting current certification requirements, or having their teaching contracts terminated. In the near future, both of these latter categories will be non-existent in most school systems.

Training beyond the Master's degree is somewhat low, but increasing. Unless added inducements are made to keep such personnel in the classroom, most of them will follow the trend towards administrative or supervisory work.

⁸Herbert Grossman, Teaching the Emotionally Disturbed (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p.149.

In analyzing the responses pertaining to essential and desirable academic qualifications, the following observations are revealed:

TABLE III
 ESSENTIAL AND DESIRABLE ACADEMIC PREPARATION
 FOR TEACHERS OF THE DISADVANTAGED
 AS INDICATED BY PRINCIPALS

Academic Preparation	Essential (Percent)	Desirable (Percent)
Bachelor's Degree	81.0	16.0
Master's Degree	19.0	67.0
Post Graduate Certificate	0	15.0
Non-Degree Training	0	0
Normal Professional	0	0
Doctorate	0	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0

In agreement with certification requirements, the indicated minimum academic preparation is a Bachelor's degree, with only a small percentage indicating that advanced degrees are not necessary in this type of work. In accordance with the new academic standards, approximately one-fifth of the sample consider advanced knowledge derived from a Master's degree as being essential, while about two-thirds find it desirable. The 15 percent, the respondents who indicated the desirability of their staff possessing post-graduate certificates, appear to be education-minded. They recognize the importance of a thorough knowledge of disadvantaged students.

The lack of response to lesser degrees implies insufficient merit attached to such qualifications. The nominal response to the need for a doctorate can possibly be considered overspecialization for classroom use.

The preceding information and discussion is graphically summarized in Figure 1.

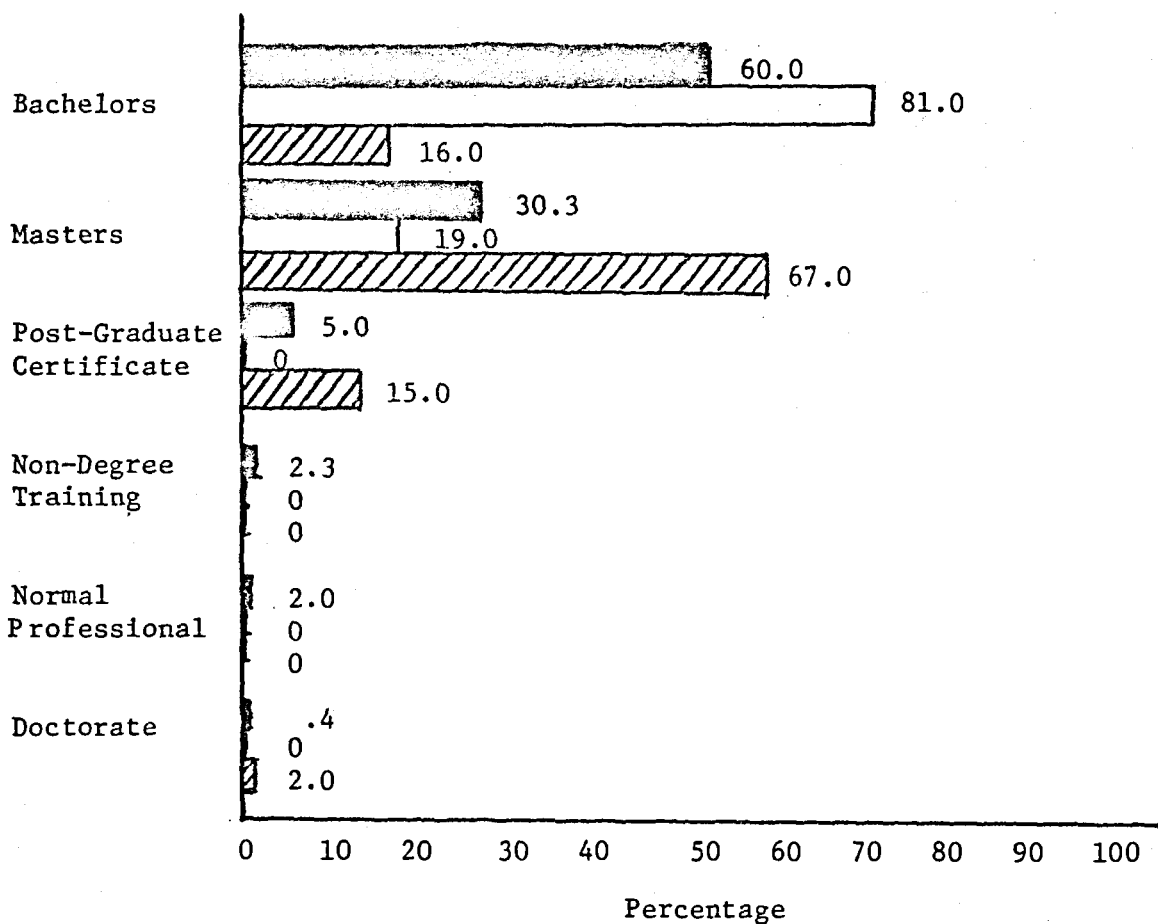
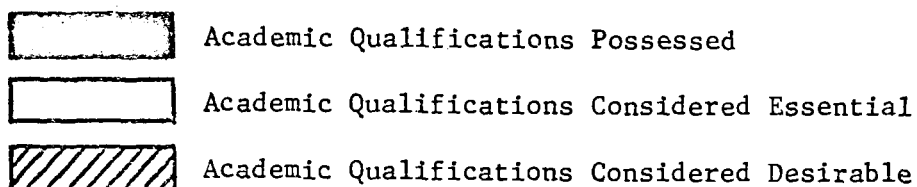


FIGURE 1

A COMPARISON OF ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS POSSESSED BY TEACHERS OF THE DISADVANTAGED AND THOSE CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL AND DESIRABLE BY PRINCIPALS



Professional

The response to the rank-order question relating to professional experience preferred by principals before assigning teachers to work with the disadvantaged indicates the following:

TABLE IV
ANALYSIS OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE PREFERRED
BY PRINCIPALS FOR TEACHERS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED

Experience	Number of First Choices	Total Count	Order of Preference
Specialized Training	78	154	1
Classroom Experience*	41	266	2
In-Service Training	9	332	3
Guidance Experience	1	387	4
Total	129	---	-

*57 preferred 2-3 years experience
31 preferred 4-5 years experience
41 did not specify length of experience desired

The heavily preferred response to specialized training complements the findings in "academic qualifications" of this report, which emphasizes the need for thorough preparation to understand the impact of psychological and sociological factors upon the disadvantaged. It has been stated that the most effective long-range approach to be used in working with the disadvantaged lies in pre-service orientation and training.⁹

⁹Gordon and Wilkerson, op.cit., p.54.

Classroom experience was revealed as the second most valuable experience, with approximately half of the sample preferring 2-3 years experience, and about 25 percent indicating 4-5 years. This preference conflicts with actual assignment procedures used in one large school system, namely Chicago. According to Roberts, "The younger teachers with the least experience tend to be assigned schools in the lower socioeconomic areas."¹⁰

In-service training has many merits, yet few principals selected it as their number one choice in this study. A response of less than 10 percent ranking it as a preferred choice implies that principals would rather have pre-service experience than in-service training for their staff.

Guidance experience, as revealed through the total count, was overwhelmingly selected as the final preference. Many speculations can arise to explain this fact. There does, however, appear to be greater stability of guidance personnel, as evidenced by the number remaining as counselors, or moving into administrative or supervisory positions rather than into the classroom.

¹⁰Roberts, op.cit., p.557.

Personal Data

Social background of teachers. According to the normal distribution patterns of the structure of American society, one would expect similar distribution for teachers. The study reveals the following data:

TABLE V

ANALYSIS OF SOCIOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF TEACHERS WORKING WITH THE DISADVANTAGED AND CORRESPONDING PREFERENCES BY PRINCIPALS

Social Background	Percent Lower	Percent Middle	Percent Upper	Total
Estimated	.5	99.0	.5	100.0
Preferred	14.5	73.0	.0	87.5

No preference was indicated by 12.5 percent of the sample.

Practically the entire teaching staff falls into the middle class structure of society, with only a token few at either extreme. In accordance with middle class orientation and dominance in the public schools, the approximately 75 percent preference for middle class teachers could almost have been predicted. It is interesting to note, however, that almost 15 percent of the principals preferred some lower class oriented teachers, and no preferences for teachers from the upper strata of society.

One very valid explanation of such findings is revealed in these statements by Hickerson:

All human beings bring their value commitments to their relationships with others. How one perceives another is often determined by one's own values and behavior... The inability of affluent-oriented teachers to understand or cope with deprived children... alienates these children from the public schools.... When there is a clash of values... they (children) have been attacked at a point of greatest vulnerability..... Since students find it hard to gain the teacher's approval, school becomes a dreaded experience and identity with the school is easily shattered. School and child early reach a parting of the ways.¹¹

In this analysis, as well as the subsequent ones, there is a small percentage of principals who did not indicate a preference. It is assumed by the investigator that these administrators found such preferences subordinate to other qualifications. This premise will be maintained without further mention.

Sex of teachers. For considerable time, the predominant teacher at the public school level has been the female. Although this ratio is slowly changing, female teachers are still in the majority as revealed in the following analysis:

TABLE IV

ANALYSIS OF SEX FACTORS OF TEACHERS WORKING WITH THE DISADVANTAGED AND CORRESPONDING PREFERENCES BY PRINCIPALS

Sex of Teachers	Percent Male	Percent Female	Equal Number of Each	Total
Actual	30.0	70.0	---	100.0
Preferred	40.3	18.6	24.0	82.9

No preference was indicated by 17.1 percent of the sample.

¹¹Nathaniel Hickerson, *Education for Alienation* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p.42-43.

According to the Virginia Education Association bulletin Where Virginia Ranks: 1968 there are 20.3 percent male teachers in public elementary and secondary schools. The 30 percent shown in this study to be working with the disadvantaged students tends to be a larger percentage than is found in average situations. Also, since there is a preference shown in a ratio greater than 2 to 1 for men, their effectiveness or ability to work with such students deserves some merit.

The sizeable response of almost one-fourth of the sample for an equal number of each sex may be based upon the needs of particular students. The role of the teacher to provide a mother or a father image for some students is quite important as many studies have revealed. The preference for men in this capacity may also be based upon their ability to control difficult situations whenever they arise.

Marital status of teachers. The following table reveals the marital status of teachers currently working with the disadvantaged:

TABLE VII

ANALYSIS OF MARITAL STATUS OF TEACHERS WORKING WITH THE DISADVANTAGED AND CORRESPONDING PREFERENCES BY PRINCIPALS

Marital Status	Percent Married	Percent Single	Percent Widowed	Percent Divorced	Total
Actual	74.2	19.4	3.3	3.2	100.0
Preferred	76.0	7.0	---	---	83.0

No preference was indicated by 17.0 percent of the sample.

Approximately three-fourths of the teachers working with disadvantaged students are married, and principals' preferences show about

the same figure. The disparity which exists between the 19.4 percent who are single, and the 7.0 percent indicated preferences for single persons, may have been partially explained previously, when the observation was made that often the youngest, least experienced (and perhaps single) teachers are given the less desirable assignments. The figures for widowed and divorced teachers are nominal, and no valid observations can be made.

Age levels of teachers. Although an extremely fine age distribution was not considered necessary, the age-group analysis presented in Table VIII is sufficiently valid for the general observations sought in this study.

TABLE III

ANALYSIS OF AGE LEVELS OF TEACHERS WORKING WITH THE
DISADVANTAGED AND CORRESPONDING PREFERENCES BY PRINCIPALS

Age Groups	Percent 20-29	Percent 30-39	Percent 40-49	Percent 50-above	Total
Actual	46.7	33.0	14.9	5.4	100.0
Preferred	26.4	48.8	7.0	0	82.2

No preference was indicated by 17.8 percent of the sample.

Some speculation occurs when the following data is noted: half of the teachers currently working with the disadvantaged are under 30 years old, and the number in each age level decreases as age increases. Are the youngest teachers being given less desirable assignments because their youth enables them to relate better with such groups? Since almost

half of the principals preferred teachers from the 30-39 age group, this indicates that maturity, experience, and understanding student needs are essential. However, the 26.4 percent preference for 20-29 year old teachers implies a need for a balance between fresh ideas and tried methods.

Intellectual level of teachers. The estimated intellectual level of teachers of the disadvantaged as identified by school principals reveals:

TABLE IX

ANALYSIS OF INTELLECTUAL LEVELS OF TEACHERS WORKING WITH
THE DISADVANTAGED AND CORRESPONDING PREFERENCES BY PRINCIPALS

Intellectual Level	Percent Low	Percent Average	Percent High	Total
Estimated	1.0	72.1	26.9	100.0
Preferred	0	61.2	33.4	94.6

No preference was indicated by 5.4 percent of the sample.

The nature of the teaching profession with its corresponding academic qualifications would naturally lead one to assume that teachers were of at least an average or above intellect to satisfy degree requirements. The 72.1 percent who were classified as average, and the 26.9 percent considered high, confirms this presupposition. In keeping with preferences, as stated previously, for greater academic training this analysis complements the need for training by the 33.4 percent preference for teachers to possess a higher intellect. A reason for 61.2

percent of the principals preferring teachers of average intelligence may be the work that these teachers will normally cover is of an uncomplicated nature, from an academic standpoint.

Stature of teachers. The actual and preferred physical size of teachers working with disadvantaged students is revealed in the following table:

TABLE X

ANALYSIS OF THE STATURE OF TEACHERS WORKING WITH THE DISADVANTAGED AND CORRESPONDING PREFERENCES BY PRINCIPALS

Stature	Percent Small	Percent Medium	Percent Large	Total
Actual	8.9	78.0	13.1	100.0
Preferred	1.0	58.1	11.6	70.7

No preference was indicated by 29.3 percent of the sample.

This response to the question could possibly have been predicted by normal distribution patterns of the stature of the American society. As in society, the investigation reveals that about three-fourths of the teachers are of medium stature, with almost an equal distribution of the balance on either extreme. However, according to preferences, only 58.1 percent selected medium stature, while about one-tenth of the sample leaned towards the physically larger teacher. Disciplinary situations may arise needing to be handled by a larger person, but the relatively large number of principals who abstained from making a preference may imply that mutual respect and ability to control a class without using physical means may be more important.

Personal Qualities

Respect for the teacher is the basis for successful interaction in a classroom, and this respect is in large measure gained through a combination of the factors identified in this section of the study. Analysis of the responses is necessary before discussing these qualities.

TABLE XI

ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL QUALITIES DESIRABLE FOR TEACHERS
WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS AS IDENTIFIED BY PRINCIPALS

Quality	Number of First Choices	Rank Total	Importance Rating
Understanding Student Needs	45	195	1
Emotional Stability	33	245	2
Patience	16	294	3
Flexibility	9	366	4
Communication Skills	7	386	5
Sense of Humor	5	424	6
Personal Appearance	0	570	7
Total	129	---	-

Although there is great difficulty in rating such a list of qualities because they are all desirable and relatively important, the largest number of principals preferred "understanding student needs" as being the most important. This indication is in line with previous

preferences which required advanced academic preparation and specialized training for working with the disadvantaged. Certainly study and experience will give a teacher a better understanding of student needs.

Emotional stability, as the next preference, closely corresponds to previous statements of desire to have teachers who are more mature, stable, married, and who have had experience in handling student problems.

Patience, flexibility, communication skills, sense of humor, and personal appearance followed in this stated order. There was no sizeable preference of any of these qualities over another, with the exception of "personal appearance" which was most frequently rated last. This sequence, indicated by the investigation, closely parallels Adams' description of desirable traits of outstanding teachers, which was brought to the reader's attention in Chapter I of this study.

Classroom Conditions

The influence of the teacher is of unequalled value for the success of any educational program, and especially in one seeking to help the disadvantaged. Classroom conditions, as developed and maintained by the teacher, are an inseparable part of such success.

Classroom disciplinary atmosphere. The disciplinary atmosphere a teacher maintains in his classroom has a close correlation with the number or severity of problems with which he must cope. Findings of the study reveal:

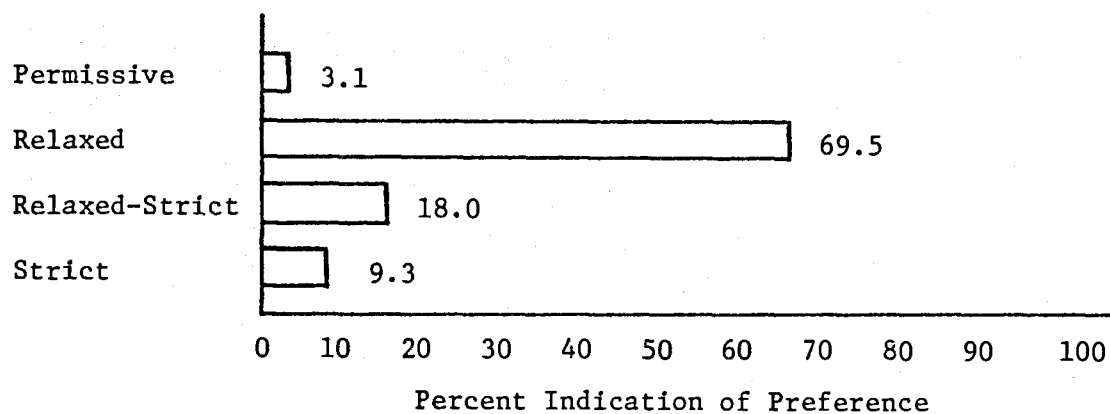


FIGURE 2

ANALYSIS OF CLASSROOM DISCIPLINARY ATMOSPHERE TO BE
MAINTAINED FOR MAXIMUM EFFECTIVENESS IN WORKING
WITH THE DISADVANTAGED AS IDENTIFIED BY PRINCIPALS

Analysis of the findings points to the need to maintain a relaxed atmosphere with some leanings towards strict control. Permissiveness is to be avoided.

Such need is confirmed by Cohen's study of the disadvantaged. He emphasizes the need for strong structuring in such groups, since they are unable to organize themselves physiologically or emotionally and must be organized and directed.¹² Certainly, the teacher who cannot control his class will be extremely frustrated, and often his own emotional discomfort will transfer to the class, resulting in relative failure of the program.

In another study, Howe states that some degree of control is necessary to create a classroom atmosphere that is sufficiently quiet

¹²S. Alan Cohen, Teach Them All to Read (New York: Random House, 1969), p.133.

and relaxed for effective communication and learning to occur. A teacher cannot concentrate on helping children learn if much time and energy is used in struggling to achieve order.¹³

Classroom appearance. Classroom appearance, as a factor in working with the disadvantaged is preferred to be as follows:

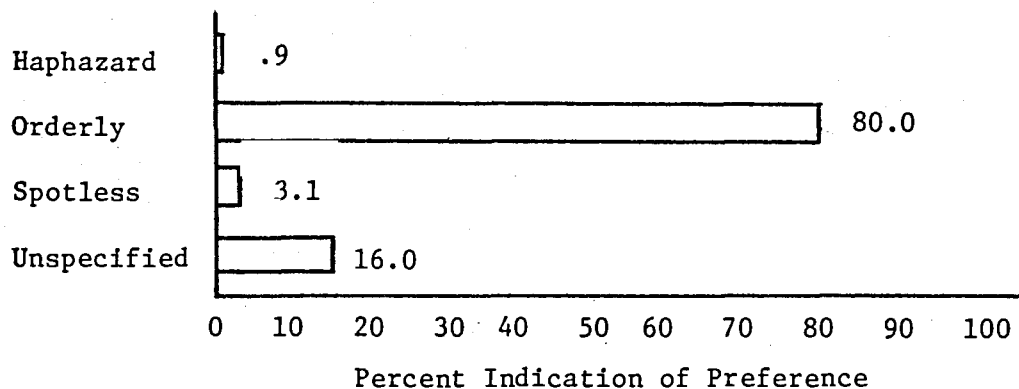


FIGURE 3

ANALYSIS OF CLASSROOM APPEARANCE TO BE MAINTAINED
FOR MAXIMUM EFFECTIVENESS IN WORKING WITH THE
DISADVANTAGED AS IDENTIFIED BY PRINCIPALS

The overwhelming response to maintain an orderly looking classroom, and at times tending towards spotless appearance, confirms many psychological studies. It has become common knowledge that immediate surroundings have a direct influence on the state of mind of the beholder. There is much disorder and confusion in the life of a disadvantaged student, and often the only experience with an organized environment that the child has is restricted to the classroom.

¹³Michael J. A. Howe, "Positive Reinforcement: A Humanizing Approach to Teacher Control in the Classroom," The National Elementary Principal, XLIX (April, 1970), 31-34.

Learning emphasis. Since disadvantaged students bring with them to school predetermined attitudes towards educational programs, new curricula must be established for these youngsters to make learning relevant. Responses to this question by school principals reveal:

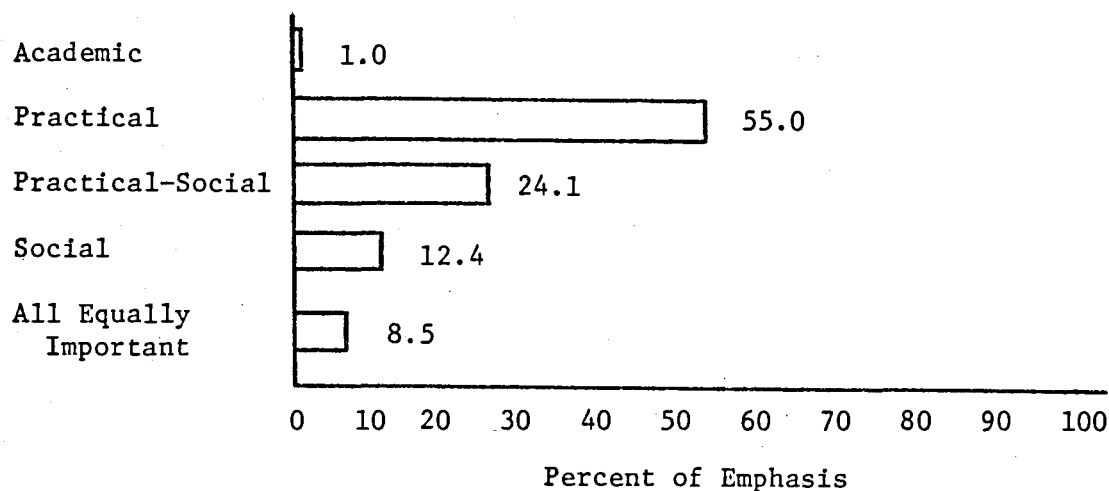


FIGURE 4

LEARNING SKILLS TO BE EMPHASIZED IN TEACHING THE
DISADVANTAGED AS IDENTIFIED BY PRINCIPALS

From these findings, it is apparent that the emphasis must be placed largely on developing a practical curriculum for such students. Parker confirms this finding by stating that as curriculum is developed with increasing emphasis on learning skills which may be useful in adulthood, the students in such programs developed a more positive attitude towards learning.¹⁴ Increased motivation benefits both the pupil and the teacher.

¹⁴Harold K. Parker, "On Making Incurable Youths Curable," Journal of Secondary Education, XLV (February, 1970), 60.

In addition to practical skills, the study reveals a need to teach the disadvantaged some of the accepted social skills and values to become respected citizens in this society. Again, referring to the Rodman experience with dropouts, his report concluded that although many disadvantaged students damn middle class values as unfair, when these values are held up to them as being attainable they showed an eagerness to acquire them.¹⁵

¹⁵Besant, op.cit., p.53.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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Summary

The problem which the investigator saw as the basis for this study was to identify the characteristics of successful teachers of the disadvantaged, and to reveal the degree of divergence between actual and preferred data where ideal characteristics did not exist.

A limitation was placed on the study to include only those schools dealing with adolescents, because of the difficulty and uniqueness of the problems at such an age level. The need and value of this study was made apparent through the many failures of otherwise good teachers to be effective with the disadvantaged.

To obtain the necessary information, a survey was made through the use of a questionnaire. School principals were selected as the sample of respondents because of their professional status, knowledge of necessary data, and educational experiences upon which to base their preferences. The responses of 129 school principals, which took into account 517 teachers who currently were working with the disadvantaged, were tabulated and analyzed.

The findings are a mixture of anticipated responses, original identifications, and some revelations which supplement other studies and fields of concentration.

Conclusions

It was an objective of this investigation to identify the characteristics of successful teachers of the disadvantaged. A knowledge of these characteristics should aid principals and personnel departments in their selection and placement of such teachers, and thereby reduce program failures and teacher turnover.

On the basis of the findings of this investigation, the study can be concluded as follows:

1. Selections of teachers are most frequently based upon personal preferences for such teaching.
2. The vast majority of teachers possess at least a Bachelor's degree, which is considered essential by most principals. However, post-graduate academic training leading to advanced degrees was highly desired.
3. Most principals preferred teachers to have had some specialized training for working with the disadvantaged and about three years of successful classroom experience.
4. Personal data of teachers revealed:
 - a. A predominant middle class background was possessed by teachers and greatly favored by principals. However, some exposure to lower class problems was desired.
 - b. Although the majority of teachers are female, most principals preferred a predominance of male teachers in such positions.
 - c. About half of the teachers were in their 20's, yet most principals found the maturity possessed by those in their 30's more desirable.

- d. Preferences for married teachers who were average or above in stature and intelligence closely corresponded to actual data.
5. Principals preferred teachers to be understanding of student needs, possess great emotional stability and patience, interact and communicate well, and to try to maintain some sense of humor in their teaching.
6. It was preferred that the classroom be maintained in a relaxed-to-strict disciplinary atmosphere and be kept in an orderly manner.
7. Learning emphasis, according to principals, should be on a practical curriculum which would be most relevant to the needs of disadvantaged students. Social values, as accepted in this society, should supplement the curriculum with least emphasis on pure academic skills.

The foregoing revelations are rather ideal and it may be difficult to find a prospective teacher who meets all conditions. The purpose for making such identifications was to enable any educator to have at his disposal a basis upon which to make a better selection, although some conditions may need to be waived. The investigator found relatively little material for this study which deals exclusively with the teacher; therefore, further research to supplement this study is recommended. If this study fills some of the void in knowledge which exists and helps educators in any way, the work involved will have been adequately rewarded.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER FOR SURVEY

Dear

We who are in the field of education realize the need for preparing students who are disadvantaged economically, socially, emotionally, or mentally to take their place as wholesome citizens in our democratic society. The products we develop are in large measure determined by the experiences we provide for them while students in our schools.

Since the classroom teacher is probably the single most important factor in providing these experiences to disadvantaged students, we as educators can benefit by knowing what type of person is best suited for this responsibility. Accordingly, I am making a study to identify the characteristics of the successful teacher of disadvantaged students.

As an experienced educator, your response to the enclosed questionnaire will be invaluable. For your thoughtful cooperation, the findings of this study will be made available to you if you request a copy.

Sincerely yours,

L. Zapar
Assistant Principal
Chester Intermediate School
Chesterfield County Public Schools

APPENDIX B

Characteristics of
Successful Teachers of the Disadvantaged
(As Identified by School Principals)

Principal _____ School _____
 City _____ Size of Student Body _____
 Number of teachers working with disadvantaged students _____
 (If you have no special classes of disadvantaged students, please so
 indicate and return this questionnaire.)

Part I ASSIGNMENT

Which of the following are most frequently used for assigning teachers to
 classes for the disadvantaged: (Indicate frequency: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)

- | | |
|--|-------|
| A. Assignment by personnel department | _____ |
| B. Principal's personal judgement | _____ |
| C. Teacher preference for such teaching | _____ |
| D. Similar experience in guidance, social work, etc. | _____ |
| E. Teacher rotation | _____ |
| F. Other (Specify) _____ | _____ |

Part II QUALIFICATIONSA. Academic

Which academic qualifications have these teachers achieved: (Please
 indicate number of teachers in each category.)

- | | | | |
|--------------|-------|------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Doctorate | _____ | 4. Post-graduate certificate | _____ |
| 2. Masters | _____ | 5. Normal professional | _____ |
| 3. Bachelors | _____ | 6. Non-degree training | _____ |

Which of the above do you consider (a) essential _____
 (b) Desirable _____

B. Professional

What professional experience do you prefer your teachers to have had
 before being selected to teach the disadvantaged? (Indicate order of
 preference.)

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Successful classroom teaching (_____ years) | _____ |
| 2. Experience in guidance or related work | _____ |
| 3. Specialized training for teaching the disadvantaged | _____ |
| 4. In-service training for position | _____ |
| 5. Other _____ | _____ |

VITA

Lubomyr Zapar, son of Iwan and Daria Zapar, was born in Krywenke, Ukraine. He is one of three children in a family who immigrated to America in 1947. After living in New York City for about three years the family moved to a farm in Dorothy, New Jersey. He attended Vineland High School in Vineland, New Jersey, from which he graduated in 1958. He also attended Virginia Polytechnic Institute from which he received a B.S. degree in Business Administration in 1962.

Upon completion of college he was married to the former Cornelia Maye Straub of Lexington, Virginia. Before entering the field of education in 1964 the author worked for the E. I. duPont de Nemours Company as a cost analyst and buyer for about two years. Following this he worked one summer as a retail sales manager with the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. His educational experience consists of two years of teaching mathematics at Chester Intermediate School and four years in administration as assistant principal at the same school.

He has been a member of Chesterfield Education Association, Virginia Education Association, and the National Education Association. He is presently a member of the Chester Presbyterian Church where he serves as a deacon and youth advisor.

Work on the Master's degree was begun at the University of Richmond during the summer of 1967.