THE ROLE OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATOR IN DISTRICT FUNDING: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY.

BY

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M.Ed., The University of Liverpool, 1978

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of Administrative, Adult, and Higher Education (Educational Administration)

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

March 1990

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This thesis examined the relationship between special education administrator role priorities and level of funding received by school districts in British Columbia. Data were obtained from the Ministry of Education on the number of students in special education categories claimed for funding. These data demonstrated an extreme variability in the proportions of students claimed for funding by the various school districts. In an attempt to examine this variability and suggest some possible explanations for it, this study was undertaken. One possible variable that might influence the number of students claimed for funding was examined: special education administrator role priorities. Special education administrators were asked to prioritise the three roles of administrative behaviour as identified by Cuban. These role priorities were then related to the level of funding received by the district.

Evidence was found to indicate that there may be a systematic relationship between the role priorities of special education administrators working in districts with low levels of funding and the level of funding received by the district. In addition, evidence was found to suggest
that the priority assigned to the instructional role may
differentiate between administrators working in low funded
districts as compared with those working in high funded
districts.

The implications from the findings of the study suggest
that: the framework of administrator role priorities
developed by Cuban may be appropriate to describe the
variability of special education administrator behaviour;
the existence of the relationship between the priority
assigned to the instructional role and district funding
level has practical significance for the structuring of
special education funding mechanisms and for the day to day
work of the special education administrator. In addition,
the study has implications for future research regarding the
uniqueness of the instructional role and the relationship
between the role priorities of special education
administrators and district outcomes other than funding
level.
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I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the special education administrators in the province for their co-operation and help. Without their assistance this study would not have been possible.
CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This study was conceived out of an interest in special education and its funding mechanisms that extends over many years. In that time I have come to realise the truth of the old North Yorkshire expression, "People alter places, Like noses alter faces."

A Personal View

During the eight years in which I have been a special education administrator in British Columbia, I have been continually fascinated by the extreme variability in the way in which my colleagues and I perform our roles. Although our formal role descriptions are very similar, (School District #88[Terrace] 1988; School District #52[Prince Rupert] 1988; School District #27[Cariboo-Chilcotin], 1988), the variety of ways in which they are carried out is amazing.

A layperson could be excused for thinking that this variability was a function of differing job titles. In examining the list of "special education contacts" (the list of administrators responsible for special education programs in school districts), the following titles were found to be
synonymous with 'special education administrator': Director of Instruction (Special Services), Supervisor of Special Services, District Principal (Special Education), District Vice Principal (Special Education) and District Counsellor. Yet informal discussions and exchanges of job descriptions indicate that the formal expectations associated with these seemingly different titles for 'special education administrator' are very much the same.

Special Education Administrator Stereotypes

From my observations of the work of a number of special education administrators in British Columbia, there appear to be three common stereotypes of behaviour. They are: the political leader, the instructional leader, and the administrator.

The political leader is the administrator who spends the majority of his/her time in face to face contact with representatives from individual special interest groups, and with parents, trustees, and principals. He/she attends almost every board and committee meeting and is on first name terms with Ministry representatives in Victoria.

The instructional leader in special education is the administrator who spends most of his/her time in schools working with teachers and children. He/she is active in both sponsoring and delivering inservice activities. He/she is indefatigable in his/her attendance at workshops and
tries to remain current in all areas of special education. When not actually in a school, he/she can often be found perusing the most recent research in special education.

The special education administrator who sees him/herself as an administrator first and foremost, can often be recognised by the tidiness of his/her desk. This individual emphasises the administrative aspects of the role, and generally spends the majority of his/her time close to, or in, his/her office.

These descriptions are, of course, abstractions. No one special education administrator represents any one stereotype. However, they are indicative of the extremes in the ways in which individual administrators are seen to perform their roles. In addition, they correspond with the descriptions of the core administrative roles in general education developed by Larry Cuban (1986, 1988).

The Variability in Special Education Administrator Role Priorities

Variability in special education administrator role priorities has been documented in the literature (e.g., Mackie and Engel, 1955; Marro and Kohl, 1975). What the literature does not address is whether there are any relationships between this variability and other aspects of special education in which the administrator has input. One such aspect is the funding process. The input required for
the funding process is the number of students claimed in each of various handicapping categories.

There is a high degree of variation from district to district in the number of students claimed in each of the special education funding categories (and thus the level of funding received by the district). A question that formed in my mind is whether the variability in special education administrator role priorities is in any way related to the variation in special education funding among districts. This study seeks an answer to that question. In the following section this question and the purpose of the study are stated in more detail.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to ascertain whether or not the variations in special education administrator role priorities can be adequately described within the framework of Cuban's three core roles and if so, is this variation systematically related to variations in the number of students claimed in the Low incidence, High cost special education funding categories. The term "special education administrator role priorities" will, for the purpose of this study, be defined as the pattern of priorities special education administrators assign to the three core roles of administrator behaviour defined by Cuban. In addition the
study provides the opportunity to explore further the extent to which the special case of special education administrator role priorities reflects the more general case of school administrator and superintendent role priorities. This will, however, be a minor part of the study.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The influence of the principal's role priorities on 'school effectiveness', using such diverse criteria as student vandalism, attendance, innovative classroom practices, and teachers' job attitudes has been extensively studied (Leithwood and Montgomery, 1986). The superintendent's role as a district leader and change agent has also been the subject of study (Blumberg, 1986). Although the special education administrator role has been the subject of considerable study, there has been no attempt to relate the high degree of variability in role priorities to any outcome measures. One outcome measure of special education administrator role priorities which is easily quantifiable is the level of funding. In British Columbia, due to the nature of the fiscal framework, funding itself cannot be used as an outcome variable because of the confounding effect of district size. An intermediate variable related to funding is the number of students claimed. This thesis will examine the relationship between
administrator role priorities and variations in the numbers of students claimed for funding in the Low incidence, High cost categories expressed as a percentage of the total district enrollment. If it can be shown that there is, in fact, a relationship between these two variables, this could have consequences not only for the construction of funding formulas, but also for the role of the special education administrator.

THE VARIABILITY IN SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING

This section explores the variability of special education funding among British Columbia school districts. Initially, the funding system in B.C. is described, and the rationale for selecting a subset of the special education funding system is presented. In the final section, a specific example of the variability in one of the factors affecting funding level among districts is given.

Special Education Funding in British Columbia

British Columbia funds special education through a system of provincial grants to school districts, supplemented by locally generated revenues (Ministry of Education, 1988). The funding system is based on the number
of pupils claimed in various special education categories. These categories are as follows:

3.20 Moderately Mentally Handicapped
3.21 Severely and Profoundly Handicapped
3.22 Physically Handicapped
3.23 Visually Impaired
3.24 Hearing Impaired
3.25 Autistic
3.26 Severely Learning Disabled
3.27 Educable Mentally Handicapped
3.28 Severe Behaviour Problems
3.29 Rehabilitation
3.30 Indian Education
3.31 English as a Second Language
3.32 Gifted\(^1\) (Ministry of Education, 1980).

On the basis of per student funding level provided in each category, the Ministry of Education combines the above categories into four groups, which are described below.

\(^1\) This list comprises all the funding categories based on student count. There are other special education funding categories not based upon student count.
Low incidence, High cost. This group consists of the first six categories: moderately mentally handicapped, severely and profoundly handicapped, physically handicapped, visually impaired, and autistic. All these handicapping conditions have assumed prevalence levels across the province, based upon historical data on the number of students claimed for funding purposes, and on published prevalence levels derived from United States data (Desharnais, 1982). These prevalence levels serve as guidelines only; districts are permitted to claim for funding purposes, as many children as they actually serve.²

High incidence, Low cost A. This group consists of the following categories: severely learning disabled, educable mentally handicapped, severe behaviour problems and rehabilitation. This group is 'capped'; that is, districts are funded on the basis of a prevalence level of 3.5% of the total district enrollment³, irrespective of need, or the number of students served.

² Personal experience however, suggests that when a district attempts to claim increased numbers of students, the officials in the Special Education Division are very reluctant to accept the increase without considerable documentation.
³ For the 1988/89 school year the cap was removed from one of the High incidence, Low cost categories (3.27 Educable Mentally Handicapped).
High incidence, Low cost B. This group contains only Indian Education and English as a Second Language; there are no provincial prevalence levels in these categories. However, the pupils represented are very unevenly distributed across the province. Gifted, which is capped, is a separate unnamed group.

Low incidence, High cost as the group for the study.
The Low incidence, High cost group of special education categories is the only group of categories in which the funding formula permits variations above and beyond provincially established prevalence levels, and hence the only one in which an association between administrator role performance and funding level might be found. All the other special education categories are either capped or governed by geographic factors. In spite of an expected even distribution across the province of the children in the Low incidence, High cost categories, it is possible that differences in funding levels among districts in these categories are associated with factors external to the

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4 Although prevalence levels of handicapping conditions are projected to be evenly distributed geographically and across time (U.S. Office of Education, 1975, cited in Hallahan and Kaufman, 1986), there are factors external to districts that could affect prevalence levels at a local level. These factors could include: racial makeup of the population (certain organic disorders are limited to certain racial types), socio-economic conditions (Foetal Alcohol Syndrome is much more prevalent in areas of the province with high levels of alcohol abuse), and factors peculiar to the community that attract parents with handicapped children.
district. An example of such a factor is geographic distribution (parents with handicapped children migrating to larger centres) which would suggest that districts with high levels of funding should be those with larger total student enrollments. Another possible factor is the presence of a Child Development Centre.

Using data provided by the Ministry of Education listing the numbers of students claimed for funding purposes and total student enrollment for each district for the 1987/8 school year (see Appendix #1) a comparison was made between districts having a Child Development Centre and those not having one. This comparison did not appear to support the contention that the presence of a Child Development Centre has an effect upon the prevalence level of children with Low Incidence handicapping conditions.

Using the same data a comparison was made between prevalence levels in large districts (those with student populations greater than 10,000 students) and small districts (those with student populations less than 2000), there being a presumption that parents with handicapped children relocate to communities of large size to take advantage of the various medical and other support services. The mean prevalence level in districts of large size was 0.68% and in districts of less than 2000 students the mean prevalence level was 0.73%. This does not support the contention that districts of large size, because of their additional services attract more children with Low Incidence
Handicaps. It would then appear reasonable to suggest that this variation may be due to factors internal to the district rather than to external factors.

In order to clarify the actual nature and degree of difference in funding levels, specific examples of the variability in funding levels among districts would be useful. The next section will provide details of the funding system as it applies to the Low incidence, High cost special education categories, and also of the degree of difference in funding levels between districts.

Examples of the Variability in Funding Between Districts

The funding provided to districts by the fiscal framework in the Low Incidence, High cost group is based on a formula. This formula provides higher levels of funding per student to districts with small numbers of special education students than it does to districts with larger numbers of students. This means it is impossible to compare districts on the basis of dollars per special education student, because of the confounding factor of the dependence of the level of per pupil funding on district size. I have therefore compared districts on the basis of numbers of special education students claimed in the Low incidence, High cost categories as a percentage of the total district
enrollment. The following table, derived from data provided by the Ministry of Education, is based on enrollment information for 1987/8 school year. Since the intent is to illustrate the wide disparity in numbers of students claimed as a percentage of district total enrollment, only data for the twenty districts at the extremes of the distribution have been included. To ensure confidentiality, district names have been changed and enrollment figures have been rounded up to the nearest thousand.

The data displayed in Table 1 indicate the extreme variability in the proportion of students claimed by school districts. At the outermost limits of the distribution, the proportion of students claimed differs by a factor of approximately 22 (i.e., 1.52% and .07%).

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5 I have used the term "number of students claimed in the Low incidence, High cost categories as a percentage of total district enrollment" to describe the level of special education funding received by a district. In order to avoid repetition future references will use the phrase "number of students claimed in the Low incidence, High cost categories" as a descriptor for the level of special education funding received by a district in these categories.
### Table I.

Variability in numbers of students claimed in the Low incidence, High cost categories as a percentage of total district enrollment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District name</th>
<th>Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Lo inc, Hi cost</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gayle</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawes</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bainbridge</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wensley</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aysgarth</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nappa</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Askrigg</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thornton Rust</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellerkin</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addelborough</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carperby</td>
<td>16000</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worton</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burtersett</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedbusk</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardraw</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalling Busk</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marsett</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countersett</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semerwater</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jervaulx</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The percentages cited are based on actual enrollment and not on the rounded figures.

2. In order to ensure confidentiality, these twenty districts have been assigned fictitious names, and district total enrollments have been rounded up to the nearest thousand.

I have argued earlier that differences of this magnitude cannot plausibly be accounted for on the basis of factors external to the district. This suggests that differences in internal factors among districts should be examined. One of these might be the way in which special education administrators prioritise their roles.
**Cuban's Framework of Administrator Behaviour**

Cuban (1986, 1988) provides a framework for describing administrator role priorities that was developed in studies of the behaviour of principals and superintendents. The framework divides administrator behaviour into three core roles: political, managerial and instructional. The close correspondence between Cuban's core roles of administrator behaviour and my own perceptions of the special education stereotypes suggests that Cuban's typology of administrative behaviour can be adapted to the study of variations in special education administrator behaviour. The variation described in terms of Cuban's three core roles could then be related to variability in the numbers of students claimed in the Low incidence, High cost categories. This relationship will be discussed further in the review of the literature.

**OVERVIEW OF THESIS**

The remainder of this thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter two reviews the literature relevant to variability in special education administrator behaviour, variability in numbers of students claimed for funding in British Columbia, and methodology. The third chapter discusses the methodology in detail. Chapter four presents the findings concerning the priorities of the special
education administrators participating in the study and relates these priorities to the variability in the number of students claimed in the Low incidence, High cost special education funding categories. The fifth chapter summarises the thesis and draws conclusions from these findings. In the final section of chapter five, implications of the findings for both practise and research are presented.
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Field Marshall Earl Wavell published a book entitled *Other Men's Flowers*, a book of all the poetry he could recall from memory; it was an impressively thick book. The poems that he had committed to memory were those that had meaning for him. In the same sense, a review of the literature is a summary of the studies we have read that have meaning for our own work. The literature which gives meaning to my study on the special education administrator role and its implications for educational funding is reviewed in three parts. The first is the literature on special education administrator role; the second, frameworks for describing special education administrator behaviour; the third, a description of special education funding in British Columbia.

THE ROLE OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATOR

The purpose of this review is to examine the literature that describes how special education administrators actually perform their roles: their role performance. This use of the term 'role' to describe behaviour is consistent with its
use in role theory (Biddle, 1979; Biddle and Thomas, 1966) but different from its use in social systems theory (Getzels and Guba, 1957; Getzels, Lipham and Campbell, 1968) in which the term 'role' is used to describe institutional expectations.

Within the literature on the special education administrator role as it is actually being performed, the studies can be divided into two groups: the early studies that used the entire population of state level special education administrators within the United States, and the later studies that sampled this population.

The Early Studies

Two early studies can be identified. Mackie and Engel (1955) and Marro and Kohl (1972) whose work represents the first major studies of the role of the special education administrator, used the entire population of local administrators of special education. The design of these two studies was very similar. A committee of experts in special education was convened to list the competencies required of special education administrators. This list of competencies was then used to generate a questionnaire which was sent to all the district level special education administrators throughout the United States.
The Mackie and Engel study. This study reported that, in order of time devoted to function, the following were the tasks in which special education administrators spent the majority of their time: managerial duties, instructional duties, direct services to children, politics, and self-directed study and research. However, within each of these tasks a great variation in the amount of time spent was reported. For example, the percentage of time spent in direct service to children varied between 0% and 60%; similarly, the percentage of time spent on managerial duties varied from 2% to 85%.

The Marro and Kohl study. This study did not report the variation in time spent on the various administrative tasks\(^6\), but chose to report actual and ideal amounts of time devoted by the average administrator per week. The administrators suggested that they spent too little time on direct service to children, supervision of instruction and curriculum development, and that too much time was spent on clerical and managerial work.

\(^6\) The tasks described in the Marro and Kohl study were, in order of time spent on each task: administration, supervision of instruction, direct service to exceptional children, clerical work, curriculum development, community work and self improvement.
The Later Studies

With the exception of Newman's (1972) study, all the later studies of special education administrator role performance (Sage, 1968; Kay, 1982; Hebert and Miller, 1985; Mello, 1986) confirmed the high degree of variability in the time devoted to various administrative tasks found in the early studies.

Newman's study was unique among both the earlier and later studies in revealing few differences among the tasks that special education administrators actually performed and ideally should perform. Unlike those studies, it reported little variability in the role performance of special education administrators. Part of this disagreement may be due to the nature of the instrument used by Newman and part may be due to the nature of the sample in her study. Newman's instrument was designed to survey the tasks of a group of special education administrators and not to report differences in tasks they actually performed and ideally should perform. In addition, Newman's sample (unlike the samples reported above) was highly selective in terms of district size. Only districts with enrollments between 13,000 and 30,000 were included in her study. This is in contrast to both the early and the later studies reported above in which district size was not a factor in sample selection. In large districts, the various administrative roles of the senior special education administrator tend to
be fewer in number as the senior administrator assigns certain duties to subordinates. This may be one of the reasons for reduced variability in special education administrator role performance in Newman’s sample.

With the exception of Newman’s study, the framework used to describe the role of the special education administrator is similar in all the studies and appears to be based on the format used in the earliest study cited (Mackie and Engel, 1955). However, various other frameworks have been developed to describe special education administrator role performance. These, together with the one developed by Mackie and Engel, will be the subject of the next section of this literature review.

FRAMEWORKS FOR DESCRIBING SPECIAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATOR ROLE PRIORITIES

The frameworks used to describe special education administrator role priorities vary between those that have been developed primarily in large urban settings (Boston Public Schools, 1976 cited in Weintraub, Abeson, Ballard and LaVor, 1976) and those designed for use in smaller districts. The descriptive frameworks designed for large urban school districts are intended for use when the various roles within special education administration are divided among a hierarchy of administrators. These frameworks are
not appropriate to the school districts that make up this study because the districts are smaller and generally have only one special education administrator.

The frameworks developed to describe the role performance of the special education administrator in smaller school districts are much more applicable to the situation in British Columbia. Examples of these frameworks are: the framework developed in the first national study of local administrators of special education (Mackie and Engel, 1955), the Board of Cooperative Educational Services Model (BOCES) (cited in Burello and Sage, 1979), and the framework developed by Cuban (1986, 1988).

The Mackie and Engel Framework

The roles performed within this framework are: administrative duties, supervisory and consultative duties, inservice education, self-directed study and research, public relations and direct service to exceptional children. The various core roles are well defined and easily understood. In comparison to the BOCES and Cuban models, the descriptions of the core roles in the Mackie and Engel model are by far the most comprehensive. In my view, the weakness of the framework is that it is no longer relevant. It was developed in 1953 prior to the major litigation and
legislation that have transformed special education (Diana v. State Board of Education, 1970; Pennsylvania Association for retarded Citizens v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1972; Larry P. v. Wilson Riles, 1979; Education for All handicapped Children Act, 1975) and is no longer descriptive of the role of the special education administrator.

The Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) Model

This framework has three core roles into which leadership and administrative or management tasks are divided. These three core roles are: Management, Pupil Personnel Services, and Supervision and Curriculum. Compared with my original three special education administrator stereotypes, the administrative and instructional stereotypes are represented, but the political stereotype is missing. This is a very significant omission within the British Columbia context, as Boards of School Trustees enjoy a considerable latitude in the distribution of funds within the school district, and in addition the composition of the Boards reflect the wide degree of political diversity within the province. These two factors account for the amount of emphasis placed on the political process as it relates to educational decision making. Any framework describing special education administrator role
performance that omits the political role is, in my opinion, inappropriate for use in the British Columbia setting.

The Cuban Framework

The framework of administrator role priorities developed by Cuban (1986,1988) was originally used to order the variety of administrative behaviours exhibited among principals and superintendents. The framework has three core roles: political, managerial and instructional. Because Cuban describes these three roles anaecdotally throughout the text of his work, it is difficult to extract a coherent description of each one. Nevertheless, I have attempted to summarise the scattered information into a meaningful whole.

Cuban’s three core roles of administrative behaviour constitute an appropriate framework for the present study for three reasons. First, the research underlying the three roles is recent and thus reflects more accurately the current realities of the work of educational administrators. Second, in my view, their simplicity permits them to encompass the variability of special education administrator role performance. Third, the roles are adequately described. What follows is a listing of all the items
referring to the three core\textsuperscript{7} roles of the framework, namely: Instructional, Managerial and Political.

\textbf{The instructional role.} According to Cuban, the instructional role comprises the following list of activities.

- Helping teachers improve their pedagogy;
- Helping principals understand the curriculum;
- Teaching principals how to supervise and evaluate teachers;
- Setting goals;
- Establishing standards;
- Selecting and supervising staff;
- Ensuring consistency in curricula and teaching approaches;
- Shaping the mission of the district;
- Establishing a climate that signals a seriousness of purpose;
- Designing rituals and structures that ensure that both mission and climate through communication skills and personal example become part of everyday behaviour throughout the organisation;
- The means principals use to persuade adults to their beliefs and behaviour in moving towards goals the principal seeks;
- Visiting classes; and

\textsuperscript{7} Cuban uses the term 'core' in reference to the "three core roles of educational administration" as being central to the administrative process. Future references to Cuban's core administrative roles will omit the term 'core' but it should be inferred by the reader.

The managerial role. According to Cuban, the activities comprising the managerial role are:

- Managing conflict across a broad array of activities;
- Planning;
- Decision making;
- Gathering and dispersing information;
- Building maintenance;
- Budgeting;
- Hiring;
- Scheduling classes;
- Grouping students;
- Completing reports;
- Dealing with conflict; and

The political role. According to Cuban, the activities comprising the political role are:

- Using formal or informal influence to persuade deflect or enlist students, teachers, parents, or district officials to build support for or overcome opposition to what the administrators desire;

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*I interpret 'monitoring performance' as the formative stage of the evaluative process, the process of improving instruction.
Those activities in which the administrator engages, in order to ascertain and transform personal and public expectations into formal policies;

The goals held and the process superintendents used to determine and transform personal and public expectations into formal policies and official actions; and

Working with and through people to get done what needs to be done in an unpredictable, uncertain world (Cuban, 1986: 115; 1988: 139).

These three roles of the educational administrator provide one method of defining the variable, special education administrator role priorities. The second variable, the number of students claimed for funding in the Low incidence, High cost special education funding categories, is described in the next section.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING**

In the summer of 1983 the Ministry of Education announced a new financial management system, now commonly referred to as ‘the fiscal framework’. This framework replaced the previous system of special approvals. In the special approvals system, special education revenues were generated at the district level on the basis of the numbers of approved programs being offered. The fiscal framework established a system of special education funding based upon service levels. Each special education category had its own service level. These service levels established the
revenues a district was to receive based upon the September 30th student count within each category.

The Fiscal Framework in Special Education

The present form of the fiscal framework is rather different from that announced in the summer of 1983. In 1983, within special education, twenty-one funding categories were identified, each with its own service level. Twelve of those funding categories had service levels dependent upon the student count reported by the district within the category (the other categories used total district enrollment to establish service level). By 1987, the number of categories in which the revenue generated depended upon the individual district's student count, had dropped to eight, six of them in the Low incidence, High cost categories. The total number of students claimed for funding in these Low incidence, High cost categories (expressed as a percentage of total district enrollment) comprises the second variable in this study.

Service levels in the Low incidence, High cost categories. These categories each have the same service level:
For the 1st student: 0.5 Special Teacher Unit\textsuperscript{9} plus 0.5 aide

\textbf{PLUS} for 2nd student: 0.5 aide

\textbf{PLUS} for 3rd student: 0.5 aide

\textbf{PLUS} for 4th student: 0.5 aide

\textbf{PLUS} for remaining students: 1/8 Special Teacher Unit plus 1/8 aide (Ministry of Education, 1987, emphasis in original).

This structuring of the service levels within the Low incidence, High cost categories allocates resources based upon district size, provided that none of the categories contain more than their statistically expected share of handicapped children.

\textbf{Allocation of resources based partly upon district size.} The structuring of the service levels to provide more dollars per student in small districts compared with large ones, confounds any analysis of funding levels between districts. However, the number of students claimed for funding in the Low incidence, High cost categories as a proportion of the total district enrollment, provides a between district comparison of students claimed for funding

\textsuperscript{9} A "Special Teacher Unit" is the district's shareable average instructional salary, plus the employer's share of statutory benefits, plus a portion of the employer's share of non-statutory benefits, plus 8.8% of the provincial average instructional salary (adjusted by the remoteness factor). This will vary slightly from district to district dependent upon their salary levels. For my own district (#88, Terrace) it was $40,273.00.
not confounded by district size. This statistic is in fact the "Prevalence Level."

**Prevalence levels.** Prevalence levels indicate the percentage of children within a particular category of exceptionality in a specific place at a particular time. The fiscal framework describes expected prevalence levels for each of the Low incidence, High cost special education categories. Statistics provided by the Ministry of Education indicate that for the 1987/8 school year the prevalence level province-wide in the Low incidence, High cost special education categories was 0.73%. Statistics from the United States Office of Education (cited in Dunn, 1973), indicate a projected prevalence level for 1985 in the Low incidence, High cost categories of 1.08%.

**Prevalence levels sociologically determined.**
Prevalence levels are not, as it might appear at first sight, psychologically determined. Local diagnostic criteria can affect the prevalence level, and research by Mercer and Richardson (1975) has shown that prevalence levels are as much sociologically determined as they are.

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10 There is some confusion in the literature between 'prevalence levels' and 'incidence levels' (Goettel, 1978; McBride, 1985). "Incidence" refers to the number of new cases of children with an exceptionality in a given period of time, usually a year. "Prevalence" refers to the total number of cases (new and old) in a population at a given point in time (Hallahan and Kauffman, 1986).
psychologically. I have, therefore, not used the term "prevalence level" to describe the number of special needs students in the Low incidence, High cost categories in a district, because it connotes immutability and psychological veracity. I have instead used the term "numbers of students claimed for funding in the Low incidence, High cost categories".

Variations Between Districts in Numbers of Students Claimed for Funding in the Low incidence, High cost Categories

The new financial management system has, it would appear, altered the distribution of funds in the Low incidence, High cost categories to favour those districts with smaller total enrollments. Fleming (1979), in a criticism of the approvals system of special education funding, noted that at the extremes of the distribution of special approvals to school districts in 1979, the highest and the lowest funded districts differed by a factor of 2.8\textsuperscript{11}. In 1987/8, following the implementation of the fiscal framework, at the extremes of the distribution of students in the Low incidence, High cost categories\textsuperscript{12}, the highest and the lowest districts differed by a factor of

\textsuperscript{11} The term "differed by a factor of 2.8" is taken to mean that the district with the highest number of special approvals had 2.8 times as many special approvals as the district with the smallest.

\textsuperscript{12} These figures are based on data supplied by the Ministry of Education, Special Programs Branch.
approximately 22. Even when comparing the average of the upper quartile of districts with the average of the lower quartile in terms of number of students claimed for funding purposes, the two means differ by a factor of three\textsuperscript{13}.

One possible explanation for this large disparity in numbers of students claimed is variability in the role priorities of special education administrators. The section that follows presents a methodology for analysing the variability in special education administrator role priorities, and for comparing this variability with the variability among districts in the number of students claimed for funding in the Low incidence, High cost categories.

### SUMMARY

It has been the intent of this chapter to summarise first, the literature on special education administrator roles; second, the frameworks for describing special education administrator behaviour; and third, the literature on special education funding in British Columbia. The next chapter in this thesis describes in detail the methodology to be used.

\textsuperscript{13} That the two means differ by a factor of three should be understood to mean that the average number of students claimed for funding in a district in the upper quartile is
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into three sections. The three sections are: sample selection, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter will conclude with a short summary of the methodology used in this study.

SAMPLE SELECTION

The sample for this study was selected using criterion-based selection techniques. Initially, districts chosen for inclusion in the sample were selected on the basis of numbers of students claimed for funding purposes in the Low incidence, High cost special education categories, as a percentage of total district enrollment. This is referred to as "maximum variation sampling" (Patton, 1980). These procedures will be described in more detail in the sections that follow.

The criteria for sample selection. In order to ensure that districts selected for the sample represented the three times the average number claimed in a district in the lower quartile.
extremes in numbers of students in the Low incidence, High cost categories, British Columbia school districts were arranged in descending order based on the number of students in those categories. The sample was selected from the extremes of this distribution, that is, the uppermost ten and the lowermost ten\textsuperscript{14}. Within these twenty districts, two criteria were used for final selection: (1) having a special education administrator in the district, and (2) the district indicating a willingness to participate in the study.

**Having a special education administrator.** Eight of the twenty districts originally selected did not have a special education administrator. This left twelve districts to be approached for willingness to participate in the study.

**Willingness to participate.** The Superintendent of Schools was approached by letter, requesting his/her permission for the district special education administrator to participate in the study. A copy of this letter is shown in Appendix #2. Eleven of the twelve superintendents who were approached gave their permission for the district special education administrator to participate in the study.

\textsuperscript{14} The choice of ten districts at either end of the distribution represents a compromise between choosing districts at the extremes of the distribution, and having a sample of reasonable size.
These eleven district special education administrators were then contacted by phone. The nature of the study was explained, particularly the option of the administrator to withdraw at any time, and his/her participation in the study solicited. All of the eleven agreed to participate in the study.

The district special education contact. Up to this point, I have used the term "special education administrator" rather loosely. By special education administrator, I mean that person in the district listed as the special education contact by the Ministry of Education and holding a position which includes responsibility for the administration of special education, i.e., Director of Instruction, Supervisor of Special Services, District Principal or Vice-Principal, or District Counsellor. Participants in the study were these special education contacts.

The sample, therefore, included only administrators who were the special education contacts, who were willing to participate in the study, and who work in districts at one of the extremes of the distribution in number of students in the Low incidence, High cost categories claimed for funding.
DATA COLLECTION

The selection of a suitable methodology for a study is essential if the data collected are going to be appropriate for the purposes of the study. Accordingly, data for the present study were collected directly from the Ministry of Education concerning the numbers of students claimed for funding, and from special education administrators concerning their role priorities. The data from special education administrators were collected using an interview format. This section on data collection describes the type of interview used.

The Interview

The extended interview has been one of the tools in the qualitative research tradition for some time (Simons, 1981; Spradley, 1979; Paul, 1953; Nadel, 1939). Denzin suggests that particular types of interviews are appropriate to certain situations. He observes that,

...the unstructured nonstandardised interview is best suited for exploratory studies, while the structured, scheduled, standardised interview is best suited for hypothesis testing and rigorous quantification of results (Denzin, 1970: 126).
Because this study is exploratory in nature but uses a pre-existing conceptual framework, an interview format was chosen that could be described as having features of both ideal types, a semi-structured interview.

A further useful distinction among interview types is provided by Spradley. Spradley identifies two types of interviews, but classifies the types according to the role played by the person being interviewed (Spradley, 1979). When the person being interviewed acts as a subject, i.e., when the information they provide is used to test a specific hypothesis, the researcher imposes a preselected conceptual framework upon the responses of the subjects. By contrast, when the person being interviewed acts as an informant, the researcher takes great care, so far as is possible, not to impose his/her own conceptual framework upon the informant's responses. It was deemed most appropriate for this study to regard the interviewees as subjects, since the use of the framework of role priorities imposes a pre-existing conceptual framework upon the subjects' responses. The interview will use Cuban's framework to structure the subjects' responses.

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15 No one to my knowledge has attempted to study the priorities that special education administrators in British Columbia assign to the various aspects of their role.
The Semi-Structured Interview

The data for this study were collected using a semi-structured interview. The interview structure was imposed by the need to ensure that all three areas of Cuban's roles were addressed by each of the special education administrators. The interview process will be described, from the interview itself through interview transcription to response validation.

The interview process. Following the usual courtesies, the purpose of the study was explained, and permission was sought to tape record the interview. The interviewee was reminded that he/she could opt out of the interview at any time and that the tapes and transcriptions of the interview would be returned to him/her at the conclusion of the study. The interviewee was then asked to indicate his/her agreement with these conditions by signing a letter of intent (see Appendix #2).

The interview questions. The questions were structured to ascertain the priority assigned by the administrators to each of Cuban's three administrative roles. The administrators were given a document listing the three roles (see Appendix #3), with each of them described using only

16 All the respondents agreed to be tape recorded.
Cuban's own descriptors. Each of the interviewees were asked to read the description of Cuban's three administrative roles, and to prioritise the three roles in terms of their perceptions of their own work.

The interviewees were then asked the following three questions. First, "You described the ....... role as having the highest priority in your own work. Would you give me some further description of what the ....... role means for you working as a special education administrator in the ....... school district." Second, "You described the ....... role as having an intermediate priority in your own work. Would you give me some further description of what the ....... means for you working in the ....... school district." Third, "You described the ....... role as having the lowest priority in your own work. Would you give me some further description of what the ....... means for you working in the ....... school district. When any responses were unclear or required elaboration the interviewees were asked to clarify or amplify their responses. The interviewees were also asked if there were important activities in which they engaged as special education administrators which did not fit into the three categories defined by Cuban.
Respondent Validation

This is the process of having respondents validate, and change if they think necessary, the content of the interview transcription (Bloor, 1978; Hammersly and Atkinson, 1983; Woods, 1986). The transcript of the interview was returned to each interviewee and he/she was asked to ensure that it accurately reflected the priorities he/she assigned his/her role as district special education administrator. Having made any necessary changes, the interviewee was asked to return the amended copy of the transcript to the author. Upon receipt of the amended transcript, the respondent's changes were made in the final transcript.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data from the interviews comprise two discrete sets. The first is the priorities assigned by special education administrators to Cuban's three administrative roles; the second is the interviewees' responses to the questions asking them to give a further description of what each of Cuban's three administrative roles meant for them. The first data set, the administrators' perceptions of their own role priorities, was analysed by displaying the data in a matrix. The second data set, the interviewees' responses to the questions asking them to give further description of
what each of Cuban's three administrative roles means for them, was analysed using content analysis.

The Data Display Matrix

The data on the relationship between the priority assigned to the three administrative roles and the level of funding in the Low incidence, High cost special education categories were displayed in a matrix.

Table II.

Data display matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Funding Level</th>
<th>Priority Assigned to Cuban's Three Core Administrative Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low/High¹</td>
<td>First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countersett</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalling Busk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carperby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semerwater</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardraw</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bainbridge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nappa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thornton Rust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addleborough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ H means High proportion of students claimed as a percentage of total enrollment. L means Low proportion of students claimed as a percentage of total enrollment.

This matrix permitted the interview data to be displayed visually and to look for relationships by
inspection. To ascertain if the interviewees interpreted Cuban's role categories in the manner intended, the interviewees' descriptions of their activities within each of the three roles were content analysed.

Content Analysis

"Content Analysis may be defined as referring to any technique a) for the classification of sign vehicles, b) which relies solely upon the judgements (which theoretically, may range from perceptual discrimination to sheer guesses) of an analyst or group of analysts as to which sign vehicles fall into which categories, c) on the basis of formulated rules, d) provided that the authors' judgements are regarded as the reports of a scientific observer (Janis, 1949: 55 cited in Krippendorf, 1980: 3).

The "sign vehicles" to be classified in this analysis are the special education administrators' responses to the three questions asking them to give further descriptions of what each of Cuban's three administrative roles meant for them. The responses to the three interview questions were analysed in three steps. First, all the descriptions of activities given by the interviewees were assigned on the basis of inspection, to one of Cuban's three core roles. Second, each description was compared to Cuban's list of activities and a decision made as to whether the described activity did or did not, correspond to one of Cuban's three roles. The decision as to which activities fitted Cuban's lists and which did not fit was based upon the author's
judgement. For example "If I see a need for um, a teacher needing to address a particular kind of activity or procedure in the classroom I’ll mention that", was considered to fit Cuban’s "Helping teachers improve their pedagogy", activity for the Instructional role. Likewise, "Putting together a plan, you know for future direction and growth", was considered to fit Cuban’s "Planning, decision making" activity for the managerial role. By contrast "I do the special services staffing" was considered as not matching any of Cuban’s activities for the Political role. Similarly "Persuading people to accept special needs kids", was considered as not matching any of Cuban’s activities for the Managerial role. Third, those that were not classified within Cuban’s descriptions of the three administrative roles were retained. This data subset, which listed the activities in which special educators engage which do not fit Cuban’s three roles, was analysed separately.

SUMMARY

This chapter was divided into three sections, namely: sample selection, data collection, and data analysis. The section on sample selection described the process of maximum variation sampling that was used in the study. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview which ensured that all three of Cuban’s administrative roles were
addressed by each of the special education administrators. The data from these interviews yielded two discrete data sets. The first, the priorities assigned by special education administrators to Cuban's three administrative roles and their relationship to level of funding, was analysed using a data display matrix. The second, the interviewees' responses to the three questions asking them to give further descriptions of what each of Cuban's three administrative roles meant for them, was analysed using content analysis. Chapter four will present the findings and chapter five will present conclusions and implications that can be drawn from the findings.
CHAPTER 4.

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from each of the three phases of data analysis. The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first and second sections report respectively the role priorities-funding level and content analysis findings. The third section summarises the findings from each analysis.

ROLE PRIORITIES AND FUNDING LEVEL

At the beginning of the interview the special education administrators were asked to prioritise Cuban's three roles of administrative behaviour in terms of their own work. The combinations of role priorities and level of funding will be presented in the following section.
Funding Level and Assigned Role Priorities

Of the twelve possible combinations\(^{17}\) of funding level and role priority only five actually occurred (with one administrator refusing to give differential priority to any of the roles). These combinations are displayed in Table III.

\(^{17}\) Within each of the funding levels there are six possible combinations of role priorities; therefore, the maximum number of possible combinations is twelve.
### Table III.

Combinations of funding level and priorities assigned to Cuban's three roles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Funding Level</th>
<th>Priority Assigned to Cuban's Three Core Administrative Roles.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low/High$^1$</td>
<td>First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worton</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countersett</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalling Bus</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carperby</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I$^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semerwater</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardraw</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bainbridge</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nappa</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>P$^3$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thornton Rust</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawes</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addleborough</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. H means High proportion of students claimed as a percentage of total enrollment. L means Low proportion of students claimed as a percentage of total enrollment.

2. This administrator distinguished between what he saw as ideal roles and what the exigencies of the job forced him to do. The role priorities reported here are the ideal ones.

3. The special education administrator in this interview declined to give differential priority to any of the roles. However, during the course of the interview the priorities he assigned became obvious, and he confirmed these priorities.

4. This administrator declined to identify any of the roles as having differential priority; he did not change this stance during the interview.
In the low funded districts, all six special education administrators assigned first priority to the instructional role, five out of six assigned second priority to the managerial role, and five out of six assigned third priority to the political role. This suggests that for the low funded districts sampled in this study there is a systematic relationship between special education administrator's role priorities and the level of funding received in these districts.

No similar pattern in the role priorities assigned by the five special education administrators who worked in high funded districts was apparent. Two out of five administrators gave first priority to the political role and two out of five gave first priority to the managerial role. Two out of five gave second priority to the political role and two out of the five gave second priority to the instructional role. Two administrators assigned third priority to the instructional role and two to the political role

All that can be said of the pattern of role priorities of special education administrators who work in districts with high levels of funding is that the four who were prepared to assign differential priority to Cuban's three roles, all assigned first priority to roles other than the instructional role. The significance of the instructional role

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18 One administrator working in a high funded district refused to give differential priority to any of the roles.
role in being assigned first priority by administrators in low funded districts, and being assigned a priority lower than the first priority by the four administrators working in high funded districts who were willing to assign differential priority to the three roles will be discussed further in chapter five.

Content Analysis

The results of the content analysis indicated that all of the activities described by the special education administrators could be judged as matching one of Cuban's three administrative roles. This finding suggests that based on the very small non-representative sample used in the study, that Cuban's framework of administrator role priorities is able to encompass within the assigned role priorities the high degree of variability in special education administrator behaviour referred to in the literature review. This is perhaps contrary to expectations as Cuban's framework was not originally created for use with special education administrators.
Administrator Activities

Cuban’s three administrative roles were developed from research with principals and superintendents. How applicable the three roles might be to the work of special education administrators was conjectural. Following the three questions which addressed the priority assigned to each of Cuban’s three administrative roles, each special education administrator was asked to indicate if there were important activities in which he/she engaged as a special education administrator which did not seem to fit into any of Cuban’s three roles. The finding concerning the applicability of Cuban’s three roles to special education administrator activities will be presented in the following sections.

Activities not related to Cuban’s three administrative roles. All of the administrators answered this question in the negative indicating that there were no important activities in which they engaged that were not covered by one of the three roles. However, four of the administrators did qualify their answers, which suggests that there may be some activities in which special education administrators engage which are not subsumed within Cuban’s three roles. What follows is a brief analysis of excerpts from the qualifying detail of each administrator’s response.
"The rapport that is required with people"
(Interview transcript page five, lines 5 and 6, Carperby School District).

This could reasonably be included within the instructional role as "The means principals use to persuade adults to alter beliefs and behaviour in moving towards goals that the principal seeks" (Cuban, 1986: 113), or within the political role as "Working with and through people to get done what needs to be done in an unpredictable, uncertain world" Cuban, 1988: 139).

"Staying in contact with support staff" (Interview transcript page three, lines 27 and 28, Countersett School District).

The purpose for staying in contact with support staff could be for "Shaping the mission of the district" (Cuban, 1988: 133) part of the instructional role as defined by Cuban. However, "Staying in contact with support staff", could equally well be part of the managerial or political roles dependent upon the reason for staying in contact with those staff.

"There are two things actually that come to mind. One is advocacy and the other is working with parents" (Interview transcript page seven, lines 6 and 7, Addleborough School District).

Advocacy is described in the Collins Thesaurus (McLeod, 1987: 17) as 'support' which coincides with Cuban's description of politics in action, "To build support for or overcome opposition to what the administrators desire"(Cuban, 1986: 115).
Regarding "Working with parents", the administrator expanded upon this point to indicate that he meant, "we bring parents in and involve them and involve the kid too in our decision making". This could be legitimately viewed as building support with parents, which is an activity within the political role as described by Cuban.

"There would be a social role. Particularly in a smaller community, when, if I lived in Vancouver for example and went grocery shopping, I would not be visible, but if I go grocery shopping in Bainbridge I'm not anonymous. I'm the Director of Instruction with all the attendant myths and beliefs that go with it" (Interview transcript page four, lines 38 through 48, Bainbridge School District).

The social role as described by the special education administrator in the Bainbridge school district is a characteristic of working in a highly visible position in a small town, but may be an informal aspect of a special education administrator's role not covered within Cuban's three core roles.

I think it is reasonable to assert, within the limits imposed by this small sample, that Cuban's three core roles of administrative behaviour are descriptive of the activities undertaken by special educators in British Columbia.
SUMMARY

The findings derived from the analysis of the combinations of role priorities and level of funding, and the activities of special education administrators as they relate to Cuban's three core roles have been presented in this chapter. In low funded districts sampled in this study there is a systematic relationship between special education administrators' role priorities and the level of funding received in districts with low levels of funding; however, no distinct pattern occurred in the role priorities of special education administrators working in high funded districts. The findings regarding the combinations of funding level and the role assigned highest priority indicated that in low funded districts all the special education administrators gave the instructional role highest priority, whereas in high funded districts none of the administrators gave the instructional role highest priority.

The second set of findings concerned the applicability of Cuban's three core roles to the activities described by the special education administrators. A content analysis of the activities described by the special education administrators indicated that all the activities matched one of Cuban's three roles. Although none of the administrators said that they engaged in any activities which did not fit any of Cuban's three roles, four administrators provided
qualifying details to their responses. The implications of these findings will be discussed in Chapter five.
CHAPTER 5.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This first section of the chapter summarises the purpose, rationale, methodology and findings of the study. Following this summary, conclusions regarding the findings concerning administrator role priorities and the applicability of Cuban’s framework to special education administrators are presented. The chapter concludes with a section outlining the implications of the study for both practice and research.

SUMMARY

This section summarises the purpose and rationale of the study, the review of the literature, the methodology employed and the findings. The section concludes with an introduction to the conclusions that might be drawn from the findings.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether or not the variations in special education administrator role priorities can be adequately described within the framework of Cuban’s three core roles and if so, is this variation
systematically related to variations in the number of students claimed in the Low incidence, High cost categories. If, in fact, such a systematic relationship does exist it may have consequences for the construction of funding formulas and for conceptions of the role of the special education administrator.

Three literatures were reviewed: (1) the role of the special education administrator, (2) frameworks for describing special education administrator behaviour, and (3) special education funding in British Columbia. The literature concerning the role of the special education administrator was, with only one exception, in agreement as to the high degree of variability in the behaviour of special education administrators. It was suggested that due to the demographic nature of British Columbia, the most appropriate descriptive frameworks were those developed for use in small rural school districts. The framework developed by Cuban was chosen to examine special education administrator behaviour in this study because of its current nature and because the three core roles of administration as described by Cuban were considered to encompass the variability of special education administrator behaviour and to correspond with my own three stereotypes of administrator behaviour. The funding mechanism in education in British Columbia, i.e., the "fiscal framework" was described and a little of its historical background summarised.
The methodology for the study involved the collection of two sets of data. Data on numbers of students claimed for funding were collected directly from the Ministry of Education. Data on variability in role priorities were collected using a semi-structured interview with special education administrators selected on the basis of numbers of students claimed for funding purposes in the Low incidence, High cost special education categories as a percentage of district enrollment. The following paragraph summarises the findings resulting from the analysis of data in each part of the interview.

The findings of this study emerge from two separate data sets: the combination of role priorities and level of funding, and the responses of special education administrators to the question asking them to give examples of activities that they undertook within each role. In the districts claiming low numbers of students in the Low incidence, High cost special education categories, five out of six special education administrators prioritised the roles in this order: Instructional, Managerial, Political. It is noteworthy that, in this low funding level group, all special education administrators accorded their highest priority to the Instructional role.

No such distinct pattern of priorities occurred in the role priorities of special education administrators working in districts with high numbers of students claimed for funding in the Low incidence, High cost categories. It is
also noteworthy that, in this high funding group, two administrators assigned first priority to the political role and two assigned first priority to the managerial role. None of these administrators assigned first priority to the instructional role.

The activities described as being undertaken by the special education administrators were subjected to content analysis to ascertain if there were any activities which could be judged as not matching one of Cuban’s three administrative roles. In addition, the administrators were asked if there were important activities in which they engaged as special education administrators which did not fit into any of Cuban’s three roles. The results of this question and of the content analysis indicated that all the activities undertaken by these special education administrators could be assigned to one of Cuban’s three administrative roles. The conclusions that can reasonably be drawn from these findings will be discussed in the section that follows.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether or not the variations in special education administrator role priorities can be adequately described within the framework
of Cuban's three core roles and if so, is this variation systematically related to variations in funding level. The first conclusions relate to whether or not the variations in special education administrator behaviour can be adequately described within the framework of Cuban's three administrative roles. The second conclusions indicate that there is, within the limits of the study, a systematic relationship between administrator role priorities and funding levels. There followed some speculation as to the existence of a fourth role of administrative behaviour, "a social role".

**Adequacy of Cuban's Three Roles**

The findings from the content analysis indicate that, within the constraints imposed by the small non-representative sample, the variations in special education administrator role priorities can be adequately described within the framework of Cuban's three core roles. This suggests that the choice of Cuban's three core roles of administrative behaviour was, given the limits of the study, an adequate conceptual framework for encompassing the variability in special education administrator role priorities. More research would be required with a larger, more representative sample if we were to make anything other
than this tentative statement regarding the adequacy of Cuban’s three roles for describing the diversity of the role priorities of special educators. If, however, further research were to demonstrate that Cuban’s three roles of administrative behaviour are an appropriate instrument for describing the role priorities of special education administrators, then they may have a much wider application in studying the role of these individuals.

**Relationship Between Role Priorities and Funding Level**

The findings indicate that for the low funded districts sampled in this study, there is a systematic relationship between the role priorities of special education administrators and low levels of funding. However, there is no similar systematic relationship among the role priorities of special educators working in districts with high levels of funding. The common thread that relates the role priorities of special education administrators working in high and low funded districts is the priority assigned to the instructional role. The uniqueness of the instructional role is that all special education administrators working in low funded districts in the sample assigned it first priority, and none of the administrators in high funded districts assigned it first priority. This suggests that
there is some feature of the priority assigned to the instructional role that is perceived differently by administrators in high funded as distinct those in low funded districts.

From the content of the interviews and my own discussions with various special education administrators, I would speculate that administrators who give first priority to the instructional role prioritise their time and their energies towards the improvement of instruction, at the expense of time spent in the political and managerial roles that may be necessary to maximise funding levels. To cite one administrator who works in a district with low levels of funding:

"When I get a cry for help from a teacher, he becomes priority number one no matter what the hell I'm doing" (Interview transcript page 4, lines 10 to 12 Worton School District).

All the administrators working in districts with high levels of funding, who were willing to assign differential priority to the three administrative roles, assigned first priority to the political or managerial role, not to the instructional role. Given the very small sample size, I would speculate that administrators working in districts with high levels of funding put more effort into the political and managerial roles rather that the instructional role, and that this may lead to increased funding. As one administrator working in a high funded district said:
"I'm not shy about inviting people up, and I do that frequently when it seems appropriate when something fairly nice is happening and if I need input or I have a problem I don't hesitate in calling them up to get them onside, so that when it comes time for funding there is at least some understanding of what we are trying to do. I feel we get a little better break because of that" (Interview transcript page 4, lines 38 to 46, Thornton Rust School District).

Cuban's Framework and the Special Education Administrator

The study provided the opportunity to explore further the extent to which the particular case of special education administrator role priorities reflects the more general case of school administrator and superintendent role priorities. In Chapter Four it was reported that all the administrators responded in the negative to the question asking if there were important activities in which they engaged that were not covered by one of Cuban's three roles. A number of administrators volunteered activities which they did not view as falling within any of Cuban's three administrative roles. The findings indicated that, with one exception, all these activities could be judged as matching one of Cuban's three administrative roles. The one exception was what the special education administrator in the Bainbridge school district called "a social role". Does this "social role" reflect something unique in the role of the special education administrator? Or, is the omission of the social
role a weakness of Cuban's framework generally? At this
time, and with the very limited nature of the present study,
I can conclude tentatively that there does appear to be a
social role that is not included within Cuban's three core
roles of administrative behaviour. The significance, if
any, of the omission of this role would need to be the
subject of further research.

This section has concluded that Cuban's framework does
provide an adequate conceptual framework for describing the
variations in special education administrator role
priorities, and that in low funded districts there is a
systematic relationship between the role priorities of
special education administrators and low levels of funding.
In addition, it was suggested that there is a unique
relationship between the priority assigned to the
instructional role and level of funding. Two areas for
future research were also identified. The implications of
these conclusions will be discussed in the next section.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications for practice and research are
discussed, particularly the implications for the structuring
of the funding mechanism of special education. In addition,
the implications for future research of the findings regarding Cuban's typology will be discussed.

Implications of the Findings for Practice

The implications of the findings for practice concern the structuring of special education funding mechanisms, and the implications for practitioners in their day to day work as special education administrators. Initially, I will address the issue of the implications for the structuring of special education funding mechanisms.

Implications for special education funding mechanisms. If it is accepted that the priority assigned by the special education administrator to the instructional role has a significant implication for the numbers of special education students claimed for funding by a district, then the justification for a system of categorical funding is questionable. Goettel (1978), in a study of "Special Education Needs and State Aid in New York", suggested that categorical state aid is justified if, "The proportions of special needs students are unevenly distributed among districts..." (Goettel, 1978: 6). The Ministry of Education presently funds special education in the Low incidence, High cost categories through a system of categorical funding.
However, the results of this study tentatively suggest that the uneven distribution of students claimed for funding may be in my view, at least as much a function of the individual special education administrators' role priorities as it is a reflection of the actual numbers of students in districts requiring services. If this is indeed the case, then the Ministry of Education is faced with a dilemma. Should they retain the present system of categorical funding, and accept that certain districts may be claiming greater numbers of students for funding than actual require the service, or, should the Ministry go to a system of 'block' or 'capped' funding which is unable to respond to an unequal distribution among districts of students requiring service? It is my personal view that the importance of providing sufficient funds to districts to meet the uneven distribution of special needs students across the province, outweighs the possible manipulation of the funding system by administrators who assign highest priority to the political or managerial roles.

One possible change that has already been suggested by Ministry personnel (Main, 1988) would be to substitute for the present reporting procedure based on specific diagnostic categories, a reporting procedure based upon the students' need for service. However, whether such a system would more accurately reflect the number of students actually requiring service is conjectural.
**Implications for the special education administrator.**

This study has suggested the possibility of a systematic relationship between the role priorities of special education administrators and the numbers of students claimed for funding in the Low incidence, High cost special education categories. Special education administrators working in low funded districts should be aware that their role priorities could have implications for the level of funding received by the district. I have speculated that administrators who give first priority to the instructional role prioritise their time and their energies towards the improvement of instruction, at the expense of time spent in the political and managerial roles that may be necessary to maximise funding levels. If this is indeed the case, then it implies that special education administrators who give first priority to the instructional role prejudice the level of special education funding being received by the district. It also suggests that if special education administrators wish to maximise the funds received by their district (and thus provide the greatest level of financial support for the special education programs for which they are responsible), they should examine their allocation of priorities and time, so as to give more time to the political and managerial roles.

The section that follows makes suggestions for further research based on the conclusions and implications from the study.
Suggestions for Further Research

Three possible areas for further research have been suggested regarding the applicability of Cuban's three roles: research regarding uniqueness of the instructional role in discriminating between the role priorities of special education administrators working in high and low funded districts, the importance or otherwise of a social role in the role priorities of special education administrators, and the relationship between role priorities and district outcomes other than funding level within special education. In addition, research regarding the applicability of Cuban's framework of administrator role priorities both to regular and special educators is required. The next section will address these areas of possible further research.

Uniqueness of the instructional role. In the findings from this study, the instructional role stands out as unique. In the role priorities of special education administrators, it is the only priority that appears to discriminate between administrators working in high funded and low funded districts. The reasons for this uniqueness of the instructional role are conjectural, and further study would be required to explore the relationship of the priority assigned to the instructional role by the special
education administrator and level of funding received by a district. It could be that the questions regarding the relationship between level of funding and role priorities should be formulated within the broader framework of understanding human intention and meaning.

The relationship between role priorities and funding level. Greenfield has suggested that:

The basic problem in the study of organizations is that of understanding human intention and meaning. Part of the complexity in this problem is found in the observation that people can act purposefully and yet bring about consequences that are wholly unintended for themselves and for others (Greenfield, 1980:26).

It may be that the role priorities of administrators could provide some understanding of human intention and meaning, and that the relationship between these role priorities and funding level may shed some light on the consequences of the purposeful acts of people (the people in this instance being educational administrators). To establish the viability of this contention, further research on role priorities of administrators as they relate both to instructional outcomes and funding level would be necessary.

Applicability of Cuban's framework of administrator role priorities both to regular and special educators. Responses from one of the special educators interviewed
suggested that a "social role" should be included with the Managerial, Political and Instructional roles. More research is required, first to establish the relevance of Cuban's framework of administrative role priorities to both regular and special education administrators and, second, to establish if a "social role" should be added to the other three roles. As I commented in the literature review, Cuban's framework does appear to encompass the variability of special education administrator behaviour. What is now required is more research to establish if that is indeed the case.

Perhaps the most important finding of this study (at least for the author), is the variability of special education administrator behaviour. As the old North Yorkshire expression puts it, "There's nowt so funny as folk". However, to those of us who wish to comprehend organisations and administrative behaviour, an understanding of these same folk is essential. Hopefully this study may have made a very small addition to this understanding.
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Variability in numbers of students claimed in the Low incidence, High cost categories for funding purposes in the 1987/8 school year.
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This table is based on information supplied by the Ministry of Education.  
"Number of Students Claimed", refers to the number of students claimed for funding in the Low incidence, High cost special education categories.

1 The districts that formed the sample for the study have had their enrollments rounded up to the nearest thousand to protect anonymity. However, the data on number of students claimed in the Low incidence, High cost categories as a percentage total enrollment is based on actual district enrollment.
these role priorities to data on the numbers of special needs students listed by the Ministry of Education in your district. I am attempting to examine the relationship (if any), between administrator role priorities and the number of students reported in categories 3.20 through 3.25. If indeed it does appear that administrator role priorities are related to number of students reported in categories 3.20 through 3.25, this has implications for the construction of future funding mechanisms in special education. Your district is one of ten selected for inclusion in the sample.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be strictly maintained. In all reports of this study (both written and otherwise), at the University or elsewhere, the names of the participating school districts will be disguised, as will other identifying features, including district size. All copies of interview transcripts and audiotapes will be returned to Mrs. ------ at the conclusion of the study. Mrs. ------'s participation in the study will be entirely voluntary, and she will be free to withdraw without prejudice at any point in the study.

Yours truly.

Andrew M. Scruton
data on how you prioritise different aspects of your role, and to relate these role priorities to data on the numbers of special needs students listed by the Ministry of Education in your district. I am attempting to examine the relationship (if any), between administrator role priorities and the number of students reported in categories 3.20 through 3.25. If indeed it does appear that administrator role priorities are related to number of students reported in categories 3.20 through 3.25, this has implications for the construction of future funding mechanisms in special education. Your district is one of ten selected for inclusion in the sample.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be strictly maintained. In all reports of this study (both written and otherwise), at the University or elsewhere, the names of the participating school districts will be disguised, as will other identifying features, including district size. All copies of interview transcripts and audiotapes will be returned to you at the conclusion of the study. Your participation in the study will be entirely voluntary, and you will be free to withdraw without prejudice at any point in the study.

If you are willing to participate in the study, as outlined above, please indicate your willingness by signing this letter in the space below and returning it to me.
Signature ________________ Date

Yours truly.

Andrew M. Scruton
APPENDIX #3.

Interview Protocol
An Investigation of Special Education Administrator Role Priorities

Cuban identified from his own observations of school and district administrators, three aspects of the role of the administrator. The three aspects are:

POLITICAL
MANAGERIAL
INSTRUCTIONAL

Each of these aspects is defined on the three cards that follow.
The POLITICAL aspect of the role comprises:

Those activities in which the administrator engages in order to ascertain and transform personal and public expectations into formal policies.

Specifically, political activities include: persuading, rebutting and bargaining with school board members, principals, teachers, students, taxpayer coalitions, parent activists and Ministry of education officials. Also included are the use of compromise and influence to persuade, deflect, enlist: students, teachers, parents or district officials to build support for, or overcome opposition to, what the administrator desires.

The political aspect of the role can be summarised as: working with and through people to get done what needs to be done in an unpredictable, uncertain world.

The MANAGERIAL aspect of the role comprises:

Activities such as: hiring and firing, supervising subordinates and managing conflict across a broad array of activities.

Specifically, managerial activities include tasks such as: planning, decision making, gathering and dispersing information, building maintenance, budgeting, scheduling classes, grouping students, completing reports and procuring resources.

The managerial aspect of the role can be summarised as: maintaining organisational stability.
The INSTRUCTIONAL aspect of the role comprises:

Helping teachers improve their pedagogy, helping principals understand the curriculum, teaching principals how to supervise and evaluate teachers, visiting classes, promoting opportunities for teacher development, monitoring performance, setting goals, establishing standards, selecting and supervising staff and ensuring consistency in curricula and teaching approaches.

It also includes: shaping the mission of the district, establishing a climate that signals a seriousness of purpose and designing rituals and structures that infuse life in both mission and climate through communication skills and personal example.

The Instructional aspect of the role can be summarised as: the means administrators use to persuade adults to their own beliefs and behaviour in moving towards goals the administrator seeks.

Questions to be Asked by the Interviewer

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship (if any), between Cuban's three aspects of the role of the administrator and the numbers of students reported in categories 3.20 through 3.25. The questions that follow are intended to ascertain how you prioritise these three aspects of your role as special education administrator.

1.0

Please read these descriptions of the three aspects of the role of the administrator. As you read them, think about the priorities that you perceive yourself to have assigned to them in your work as special education administrator in ________. Feel free to ask questions for clarification. Take as long as you like to read the role descriptions, but let me know when you have finished.

1.1

I am interested in ascertaining what priority you assign to each of these aspects of the role in your work. Please feel free to re-read the role descriptions at any time.

2.1

As you think about your approach to administration, to which of the three aspects of the role do you tend to assign first priority in your work?
2.2
To which of the three aspects of the role do you tend to assign second priority in your work?

2.3
To which of the three aspects of the role do you tend to assign third priority in your work?

3.1
You described the _____ aspect of the role as being given the highest priority in your own work. Would you give me some specific examples of activities that you would characterise as _____.

3.2
You described the _____ aspect of the role as being given the highest priority in your own work. Would you give me some specific examples of activities that you would characterise as _____.

3.3
You described the _____ aspect of the role as being given the highest priority in your own work. Would you give me some specific examples of activities that you would characterise as _____.

4.0
If there are important activities in which you engage as special education administrator that do not seem to fit into any of the political, managerial or instructional categories as defined above, will you please tell me about them?

End of Interview