DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 196 132 EA 013 157

AUTHOR Erlandson, David A.
TITLE The High School Principal's Impact on Classroom Learning Activities: Research Report.
INSTITUTION CFK, Ltd., Denver, Colo.
PUB DATE Oct 80
NOTE 9p.; Figures may be marginally legible.
JOURNAL CIT CCBC Notebook; v10 n1 p3-10 Oct 1980

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; Cognitive Measurement; *High Schools; Institutional Research; *Intentional Learning; Models; *Principals; Research Reports; Secondary School Teachers; Teacher Administrator Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Class Activities Questionnaire; *Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire

ABSTRACT

The high school principal's impact on classroom learning activities is examined in this research report. The study, conducted in four Houston high schools, applied the model described in "CCBC Notebook," February 1980. This report offers a portion of the overall research, providing a summary of the patterns identified. The first segment of the report consists of data collection procedures for the three measured groups: students, teachers, and principals. Two instruments were used, the Class Activities Questionnaire (CAQ) and the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ), in conjunction with interviews and on-site observations. The second segment lists the findings and analyses. Observations and interviews indicate that the four principals were not equal in their understanding of instruction and, thus, were not equally clear on intentions for instruction. Table 1 compares actual cognitive activity with the teacher's ideal of cognitive activity on seven cognitive levels. Table 2 compares teacher and principal behavior on four dimensions of organizational climate. Three figures provide correlational interaction between levels of instruction and organizational climate dimensions, suggesting that teachers operate according to their unique perception of the school which may differ greatly from the perception of other teachers within the school. Synthesis reveals that data obtained through interviews and observations were remarkably synchronous with the CAQ and OCDQ data. (JK)

THE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S IMPACT ON CLASSROOM LEARNING ACTIVITIES: RESEARCH REPORT

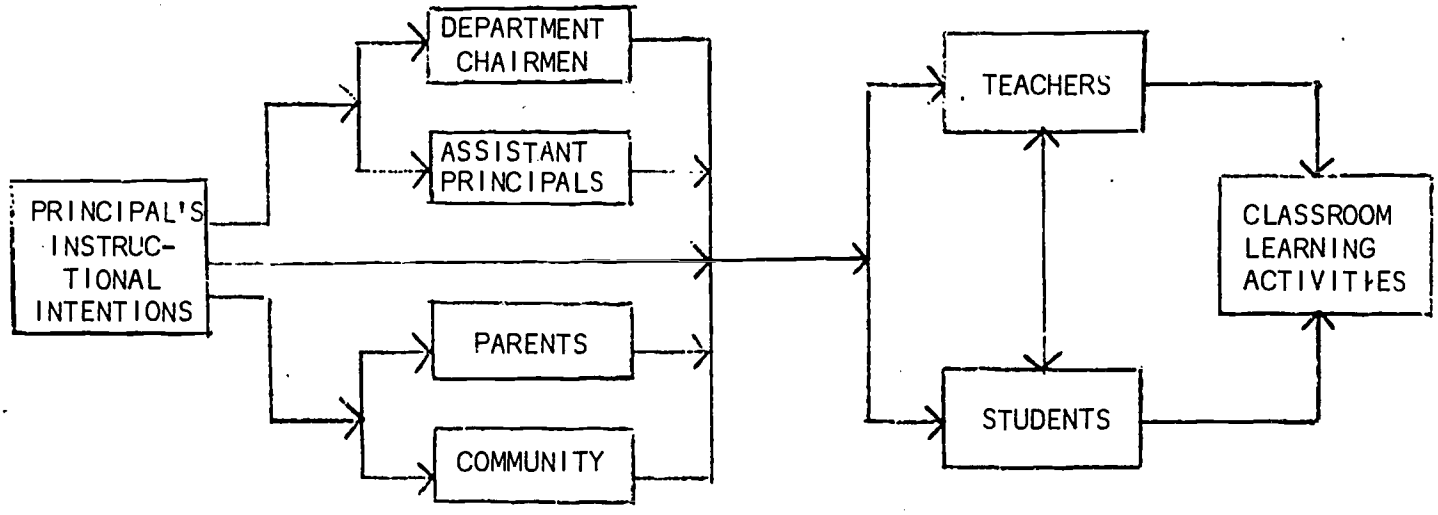
David A. Erlandson
Texas A&M University

In the February, 1980, CCBC Notebook the author described a model for investigating the high school principal's impact on classroom learning activities. That article also described briefly the application of the model to four high schools in the city of Houston during the 1979-80 school year and indicated the outcomes anticipated from the study. The three chief products sought through the study were the following: (1) a profile of the transmission of instructional intentions for each principal; (2) a summary of the patterns found in the four high schools and implications for future development of those patterns; (3) a systematic procedure which would have applications for principals everywhere who wish to obtain insights on their own operations. The profiles of the transmission of each of the four principal's instructional intentions were developed as planned and were made available to the respective principals. The systematic procedure for enabling any principal to obtain insights on his/her own operations is still in the process of refinement and will be made generally available after it has been more completely developed and tested. The first portion of the second anticipated product, the summary of patterns identified, is the subject of the present article.

Data Collection Procedures

The reader is referred back to the February, 1980, article in which the model for guiding the investigation was developed. This model is

reproduced as follows:



As indicated in that article, it was the intent of the investigation to collect data on each of the nodes of the model. A brief description is given of the collection procedures used:

Student data. The Class Activities Questionnaire (CAQ) was administered to students in twenty-seven heterogeneously grouped English classes in the four high schools in HISD Area IV during October, 1979. Graduate students from Texas A&M University administered the questionnaires.

Teacher data. Each of the twenty-seven teachers whose classrooms were to be measured on the CAP completed an "Ideal" profile on the CAQ for an English class during August, 1979. Later, in October, each of these teachers completed a copy of the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ).

Principal data. During August, 1979, each of the principals of the four high schools completed an "Ideal" profile on the CAQ for a heterogeneous English class. These ideal profiles were used as starting points for further investigation into the principal's intentions for instructional activity.

Between August 1 and December 31, 1979, the author visited each of the schools four times, the visits ranging from one hour to five hours in length. The purpose of these visits was to trace the communication of the principal's instructional intention to the classroom. Toward this end, considerable time was spent with each of the principals, discussing how various tasks (e.g. goal setting, curriculum development) were accomplished at the school, how the principal defined the roles of various persons in the organization (e.g. assistant principals, department chairpersons, teachers), and what the principal's intentions were for instructional activity in the school.

Other data. To supplement the information obtained from the principals, the author also interviewed assistant principals, department chairpersons, teachers, and parents and community representatives; toured the buildings with the principals and assistant principals; observed a number of classes in session; and spoke with students.

Additional sources of data were the documents on various aspects of the schools' operations furnished by the principals, assistant principals, and department chairpersons. These included the schools' action plans, master schedules, and teacher handbooks. They also included meeting agenda and minutes, in-service materials, and procedural forms. Together these materials complemented and clarified data obtained through interviews and observations, and provided a concrete base for further investigation.

Findings and Analyses

The findings and analyses of the study were derived from (1) interviews and on-site observations, (2) CAQ and OCDQ data, and (3) synthesis of the two sets of data.

Interviews and on-site observations. The author's on-site observations and interviews indicated that all four high schools, while located within a large city system and dominated by minority students, were, contrary to common perceptions of such schools, educationally viable institutions. Administration and staff were almost unanimously, as individuals, dedicated to instructional effectiveness, and students and parents were largely supportive of instructional goals.

However, uneven patterns of communication, influence, and ownership were found among the four schools. These did not uniformly support the communication of the principal's instructional intention to the school program. In at least one case, the principal's instructional intention was diverted by an inadequate communication-influence system through which ownership in the educational program was effectively denied to persons not close to the top of the formal hierarchy. In another case, effective instructional communication was hampered by an overconcern for comformity. In still another case, communication about instruction focused so extensively on means and processes that instructional goals provided little effective direction. In one case, ownership was shared and creativity encouraged at all levels throughout the organization.

Finally, it was clear from the observations and interviews that not all four principals were equal in their understanding of instruction, and, as a result, not all four principals had equally clear intentions for instruction.

CAQ and OCDQ data. This study used the CAQ to identify the level of cognitive activities (classified by Bloom's taxonomy) present in the twenty-seven classrooms. Since the range of responses on the CAQ is from 1 to 4, a middle level of activity should show as a 2.5 in the aggregated data. Scores closer to 1.0 indicate clearer presence of a cognitive activity; scores closer to 4.0 indicate its infrequency. Table I shows what the twenty-seven teachers ideally would have liked to occur in their classrooms and what the students in the twenty-seven classrooms said was actually happening.

(See Table I on following page.)

The CDQ was used, not for its designed purpose of describing the climate of an organization, but rather as an indication of the twenty-seven teachers' individual perceptions of the organizational dimensions within which they operate. The OCDQ is also scored from 1 to 4 with 2.5 as the midpoint. On the OCDQ, however, a marking of 4.0 indicates that a statement strongly characterizes the organization. Thus, a higher mean score for one of the dimensions indicates a greater awareness of that dimension in the organization. The teachers from the four high schools provided the profiles for their schools shown in Table II.

Table I. Cognitive Activity Level Described by the Class Activities Questionnaire (CAQ)

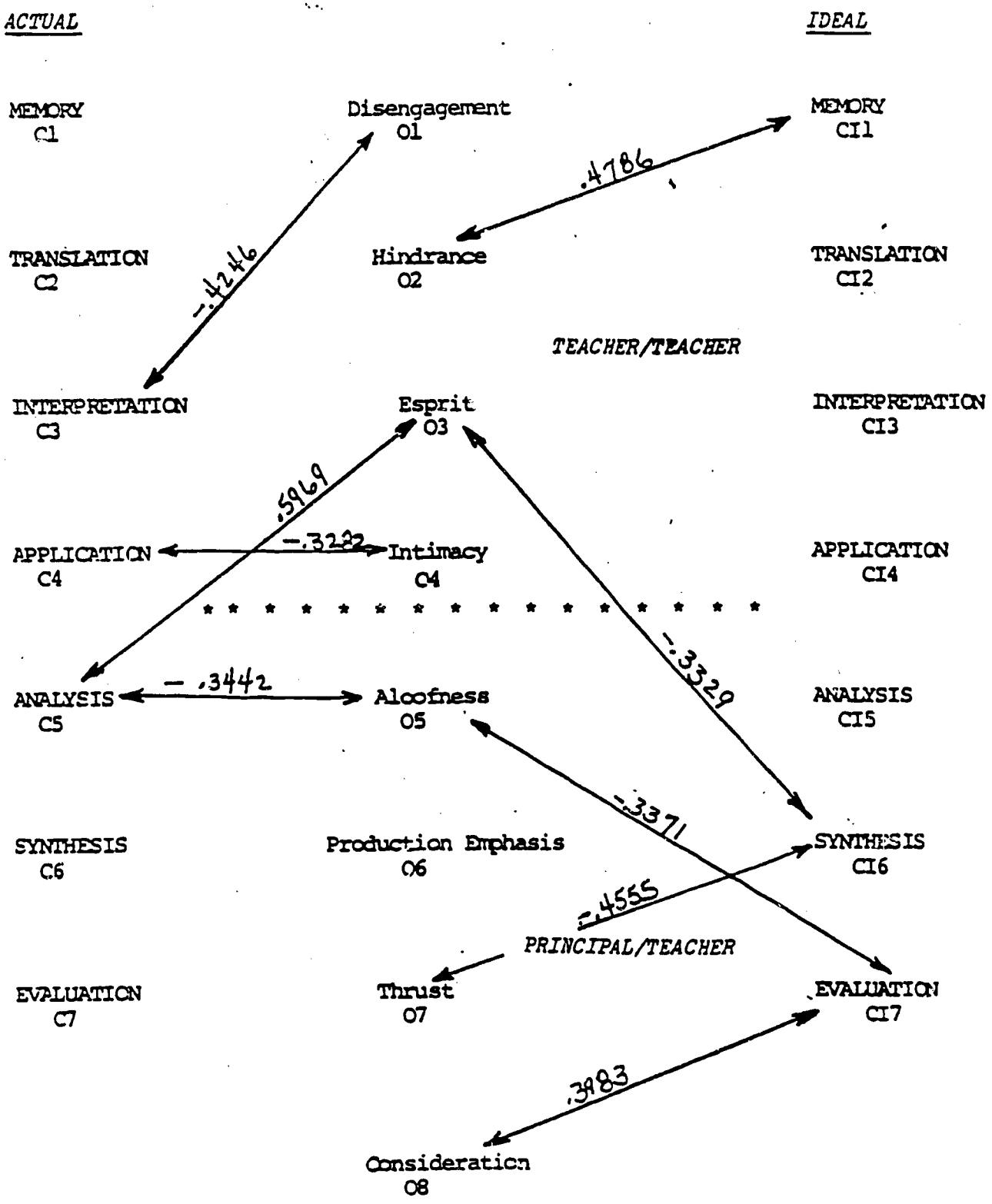
COGNITIVE LEVELS	Overall Mean	High Schools A	B	C	D
Actual Cognitive Activity					
Memory	1.82	1.85	1.79	1.80	1.84
Transiation	1.99	2.00	1.86	2.06	2.02
Interpretation	2.36	2.30	2.37	2.33	2.47
Application	2.12	2.11	2.03	2.28	2.06
Analysis	2.09	2.11	2.04	2.09	2.09
Synthesis	2.16	2.05	2.16	2.27	2.15
Evaluation	2.16	2.21	2.16	2.18	2.11
Teacher Ideal Cognitive Activity					
Memory	2.74	3.07	2.75	2.79	2.35
Translation	1.51	1.64	1.50	1.39	1.50
Interpretation	1.65	1.64	1.75	1.36	1.86
Application	1.46	1.57	1.58	1.14	1.57
Analysis	1.61	1.57	1.83	1.21	1.86
Synthesis	1.43	1.36	1.67	1.29	1.43
Evaluation	2.35	2.50	2.58	1.71	2.64

Table II: Organizational Climate Dimensions

Organizational Climate Dimension	High Schools A	B	C	D	$\bar{X}$
Teacher's Behavior					
Disengagement	2.16	2.12	1.90	1.73	1.97
Hindrance	3.16	2.53	1.86	2.71	2.57
Esprit	2.28	2.17	2.71	2.34	2.39
Intimacy	1.76	1.67	1.80	1.86	1.77
Principal's Behavior					
Aloofness	2.52	2.17	2.27	1.86	2.21
Production Emphasis	2.75	2.14	2.16	1.73	2.20
Thrust	2.84	2.41	3.01	2.36	2.67
Consideration	1.64	1.53	1.79	1.50	1.62

Correlations were found between cognitive activity levels as shown on the CAQ (Ideal and Actual) and dimensions of organizational climate as shown on the OCDQ. There were relatively few high correlations that showed up when the four schools were considered together. Figure 1 shows those correlations that were found significant beyond the .10 level.

However, when individual schools were examined, distinctly different patterns appeared between the cognitive levels described by the CAQ and the dimensions of the OCDQ. While interpretation of these various correlations lies outside the scope of this report, their implication is that relationships between organizational characteristics and classroom cognitive activity is to some extent a function of individual buildings, and is diluted when several schools are aggregated. Figure 2 shows the correlations found for each of the four schools.



INTERACTION BETWEEN LEVELS OF INSTRUCTION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE DIMENSIONS

Figure 1

To further explore the strength of the relationship between organizational characteristics and classroom learning activities, the entire group of twenty-seven teachers was regrouped, using an H-group program developed by Veldman, according to the similarity of their responses on the OCDQ. Correlations were then found between the organizational climate dimensions identified by the group members and Ideal and Actual scores on the CAQ. Figure 3 shows the correlations for each of the H-groups.

It is interesting to notice the increased number and strength of the correlations that are found when the teachers are so grouped. As in the case of the building groups of teachers, interpretation of these correlations lies outside the scope of this report. However, a preliminary interpretation of these data suggests that the teachers in each of these large, comprehensive high schools (even though they are within the same department) are actually functioning in different schools psychologically and are operating in their classes in accordance with their separate interpretations of the school.

Synthesis. It should be noted that all on-site visits were completed and analyzed prior to analysis of the CAQ and OCDQ data. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the interviews and on-site observations were not looking at exactly the same phenomena as those examined by the CAQ and OCDQ, the two sets of data were remarkably synchronous with each other. The outstanding features of aloofness, hindrance, esprit, and production emphssis dimensions among the schools were noted from the interviews and on-site observations. Also, many of the correlations between organizational climate factors and cognitive level factors in the separate schools mirrored rather closely the field observations made by the author.

The high compatibility of the independent sets of observations provided mutual authentication and strengthened the individual school profiles communicated to the four principals. It also suggested authenticity for those elements of the field observations that couldn't be readily compared with the quantitative data. Foremost among these were observations regarding particular communication links, particular assets and liabilities, and particular opportunities for communicating the principal's instructional intention that were available in each school.

These field observations also provided the basis for short and long range action recommendations to the Houston Independent School District.

(See Figures 2 and 3 on the following two pages.)

* * * * * * * * * * *

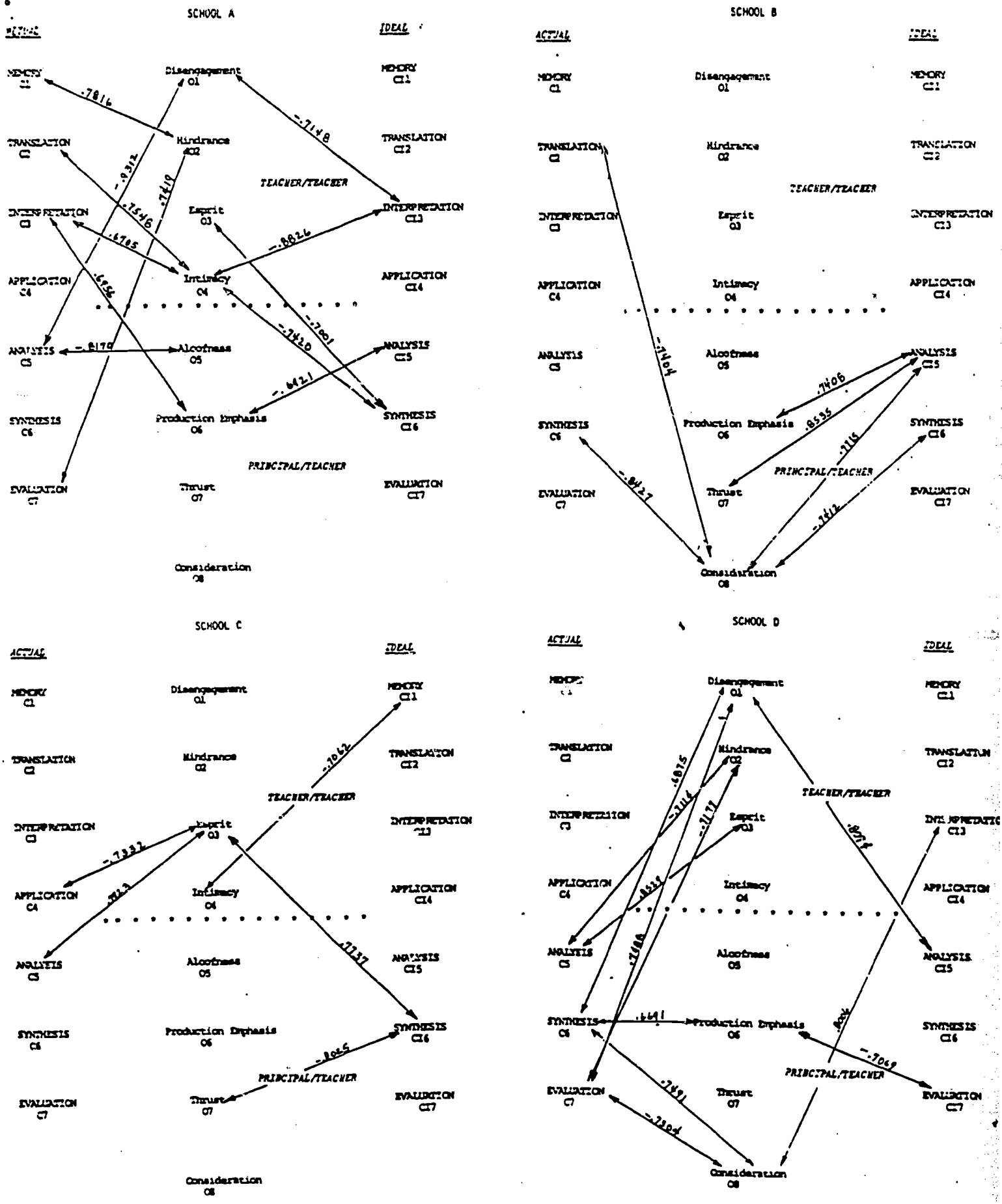

SCHOOL A
ACTUAL
IDEAL
MEMORY C1
Disengagement O1
TRANSLATION C2
Hindrance O2
TEACHER/TEACHER
INTERPRETATION C3
Esprit O3
APPLICATION C4
Intimacy O4
ANALYSIS C5
Aloofness O5
SYNTHESIS C6
Production Emphasis O6
PRINCIPAL/TEACHER
EVALUATION C7
Thrust O7
Consideration O8
.7816
-.7148
-.9312
-.7419
-.7546
.6785
-.8826
-.7001
-.7430
-.8170
-.6421
SCHOOL B
ACTUAL
IDEAL
MEMORY C1
Disengagement O1
TRANSLATION C2
Hindrance O2
TEACHER/TEACHER
INTERPRETATION C3
Esprit O3
APPLICATION C4
Intimacy O4
ANALYSIS C5
Aloofness O5
SYNTHESIS C6
Production Emphasis O6
PRINCIPAL/TEACHER
EVALUATION C7
Thrust O7
Consideration O8
-.1404
.7406
.8535
-.7115
-.8427
-.1612
SCHOOL C
ACTUAL
IDEAL
MEMORY C1
Disengagement O1
TRANSLATION C2
Hindrance O2
TEACHER/TEACHER
INTERPRETATION C3
Esprit O3
APPLICATION C4
Intimacy O4
ANALYSIS C5
Aloofness O5
SYNTHESIS C6
Production Emphasis O6
PRINCIPAL/TEACHER
EVALUATION C7
Thrust O7
Consideration O8
.7062
-.7332
.7137
-.8045
SCHOOL D
ACTUAL
IDEAL
MEMORY C1
Disengagement O1
TRANSLATION C2
Hindrance O2
TEACHER/TEACHER
INTERPRETATION C3
Esprit O3
APPLICATION C4
Intimacy O4
ANALYSIS C5
Aloofness O5
SYNTHESIS C6
Production Emphasis O6
PRINCIPAL/TEACHER
EVALUATION C7
Thrust O7
Consideration O8
.6815
-.7014
-.7137
.8014
-.1668
.1691
-.7069
-.7491
-.7304

Figure 2

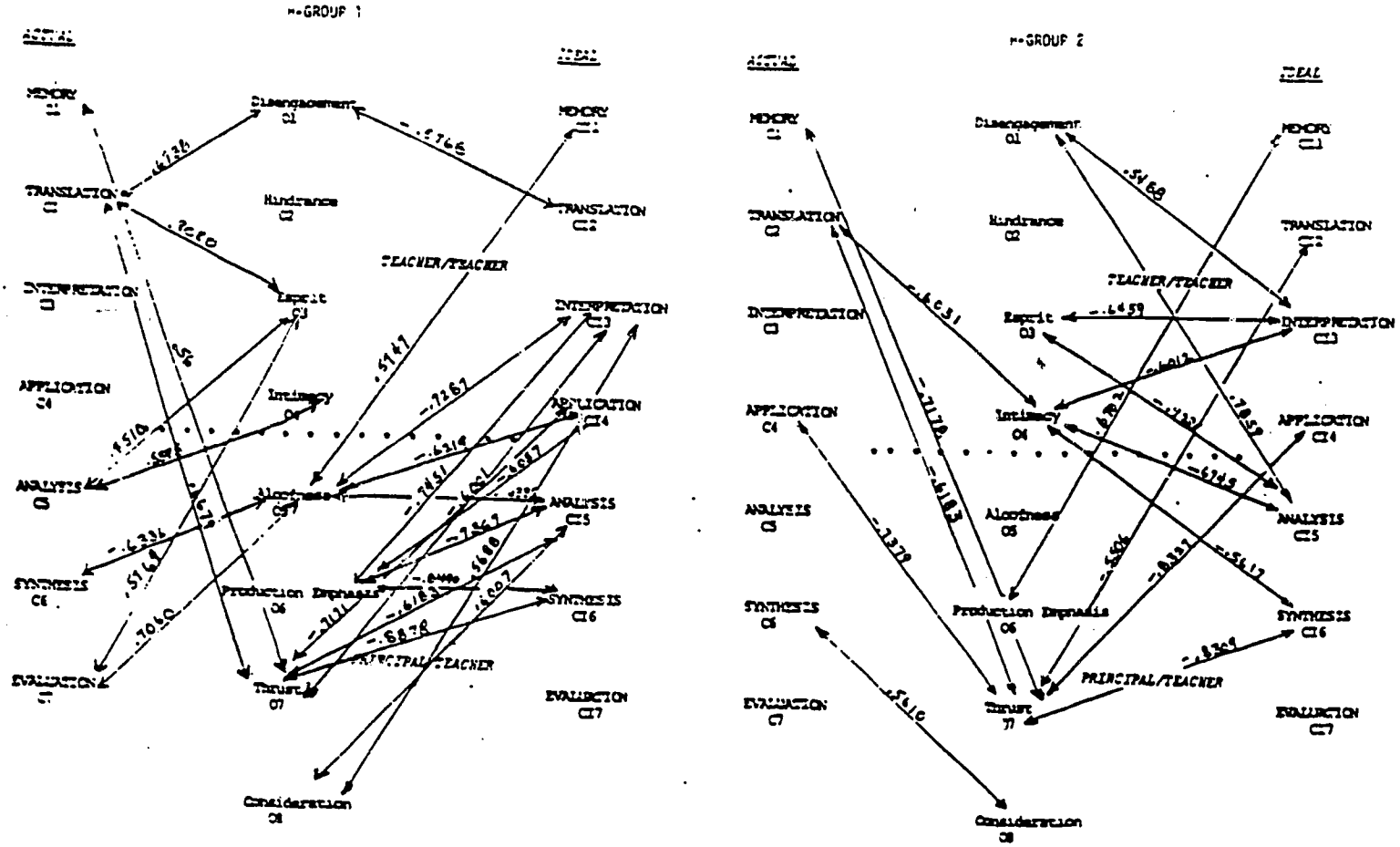

H-GROUP 1
ACTUAL
IDEAL
MEMORY C1
Disengagement Q1
TRANSLATION C2
Hindrance Q2
INTERPRETATION C3
Esprit Q3
APPLICATION C4
Intimacy Q4
ANALYSIS C5
Alcofribas Q5
SYNTHESIS C6
Production Emphasis Q6
EVALUATION C7
Thrust Q7
Consideration Q8
TEACHER/TEACHER
PRINCIPAL/TEACHER
H-GROUP 2
ACTUAL
IDEAL
MEMORY C1
Disengagement Q1
TRANSLATION C2
Hindrance Q2
INTERPRETATION C3
Esprit Q3
APPLICATION C4
Intimacy Q4
ANALYSIS C5
Alcofribas Q5
SYNTHESIS C6
Production Emphasis Q6
EVALUATION C7
Thrust Q7
Consideration Q8
TEACHER/TEACHER
PRINCIPAL/TEACHER
H-GROUP 3
ACTUAL
IDEAL
MEMORY C1
Disengagement Q1
TRANSLATION C2
Hindrance Q2
INTERPRETATION C3
Esprit Q3
APPLICATION C4
Intimacy Q4
ANALYSIS C5
Alcofribas Q5
SYNTHESIS C6
Production Emphasis Q6
EVALUATION C7
Thrust Q7
Consideration Q8
TEACHER/TEACHER
PRINCIPAL/TEACHER

Figure 3