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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF

THE DEVELOPMENT

OF A SCHOOL PROFILE

A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfilment of Requirements for the
Master of Education Degree
in Educational Administration

Lakehead University
Faculty of Education

by Susan Prentice ©
August, 1995

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CHAPTER 1 - The Problem

Conceptual Framework

This study was developed as a means to examine the assumptions arising from educational research on the use of the school audit process in building effective schools. These assumptions are evident in the work of Fullan & Hargreaves, McLoughlin, Sackney and others. They are encompassed in the following belief which is represented schematically in Figure 1: school improvement requires significant <u>change</u> in <u>school culture</u> through <u>understanding</u>, <u>collaboration</u> and <u>ownership</u>. In this thesis these assumptions are tested against teacher perceptions collected through a school audit process. Figure 1 is then modified to reflect the findings of this study.

Background

Schools are being pressured to evaluate their structures, practices and beliefs in order to affect improvement within the organization. Impetus for this pressure comes from a belief that in order for school

Figure 1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

School Audit Process

CHANGE

Ownership

Collaboration

Understanding

SCHOOL CULTURE
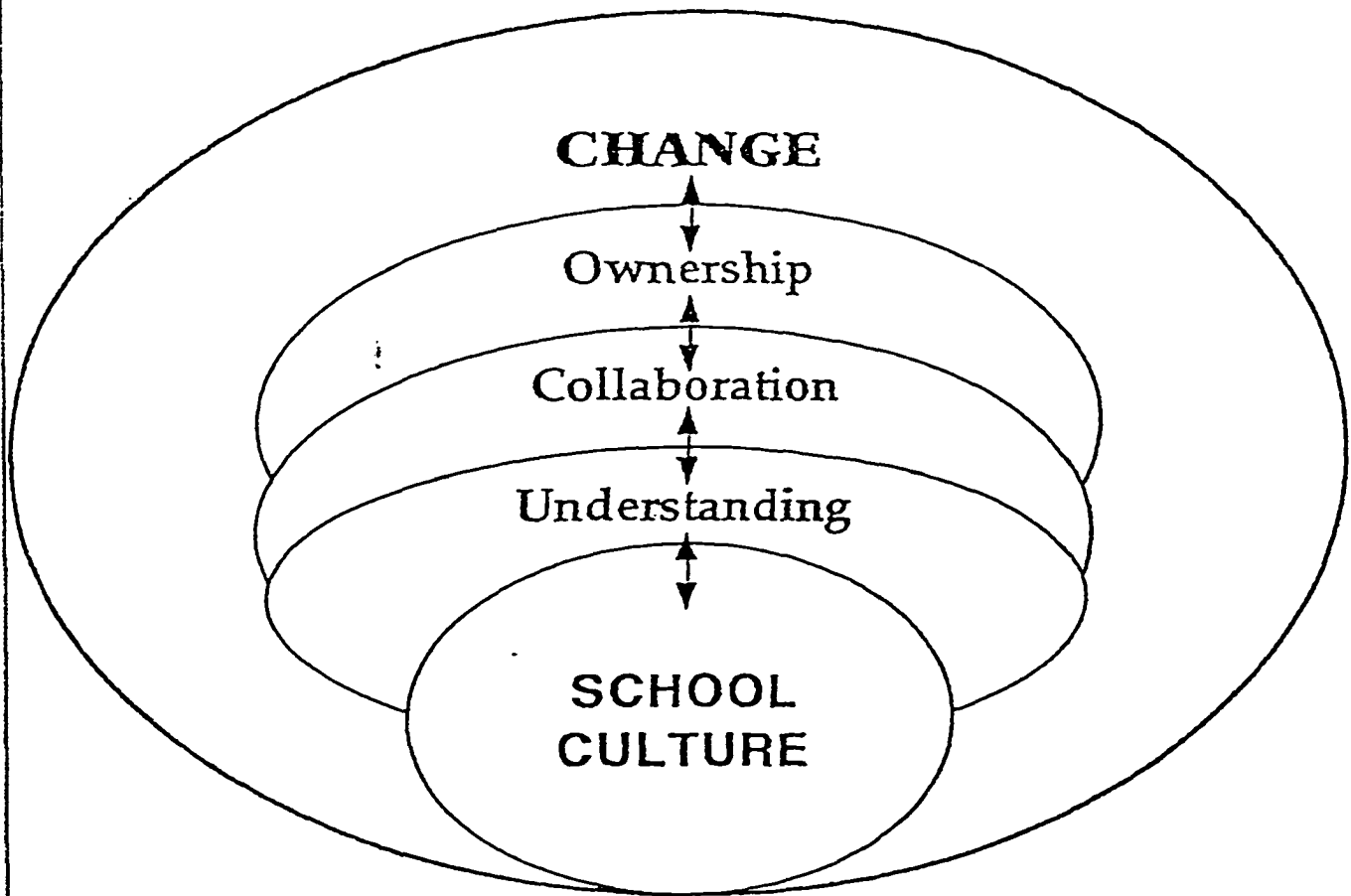
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hands. Not surprisingly, they often act like hired hands (1991, p.35).

McLoughlin (1978), suggests that efforts to make significant changes in schools have been most productive when directed toward influencing the entire school culture. This is done by employing strategies such as "collaborative planning" or shared decision making to create an atmosphere that is friendly to experimentation and evaluation. Such a collaborative culture takes a long time to build; it is, however, the most critical component needed to initiate and implement meaningful change in an educational setting:

> Effective collaborations operate in the world of ideas, examining existing practices critically, seeking better alternatives and working hard together at bringing about improvements and assessing their worth. (Fullan, Bennett and Rolheiser-Bennett, 1990, p.55).

In order to critically examine existing practices within an organization, a process for data collection must be put in place. Sackney (1990), used a school audit process within individual schools to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school's teaching and learning practices. He pointed out that such a process

was bound by time. That is, it reflected the state of the organization at a particular time thus setting some parameters for future directions. However, as Sackney was quick to caution, just as financial audits do not test all accounts, nor does a school audit test all aspects of school activities.

Although the "school audit" process can identify strengths and weaknesses, the success of implementation for future initiatives will be dependant upon how the key stakeholders have been involved in the development of the process. If the key stakeholders have had the opportunity to provide input and develop a sense of "ownership" in the "school audit" process, then the likelihood of implementation exists; but, as Jacoby and Lezotte (1990) suggest, successful implementation of any plan is in direct proportion to the ownership felt by the members of the school community. It is critical to evaluate the information collection process because it is peoples' perceptions of the process which can impact upon future directions (Patton, 1980).

The purpose of this study was to examine the teachers perceptions of the research process used in conducting a school audit in a secondary school . The

results of the audit itself will be reported to the school, the community, the board and all others concerned. This will be done through staff meetings and written summaries to other key stakeholders. However, the focus of this study is teacher's perceptions of the process of the school audit. Therefore, the results of the audit are not germane to this discussion.

It is not an attempt to demonstrate the effectiveness of the process and the future outcomes. Understanding teacher reactions to the process will be valuable in setting directions for future studies.

Definitions

School Audit

An examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's teaching and learning practices based on the school effectiveness attributes (Sackney, 1990, p.238).

School Profile

A picture of a school based on data-collection. Components involved in developing that snapshot in time include:

1) perceptual data from community, staff and students,

2)   results of standardized tests, provincial tests and system tests,

3)   school statistics in such areas as attendance rates, behaviour codes, participation and retention rates,

4)⊦   community information (The Lakehead Board of Education, 1993).

Assumptions

The participants in this study have been made aware of the rationale for conducting a school audit through vehicles such as memos, information sessions and department meetings, therefore, there is a clear understanding of the process to be utilized. Participants have knowledge of the school improvement initiatives in their school and understand how the information collected in the school audit will assist in identifying areas for school improvement. All participants in the study were volunteers so it is assumed that the results presented reflect honest opinions. The data was collected at a staff meeting so some individuals may have felt pressure to respond.

Delimitations

This research was conducted in conjunction with a school audit process therefore the study was bound by the framework developed for that process. For example, the process dictated that the survey must be conducted on a specific date. This limited the study sample to a specific target audience (classroom teachers) and specified the timelines. Information collected through this study can only be applied to this particular situation and cannot be generalized.

Other factors that impact on the information collected are, the time of year and contract negotiations. The study was conducted just prior to the Christmas holiday. There were also restraints placed on participants through social contract demands. Enthusiasm and support for yet another initiative may not have been demonstrated. These additional factors could have a negative impact upon responses thus limiting the study results.

CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review

Research on school improvement is extensive. This review will begin with a brief background summary of the school improvement movement and will focus on research specifically related to "school audits". It will also examine works which analyze the value of processes involved in qualitative research and the benefits and implications of evaluating peoples' perceptions.

Effective Schools Research

Effective schools research grew out of a challenge to the Coleman Report (1966) which stated that student ability and performance were directly related to socio-economic status and that schools did not make a difference for students, especially students with low socio-economic status.

Other researchers, such as Brookover (1979), Levine (1990), Stark (1981), Edmonds (1978), Rutter (1981) and Sackney (1985) found that schools can be successful in teaching all children the essential skills. They have

found that schools can be effective if school resources are used effectively. Their research suggests that quality and equity are critical standards vital to measuring effectiveness. The National Centre for Effective Schools Research and Development maintains that: -

> The quality standard assures that the overall level of achievement in a school is high. The equity standard assures that the high achievement does not vary significantly across the subsets, race, gender, socio-economic status of the schools' student population. These standards are critical to the definition of an Effective School (Lezotte and Jacoby, 1990, p.10).

Characteristics Associated with Effective Schools

Lezotte, Edmonds and Ratner (1974), Brookover and Schneider (1975), Spartz, Valdes, McCormick, Meyers and Geppert (1977), have further suggested that there are specific characteristics present in effective schools. For example, several characteristics were identified by Purkey and Smith in their review of school effectiveness literature:

The more pervasive common elements are better control or discipline and high staff expectations for student achievement. Each of these variables shows up in four of seven studies for which there are data. An emphasis on instructional leadership by the principal or another important staff member was found to be important in all three studies (1983, p.431).

Purkey and Smith (1983) believed that the most important organizational structure variables for effective schools were:

1) School-site management

2) Instructional leadership

3) Staff stability

4) Curriculum articulation and organization

5) School wide staff development

6) Parental involvement and support

7) School wide recognition of academic success

8) Maximized learning time

9) District support

Others, such as Brookover and Lezotte (1979) state that process variables can define the concept of school culture and climate, but a school climate seems to be the

determining factor in its success or failure as a place of learning. Through a proactive school culture, school staffs can initiate their own goals in relation to academic achievement and work toward attainment of those goals. Identified as the characteristics of a productive school culture are:

1) Collaborative planning and collegial relationships

2) Sense of community

3) Clear goals and high expectations commonly shared

4) Order and discipline (Purkey and Smith, 1983, p.444)

This belief in positive attributes associated with effective schools led to an increased emphasis on school culture.

Effective Schools & Culture

While early research on effective schools pointed to many key characteristics, it did not indicate how to recreate or transform schools through systematic change. Sackney (1986) attempted to address these concerns with an implementation model which focused on the school as a

unit of change and utilized a process of collaborative decision making and group planning. Subsequent programs have identified organizational issues of decentralizing structure, dispersing leadership and empowering others, and fostering a school culture supportive to student success.

Of course, individuals involved in the process of school improvement realized that the ultimate goal of such involvement was to impact student learning by changing the culture of the school. McCue (1987), suggested that this approach to educational reform was built upon three key concepts:

1) Each school has a unique culture embodied in the norms, beliefs, and attitudes of the people in that school.

2) If lasting change is to occur, the culture itself must be shaped to support that change.

3) Schools, as well as individuals have a capacity for self-renewal and redirection (cited in Lezotte and Jacoby, 1990, p.18).

Since individuals in the school and school community are the "carriers of the culture" (Lezotte and Jacoby, 1990), they all need to be informed and involved in the

planning, implementation and monitoring of school improvement efforts designed to change the culture.

Effective Schools and Change Theory

School improvement means change (Fullan, 1982). Critical to the success of the school improvement process is an understanding of the rationale for the change. As Fullan has suggested, key stakeholders must be involved and given opportunity to provide perceptions regarding both strengths and weaknesses of the school in order to facilitate planned meaningful change. Hall (1987) suggested:

1) Change is a process, not an event, and therefore requires time to show results.

2) Change is a highly personal experience and its success depends on the appropriateness of timing, location and relevancy.

3) Change involves predictable reactions and consequently can be planned.

4) Improvements or innovations can be of varying degrees of "newness" and length.

5) To change something, someone has to change first. (p.25)

Lezotte and Jacoby (1990), in their <u>Guide to the</u> <u>School Improvement Process</u> developed several strategies that they felt should be employed when developing and implementing a school improvement plan. Their School Improvement Planning Process included:

Stage A - Preparation (getting ready),
Orientation to Effective Schools

Stage B - Focus on "Where do We Want to Go?"
Where are we and where would we like to be?

Stage C - Diagnosis/Interpretation of Student Outcomes and Organizational Dimensions or "How Are We Doing?"

Stage D - Plan Development or "How Will We Get to Where We Want to Go?"

Stage E - Implementation/Monitoring/Evaluation/ Renewal or "How Will We Know We Got There?"

Imperative in the orientation stage of the plan is the building of commitment to the process in all key stakeholders. This helps ensure that the vision of the planned improvement will become reality. Lezotte and Jacoby (1990) suggest that staff orientation begins the

"ownership" process and is an essential component to the success of the reform effort. Such an orientation should include an overview of the process with the provision of time for discussion, clarification and consultation.

The orientation to the process should also identify to these stakeholders (i.e. school, staff, students, parents) potential "payoffs" to the organization for their involvement in the process. Lezotte and Jacoby (1990) stressed the importance of ensuring that teachers understand that the process would help them to be more effective in their jobs and consequently to become more satisfied in their work. Individuals who will be involved in the process needed time to reflect upon all of the information, and to analyze the implications of the school improvement process.

School Audits

The guidelines given in Lezotte & Jacoby (1990) strongly suggested that it was important that key stakeholders be involved and that they felt "ownership" in school improvement initiatives. These stakeholders provide the energy for internal school renewal and can only be successful if initiatives reflect their values

and beliefs and they feel that the school has valued their input.

Sackney (1990) suggested that there were three views on organizational renewal and change. One view saw schools as self-directed places where change was a continual process. Individuals who held this view believed that schools should be left to their own devices. Some researchers (Sackney and Wilson, 1987; Riffel, 1987) feel that if this happens there will likely never be change.

Reflected in the second view is the belief that organizational renewal must come from the top down. However, the bureaucratic model often suffers from the inherent problems commonly associated with the top down structure.

The third view calls for a developmental approach to school improvement (eg. Riffel, 1987). This view stresses the necessity for the system to establish clear expectations that the school will improve, but allows for a great deal of school autonomy in the choice of the direction it takes.

The school audit model evolves from this latter view. The school audit is done on the assumption that a

system can establish clear expectations for school improvement and allow for a great deal of autonomy in the choice of the direction it will take.

Key to this assumption, is the leadership provided by the school principal: "the principal's role in culture building is central" (Sackney, 1990, p.237). Much of the impetus for renewal and improvement must come from the leadership of the school. The leader must demonstrate a commitment to the audit process.

The audit is the vehicle for the school to assess its strengths and weaknesses through collaboration and reflection. Sackney defined a school audit as: "an examination of strengths and weaknesses of the school's teaching and learning practices based on the school's effectiveness attributes" (Sackney, 1990, p.238). As mentioned earlier, the school audit is based on Sackney's 11 premises:

1) All schools have strengths and weaknesses.

2) All schools can continuously improve.

3) There is a culture that permeates the work of the people in the school.

4) Some of the sub-cultures may be functional or dysfunctional.

5)   All stakeholders should be involved in the assessment of the school (teachers, students, administrators, para-professionals, parents).

6)   The audit should be conducted openly, collaboratively and honestly.

7)   The audit should indicate areas for improvement but not the "how to".

8)   The results of the school audit belong to the school staff, but it is hoped that the school staff will share its results with interested stakeholders (e.g. students and parents).

9)   It is anticipated that the school will use the results of the audit to reflect and develop its action plans.

10)   It is anticipated that the school will continue to monitor its improvement efforts.

11)   It is assumed that schools that engage in reflective practices will be better schools. (p. 238, 239)

The school audit also considers the eight attributes that consistently occur in effective schools research when assessing the schools effectiveness. These attributes are:

1) Leadership

2) Attention to climate

3) Academic focus

4) High expectations

5) Student participation in decision making

6) Sense of mission

7) Positive motivational strategies and reward systems

8) Feedback on academic performance (Sackney, 1990, p. 239).

Sackney (1990), also noted that in order for an "audit" to take place, much preliminary work must be done. This includes meeting with administration and staff representation in order to refine the research instrument to meet the needs of the individual school.

School audits use both quantitative and qualitative approaches to elicit information from staff, students and parents. An audit may use questionnaires, interviews, observations and other data sources. In Sackney's model, questionnaires were validated through interactive usage and discriminated item analysis.

The findings of an audit were expected to be used to allow school leaders as well as staffs to identify the

schools' strengths and weaknesses, thus enabling them to make future decisions about the organization. Sackney outlined the findings of several school audits and suggested the following to be the generalizations that can be made about the school audit process.

1) There are considerable variations in effectiveness of schools. Generally schools with weak leadership seem to have more problem areas than those that have strong leadership.

2) Generally parents and students report strong support for the school audit.

3) We find that in the more effective schools teachers are more critical of school practices than are parents or students.

4) Occasionally a particularly weak teacher surfaces in the audit process. The individual tends to be named by students and parents.

5) Schools that have been involved in the audit process have found it to be highly useful.

6) Most audits find: strong support for the school and teachers, high expectations for learning, teacher willingness to provide extra help, adequacy of programs.

7) Most frequently reported weaknesses are: teachers need to devote more attention to caring and taking a personal interest in students, assignments are slow to be returned, teachers tend to come late to classes, students desire more teaching strategies, students lack involvement in decisions, discipline is poorly handled in schools.

8) In small rural schools parents tend to hold higher expectations for teachers. They also tend to be more critical of teachers.

9) Smaller schools tend to have better learning environments than larger schools.

10) Parents whose children attend small schools tend to be more closely involved with their school". (p. 243, 247)

Sackney emphasized that the largest obstacle to conducting an "audit" was not in doing the audit itself, but in developing the expertise necessary to implement the process.

Patton (1980), in his writings about qualitative evaluation methods, suggested that process evaluations could give the researcher a greater understanding of the

internal dynamics of program operations as well as information on how programs are perceived by participants. A focus on the "process" emphasizes how a product or outcome was produced rather than strictly looking at the products. Such an analysis looks at the processes by which a result was achieved. This can be a critical factor when trying to evaluate the successes or failures of a program.

Researchers who examine processes must be sensitive to major patterns and trends that emerge as they examine a program (Patton, 1980). Process evaluations must focus on anticipated outcomes as well as unanticipated results during the development and implementation of the program. Patton suggested that process evaluations normally include perceptions of people both key to and removed from the program to determine how things are going. He concluded that when researchers were trying to evaluate the dynamics of a program, or trying to reveal strengths and weaknesses of a program, or trying to determine if such an initiative should be replicated, process evaluations can be most effective. When one understands the dynamics of the process as well as participants'

perceptions, critical elements of the program's successes or failures can be isolated.

To engage in a process, then, whether it be a school improvement initiative such as a "school audit" or some other program, there are several critical factors to consider. Sackney and Patton concur on these key points:

1) It is extremely important to develop a sense of "ownership" in the process for the key stakeholders.

2) There is a strong link between the amount of discussion, sharing and collaboration prior to the process being initiated and the eventual success of the initiative.

3) It is absolutely essential to have knowledge of and an understanding of peoples' perceptions about the initiative although neither put forth a means for collecting and evaluating such data.

These essential factors ownership, collaboration, and understanding form the foundation for the present study. They are identified as key factors in change as it applies to school culture, as represented in Figure 1 on page 2.

CHAPTER 3 - Methodology

This research was conducted in conjunction with a school audit process being carried out in a composite high school within a board of education. The composition of this school included approximately 1,200 students, 60 full and part-time teaching staff, 3 administrators and 20 support staff. The object of this research was to clarify perceptions and attitudes, through a survey completed by all staff members (Appendix A). The school audit itself was reported to the teachers, parents and community. The perceptions that teachers had about the process are limited to their responses to their questionnaire, not to the data it produced.

Although students and parents were a part of the audit process, they were not a part of the perception evaluation. Staff members were invited to participate in the perception survey and were able to decline if they so desired.

Data Collection

Appended to the school audit survey was a perception survey which focused on the process that was used to collect data from the staff during the initial stages of developing a school audit profile. The perception survey instrument was developed using Sackney's (1990), 11 premises for conducting a school audit in conjunction with the underlying themes of school culture, understanding, collaboration, ownership and change as they relate to school improvement initiatives. The five questions developed were intended to elicit teacher perceptions related to the school audit process and the impact such a process would have on the school environment.

Participants were asked to respond to the following questions appended to the school audit questionnaire:

1)   Do you think that this information will have an impact upon the learning environment of the school?

2)   Do you think that this information will have an impact upon you as a classroom teacher/ administrator?

3)   It is anticipated that the school will use the results of the survey to reflect and develop its

plans for school improvement. How relevant do you think the information that was collected will be?

4) Do you feel that the process used for data collection allowed for collaboration?

5) How should the school go about sharing the results of the survey with staff, students and parents?

Information collected in this survey was intended to assess the significance these key stakeholders placed upon their involvement in the development of a school audit profile.

Thirty-five members of the secondary school teaching staff provided the data base for the study. Since the research tool allowed for anonymity, no analysis based upon gender or number of years teaching could be done.

Data Analysis

The survey information was collated based upon the comment responses to the five questions appended. Analysis of the responses was intended to determine participants' perceptions of the process and to ascertain how well the information obtained correlated with Sackney's 11 underlying premises for conducting a school audit. Through this process the themes were examined as

previously identified as components on Figure 1 (page 2), school culture, understanding, collaboration, ownership and change. These components are summarized in Table I which follows.

School Culture

1) Responses from questions one, two and three provided information about the teaching and learning environment, as well as the culture of the school. Data reflected strengths and weaknesses of the organization.

Understanding

2) Attitudes and beliefs about the process used to conduct the school audit was identified through responses to question four. Since Sackney suggests collaboration and involvement of key stakeholders are essential to the school audit process, responses to this question determined if that premise applied.

Collaboration

3) Perceptions regarding the value of sharing information with interested stakeholders was gleaned through responses to question five.

Ownership

4) Participants' attitudes towards the value of the information and its' worth to the school in their improvement plans was identified through questions three and five.

5) Further clarification of all the data was done by identifying issues that were most frequently raised by participants. A percentage analysis of responses was done.

6) Discrepancies between the information collected and Sackney's 11 premises were outlined and evaluated.

7) From the overall analysis, recommendations were made regarding the process of the school audit based upon individuals' perceptions and the extent to which Sackney's premises applied to this particular study.

8) Recommendations based upon information collected in this study was shared with key stakeholders.

This is a study of the school audit process, in which teachers' perceptions of the process will form the basis of the analysis. The perceptual framework guiding this study is based on the literature pertaining to school audits which will follow. This process then can be summarized in the following manner:

Table I

THEMES	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	SACKNEY'S PREMISES
School Culture	· impact on learning environment · impact on classroom teacher · plans for school improvement · relevancy to school culture	· all schools have strengths and weaknesses · all schools can continuously improve · a culture permeates the work of people in a school · sub-cultures may be functional or dysfunctional
Understanding	· attitudes and beliefs about the process	· all stakeholders should be involved in the assessment of the school · audits should be conducted openly, collaboratively and honestly
Collaboration	· process of sharing results	· audit should indicate areas for improvement but not the "how to"
Ownership	· impact on plans for school improvement · relevancy of information · process for sharing	· results of the school audit belong to the school, but it is hoped the school will share its results

THEMES	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	SACKNEY'S PREMISES
Change	· future effects of the school audit	· the school will use the results of the audit to reflect and develop action plans · the school will continue to monitor improvement efforts · schools will engage in reflective practices

Framework for Analysis of Themes

The framework for analysis of themes is represented schematically in Figure 1. This representation is expanded here in the interpretation of teacher responses.

School Culture

The literature on school improvement makes it clear that positive school change is a function of school culture (McCue, 1987). This culture is the starting point for change and a change in culture, then is the objective of the school improvement process. The first stage in change is assessing the school culture.

Assessment of teachers' current impressions of their school's culture is the first focus of the research. This theme, school culture, links responses from questions one, two and three of the questions appended to the school audit questionnaire. These questions provided information about the teaching and learning environment, as well as the culture of the school. Data reflected strengths and weaknesses of the organization.

Critical to facilitating change in school culture, is ensuring that key stakeholders, teachers within the school, have access to three essential components of

change, as emphasized in various aspects of the literature. These components are understanding, collaboration and ownership.

Understanding

The second theme, understanding, is also reflected in the data. It refers to the attitudes and beliefs of the participants concerning the school audit process. According to Fullan (1982), a critical element of change involves individuals' understanding the rationale for change and an insight into how the particular innovation will lead to improvement. One should not assume that individuals will understand all aspects of the change without some opportunities for information sharing and clarification.

Lezotte and Jacoby (1990), suggest that time is needed for personal reflection in order for individuals to feel comfortable with and ready to accept new innovations. Through personal reflection, discussion, and clarification of issues comes greater understanding and comfort with the change. In order for individuals to support change they must clearly understand what the change is, why change is necessary and who will be

involved in the change. The key to the acceptance of any change is involvement of the key stakeholders in the process.

Collaboration

The importance of collaboration is also evident in this process. Collaboration refers to the degree to which participants in the school audit process feel they have had opportunities for input, discussion and decision making. Since involvement of key stakeholders in the change process appears to be critical to the success or failure of planned change, the way in which these stakeholders are engaged is also crucial. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991), contend that building collaborative cultures that provide teachers with opportunities to share in and support decisions is the key to successful school reform. McLoughlin (1978), also believes that strategies that encourage collaborative planning and shared decision making create an atmosphere where change is encouraged and accepted.

Only through collaboration are people able to share ideas, examine existing practices critically, look for creative ways to solve problems and eventually bring

about improvement (Fullan, Bennett and Rolheiser-Bennett, 1990). Sackney (1990), suggests for the school audit to be successful, participants must feel they had an opportunity to collaborate.

Ownership

Ownership refers to the degree to which participants felt committed to, valued and involved in the school audit process. During the early stages of any change process there must be opportunities for key stakeholders to develop a sense of commitment. Lezotte and Jacoby (1990), suggest that providing a staff orientation will begin to build such an "ownership" which will lead to the success of the reform effort.

Ownership is built through identifying potential pay-offs as a result of the change, valuing the input of all, allowing all concerned to be actively engaged in the process, and creating a climate where individuals feel their opinions and comments will be valued and have some impact upon the change. (Fullan, 1982, Patton, 1980, Sackney, 1990).

A changed climate can only be attained through a process which pays attention to how these elements are

integrated and interpreted. The foundations for them should be a part of the school audit process.

CHAPTER 4 - Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptual data from teachers involved in a "school audit". Teachers responding to a survey intended to produce a school profile were asked to reflect on the process itself. These questions allowed for an examination of school culture, the audit process, value of the audit process and the value of sharing results and an assessment of issues frequently raised. Each of these topics will be treated separately.

The responses to the questionnaire were divided into the four themes identified in the conceptual framework. Responses on the following table (Table II) are representative of teacher responses to the school audit process.

TABLE II

THEME	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
School Culture	· may improve working/ learning environment · information should point out strengths and weaknesses of this school - these areas can be analyzed and addressed · obviously if many teachers are unsure of policies and procedures, perhaps an awareness session would be of positive benefit · change in rules and expectations between staff and students · I will learn if there is really the level of commitment to helping students be responsible learners, which I think there is · hopefully it will give us a common goal and direction instead of going in different directions	· very little · I don't know, I will have to see some changes before I know if there has been an impact · if this info is used it should have an impact · do we really know how to improve self-esteem or do we really just know how to criticize the improperly behaved students · no (2) · not sure · not much/fear · if feedback comes back we may see some common thread other than being very negative · if the full info is returned it will change procedures

THEME	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
School Culture (cont'd)	· raise awareness · might change some practices · assist in feelings of common goals, struggles · I will try to improve in the areas indicated · possibilities for increased parent involvement · improved methods of communication in school to community · people and committees · parents might realize how teachers feel · work as a "team" heading in the same direction · give administration and staff clear direction as to where we are going · if taken seriously it can influence · it will show areas of strengths and areas for improvement · this survey will present an action plan for addressing needs for change and improvement as well as recognizing our accomplishments	· once again hard to tell at this point, will everything be acted upon or only isolate areas · depends on how it is used once collected. I'm sure information first goes to administration and it will be up to them to pass on any further information that will impact on the teacher · who the agents of change are and how they intend to make the change · old guard · not optimistic where "administration" are involved · classroom teacher needs more support

THEME	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Understanding	· if taken seriously and acted upon · information can have a profound effect · hopefully this survey will give needed information to help encourage and persuade administration to improve the learning environment and not just shelve the info · positive regard for students · clear expectations of students · consistency of discipline · I hope positively · hopefully there will be an eye opener to hold the line for students to be more responsible for their actions	· no money · depends on how it is used · I don't believe it will unless action is taken to change a situation · I don't think we have as much partnership in this area as possible · realistically probably no impact · not clear as to purpose of survey, who originated/ designed or what intent was. Little if any teacher community, student input · probably little impact · don't know (3) · depends on how used · it will affect teachers

THEME	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Understanding (cont'd)	· if we spend enough time evaluating the information generated, we will be able to address perceptions and make an effort to change aspects of our operation to more effectively meet student/ parent and teacher needs · hopefully we will learn if we are doing enough for parents as well as students in keeping them informed re our goals and strategies · hopefully something good will come of this i.e. more funds · provide insights on a broad basis	· depends on whether the results of the test will be used to determine change

	YES	NO
Collaboration	· OK like any other survey · the questions were very effective even if not developed on sight. Collaboration would not develop a better questionnaire	· staff informed prior to survey · not sure · not very/wasn't allowed not to complete survey · don't know, wasn't involved (2) · not · didn't take part in designing the process · I was told to complete it (3) · not very, purpose was not clear · I had no input into choosing or wording items used · survey was developed externally to school but collaboration will result as a result of sharing the data and identification of school growth plans, strategies and activities · we might have come to a group consensus about the value of such an exercise before embarking on it

	VALUABLE	NOT VALUABLE
Ownership	• information will be very useful in determining areas to address in developing our ongoing plans for improvement. If we use the information the results could be very exciting and beneficial • possibility for identifying thrusts - mission, homework policy, self-esteem, collaboration • any change and response to perceived needs will improve the school - climate, physical layout and support systems • working as a "team" heading in the same direction can only help improve the school by adding consistency • parents might realize how teachers are feeling • we can identify areas of our school that need improvement and to prioritize problems/ concerns in addressing them • useful to target perceived areas of weakness • help bring out the issues • positively I anticipate if we start listening to grass roots teachers	• only as useful as people who are working with it think it is • not sure (3) • depends on if it is used • very little • depends on how it is used (2). Who determines this survey - initiated by non-teachers • who will interpret and implement • so I doubt much will be done with the results • so I assume the results will not reflect what you are truly seeking • depends upon who the agents of change are and how they intend to make the change accommodating, threatening, etc. • I am not optimistic where administration are involved • I do not see the old guard moving

	VALUABLE	NOT VALUABLE
Ownership (cont'd)	· ideas should be brought forward to appropriate people and committees and they should act upon them · it could be very useful · act on the problems and the good things · it will raise awareness among teachers · hopefully cause us to reflect and think where we can improve our teaching and cause students to see their role	

Themes from Conceptual Framework

School Culture

The first analysis of data correlated the responses from questions one, two and three appended to the school audit questionnaire to Sackney's (1990), first three premises regarding school audits;

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	SACKNEY'S PREMISES
· impact on learning environment · impact on classroom teacher · plans for school improvement · relevancy to school culture	· all schools have strengths and weaknesses · all schools can continuously improve · a culture permeates the work of people in a school · sub-cultures may be functional or dysfunctional

Little (1982), determined that effective school cultures are distinguished by the presence of shared values and beliefs, norms of collegiality and that experimentation was consistently found in effective schools.

The culture that exists in the school organization is critical to the successful implementation of any new

initiative. Responses given in the school audit process, identified specific characteristics of the school culture that existed in this study.

Comments from teachers #6 and #10 suggest that they were unsure of policies and procedures that exist in the school that they are expected to follow. This could imply that some confusion and uncertainty exists within this culture. Teachers #3, #7, and #11 suggested that they were the "grassroots" in the organization, therefore administrators should start listening to them. Such statements suggest that these participants perceive that bureaucratic structure exists within this culture. Other hints of a top down structure come from statements made by teachers #17 and #25 who pointed out information goes to administration first and it is up to them to pass on any further information that will impact upon me. Other teachers, #4 and #2 stated there is an old guard and they were not optimistic about changes taking place if administration were involved. The lack of optimism coupled with the sense of power and control resting with

administration appears to create an environment where there is low morale and little collegiality.

Other teachers had contrary views about the organization. Teacher #20 suggested that he/she perceived the staff was working as a "team" heading in the same direction. This response would suggest that some common values, beliefs and interests are shared by this culture. Teachers #18 and #30 indicated they perceive people would work as a group to implement any new information gathered as a result of the school audit process. This may indicate that there is a sense of commitment and responsibility demonstrated by members of this group.

Comments from teachers reflected an expectation of change as a result of the school audit process. Teacher #1 suggested that this would bring about a change in rules and expectations between staff and students. Teacher #3 believed that the school audit process would give a common goal and direction, changing practices, increasing parental involvement and improving methods of communication in the school community. Teacher #6 felt the school audit process would present an action plan for change and improvement as

well as recognizing our accomplishments. Teacher #9 felt that by spending time to evaluate data collected, the school would be able to address perceptions and make an effort to change aspects of our operation to more effectively meet student/parent and teacher needs.

With some exceptions (Respondents #2 & #4) the participants perceive the school audit process will cause a significant amount of change. In their opinion this change will be positive. It is critical for participants to perceive there is a need for change if they are to be part of the change process.

Other comments from teachers reflected a commitment to ensuring students were responsible. Teacher #2 and #5 responded that the school has a commitment to helping students be responsible learners, providing clear expectations for students while teachers #4 and #8 suggested making students more responsible for their actions was important and assessing how affective the school had been in developing this sense of responsibility in students was an important future consideration.

Teacher #7 stated that the end result of the school audit process would be an "improved learning environment".

All of the comments identified regarding expectations for change, commitment to developing responsible students, improving the learning environment indicate the positive impact the school audit process will have on the school.

Some concern was raised by teachers regarding change and the use of information to facilitate change. Teacher #10 responded that "it is difficult to determine impact of information until change is seen". Teachers #12 and #13 reflected on the use of information, they questioned how the information was to be used and how it would determine change. These comments raise two significant issues, who will determine how the school audit information will be used and what impact the information will have on change.

As Sackney (1990) suggested, the school audit process has identified a culture that permeates the work of the people within the school in the study. This culture appears to be one that has an identifiable structure, some shared values and beliefs, common concerns and interests. They share a sense of commitment and responsibility to

aspects such as improving the learning environment and developing responsible students. There is an expectation that change is necessary but a reluctance is also evident to the change process. There appears to be an underlying concern regarding administration, their use of power and information.

Although the data identifies many strengths, such as expectations for change, improving the learning environment and ensuring responsible students are developed, some weaknesses do exist, particularly around information use and sharing.

Participant perceptions of the school audit process determined the extent to which participants understood the process, felt they were collaborating in it and had ownership in it. These understandings can be gleaned by reflecting upon the extent to which they valued:

a) the process of collecting the information,

b) their own responses to the process and

c) the sharing of results

Understanding

Attitudes and beliefs about the process used to conduct the school audit were identified through responses to question four appended to the school audit questionnaire.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	SACKNEY'S PREMISES
• attitudes and beliefs about the process	• all stakeholders should be involved in the assessment of the school • audits should be conducted openly, collaboratively and honestly

Respondent #3 commented that they were not sure why the survey was being completed. Teacher #8 suggested they didn't take part in the designing process therefore they did not know much about the survey. Teacher #19 stated "the staff was told they would be a part of the survey but did not really understand what it was all about". Other teachers, #2 and #25, commented they were unclear of the purpose of the school audit and really did not understand why they were participating in the audit process. There also appeared to be a lack of understanding as to how the audit questionnaire was developed. Teacher #7 commented "I don't know anything about this, wasn't involved".

Teacher #17 reflected that the survey was developed externally to the school, with teacher #5 concurring with

that; "questions were effective but not developed on site".
There also appeared to be a lack of understanding as to
what impact the results would have on the school
improvement thrusts within the school, and what
expectations administration would have of participants once
the audit information was collected.

Collaboration

Sackney (1990) suggests that collaboration and
involvement of key stakeholders are essential to the school
audit process, responses to question four appended to the
school audit clarify the extent to which those premises
applied to this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	SACKNEY'S PREMISES
· process of sharing results	· audit should indicate areas for improvement but not the "how to"

The sense that there was little or no opportunity for
collaboration was expressed by teachers #8, #13, #21 and
#24. Statements made by these teachers were: "didn't take
part in the designing process" (respondent #8); "I had no
input into choosing or wording items used" (respondent
#13); "I was told to complete" (respondent #21); "we might
have come to a group consensus about the value of such an

exercise before embarking on it" (respondent #24). One individual, teacher #6, felt that collaboration would not have developed a better questionnaire, but this opinion was not reflected by other participants.

Responses clearly indicate that participants perceive that they were not given the opportunity to collaborate prior to, -or during the school audit process. Their comments also reflect a tone of resentment about not being involved in such a process as indicated by these responses. Teacher #9 stated, "I was told to do this" and teacher #13 stated "we were told we would be part of this - not a good start". There appears to be an understanding of how the school audit questionnaire was developed but a concern that there was no opportunity for input by the group that would participate in the school audit, therefore the process did not build in that sense of ownership that is so critical to the success or failure of a new innovation.

Ownership

Many of the respondents perceived they felt little or no ownership to the school audit process.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	SACKNEY'S PREMISES
· impact on plans for school improvement · relevancy of information · process for sharing	· results of the school audit belong to the school, but it is hoped the school will share its results

Respondent #19 stated "I am not clear as to the purpose of the survey, who originated, designed or what the intent was, little if any teacher, community, student input". This attitude was also reflected in questions raised by responses given by #2, 11 and 19, "who determines this survey initiated by non-teachers? Who will interpret and implement? Who will decide on how these results are used?"

Since such an impression was created there is concern that although valuable information was collected through this process, if individuals did not feel a part of the process, how much weight will be given to the results and how will the information collected be utilized?

Comments made by the participants were valid in that they were not involved in the designing of the questionnaire and did not have an opportunity to refine the questionnaire to better meet their needs, since much of the school audit questionnaire used was developed externally. That particular factor created the impression that there was no opportunity for collaboration and that the school audit was not being conducted in a manner that led to openness and honesty. As Sackney (1990), has already pointed out, individuals must feel a part of the process and develop a sense of commitment and ownership. This

commitment can only be created by allowing the collaboration to occur.

Although there was no specific reference to key stakeholders in the response to question four, other data indicates involvement of parents, students and administrators, though it does not address para-professional personnel in the assessment of the school. The data did not indicate that the climate was open, honest and collaborative throughout the "school audit" process. These factors have an impact on the value of the information gleaned. Emergent understandings implicit to this discussion will be discussed in the next chapter.

Incidental Themes

Although the survey was not extended to address these issues, there were several themes that emerged through the analysis of these responses. The incidental themes have been expressed as percentages based on some judgements made by the research as to what category best suited statements made by participants.

Change

Approximately 20% of the respondents identified the area of change as an issue. These respondents expressed some concern regarding the impact the audit process would

have on change within the organization. They clearly perceived that there could be either a positive change or negative change depending on how the leaders within the organization used the information collected in the school audit process.

Leadership

Approximately 40% of the respondents perceived administration as being the key to determining if information gleaned from the survey would be useful or not. Responses also indicated that participants perceived that the audit process was facilitated because administration wanted it, not staff members. Participants were also sceptical that administration would not share complete information, that they would only receive the good news items not necessarily information that would tarnish the image of administration.

Uncertainty

Approximately 45% of respondents identified they perceived students and teachers to be affected by the school audit process but were unclear as to the impact on the teaching and learning environment. Participants were not sure as to how the information could be utilized to ensure some improvements would be seen in the future.

Sharing Information

Approximately 65% of respondents identified sharing of information as critical to the school audit process. Participants offered a variety of mechanisms to facilitate this sharing. There was a clear understanding of the need to share such information with all key stakeholders.

All of the incidental themes are items that should be given further consideration. Some judgements made by the researcher regarding where a statement made by a respondent best fit, created percentages that may not truly reflect accurately all of the participants' perceptions. For the purposes of this study it was important to categorize incidental themes. Even though the incidental theme of change appears to have the least weight in this study it does not negate the importance of that theme, since change is the underlying theme in the school audit process, ultimately leading to school improvement.

CHAPTER 5 - Analysis and Conclusions

Emergent Understandings

The data collected in this study suggests that the elements identified in Figure 1 are inadequate for a full understanding of the elements necessary for a school audit to assist in positive change in school culture. Emerging from the initial core concepts of understanding, collaboration and ownership was the underlying theme of value. The three levels on which to value a school audit as reflected in the data are: 1) responses, 2) sharing sharing, 3) process.

Value of Responses

If participants clearly understand the intent of a school audit then they perceive that the information collected through this process will be valuable in the development of school improvement plans. Responses from questions one and three appended to the school audit questionnaire identified participants' perceptions of the value of the responses given in the school audit process for school improvement plans.

Comments from some participants in the school audit process indicated that they perceived that their input

would be valued and utilized in developing new school improvement initiatives.

Teacher #24 suggested that his/her input could influence future decisions and teacher #32 believed their responses to the questions would provide insight into a broad base of topics. Teacher #5 felt that his/her responses would bring out the issues so that they could be addressed. One particular comment indicated the audit would be of greatest value to the individual partici-pating was reflected in this statement, "This information will help me assess how effective my work is within the organization. I will be able to compare my perceptions with overall views of my colleagues." (Respondent #7)

The comments made by these individuals indicate that they perceive information given in this school audit to have both personal and school implications.

As a result of the information obtained in the school audit an individual could assess his or her own professional practices, which could ultimately lead to individual improvement. At the school level, this information would be deemed valuable if suggestions given through the school audit process were utilized in future school improvement initiatives.

Respondents #4, 12 and 20 disagreed with other participants since they felt this information was not valuable in school improvement for the following reasons: teacher #4 commented that the information was only as

useful as people who are working with it think it is. Teacher #12 suggested that they were not optimistic where administration are involved and teacher #20 stated "it depends on who the change agents are and how they intend to make the change accommodating, threatening, etc.

Reflected in these comments is a sense of lack of ownership, the individuals are looking to others to work with the information and expecting that other people will be the change agents. There is also a sense of the perceived school culture from the comments made here, that top down structure with specific individuals being seen as the individuals that will make changes, not particularly a culture that collaborates and works together to create change.

Value of Sharing Results

Inherent in sharing, is a sense of collaboration. In order for the sharing of information to be perceived as valuable participants need to feel they have had opportunities to meet and discuss with other key stakeholders. Data from question number five appended to the school audit questionnaire and Sackney's (1990) premise regarding the sharing of results were correlated. The results of the school audit belong to the school staff, but it is hoped the school staff will share its results with interested stakeholders (eg. students and parents) (p. 238) were reviewed to determine the significance of sharing.

Although the results of the survey were most applicable to the school staff, many participants valued the process of sharing data. For example, some felt that the process of small group discussion to assess results and develop plans would be useful. This would involve groups with representation for each constituent group (parents, teachers, students). There was a feeling that the results should be shared with staff, others should be determined by administration. As one respondent suggested "the survey does no good if the staff and administration feel safe with what's here at present" (respondent #32).

Teachers also suggested other ways in which to carry on the process. For example teacher #17 suggested preparing a survey, then giving it to the participants who could then discuss the results further on a voluntary basis. Other teachers felt there should be some written material available to participants and others to communicate the findings of the school audit process. Teacher #6 suggested publishing the results in a staff newsletter, school newsletter, in the school page of the newspaper and at staff meetings. Teacher #2 felt that an open meeting should be held for all participants to share their concerns. Teacher #22 wanted the findings reported to administration, staff growth team and the parent council.

Participants perception was that sharing of the information gleaned through the school audit process could

be valuable and worthwhile since it may lead to the development of a school report card that could ultimately lead to the development of plans to address perceived problems within the school creating opportunities for change.

Many participants realized the importance of sharing the information with others. Since the information collected in the school audit process will impact on more than just the participants, the results must be shared with others. Many teachers gave creative solutions for the sharing of information. Participants seem to clearly understand the need to report information to key stakeholders in an open, honest manner. Key to any of the suggestions and recommendations given by participants in the school audit process was the interest in the collaborative process.

Value of the Process

In order for the school audit process to be deemed valuable, participants must have felt some sense of commitment to and ownership in the process.

Responses from questions three and five appended to the school audit questionnaire reflect participants' attitudes towards the value and worth of the information collected in the school audit process for school improvement plans.

Comments from the participants in the school audit process indicate that they felt the data collected through the process would identify specific areas for the school to work on in order to improve, create a framework for the school improvement plans for the next few years and chart a direction for the "team" to head in.

Teacher #7 suggested that the information would be very useful in determining areas to address in developing ongoing plans for improvement. Teacher #32 reflected that the school audit would assist to identify areas of the school that need improvement and then those could be prioritized as to problems/concerns so they could then be addressed. Teacher #25 felt the process would help identify thrusts while teacher #3 suggested this would help the school act on both the problems and the good things. Since these priorities and thrusts were identified by participants some sense of ownership was developed.

Other very positive comments given by participants were; "any change and response to perceived needs will improve school climate, physical layout and support systems" (respondent #11); "working as a "team" heading in the same direction can only help improve the school by adding consistency" (respondent #18).
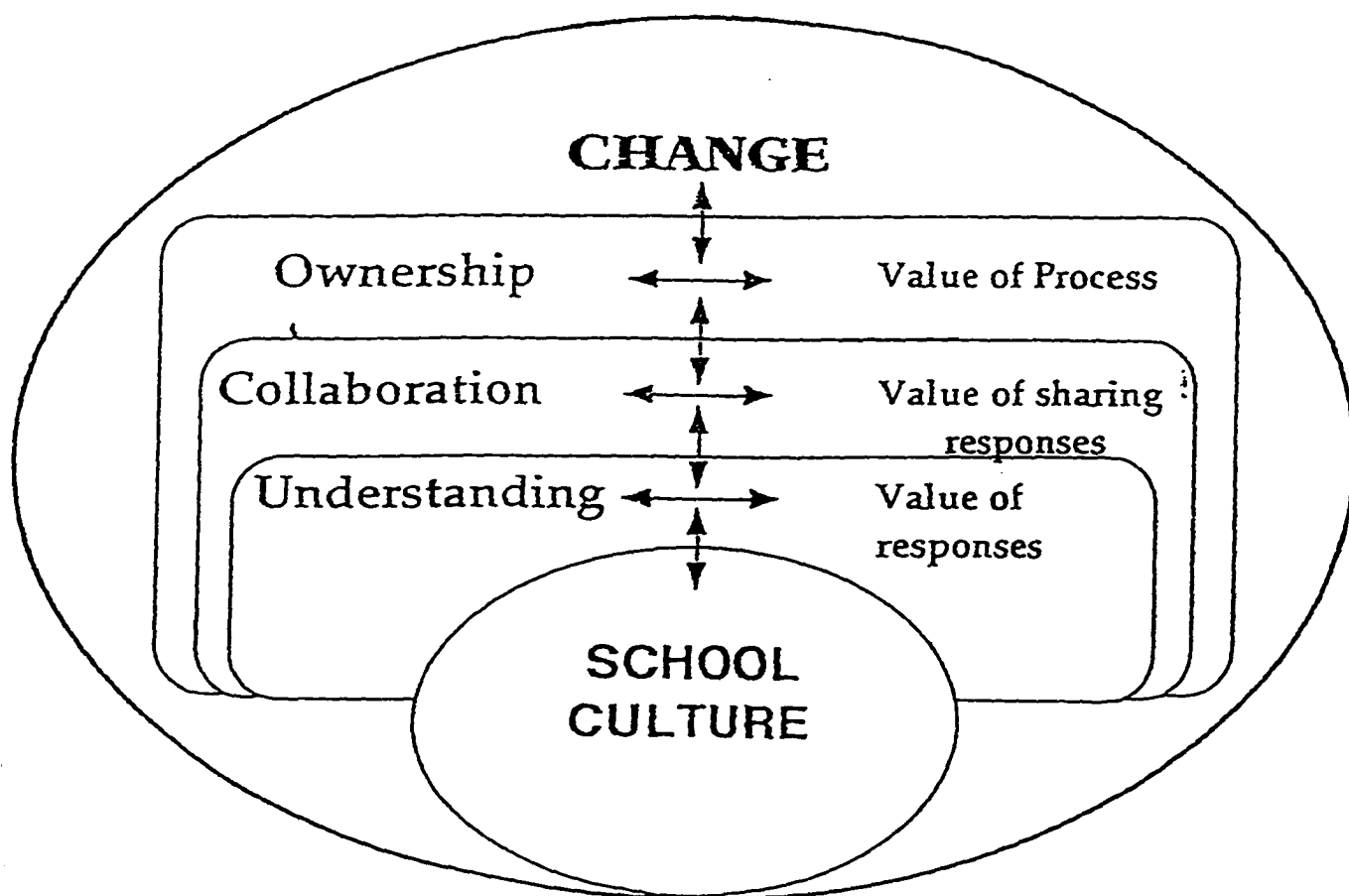
These particular comments indicate that the school audit process is perceived to have value in identifying some specific areas that need to be addressed in order to improve the school. This could lead to some change within

the school. Participants perceive that the school audit process could set new priorities and directions for the school improvement initiatives. In order to facilitate any change there must be a perceived need for change.

Represented schematically in Figure 2 which follows: the specific conceptual linkages that stem from the school culture and lead to change.

Figure 2

School Audit
Conceptual Linkages

CHANGE

Ownership	←→	Value of Process
Collaboration	←→	Value of sharing responses
Understanding	←→	Value of responses

SCHOOL CULTURE

Comparison to Sackney's Premises

The overall analysis of data, in relation to Sackney's 11 premises, indicates a discrepancy in peoples' perceptions of the audit process in three main areas, collaboration, stakeholder involvement and the monitoring of and reflecting upon future efforts.

Collaboration

As suggested by Sackney (1990), in order for an audit to be successful participants must feel that they have had opportunities to collaborate about the process prior to its' induction. Participants must also believe that they have had an opportunity to provide input to the process in a collegial manner. There must be built into the process, times for further collaboration and reflection so that participants feel valued and appreciated to ensure that information gathered will be utilized.

Data collected in this study clearly showed that the collaborative process was not given as much weight as Sackney suggested would be necessary. Some opportunities were given for collaboration during the school audit process but no practices were put in place prior to the process to allow for that necessary discussion and input to

take place. Participants did not feel that their input was wanted or needed, therefore that important sense of ownership was not built into the process. The fact that participants appreciate being involved in the process and like to be asked for their input did not play a role in the school audit process. Comments made by teachers clearly indicate that little or no collaboration took place.

Stakeholder Involvement

In order for a school audit to maximize the data collected it is important to involve as many key players as possible. Sackney (1990), suggests that all stakeholders should be involved in the audit as well as in the sharing of results including teachers, students, para-professionals, administrators and parents. All of these individuals play a key role in a school culture.

Although some of these key stakeholders were involved in the school audit process in this study, not all groups were given opportunities to participate in the process.

Teachers, parents, administrators and students completed the school audit questionnaire but only teachers completed the questions appended to the school audit questionnaire. There are a number of para-professionals

that are a part of the school organization but they were not involved in the school audit process. In order to have data that reflects the perceptions of the total school community it would be critical to involve those individuals in future school audits.

Also as part of the process it is important to ensure that all of the interested stakeholders are provided with the results. Data collected from participants in the school audit would suggest this premise.

Monitoring and Reflection

To ensure that information collected in the school audit process is utilized, a mechanism must be built in for monitoring and reflecting upon practices to determine if any change has taken place as a result of the process. Sackney (1990), suggests that it is anticipated schools will monitor improvement efforts and engage in reflective practices.

Although there is a hint of this reflected in the data collected, no specific mechanisms were put into place to facilitate that. Comments from teachers indicated they perceive some future plan of action would be required to monitor improvement but no means to do so was developed.

Applications

By reviewing the entire school audit process, and reflecting on all of the data collected, respondents inferred information collected via this process would be applicable in the following areas:

1) Identifying new directions and setting common goals for the school.

2) Developing ongoing plans for school improvement initiatives that have already been started at the school.

3) Changing aspects of the organization to more effectively meet student/parent and teacher needs.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991), as well as Sackney (1990) advocate that critical to any school renewal process is the involvement and support of individuals concerned. Findings presented in the study indicate the school audit process did not allow for that to occur. Since participants did not feel involved in developing the school audit, this led to a lack of understanding and support, therefore an obstacle for successful implementation was created.

Areas identified as weaknesses included:

1) opportunities for collaboration throughout the process,

2) development of a sense of ownership in the process,

3) a lack of understanding of the overall process,

4) a sense of uncertainty as to the impact results would have upon the school community,

5) few opportunities· for key stakeholders to be involved in the process.

The present study raised several questions about other aspects of the school such as teacher interaction, power of certain individuals or groups within the school, parental influence and student rights and responsibilities. Sackney (1990), concurs that a school audit does not test all school activities and it only reflects the school at one particular time. Further studies may focus on these issues to gain more insight.

Underlying factors that appeared to influence people's perceptions of the audit process were; a lack of understanding of the necessity to be involved in the process, an appearance that this was imposed from the top - down, a lack of time available to explain the process

prior to implementation. Since Patton (1980) suggests teacher reactions to the process will set directions for future studies, these findings are critical.

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of the process used to compile school audit data in a secondary school. The effectiveness of this process was examined based on Sackney's premises for conducting a school audit. The conceptual framework guiding this study was based on literature pertaining to school audits and the schematic representation in Figure 1. Throughout the study the key concepts reflected in Figure 1 were addressed. Results of the study indicate there was a significant connection between the key concepts in Figure 1 and the linkages reflected in Figure 2. Teacher reactions to the process reflected in the study results will assist in setting directions for future studies.

According to Sackney (1990), the effectiveness of the school audit process can be evaluated by the following criteria:

1) Change would come as a result of the school audit process;

2) Individuals would be more informed as a result of this process;

3) Areas would be identified for improvement as a result of the school audit process.

The analysis of the data collected in the study correlated with several of Sackney's premises for conduction of a school audit. These included:

1) All schools have strengths and weaknesses.

2) All schools can continuously improve.

3) There is a culture that permeates the work of the people in the school.

4) Some of the sub-cultures may be functional or dysfunctional.

7) The audit should indicate areas for improvement but not the "how to".

8) The results of the school audit belong to the school staff, but it is hoped that the school staff will share its results with interested stakeholders (e.g. students and parents).

9) It is anticipated that the school will use the results of the audit to reflect and develop its action plans (p.238, 239).

As anticipated, shortcomings in this study were reflected in the attention paid to

1) involvement of all key stakeholders in the audit process,

2) ensuring there was a clear understanding of the audit process,

3) conducting the audit in an open, honest and collaborative manner,

4) ensuring that participants had the opportunity to develop a sense of ownership in the process prior to implementation and

5) putting in place mechanisms for monitoring and reflecting upon practices.

An examination of the study indicates that the school audit process can be a useful vehicle for school renewal as Sackney (1990) indicated, but more attention must be paid to prior involvement of key stakeholders in the process. A clearer understanding of the underlying rationale for participating in such a study, must be given to individuals before they will buy into the process and develop the sense of "ownership" that is necessary if future implementation is to occur.

Improvement in the design of the audit process would be necessary to allow participants to develop a sense of commitment to the process. This could have been accomplished by providing an overview of the process, and allowing time for discussion. Provision for clarification and consultation as opposed to simply administering the questionnaire would have improved participant response.

Future studies on the "school audit" process may examine ways in which to monitor and follow-up on areas identified as strengths and weaknesses in the "school audit" process. Another area to study would be the role and impact leadership has on the school audit process. Leadership appears to be a critical factor in the future of the school audit process.

A variation in results from a study similar to this one could have occurred if researchers had used either gender or age as a discriminating factor on their analysis. Such information could be correlated with the other responses given.

Researchers should continue to conduct "school audits". Information collected through such a process is both useful and crucial to future directions in school improvement. All stakeholders must feel a sense of

ownership in the process to make it meaningful and valuable.

Limitations To The Study

Some participants in the study may have developed negative attitudes toward the school audit process, not seeing merit or value in such a process, this bias could impact on the results. Since not all participants in the study attended an initial information session outlining the rationale for the school audit and its' process, there was a varied degree of understanding which could influence results. A limited number of teachers completed the perception survey, less than 50% of the total teaching population in this school, therefore results may not reflect common perceptions of the school audit process. It is also difficult to assess if all thirty-five participants in the study interpreted the questions in the same manner and answered honestly therefore some data may be misleading. Given the novelty of the audit process and the uncertainty of this initiative one may question the participants perceptions of the motive of the initiative.

Recommendations

1) The information gleaned in this study be shared with the participating school in order to facilitate

change.

2) The data collected in this study form the foundation for the school improvement thrust in this particular school by having the school growth team identify areas to concentrate on to improve overall practices within the school over the next school year.

3) The "school audit" be replicated with a provision built in for involvement of all key stakeholders, provision of time be given to ensure collaboration and a sense of ownership is built into the process.

4) The role of leadership and the impact leaders have on processes such as a "school audit" be explored further to determine if such influences have positive or negative impact on results.

As anticipated, results of this study indicate that in order for the school audit process to initiate change/school improvement, a greater emphasis must be placed on ensuring participants have an understanding of the process by developing a sense of ownership and creating a collaborative culture. Central to the success or failure of any school improvement initiative is the school culture, their desire for and commitment to change.

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THE LAKEHEAD BOARD OF EDUCATION

SECONDARY TEACHER SURVEY

In effective schools, the progress, achievement and self-concept of all students are enhanced. A review of research undertaken in elementary and secondary schools in a variety of school systems has identified certain characteristics that are more commonly seen in effective schools. These are shown in the wheel below.
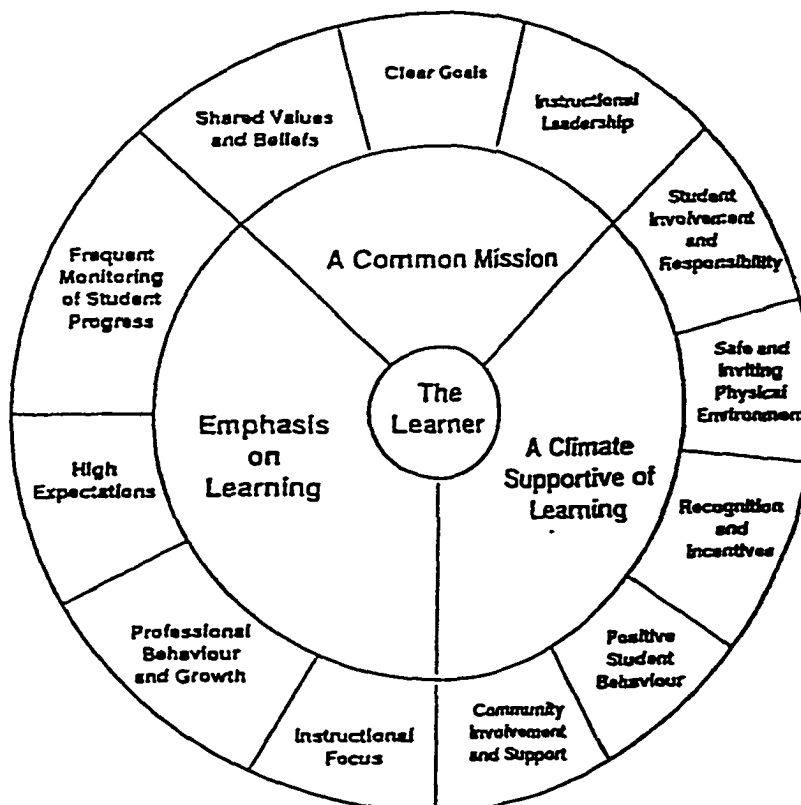
This questionnaire is designed to provide information on how you perceive your school's overall effectiveness. It will form part of the profile you will use to celebrate growth as well as to identify areas for improvement. Please complete this questionnaire, based on your knowledge.

INSTRUCTIONS

The statements in the questionnaire have been developed and are grouped according to the characteristics of effective schools.

For each statement, please respond according to the extent to which you agree with the statement as it reflects what is happening in your school at this time.

Respond on the purple answer sheet by darkening, with a pencil only, using the scale below.

1	=	Strongly disagree
2	=	Disagree
3	=	Uncertain
4	=	Agree
5	=	Strongly agree

DO NOT BEND, FOLD OR CREASE ANSWER SHEETS AS THEY WILL BE UNABLE TO BE SCANNED.

MARK ONLY ONE ANSWER PER QUESTION.

THANK YOU.

IF YOU DO NOT KNOW AN ANSWER OR IT IS NOT APPLICABLE, PLEASE LEAVE IT BLANK - DO NOT ANSWER.

| 1-Strongly disagree | 2-Disagree | 3-Not sure | 4-Agree | 5-Strongly agree |

COMMON MISSION

1. The educational goals and priorities of our Board are communicated clearly to me.

2. The educational goals and priorities for my school are communicated clearly to me.

3. The educational goals and priorities for my school are communicated clearly to the parents of my students.

4. I have opportunity to influence system-wide plans and decisions which affect me.

6. The Board's promotion policies and practices are fair and reasonable.

7. Board and Ministry policies are effectively implemented in my school.

8. My school has a clear mission.

9. Teachers share a unified sense of purpose.

10. I believe our school growth plan is the right plan for our school.

11. My school reflects the unique nature of our school community.

12. My school focuses on academic achievement as its top priority.

13. My schools's administrative team supports change.

14. The administration at my school has a clear vision of where the school is going.

15. The principal is highly visible within our school.

Feel free to write any comments on comment sheet provided.

1-Strongly disagree   2-Disagree   3-Not sure   4-Agree   5-Strongly agree

EMPHASIS ON LEARNING

16.   The curriculum is clearly defined in the areas for which I have responsibility.

17.   I encourage students in my class(es) and provide them with opportunities for success.

18.   Students in my class(es) are provided with experiences which promote personal growth.

19.   Students in my class(es) are provided with experiences which promote a positive self-concept.

20.   I take an active role in curriculum review, development and implementation at the school level.

21.   I take an active role in curriculum review, development and implementation at the department level.

22.   At my school programs are reviewed regularly.

Sufficient learning materials are available to me for the delivery of my:

23.   regular program

24.   program for special needs students

25.   program for exceptional students

26.   I communicate with parents informally regarding their child's progress.

27.   At my school student progress is regularly monitored for the purpose of student improvement.

28.   Students in my school generally do as well academically as students in other schools.

29.   My school has a consistent homework policy.

30.   Homework is an important component of my program.

31.   Suitable learning activities are planned by frequently monitoring student progress.

1-Strongly disagree	2-Disagree	3-Not sure	4-Agree	5-Strongly agree

32. Student progress is used to evaluate programs.

33. My school has high expectations of all its students.

34. Teachers are encouraged to work co-operatively on curriculum.

Generally, I am satisfied with the support being given in my school by:

35. the principal

36. the vice principal(s)

37. the department head

38. secretarial services

39. custodial services

40. teaching staff

41. zone superintendent

42. zone support staff

43. library technicians

44. special education resource teachers

45. Student process is measured to show that teaching and learning have occurred.

46. Students are clearly informed of the evaluation methods that are used to assess their progress.

47. I frequently provide feedback to individual students regarding their progress.

48. At my school, I have opportunities to contribute to decisions which affect the whole school.

49. At my school, the teacher performance evaluation and review process promotes personal growth.

50. I receive recognition for contributions I make to my school.

51. At my school, opportunities for professional development are available to me.

52. Our school system fosters interdependence and cooperation.

53. At my school the teacher performance and review process promotes professional growth.

| 1-Strongly disagree | 2-Disagree | 3-Not sure | 4-Agree | 5-Strongly agree |

54. Teachers take responsibility for the learning of all students.

55. Good teaching is recognized and celebrated.

Feel free to write any comments on comment sheet provided.

CLIMATE SUPPORTIVE OF LEARNING

Parents in my school community are adequately informed of:

56. school programs and practices

57. responsibilities of students

58. student progress

59. decisions that affect them and their children

60. expectations regarding student achievement

Programs offered in my school are consistent with:

61. school values and expectations

62. community values and expectations

63. Parents have opportunities to be involved in their children's schooling.

64. The community is encouraged to make use of the school facilities.

65. At my school, our procedures and policies help parents feel welcome.

66. Teachers at my school work to strengthen the links between home and school.

67. Parents have opportunities to ask questions and receive information about school programs.

68. Parents are involved in developing school policy.

69. Our school building is clean and well maintained.

70. Our school grounds are clean and well maintained.

71. At my school, students are well behaved.

72. At my school, student attendance is not a problem.

| 1-Strongly disagree | 2-Disagree | 3-Not sure | 4-Agree | 5-Strongly agree |

73. At my school, parents feel welcome.

74. Students at my school display school spirit.

75. Staff morale at my school is high.

76. In general, students enjoy attending this school.

77. The Lakehead Board of Education is a good place to work.

78. I enjoy working at this school.

Feel free to write any comments on comment sheet provided.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

79. At my school, bulletin boards and display areas are changed regularly.

80. At my school, students are recognized for their achievements.

81. . Student work is prominently displayed.

82. Student recognition and incentives are used to support learning.

83. At my school, we promote activities which recognize student achievement.

84. At my school, all students receive praise.

85. At my school, teachers strive to enhance student self-esteem.

86. At my school, teachers celebrate the accomplishments of each other.

87. School administration recognizes the accomplishments of staff members.

88. At my school, we maintain a clearly stated behaviour code for students

89. At my school, student rules are clear and consistent.

90. At my school teachers treat students with respect.

91. At my school teachers treat students fairly.

92. At my school students treat teachers with respect.

93. My students and I cooperatively develop classroom rules.

1-Strongly disagree   2-Disagree   3-Not sure   4-Agree   5-Strongly agree

94.   At my school, students are expected to work hard.

95.   Our staff has high expectations for all students.

96.   At my school, the administrative team supports staff in resolving student discipline problems.

97.   In general, students enjoy attending this school.

98.   Students are encouraged to accept responsibility for their behaviour.

Feel free to write any additional comments on comment sheet provided.

The Lakehead Board of Education
Secondary Teacher Questionnaire
Comment Sheet

Please use this sheet to write down your
comments and return it with the scan sheet.

Please indicate gender:

Comments on "A Common Mission"

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Comments on "Emphasis on Learning"

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Comments on "Climate Supportive of Learning"

_____
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_____
_____

Comments on "Physical Environment"

_____
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_____

Additional comments:

_____
_____
_____
_____

It is anticipated that Hillcrest will use the results of the School Profile Surveys in the development of its plans for school improvement.

Please answer the following questions.

1. How will the information collected in this survey impact on the learning environment of our school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. How will the information collected in the surveys from staff, students and parents impact on you as a classroom teacher / administrator?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. How useful will this information be in improving our school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. How collaborative was the process used for the collection of data in this survey?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. How should the school go about sharing the results of the survey with staff, students and parents?

_____

_____

_____

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

55 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada P7B 5E1

Dear Participant;

As you are aware, during the next few weeks, we are conducting a "school audit". As a part of my masters research at Lakehead University (advised by Dr. Juanita Epp) I am studying staff perceptions of the school audit process. This study will help us to understand teacher reactions to the process and will be valuable in setting directions for future studies.

We are asking that you complete the five perceptions questions appended to the questionnaire. It should take about 5 to 10 minutes. Participation is voluntary and confidentiality is assured as you do not put your name on the survey or the questionnaire. We would be interested in all your responses, be they positive or negative. There is no risk to you and you are free to withdraw at any time.

Staff will have opportunity to assess information collected in the survey through staff meetings throughout the coming year.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Susan Prentice
Phone 345-1461

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

Oliver Road. Thunder Bay. Ontario. Canada P7B 5E1

Office of the President
Telephone (807) 343-8200

29 June 1994

Ms. Susan Prentice
School of Education
Lakehead University
THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO
P7B 5E1

Dear Ms.Prentice:

Based on the recommendation of the Ethics Advisory Committee, I am pleased to grant ethical approval to your research project entitled: PERPETUAL INFORMATION LEADING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SCHOOL PROFILE.

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

ROBERT G. ROSEHART
President

/lw
cc: Dr. J. Epp, Supervisor

IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA–3)

1.0

1.25

1.1

1.4

1.25

2.8 2.5

3.2 2.2

3.6

4.0 2.0

1.8

1.6

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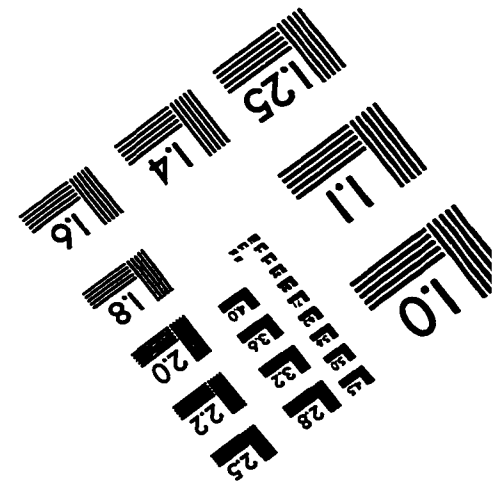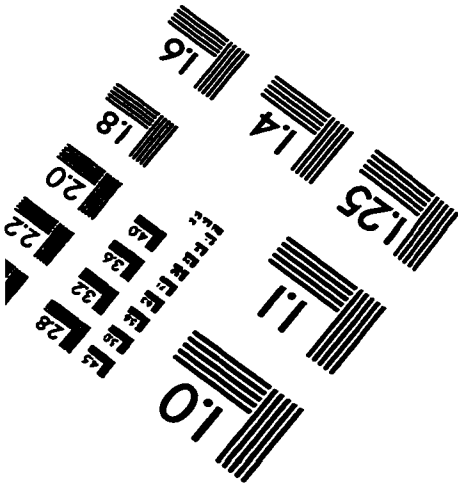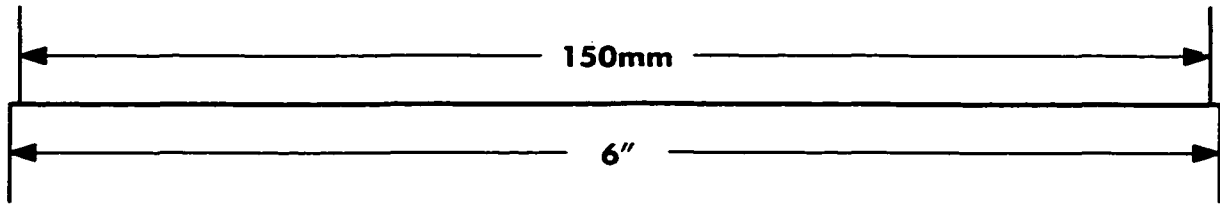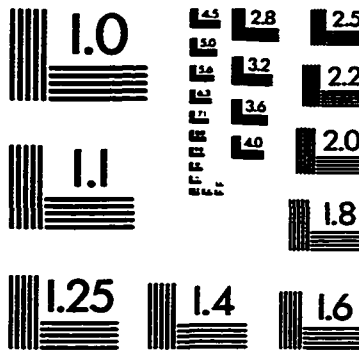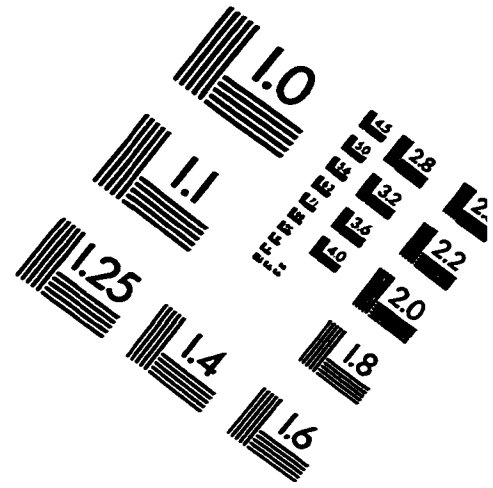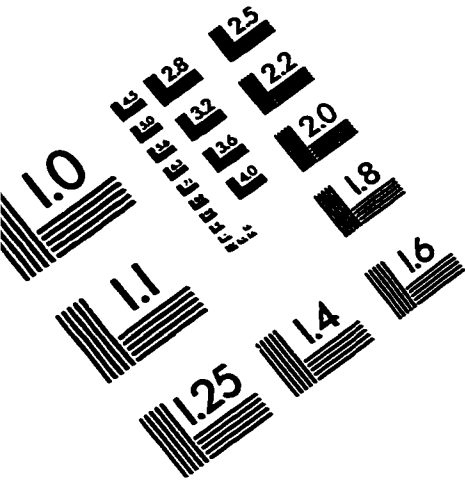
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