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PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING HELD BY TEACHERS,  
STUDENT-TEACHERS AND TEACHER-EDUCATORS

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PART I

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE RESEARCH ISSUE

" Apart from the bedroom (where he has his eyes closed most of the time) there is no single enclosure in which (the child) spends a longer time than he does in the classroom " (Jackson, 1968, page 5).

Among the many positions<sup>1</sup> in our social structure is that of 'teacher'. Those who occupy this position command considerable power in terms of the influence they have on society's children. Within the classroom the teacher is the single most important influence and the pupils spend a large proportion of their waking life within this sphere of influence. Musgrove and Taylor (1969) acknowledge this power as a "new despotism: the rule of teachers". Their thesis is that teachers continually make important decisions: whether to stream or not to stream; to set up a drama club or a sports' club; to elect or to nominate class leaders, and a thousand and one other matters which to a large extent determine what their pupils will become.

With the realisation that the classroom does have a deep-seated influence on the children who populate it, social scientists, including educationists, have turned their attention to teaching and teacher behavior.<sup>2</sup> Among their concerns has been the investigation of teacher role<sup>3</sup> and it is to the extension of knowledge in this area that the present study is oriented. The teacher's role is organised around his function in society. What this function is seen to be is determined by the standpoint of the perceiver. The teacher's own perception of his role must influence his classroom behaviour. Consequently it is important to discover just how teachers do perceive their role. This study assumes that teachers enact many sub-roles within their role, that among these sub-roles some are

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1. *Position*<sup>1</sup>: defined by Gross et al. (1958) as "the location of an actor or class of actors in a system of social relationships."
  2. For example, see Biddle and Ellena (1964).
  3. *Teacher Role*: Teacher behaviour and expectations for this behaviour. See Chapter 2.



perceived to be of more importance than others, and that there are likely to be differences between groups of teachers in the priorities they assign to various activities. It investigates teacher role as perceived by incumbents of the position, and the consistencies of their perceptions with those of student-teachers and teacher-educators. Using as a base a partial replication of one of a series of studies supervised by Fishburn of San Diego College, California, it also investigates whether New Zealand teachers and student-teachers perceive their occupational roles as similar to or different from their American counterparts. Rose (1954) remarks on the importance of replication for generalisation in the scientific method. This partial replication of some of Fishburn's work on a sample of New Zealand teachers, students and teacher-educators, provides cross-cultural data as well as more detailed information on the role perceptions of the New Zealand respondents.

#### *Overview of the Chapters*

Chapter Two contains the theoretical and research background perspective to this study, with particular emphasis on the variation of possible definitions of teacher role and the methodological approaches to researching in this area. In Part II can be found discussion of methodological issues related to the study, an outline of the methods used to obtain and analyse the data, the hypotheses proposed, and a discussion on the respondents. Part III contains the findings and their implications.