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TEACHER DECISION MAKING IN THE STAGE MANAGER ROLE: A Q METHOD STUDY (343 pp).

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The teacher decision making and stage manager literatures have failed to identify and describe the decision making process. The purpose of this study was to explore the decision-making processes of preschool teachers occupying the stage manager role in integrated and non-integrated settings in an effort to address this gap. Associations among demographic variables (i.e., years experience, terminal degree, professional preparation area, classroom locale, funding source, inclusion of children with special needs) and decision-making styles were also explored.

The mixed-method design employed Nominal Group Technique, Q Method, and Key Informant Interviews for the discovery of grounded theory. A diverse sample of thirteen preschool teachers generated a large, representative concourse from which the Q sample was drawn. Fourteen preschool teachers, two of whom participated in an NGT session, then completed a 36-statement Q sort, demographic survey, and brief post-sort interview. The teacher with the highest score on each factor was interviewed as the factor representative.

Q method analyses revealed three distinct factors representing three types of decision making. The decision-making types were labeled to evoke the complex interactions of three main effects and three levels evident in the results (i.e., Shared, Pragmatic, Essential). No clear associations were found among the demographic variables collected and the three types. How teachers defined stakeholder (i.e., teacher, child, family) roles, however, was related to reported level of involvement in the classroom and participation in decision making. Artifacts gathered during a camera tour of the factor representatives' classrooms supported this interpretation.

Each decision-making type was compared with the conditions for successful proximal processes to provide positive pressure for stakeholder growth and development according to Bronfenbrenner's (1999) bioecological theory of human development. The findings fill a gap in the existing teacher decision making and stage manager literatures by identifying and describing three decision-making processes and the associated implications of teachers' role definitions. Implications for professional development are discussed. Future research contributing the voices of children and families to the teacher decision-making processes can extend the results of this exploratory study.