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ABSTRACT

This paper presents results from a research project on the professional profile of the educational principalship in Spain. The study defined the most relevant features related to professional activities, examined the opinions of teachers on what constitutes the principalship as a profession, and discussed the decision making process about aligning the job of principal to that of other professions. Surveys of 1,005 education professionals in the province of Cordoba examined the opinions of professionals with no experience as principals, professionals with experience as principals, and professionals with experience as guidance counselors, educational advisors, and educational inspectors. Results indicated that educators were moderately in favor of turning the principal position into a profession. People with experience in top positions favored turning the principal position into a profession, while those with no principal experience did not. People over 50 years of age had a more clear conception of the principalship than did the rest of the respondents. More males than females agreed with the idea of turning the principal position into a profession. The highest level of disagreement among professionals was about selection and access to the principalship. (Contains 22 references.) (SM)

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE OF PRINCIPALSHIP IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN SPAIN*

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I.- OBJECTIVES

The aim of this report is to submit the relevant results and conclusions of a research project on the professional profile of educational principalship in Spain.

This study intends to provide useful criteria in order to exceed the aims and intentions of the stated current model of educational principalship. In short, the aims of the research are the following: 1) To define and specify the most relevant features related to professional activities in the way they are normally understood. 2) To know and take into consideration the opinions of teachers in order to determine their agreement and disagreement with what constitutes the principalship as a profession. 3) To formulate conclusions orientated to the decision-making process about aligning the job of principal to that of all professions. The hypothetical starting point of this study has been consolidated on the following assumption: the way of thinking of education professionals can provide future criteria with valid support in order to reach the principalship. Potential principals should meet the requirements derived from the same demanded professional activities.

II.- PERSPECTIVES AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The importance of educational leadership for the development of education systems, as well as for the improvement of education institutions, has been repeatedly confirmed by the recent research in this field (Elmore, 1996; Fullan, 1992, 1996; Leithwood et al. 1995; Leithwood, Tomlison y Maxine, 1996; Van den Berg y Slegers, 1996; Duke, 1996; Firestone, 1996; McBeath, Moos y Ryley, 1996)

Reaching this point, we need to qualify the differences between the concepts of leadership (*liderazgo*) and management (*gestión*). The management of an institution is oriented to its smooth running, according to certain conditions of order, and it covers aspects such as planning, coordination and organization of activities and the control of the effectiveness of the results. The concept of educational leadership goes beyond these aspects and includes

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two essential elements: a) it makes the members of the institution feel confident and able to take decisions. b) it makes the members of the institution feel personally committed to attain the goals of the institution. Therefore, the fundamental aspects of educational leadership are evident in the attitudes, emotions or feelings and actions of the members of the institution with the aim that these contribute to improve their tasks and roles inside the institution. We could say that the structure of the institution is the keystone of the principal's influence on the rest of the members of the institution. However, the leadership implies a certain degree of own initiative and a challenge to the creativity on the part of the principal. The leadership, otherwise, refers to an eventual and contextualized action: its influence depends on the specific context, the attitudes and aptitudes of the members of the institution, the specific problems that arise and, of course, the tendencies of the leaders. This means that, no matter the preference for a particular way of leadership, there is always the need of specific changes according to the circumstances of a certain moment. As a consequence of the ideas already mentioned, we could say that the educational leadership implies a decision-making process in which all the members of the institution play a role. This process refers to identifying the goals of the institution, the participation of the members of the education community in attaining the goals, developing strategies to support the goals, and promoting the collaboration among the members of the community.

According to these principles, we could state that the present concept of educational leadership tries to substitute the old one, in which the members of the institution had few or none responsibility in the decision-making process. The new concept of leadership has been defined as *comunidad ideal de comunicación (ideal communication community)*, which means that all its members play the same role and share the same level of competence when it comes to reach a consensus on any decision. In this sense, we should "create the necessary conditions to provide teachers with the opportunity to become leaders" (Bolívar, 2000; Gairín, 2000).

We should qualify the tendency to relate the concept of educational leadership to certain positions – such as the principal and the director of studies of an institution – in the sense that, as it occurs in most institutions, the evidence of positive leadership inside a school becomes apparent not in the position of its leader but in his/her influence on the members of the institution to play an active role in the decision making process, in order to attain the goals of the organization. In this sense, the leadership is an activity carried out by those members of the institution who, regardless of their position inside the institution, are able to motivate, direct and support other members on the presentation of approaches and projects. This is what we call *liderazgo colectivo (collective or shared leadership)*, which means that the smooth running of an institution will not be just the result of the leader's work, but the result of the initiatives and co-operation of all its members.

These approaches support the idea we presented at the beginning of the study that one of the most relevant components of the school dynamic is related to the processes of educational leadership. This phenomenon has its origin in the complexity of the reasons, the rivalry and implementation of power in the heart of any educational institution. The educational leadership is the motor of the decision making processes that take place inside educational institutions and in which all the members of the institution participate. The old understandings of leadership have lately confirmed that there exist two different and complementary models of leadership within the context of the Education system. On the

one hand, there is the so called *liderazgo transaccional* (*transaction-based leadership*), according to which the group members follow the leader's plans in return for incentive payments. On the other hand, the so called *liderazgo transformacional* (*transformational leadership*) is based on the commitment between the leader and the members of the group. This means that, they work together to renew and improve the ideas and values of the institution to transform it to better (Bass, 2000).

There is a need for leadership in the education system, due to the validity of two different functions which are considered vital for the survival of the educational institutions. First of all, the *funciones de estructuración* (*structuring functions*) are important in order to take advantage of the positive attitudes of the members of the group to attain the set goals. And secondly, the *funciones de mantenimiento* (*maintenace functions*) are related to the necessary efforts for the consolidation and continuance of the group as a whole. According to the *teoria de la contingencia* (*contingency theory*), the leadership must face up to the challenge of creating a social environment favorable to attaining the goals of the institution (Leithwood, 1994).

The interest of the issues related to the educational leadership within the international scientific community is a consequence of the growing interest in revitalizing the education system of the developed societies as a means of progress and continuance of such system. In a previous stage, we have been reflecting on the sense and strategies of the assessment as the key issue in the decision-making process. At present, there is the need to finding appropriate criteria to make the decisions viable and operational in order to improve the education system. Moreover, this view is especially important when we refer to the Spanish Education system. It is fundamental to point out that the decisions which have been lately taken in Spain on the leadership do not have clear scientific basis and, in many occasions, they have arisen from initiatives out of the education community. Consequently, most of these decisions are scarce or lack vitality. We just have to consider, for instance, the problems that arise from the running or management of educational institutions and the supervision of the education system.

To conclude with this introduction, we will say that the interest to highlight the key role of the principals in the smooth running and improvement of schools is a matter of debate among the scientists in the last few years. On the one hand, there is the need of specifying the tasks of principals in the educational institutions, according to the tendencies that make up this activity. On the other hand, the interest in stressing the relevance of the principal's role in the smooth running and improvement of schools is a current matter of debate among the scientific community. Firstly, there is a need to find an answer to the necessity of defining a framework of action, and secondly, there is the need to designing the characteristic features of the principalship in order to consider this activity a profession (Leithwood, and Montgomery 1986; Hopkins, et a. 1994; Bolman and Deal, 1994; Bernat, 1991; Gairín and Villa, 1999; Gimeno, 1995). To sum up, the function of the leadership in educational institutions is committed to the practice of the functions we have already mentioned, which are related to the concept of leadership and management, but mainly to the former.

III.- TERRITORIAL, INSTITUTIONAL, AND LEGAL CONTEXTS

We have based our study in the Spanish public education system, due to the fact that in centers of preprimary education (0-6 years), elementary education (6-12 years) and secondary education (12-18 years), an electoral process is required to access to the principal position. Nevertheless, it is the *Consejo Escolar (Schools Council)* – a body where the different sectors of the education community are represented – which has the final say on this matter. The basic requirements to reach the principal position are the following: 1) The candidate must be part of the teaching staff in that center. 2) The candidate must owe a special pass, “*acreditación para el ejercicio de la dirección*”, which is an official document awarded by the Administration that shows and acknowledges the person’s general capacity for that position. 3) The candidate must be elected by an absolute majority. The term of office will last for four years, but it can be renewed twice consecutively. Once the candidate has exhausted all possible periods of mandate, he/she returns to teaching.

However, this model of principalship has received criticism since its introduction due to three significant facts. Firstly, the lack of candidates for the principal position, which has resulted in the Education Government naming someone to occupy the post in many occasions. Secondly, the complaint of those elected for the post who constantly claim the lack of support by the Education Government and teaching professionals. And finally, the lack of rigorous contributions by the scientific community (e.g. specific research) and which has also divided their stances on such a vital issue. At present there is no sound research that could provide the right criteria to solve a crisis in which the prevailing attitudes are a priori or free (Saenz y Debon, 1995, 1999). The proper *Consejo Escolar del Estado (State’s Schools Council)* (1990), which is the top consultative body on education issues in Spain, has made several calls asking for reasonable solutions to forestall some deficiencies.

The most widespread opinion among the teaching community in Spain tends to underline the idea that this model provides insufficient and inappropriate material to improve the education system. Consequently, it would be convenient to find a form to supersede it. If this model remains the same, we might witness a process in which some positive aspects of the Spanish public education system - which has a consistent infrastructure of workers as well as resources – could disappear or be altered as a consequence of the weakness in the principalship dynamic.

IV.- FUNDAMENTALS TO TURN THE PRINCIPAL POSITION INTO A PROFESSION

The superseding of this model – considered *socio-political* (Rull y Gargallo, 1994) by part of the Spanish scientific community – should be based on the introduction of new features to improve the professional status the principal. This last assumption demands the explanation of the concept of “profession” as it is normally understood in developed societies.

In order to define and specify the features which are in accordance with the concept of “profession” (Carr y Kemmis, 1986; Touriñan, 1984,1987, 1990, 1991, 1995; Touriñan, Rodríguez y Lorenzo, 1999 Tenorth, 1988; García Carrasco, 1988; Escolano, 1980; Buj y Sánchez, 1999; Gómez Dacal, 1991; Hortal, 1993; López, 1998)we have started with three basic elements. 1) the existence of a group of peers which share practices, duties and common rights; 2) the existence of scientific supporting to the practices of professionals; 3) the existence of a social group considered as the beneficiary of the professional practices. Taking the grouping of the various elements of differentiation from the concept of “profession” as a starting point, we have drawn the main features of the general profile of principalship which are common to all professions. Our study has proposed the comparison of the resulting profile with that which the professionals believe is most appropriate for the access to the principal position.

From our point of view, the superseding of this model – which is considered a sociopolitical model (Rull i Gargallo, J. 1994) by most of the scientific community – should be based on the introduction of specific features that allow a person to run an educational institution. This last assumption requires the clarification of the concept of profession as it is usually understood in advanced societies.

The preparation of a questionnaire directed to determine the elements and dynamics of the professional profile of the educational leadership requires some previous conceptualizations, without which there is a risk of falling on deaf ears.

The existence of professions in the highly developed societies presupposes the practice of a number of activities directed towards the securing of certain goals. These are structured, programmed and realised according to some principles and rules that presuppose, at least, the following elements:

A.- The existence of a group of equals:

1. That know about the existence of “others” who carry out their same range of *activities*, with similar *goals* and equivalent *resources*. They also have followed a process of approved *training* and have equivalent personal and social prospects for their professional activities.
2. That know about the existence of a set of regulating *norms* for the practices in which they are involved. Some of such practices are from *outside* the group (social or legal), but others are from *inside* the group.
3. That know the existence of a certain socio-economic *status* that is characteristic of those who work in such activities. That status can help the members of the group to satisfy their professional and personal prospects.
4. That know the existence of some *target groups* of their practices who suffer from any necessity and therefore, devote themselves first and foremost to the securing of such activities.

5. That demand the right to take *independent decisions* on the matters of the activities they carry out, and which are based on professional criteria inside the group.
6. That demand the right to take *independent decisions* related to the list of practices derived from the profession.
7. That defend the conferring of the right to hold such opinions and decisions only, and exclusively, for those who are part of the professional group.
8. That defend the right to specify and define, on behalf of this group, the type of structure, administration and organization aimed at controlling the running and development of the professional activity.
9. That are subject to the existence of a *specific training based on certain rules* to accede to the group.

B.- The existence of a grounding in science of the professional practices:

10. That provides a widespread and verifiable opening for its acquisition, spreading, critic and updating.
11. Whose content and characteristics, at least in general terms, are or can be well-known by those who are considered targets of the practices (at individual or group level).
12. That is clearly different from the precise knowledge that is necessary for the practice of other professional activities.
13. That is thought to be profitable for the securing of aims that contribute to the improvement of the conditions in which the targets of the group's professional practices carry out their activities.

C.- The existence of a social group that is target of the profits generated by the practices of the professionals.

14. It knows the *fundamentals*, at least in general terms, needed for the existence of a group of professionals.
15. It knows the *modes of access* to the activities carried out by the professional group itself, as well as the key elements of its structure and administration.
16. It is aware of the existence of *entrance conditions* to the group of professionals which tend to guarantee the suitable use of the professional practices of those who make up the group.

17. It recognises certain *dependencies* derived from the existence of a group of professionals.
18. Despite everything, it recognises the *positive balance* of the existence of such professional practices.

D.- The existence of professional practices:

19. That are considered *essential* to satisfy personal and social necessities.
20. That are organized in structures which are open to critics, changes and improvements.
21. Improvements.
22. That are socially *regulated* and therefore, can be controlled.
23. That need to acquire certain levels of *stability* and *continuity* in their performance. So that, it would be possible to consolidate the profits and improvements that they face in the execution of such activities, as well as to purge the negative aspects.
24. That are deeply influenced by the *context* in which they take place. However, those who put them in practice are sufficiently qualified to adapt such practices to any other required contexts.
25. That demand *credentials of competence* to solve those problems derived from the already done activity.

Our study intends to contrast the variables of the professional profile with the beliefs of education professionals about their views on the principal position. Although our approach is not only aimed at confirming this hypotheses, we are positive about the validity of such beliefs. Therefore, the sociopolitical model of the principalship will also be questioned by the education professionals.

V. – METHOD AND TECHNIQUES

Due to the fact that this is descriptive research (Cohen and Manion 1989), we have made use of the survey – which is used to compile data, figures and information in general on a specific issue – as a working tool. There is no other questionnaire in Spain that has been designed with the same objectives as this present research. Consequently, we have made use of a questionnaire called PROFILE.DIR.2000.ES, which we elaborated on beforehand. It consists of three dimensions related to: a) the general conception of principalship; b) the accession to the post; c) the running of the principal position. The questionnaire consists of 50 items which make reference to some of the features that should be included to turn the principal position into a profession. It also consists of items which are placed on a scale that

goes equally from those favourable and unfavourable regarding the idea of turning the principal position a profession. The questionnaire has been divided into three different qualitative dimensions that we have called: a) *general conception of the role of the principal* (items 1 to 27); b) *conceptions of selection and access to the principalship* (items 28 to 33); and c) *ideas about the practice of the principalship* (items 34 to 50).

The questionnaire items and dimensions are based on the main features of all professions. We have followed four steps to its design. Firstly, we have made a draft; secondly, experts on the field have discussed, checked and polish the work; thirdly, the questionnaire has been applied on a trial basis to a group of education professionals; and fourthly, we have elaborated the current questionnaire.

Both, the different dimensions and the items as a whole, are the basis to specify the characteristics of the above professional tasks. In order to do so, we have followed four steps: 1) the preparation of a draft questionnaire; 2) the discussion and revision of the questionnaire by a group of experts; 3) the application of the questionnaire to a group of professionals from the education community; 4) the preparation of the final questionnaire. Structure of the questionnaire: The choice of answers is presented in a rating scale from 1 to 10, and there is also an explanation of the exactly means every mark in the scale (Krosnic, 1999)

- 1 means more disagreement than 2; 2 means more disagreement than 3, and so on.
- 5 means indecision, but with a tendency to disagreement rather than to agreement. 6 means indecision, but with a tendency to agreement rather than disagreement..
- 8 means more agreement than 7; 9 means more agreement than 8, and so on.

The questionnaire questions, which have a clear tendency in favor or against turning the principal position into a profession, have been interspersed with the rest of the questions. Therefore, the professionals polled did not know if the results of their answers were in favor or against that perspective. The questionnaire has a total of 50 items (26 are in favour and 24 are against making the principal position a profession).

VI.- DATA SOURCES (RESEARCHED PARTICIPANTS)

The questionnaire has been addressed to education professionals who work in State centers –except Universities– in the province of Cordoba (N=6000). We have obtained a total of 1005 answers which constitute a sufficiently significant sample of study.

In order to have more detailed information, we have divided the education community into three different groups: 1) professionals without any experience in the principalship; 2) professionals with experience in the principalship; 3) professionals with experience as guidance counsellors, education advisors and education inspectors. In each of the areas mentioned above, we have differentiated among the following variables: 1) population of the town where the professionals work; 2) type of job and years of experience; 3) size and kind of educational institution where they work; 4) age of the professionals polled; 5) sex of the professionals polled; 6) University degree.

VII. – RESULTS

a) Reliability of the questionnaire

We have applied Cronbach's alpha coefficient, as it is normally used with quantitative data, to analyse the reliability. The degree of reliability was .792, which means that the questionnaire is a sufficient precise tool for measuring the professional status of principals.

Due to the fact that the questionnaire is intended to measure three different groups of conceptions – general conception of the role of the principalship, selection and access to the principalship and ideas about the practice of the principalship –, we also decided to calculate the subcoefficient of strength for each of these groups of conceptions. The results were the following: (1) $r_{\text{cor}(d1)}=.692$; (2) $r_{\text{cor}(d1)}=.442$; (3) $r_{\text{cor}(d3)}=.694$. The coefficients of dimensions 1 and 3 are very positive, as they are close to .7, but those of dimension 2 tend to be low. We already expected these results, as the magnitude of α coefficient depends, to a large extent, on the length of the instrument. As the second dimension results in a small number of items (6), we knew beforehand that the resulting coefficient would not be high. However, we tend to think that the real inner strength could be positive too in the case of this second dimension. Nevertheless, we will have to be more careful when it comes to formulate conclusions on the conceptions of selection and access to the principalship.

The mean of the 1005 professionals polled is 6.58. The mark 6.5 is considered as the borderline between indecision and agreement. Therefore, the results reveal that education professionals are in a stage of exceeding that phase of indecision but they do not yet consider the principal position as a profession itself. Furthermore, that general data reveal that there is not a rejection among the teaching community to turning the principal position into a profession.

b) Descriptive analysis of the marks given by the professional polled

The analysis of answers of the different subgroups shows that the teaching staff who also work as Guidance counsellors, Advisors and Education Inspectors, agree with the idea of turning the principal position into a profession ($M=7.4$).

The analysis of the items shows that the education professionals polled are prone to accept certain characteristic features essential to turning the principal position into a profession. The results reveal that 41 out of 50 features of the questionnaire are accepted by the education professionals, and 9 out of 50 are rejected.

The answers of professionals who are over 50 years old present a significantly higher mean (6.740) than those of the rest of professionals.

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of the variable within which we can classify the sample.

Table 1
Means and standard deviations of those groups within the qualitative variables

Variable	Groups	Mean	Standard deviation
Type of subcommunity	Teachers with exp	6.6525	.6848
	Teachers without exp	6.4316	.6351
	Guidance counsellor/Advisor/Inspector	7.1381	.7969
Theoretical dimension	General conception	6.7696	.7456
	Selection & access	4.6410	1.2966
	Practice of the prinipal position	6.9604	.9929
Town (population)	Less than 1000 inh.	6.4048	.4682
	1000-5000 inh.	6.5180	.5096
	5000-20000 inh.	6.5405	.748
	20000-50000 inh.	6.5316	.8562
	More than 50000 inh.	6.5534	.6534
Age	30 years old or more	6.4739	.9099
	31 to 40 yrs old	6.5052	.6572
	41 to 50 yrs old	6.5616	.6431
	More than 50 yrs old	6.7403	.7238
Sex	Male	6.6849	.6558
	Female	6.4709	.717
Teaching experience	Less than 10 yrs	6.5698	.577
	Btw10 and 19 yrs	6.5873	.5936
	Btw 20 and 29 yrs	6.537	.7391
	More than 30 yrs	6.6722	.9048
Educational institution level	Preprimary edu.	6.3773	.6195
	Elementary edu.	6.4000	.6338
	Combined (Preprimary /Elementary edu.)	6.5388	.7629
	Combined (Elementary /Secondary edu.)	6.5952	.5784

	Combined (Preprim./Element/Sec ondary edu.)	6.5952	.5784
	Secondary edu.	6.5792	.5822
	Others	6.4963	.5415
Educational institution size (number of departments)	6 or less dep.	6.4449	.58
	6 to 12 dep.	6.5340	.5476
	13 to 18 dep.	6.5725	.7057
	19 to 30 dep.	6.4965	.7856
	More than 30 dep.	6.6150	.7035
University degree	Qualified	6.4970	.6459
	Bachelor's	6.7672	.665
	Doctorate	7.0300	.525

The mean of the total marks of the 1005 professionals polled is 6.58. If we consider that a mark of 6 means indecision, but with a tendency to agreement, then the results show that education professionals slightly support the idea of turning the principal position into a profession. Obviously, if we consider every mean of the different levels of analysis, the results of the variables reveal that we should specify there is a need to specifying this perspective. Firstly, although it is the inferential analysis which makes it possible to establish differences among the community, the description allows us to assure that, for instance, the group of Advisors, Guidance counsellors and Inspectors agree on turning the principal position into a profession (M= 7.14). Secondly, in the variable representing the "Theoretical dimension", the means score of general conception (M= 6.77) and practice of the principalship (M=6.96), also tend to favor the idea of turning the principal position into a profession. Likewise, we observe the same tendency in other variables, for instance, among those education professionals of more than 50 years old (M= 6.74) and those professionals with a Bachelor's degree (M= 6.77). Consequently, even though there is not a clear tendency to agreement in turning the principal position into a profession among the education professionals, some of them are more prone to support this perspective than others.

Table 2

Total means and standard deviations of the answers of the professionals polled in the 50 items of the questionnaire

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
1	8.035	1.805
2	6.788	2.097
3	8.905	1.913
4	2.926	2.372
5	4.775	2.434
6	6.768	2.346
7	6.650	2.254
8	7.302	2.328
9	7.707	3.166
10	8.840	1.659
11	7.527	2.249
12	8.569	1.738
13	3.180	2.250
14	5.873	2.689
15	2.111	1.750
16	8.294	1.711
17	8.056	1.946
18	5.585	3.043
19	8.517	3.215
20	3.728	2.471
21	6.958	2.511
22	8.174	1.916
23	9.055	1.450
24	5.162	2.656
25	8.226	2.067
26	8.379	1.529
27	8.505	1.542
28	6.117	2.379
29	5.562	2.809
30	3.131	2.323
31	3.650	2.599

32	5.221	2.659
33	4.493	2.332
34	6.576	2.379
35	4.089	4.180
36	7.807	1.803
37	8.063	3.200
38	7.286	1.951
39	8.785	1.497
40	7.657	2.044
41	4.935	2.499
42	8.903	1.437
43	7.768	1.903
44	5.694	2.357
45	7.427	2.276
46	7.949	1.796
47	8.048	2.213
48	7.915	2.213
49	4.853	3.051
50	6.286	2.632

The analysis of these items reveal an even higher variability than that of the predictable variable. We confirm, in table 2, that there are a number of items which show the disagreement of the professionals about turning the principal position into a profession. We especially refer to items 4, 13, 15 and 20 (first dimension); 30,31 and 33 (second dimension); 35 and 39 (third dimension). On the contrary, there are other items which reflect the stance of some professionals in favor of turning the principal position into a profession; and these are the following: 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26 and 27 (first dimension); 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47 and 48 (third dimension). Generally speaking, we could point out that the sample contains more items showing agreement rather than disagreement with that perspective.

As far as variability is concerned, the standard deviations outstandingly differ from each other, ranging from 1.437 (item 42) to 4.180 (item 35). There are 5 items in which we observe higher level of homogeneity than in others: 42 (SD= 1.437), 23 (SD= 1.450), 39 (SD= 1.497), 26 (SD= 1.529) and 27 (SD= 1.542). On the contrary, the difference in the marks is much higher in the following items: 35 (SD= 4.180), 19 (SD= 3.215), 37 (SD= 3.200), 9 (SD= 3.166) and 49 (SD= 3.051). It is difficult to reach a conclusion, based on theoretical dimensions, about the number of items with which the professionals agree more.

However, if we put the items in order of variability, the result is quite interesting: the items of the second dimension (selection and access to the principalship) show big differences according to the given marks. That is to say, globally, the disagreement among the professionals is much higher in this second dimension than in the first and third dimensions. This two last dimensions present a balance between homogeneity and heterogeneity, whilst the items of the second dimension are grouped around a deviation of 2.6 points.

The figure below presents the results above mentioned.

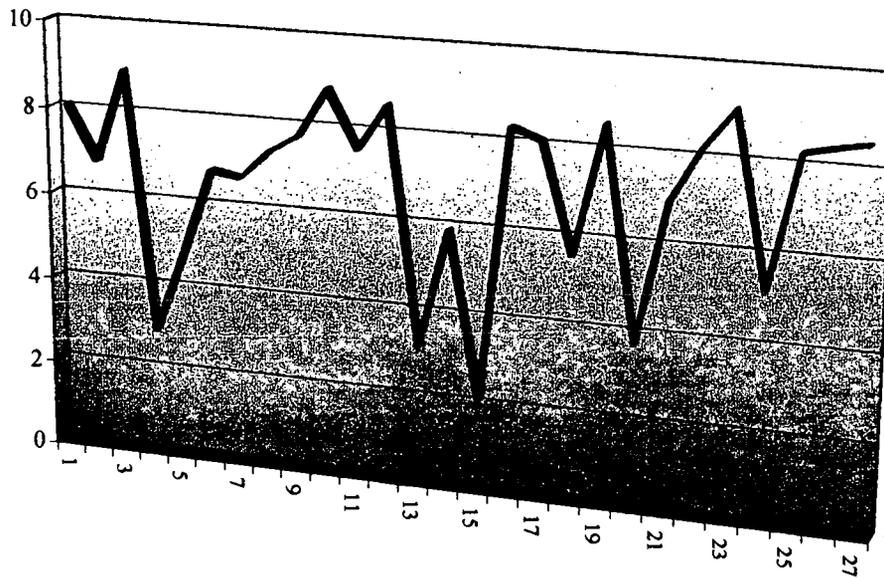


Figure 1. It shows the means of the first dimension items of the PROFILE (general conception of the principalship).

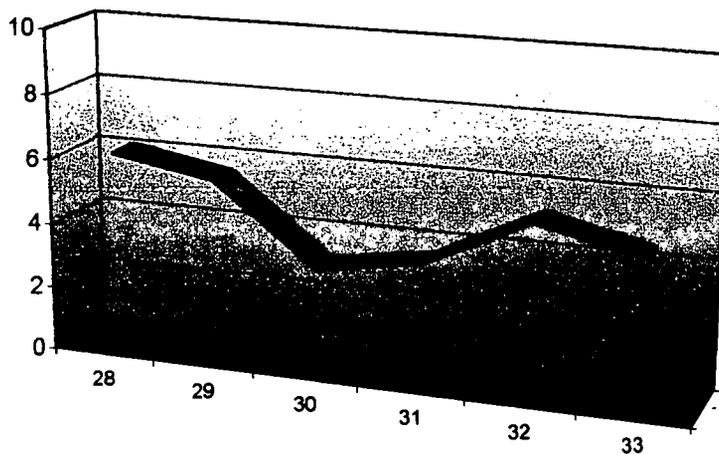


Figure 2. It shows the means of the second dimension items of the PROFILE (ideas about the access to the principalship).

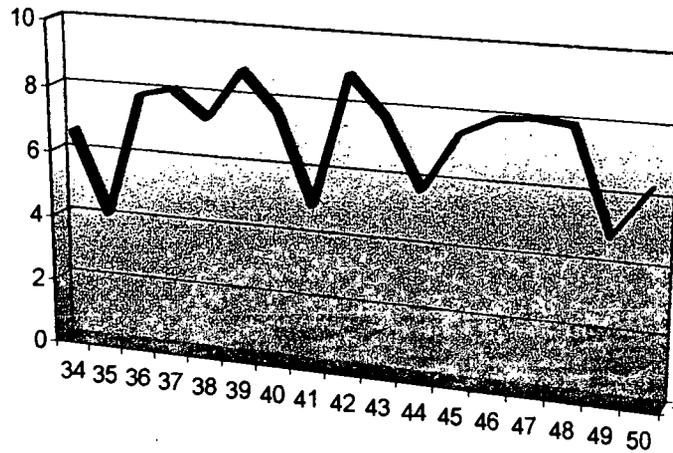


Figure 3. It shows the means of the third dimension items of the PROFILE (ideas about the practice of the principalship).

Figures 1, 2 and 3 reveal the mean scores obtained in each of the qualitative dimensions of the questionnaire. The scores of dimensions 1 and 3 reveal a clear tendency in favor of turning the principal position into a profession, whilst the means obtained in the second dimension do not reveal such tendency.

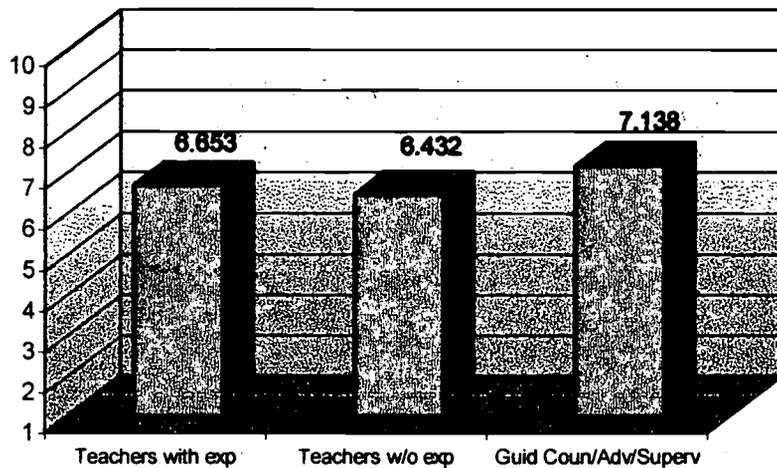


Figure 4. It shows the means obtained from those groups within the variable "Type of subcommunity".

Figure 4 presents the different marks, from every category within the variable defined as different forms of being in the teaching, favor of turning the principal position into a profession. We observe a decrease in the number of teachers who are in favor of turning the

principal position into a profession, above all, among those professionals who had no previous experience as principals, guidance counsellors, advisors or inspectors.

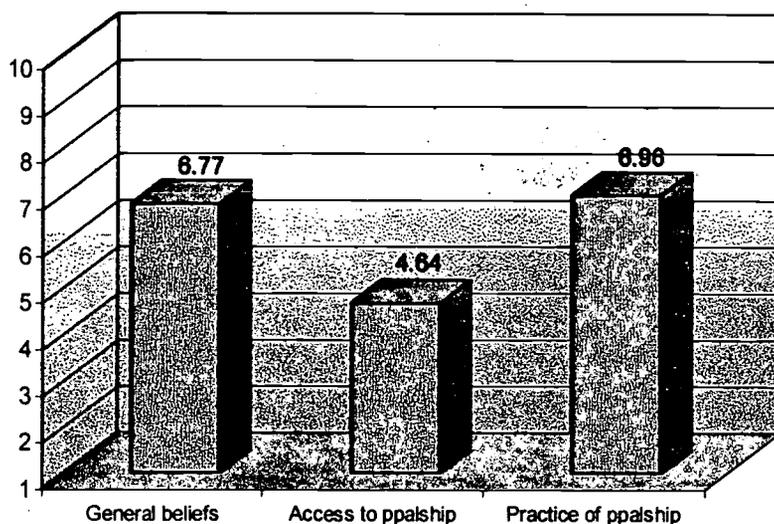


Figure 5. It shows the means obtained from the three theoretical dimensions of the questionnaire.

There are different marks for every qualitative dimension of the questionnaire – shown in figure 5 –, including the depression already mentioned in the second dimension.

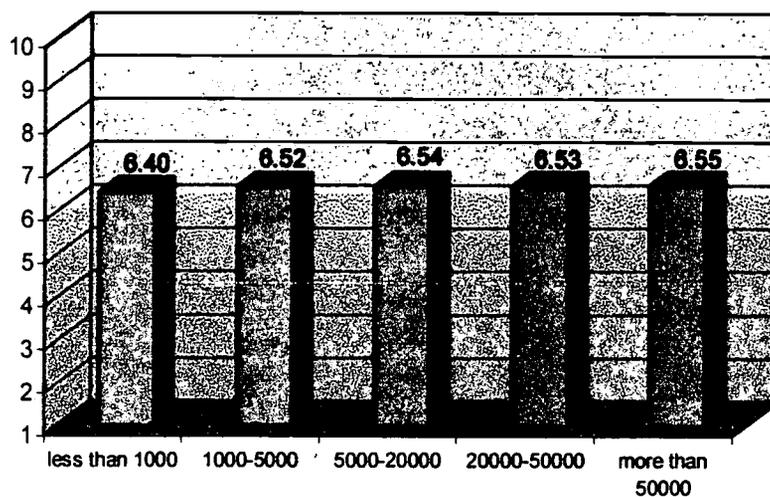


Figure 6. It shows the means obtained from those groups within the variable "Town".

Figure 6 reveals a decrease in the number of professionals, who teach in towns with less than 1000 inhabitants, in favor of turning the principal position into a profession. However, the rest of the categories show a high level of homogeneity in its marks.

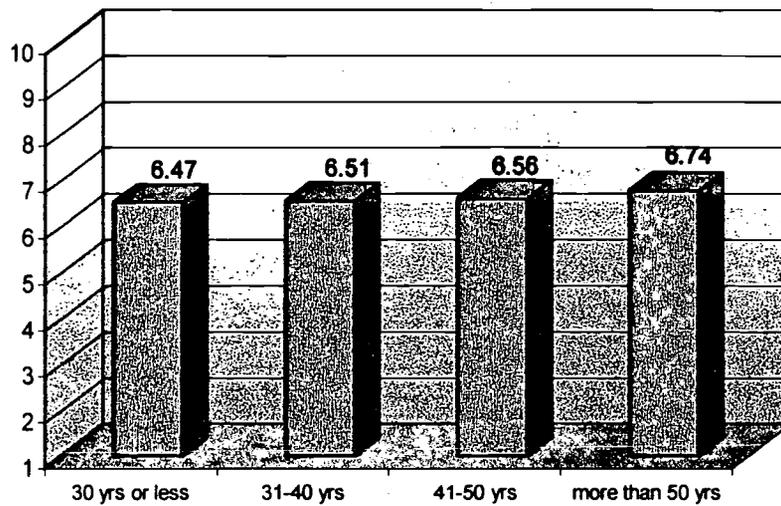


Figure 7. It shows the means obtained from those groups within the variable "Age".

We observe in figure 7 that there is an increase in the number of professionals in favor of turning the principal position into a profession, according to their age.

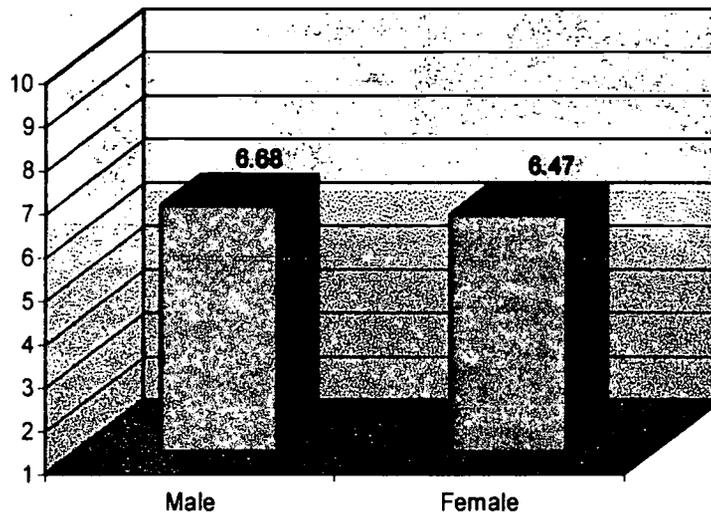


Figure 8. It shows the means obtained from those groups within the variable "Sex".

Figure 8 reveals a difference in the marks obtained from the education professionals according to their sex (male or female).

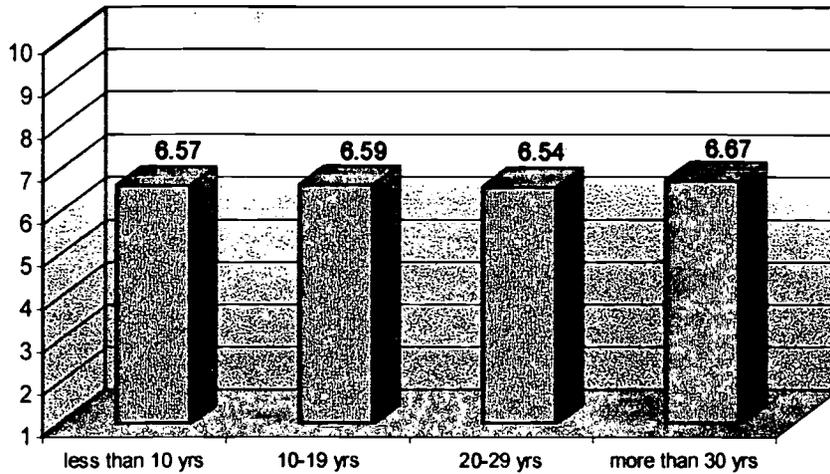


Figure 9. It shows the means obtained from those groups within the variable “Teaching experience”.

We observe in figure 9 that there is an increase in the number of professionals in favor of turning the principal position into a profession, according to their professional experience. The highest the level of experience, the highest the level of agreement.

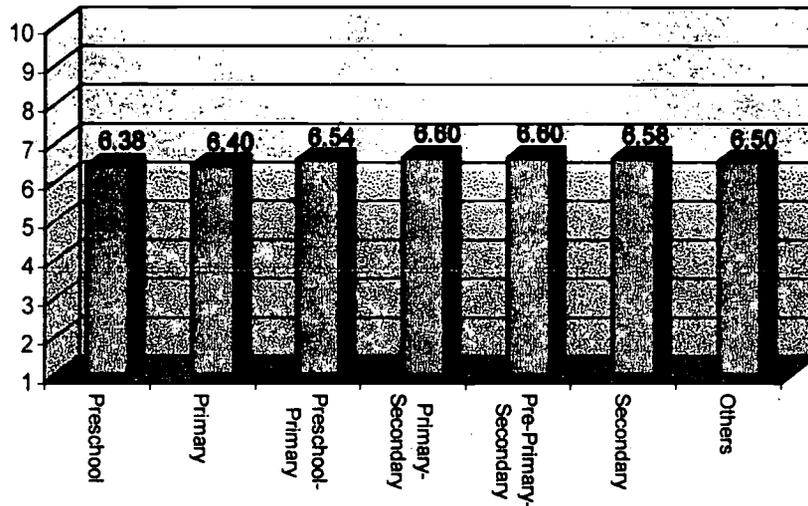


Figure 10. It shows the means obtained from those groups within the variable “Educational institution level”.

Figure 10 reveals a decrease in the number of professionals in favor of turning the principal position into a profession, according to the kind of educational institution where they teach. The highest the level of the institution the highest the level of agreement.

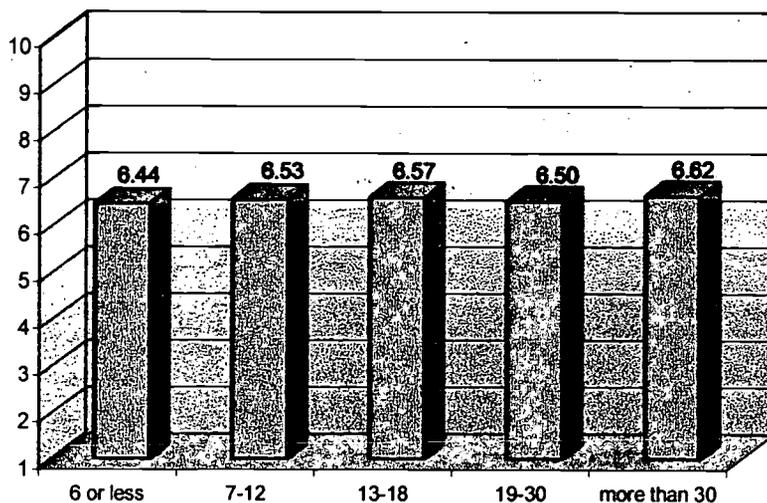


Figure 11. It shows the means obtained from those groups within the variable "Educational institution size" (number of students' groups).

Figure 11 reveals that there is an increase in the number of professionals in favor of turning the principal position into a profession, according to the number of departments of the educational institution.

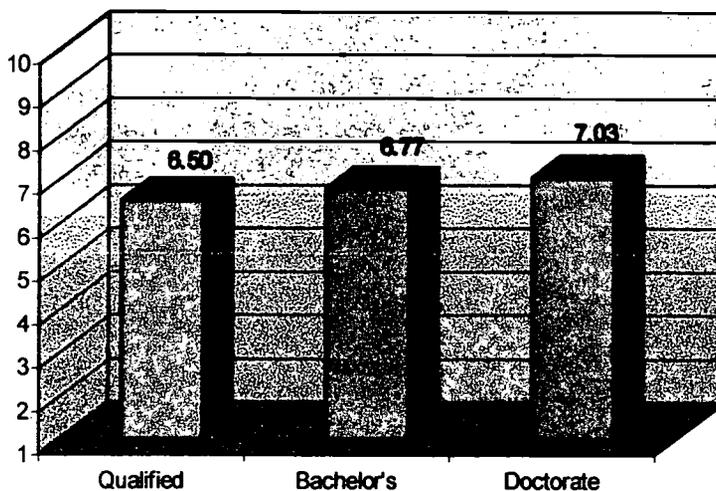


Figure 12. It shows the means obtained from those groups within the variable "University degree".

Figure 12 reveals that there is an increase in the number of professionals in favor of turning the principal position into a profession, according to their University degree.

c) Inferential analysis

We will now use the unifactorial ANOVAs to carry out some inferences about the existence of differences between the means of the various groups in the predictable variables. We will work especially with 15 ANOVAs, followed by the corresponding multiple comparisons (Fisher and Scheffe tests). In the case of the variable “Sex”, it is only necessary to execute test *t*, as it consists only of two groups.

The irregular size of the different groups does not prevent us from using these ANOVAs, as the statistics program used (StarView) can work with sample models that have irregular *n*.

First of all, we will present the unifactorial ANOVAs, and secondly, we will verify which groups present differences in those cases where the value of *F* lets us reject hypothesis zero ($p > .01$).

Table 3
ANOVAs to verifying the different means of the 15 variables of the study

Variables	F	p
Type of subcommunity	43.916	.0001
Town (population)	.600	.6626
Age	6.0807	.0004
Teaching experience	1.3694	.2507
Experience as a principal	.9326	.4714
Years in the principal position	1.3004	.2754
Years as an assistant to director	.1846	.9067
Years as a director of studies	3.6471	.0138
Educational institution level of education	1.3105	.2496
Educational institution size	.9210	.451
University degree	19.3746	.0001
Experience as a guidance counsellor, advisor and inspector	11.0937	.0001
Period of time as a Guidance counsellor	.3016	.824
Period of time as an advisor	.0702	.9325
Period of time as inspectors	1.0624	.3867

We assume, considering p values, that there exist differences among all the groups only in four of the variables. The four following tables show the results of the multiple comparisons (PLSD of Fisher and F of Scheffe), although they only show those groups in which, at least, the result of one of the tests allows us to reject H_0 .

Table 4

Multiple comparisons among those groups within the variable "Type of subcommunity"

Groups	Difference of means	PLSD of Fisher	F of Scheffe
Teachers with exp vs. Teachers without exp.	.218	.1148*	12.0121*
Teachers with exp. vs. Guidance counsellors/Advisors/Inspectors	-.4879	.2073*	18.4428*
Teachers without exp. vs. Guidance coun./Adv./Insp.	-.706	.2035*	40.0904*

* $p < .01$

Table 5

Multiple comparisons among those groups within the variable "Age"

Groups	Difference of means	PLSD of Fisher	F of Scheffe
Less than 30 years old vs. more than 50 years old	-.2664	.229*	3.0043
Btw 31 and 40 years old vs. more than 50 years old	-.2351	.1566*	5.0037*
Btw 41 and 50 years old vs. more than 50 years old	-.1786	.1476*	3.2527

* $p < .01$

Table 6

Multiple comparisons among those groups within the variable "University degree"

Groups	Difference of means	PLSD of Fisher	F of Scheffe
Qualified vs. Bachelor's	-.2701	.118*	17.4375*

* $p < .01$

Table 7

Multiple comparisons among those groups of the variable "Experience as Guidance counsellors/Advisors/Inspectors"

Groups	Difference of means	PLSD of Fisher	F of Scheffe
Guidance counsellors vs. Inspectors	-1.0989	.4618*	9.8965*
Guidance counsellors vs. Guidance counsellors/Inspectors	-1.2323	.7973*	4.1756*

* $p < .01$

Table 8

Bilateral t test on the difference of the means between the conceptions of men and women of the principalship

Groups	Difference of means	t	P
Female vs. Male	-.214	-4.8787	.0001

Table 4 reveals that teachers with experience as principals have a more professional conception of that position than teachers without such experience ($F=12.01$, $p < .01$). However, those professionals with experience as guidance counsellors, advisors and inspectors show in their marks a more professional attitude towards the principalship than those who have some experience as principals ($F=18.44$, $p < .01$), and teachers without such experience ($F=40.09$, $p < .01$).

As far as variable "Age" is concerned (table 5), the professionals polled – those who are 50 years old or more – have a more professional perspective of the principalship than the rest

of the age groups ($p>.01$). This means that the former are in favor of turning the principal position into a profession ($M=6.74$), although they do not totally agree.

Something similar happens to the graduates in relation to the qualified professionals (table 6). The graduates, contrary to the qualified ($F= 17.4, p>.01$), wish a better preparation before accessing to the principalship. However, the mean obtained from their marks only represents moderate support to this view.

We infer from the marks among the subcommunity of guidance counsellors, advisors and inspectors (table 7) that, those who have worked as inspectors or both guidance counsellors and inspectors, have a more professional perspective of the principalship than the advisors. In this sense, the mean score among inspectors ($M=7.50$), and those who have worked as inspectors and guidance counsellors ($M=7.64$), show they are clearly in favor of turning the principal position into a profession.

Finally, table 8 reveals a difference in the scores of male and female professionals ($t=-4.88, p<.01$). Nevertheless, as it has happened in previous cases, the mean of men who support the idea of turning the principal position into a profession is still moderate ($M=6.68$).

VIII.- CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCH

- 1) The results of the study clearly show a favourable attitude to turning the principal position into a profession within the educators group, although we must admit that such attitude is still moderate.
- 2) It is important to analyse the different answers given from those who have already had any experience in top posts (principal, guidance counsellor, advisor and education inspector) and those who have not. The former are prone to reach an agreement on turning the principal position into a profession, whilst the later disagree or are still undecided. This trends are clearly revealed in every of the theoretical dimensions of the questionnaire. A first reading of these facts indicates that the more clear idea education professionals have about the complex network of educational institutions, the more favourable is their opinion to turning the principal position into a profession.
- 3) It also calls our attention that the group of professionals over 50 years old have a more clear and serious conception of the principalship than the rest of professionals. This data is even more significant if we take into account that it is this group of professionals polled which had some experienced in the previous model of principalship, in which we also find some features in favour of turning the principal position into a profession.
- 4) Despite having to analyse the mean scores and standard deviations of the 50 items of the questionnaire in more detail, we should stress the fact that only 9 of the items present marks close to the limit of disagreement about turning the principal position

into a profession. This means that, according to our first thoughts, it would be important to go into that process in more depth.

- 5) We will have to research more about the process of turning the principal position into a profession, as it was in the second dimension – selection and access to the principalship – where we found the highest level of disagreement among the professionals polled. In relation to this second dimension, it is important to take into account three relevant factors: 1) This second theoretical dimension is one of the most complex when it comes to specify the perspectives of the professionals about turning the principal position into a profession, due to the fact that there are corporate interests that could interfere in their answers. We believe it is important to study this hypotheses in detail. 2) The different items of the questionnaire make the professionals declare themselves in favor or against the options presented. However, there is not a wide range of options, due to constraints of length of the questionnaire. So, it is not possible to present a more reliable interpretation of the different answers. 3) The interpretation of the results of the third dimension must be carefully presented, as there is a moderate coefficient of reliability in the answers of this dimension. It will probably be necessary to analyse this dimension and its items in depth by means of procedures associated to the qualitative model.
- 6) The degree of agreement with the idea of turning the principal position into a profession is higher among male teachers than female. This data is worthy of further research.
- 7) It is quite interesting to take into account that, there is a higher degree of agreement with turning the principal position into a profession among graduates and doctors than qualified teachers.

However, the means and standard deviations of the responses given to the 50 items of the questionnaire by those polled will need to be analysed in detail in future time. Nevertheless, it is important to point out the fact that there is only disagreement to turning the principal position into a profession in 9 out of the 50 items of the questionnaire. Consequently, that confirms our starting assumption which stated that: it would be convenient to turn the principal position into a profession in order to improve this task.

IX.- CONSEQUENCES DERIVED FROM THE RESEARCH

The confirmation of the above hypotheses contributes to highlight, from a scientific perspective, the lack of fundamentals of the present model of principalship in Spain. However, we consider that the results of our project should be analysed in detail and we promise to do so. The most relevant aspects of the work, which we have already stated in this report, create a legitimacy to confirm that the process which leads to turning the principal position into a profession follows some basic lines of the teachers way of thinking. That is to say, in general we have no doubts that education professionals will accept the idea of turning the principal position into a profession. Consequently, we need to make specific contributions to supersede the relevant faults and dysfunctions of the current model of principalship in Spain. Most of the deficiencies have to do with the lack of professional fundamentals for those who hold a principal position. The superseding of the

current model of principalship has the aim of forestalling possible prejudices of the Spanish society in relation to the education system, as a consequence of the validity of the present model of principalship.

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