

CHAPTER 4

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study tend to support the hypothesis that there should be agreement as to the characteristics of the ideal student-teacher relationship as perceived by teachers, students and university students. Since most of the results also reveal agreement with Fiedler's and Tyler's studies, the second and third hypotheses seem to be rejected. Of the many interesting results coming out of this study, the following seem to the investigator to be the most significant:

1. The high intersubject correlations which indicate the agreement between each sorter may occur because of many reasons. The first may be that each group of subjects is very homogeneous. The group of MS. 3 students are homogeneous in their educational level, they learn in the same class, are taught by the same group of teachers in the same school and they are also homogeneous in their age level. They also come from the same socio-economic background, that is middle class people. All these similar background and environmental factors may effect their perceptions so they perceive other things in the same pattern. The teachers are similar in their educational background and experience in teaching and also are teaching in the same school. The Education students are equal in their years of studying in the university and experience as a student teacher so this may be why each subject correlates

highly with the others. Secondly, it may be that the wordings used in the statements are so clear to the subjects that they can do the sort without any difficulty. This may motivate them to give more attention and concentration to their work during the Q-sort performance, thus resulting in high intercorrelations. Finally, it may be that we only ask about the ideal relationship, not the relationship which the subjects perceive in their present classroom, so any bad attitudes they have about any specific teacher do not interfere in the sorting; they just judge all the statements according to the meaning conveyed by each statement. Thus, there would appear a fairly high agreement as to the characteristic under judging.

2. The a priori dimensions of the relationship used in this study have not yet been confirmed by the results of this study. We still have no knowledge as to whether the sorter will perceive the ideal student-teacher relationship in three dimensions or not when they sort the cards. Are there any other statements about the relationship which should be included in this study? Are there any other dimensions of the relationship which would represent the student-teacher relationship? It would be interesting to investigate this by having a large group of students list all kinds of student-teacher relationships they could think of. All these lists are then put together, then a group of students would be asked to sort all these relationship from the most ideal characteristic to the

least ideal one. Through the process of factor-analysis, all the statements descriptive of the relationship would be classified into dimensions according to the loadings they give.

3. It was expected by the investigator that the results of this study should not be similar to Tyler's and Fiedler's because of cultural differences as Linton¹ has stated that culture effects the response of each person to a given situation. When the results of this study mostly agreed with Tyler's and Fiedler's, it does not mean that there are no effects of cultural differences between the group of subjects in this study and those in Tyler's and Fiedler's. It rather suggests that may be the culture does not interfere much in the classroom situation. This means that the classroom situation is quite the same everywhere while the teacher is a leader of activities and has the duty to teach students. Most of a person's concepts of the ideal student-teacher relationship come from the accumulated experience he got from the classroom situation. Thus, the concept of the ideal student-teacher relationship of this study is similar to Tyler's. Since it is similar to Tyler's, it should be similar to Fiedler's too, because

¹Ralph Linton, The Cultural Background of Personality, pp. 25-26.



Tyler's study agreed with Fiedler's. The reason why the therapeutic relationship is similar to the student-teacher relationship may be that both represent the interaction between persons, with one having a higher status than the other, so they yield the same results. Another interesting point why the three studies have revealed a similar relationship is that all the statements used are a priori: they were set by Fiedler and Tyler modified the wording slightly, then they were translated directly for use in this study. When the sorters sorted the cards they were limited to think along the similar dimensions of thought which are defined by all these statements. They were not able to vary their thoughts into many different directions as they may do in other situations, so the three groups revealed very high agreement among themselves. Another important aspect may be that the comparison of the results does not derive from an identical statistical analysis of data. Tyler and Fiedler used the Q-sort array while we ranked the statements according to mean score, so the results are much more rough than what is revealed in the two previous studies. When the results are drawn in this way, the certainty of the comparison decreases to some extent. On the other hand, despite what have been stated, the characteristics of the student-teacher relationship may be so unique all over the world that any person under any cultural frame of reference would perceive the same relationship. This field is left for research workers to investigate more.

4. Generally, Tyler's study and this study reveal the similar result that the type of relationship considered desirable is described principally in terms of emotional distance. It is noted that Tyler's group did not include an extremely close relationship in their most ideal relationship while the three groups of subjects in this study did. From the description in English of this type of relationship, it seems that this should not represent the most ideal kind of relationship, but since the study reveals that it is, consideration will be made on this point. First, this may happen because all the subjects employed in this study are always rejected by persons around them so they long for a very, very close emotional distance relationship. This seems to be unreasonable since there are a lot of subjects in the study, if everyone happened to be as stated above it should be curious. Secondly, it is doubted whether the translation of the statements can retain the identical meaning of the original ones or not. The Thai translation may increase some positive meaning to the statements that they become very ideal relationship. Thirdly, the suspicion is on whether the statements represented this type of relationship really convey the meaning equivalence to the name of its type. It may be that the statements just represent the simply close relationship, not sticky or too close at all. Another interesting point is that the three groups of this study agree that one of the aspects of the least ideal relationship is that the teacher tends to be emotionally neutral to the student. This type of relationship

should not be included in the extreme non-ideal relationship, since it represents a not-good but not-bad, either kind of relationship compared with other degrees of emotional distance. The reason why it is judged to be one of the ten least ideal aspects of the relationship be directly due to its Thai translation. For example, item number 53 in its English sense seems half-way between positive and negative meaning but when translation is made, it seems to be a little bit more negative. That may be why the result comes out like this.

5. On the basis of Fiedler's study, it was indicated that the therapeutic relationship was basically the same as any other kind of interpersonal relationship. Since this study reveals characteristics of the student-teacher relationship which are similar to Fiedler's results, we can conclude then that within these three dimensions of relationship, the characteristics of the student-teacher relationship found in this study are also similar to those in every kind of interpersonal relationship.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The final point is about the limitations of the study. The first thing is that the results of this study can be generalized to only a very limited area. According to the characteristics of the subjects, this study can be generalized to all MS. 3 (grade 10) adolescents in all the Demonstration schools with quite the same economic background. For the teacher group, the results will be representative

of teachers' perceptions of the ideal student-teacher relationship among teachers whose level of educational attainment is not less than a Bachelors Degree in Education. The matter of generalizing the results is important but not a serious or disadvantageous limitation when Q-Technique is employed. When Q-Technique is used, the purpose of the study is always to investigate into the nature of that problem rather than concerning with the generalization of the result across subjects. Another obvious limitation of this study is that the statements used in this study are a Thai translation of Tyler's statements and all the results which are drawn are based on these statements. Since there has not been any exploration to determine whether these statements are comprehensible for a Thai sense or not, the perceptions and thoughts of the subjects may be obstructed by these unfamiliar statements. In addition, since no two languages are comparable, the translated statements will not be able to retain the identical meaning of the original ones though careful effort was spent in the selection of wording to maintain the same meaning as the original ones as much as possible. Another important point is that a factor-analysis has not been used in this study. The cluster analysis which used instead is less precise than a factor analysis so it leaves many questions unsolvable. If a factor-analysis was employed; more detailed results could be obtained and discussed. Because of no factor-analysis of the data, the Q-sort array could not be done, and thus the ranking of statements according to

mean score is employed instead. This makes the comparison with Tyler's and Fiedler's findings incomplete because we compared our ranking of statements according to mean score with the Q-sort array of statements. It is expected by the investigator that a factor-analysis will be done in the near future to make the results of this study more complete.