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An Analysis of the Source of Competencies Acquired by Principals in the Omaha Public Schools

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOURCE OF

COMPETENCIES ACQUIRED BY

PRINCIPALS IN THE OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Presented to the

Graduate Faculty

University of Nebraska

at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Specialist in Education

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Lennard N. Hansen

July 1984

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FIELD PROJECT ACCEPTANCE

Accepted for the Graduate Faculty, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Specialist in Education, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Supervisory Committee

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Chairman

July 25, 1984
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Date

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Questions are often asked about the extent and nature of qualifications needed to become an effective school principal. Are there certain personal qualifications which help a principal operate effectively and implement change within his or her school? A person looking toward possible future administrative duties, or a current school administrator is likely concerned with effective decision making and problem solving within a framework of expectations from superiors, subordinates, the public and government funding sources.

Joan Shoemaker and Hugh Fraser found several factors associated with four successful schools:

1. Strong leadership
2. High expectations
3. Orderly climate
4. Stress on reading[1]

The two authors found that to improve a school, the principal was more likely to be assertive, an instructional leader, a disciplinarian and a person who was responsible for evaluating achievement of basic school objectives. A school could be heading toward declining effectiveness if the principal stressed informal, collegial staff relations and public relations instead of evaluating educational results.

Shoemaker and Fraser reported in their research that an effective school was achievement-oriented. An achievement-oriented leader had a strong desire for achievement-oriented students, staff and parents. An exceptional school was the

result of leadership styles and attitudes where framed goals and objectives, set standards of performance and the creation of a productive working environment were emphasized. This emphasis related to four key themes:

1. Assertive, achievement-oriented leadership
2. Orderly, purposeful and peaceful school climate
3. High expectations for staff and students
4. Well designed instructional objectives and evaluation system

Principals who operate under these themes feel strongly about instruction and want to be part of instructional materials selection, planning and evaluation. Assertive principals are not interested in hierarchical authority or a task-oriented structure. Principals in high achieving schools want their teachers and students to be happy and feel that their school is a pleasant place to be.[2]

Effective leadership and organizational improvement may be brought about by training. The problem arises then as to which university courses or school district inservice programs can help an administrator achieve the two goals just mentioned.[3]

Ray Cross states that the question of the best preparation for principals is asked by every school official who selects, trains, supports and pays principals. Cross feels there are some identified behavior patterns and personal characteristics associated with effective principals. He found that: (1) principal characteristics commonly investigated have been age, experience, training and personality,

(2) commonly researched principal behaviors have been leader-
ship style and decision making, and (3) commonly investi-
gated school attributes have been teacher morale and organ-
izational climate.

That author's report is that these investigations are
of little value and findings do not mean a certain type of
person with a particular training will function more effec-
tively as a principal.[4] Cross expanded this point by compar-
ing the principal to a baseball manager and a hospital admin-
istrator. As a hospital administrator, the principal simply
coordinates personnel and resources to keep the organization
functioning. The principal as baseball manager is aware of
and uses different kinds of teacher performance and programs
to promote student achievement.[5]

The research Cross studied suggested that: (1) inter-
personal skills and dedication are often associated with
successful principals, (2) a principal's influence over stu-
dent achievement may be difficult to measure, and (3) the age,
gender, training, and personality of principals is little re-
lated to their behavior. However, principals must have strong
task orientation and a high concern for prople. They should
have their own notions of effectiveness and must always keep
in mind the expectations of the people who surround them.[6]

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The literature cited above reveals that a principal's
effectiveness is derived from a complexity of perceprions and

orientations about people. Little mention is made about graduate preparation. However, competency is an important foundation to doing a job, delegating responsibilities and providing subordinates with information about their accomplishments. To what extent are graduate courses related to the knowledge, comprehension and skills necessary for successful administrative leadership? The problem will be to identify the contributions of university courses to the development of knowledge, comprehension and skills needed for successful administrative leadership in the school.

The purpose of the study is to assess the perceptions of 30 educational administration graduates about the degree to which graduate courses prepared them for the position of the principal.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Competency. A skill or ability to fulfill the requirements of the principal position.

Educational training. The coursework required by a university to qualify a candidate for a specific degree in administration with any combination of endorsements.

Principal. A person possessing a Nebraska Administrative and Supervisory certificate. He or she has the responsibility to direct and control the total operation of the building unit.

School. An educational institution comprising several grades or classes in one building.

DELIMITATIONS

For the purpose of this study, the principals selected must have been employed by the Omaha Public Schools during the 1981-82 school year and re-employed for the 1982-83 school year. Each person must possess a valid Nebraska administrative and supervisory certificate. The people receiving the survey will be chosen from this group. Any respondent who received a Masters degree in Educational Administration and Supervision before 1970 will be eliminated from the study.

ASSUMPTIONS

It will be presumed that each principal surveyed is considered an effective and competent employee capable of fulfilling the requirements of the principalship in the Omaha Public Schools. Basic differences of opinion will be accepted as the survey reaches people from varied backgrounds and experiences. It will not be expected that each principal has completed degree requirements at the same institution, possesses the same on the job experiences or participated in a similar type and amount of inservice training.

SIGNIFICANCE

This study will have some application for training future school principals. The information and opinions gathered will be helpful in the decision making process of determining

the university courses best suited to training effective principals. Those responsible for evaluating, changing and expanding the administration and supervision course offerings will be interested in assessing the results of the survey. Prospective administrators may structure their coursework around those competencies noted by present administrators as being significant. Those presently serving in administrative positions may be motivated to review their acquired competencies to find which important ones are missing and those which need strengthening. Persons in staff personnel positions may be interested in identifying applicants for principal positions who have coursework, training or experience in the important competencies listed in the survey.

METHODOLOGY

The following outline will explain the procedure used in identifying the desired competencies, how the questionnaire will be organized and how it will be administered.

I. Develop a list of competencies needed by the practicing principal.

    A. Select competencies identified in the literature.

    B. Interview three principals to identify administrative competencies each feel are important.

    C. Review a sample of principal's job descriptions of selected school districts to identify additional competencies.

    D. Organize the competencies into a questionnaire.

II. Mail the questionnaire to a sample of principals.

    A. The sample chosen for the questionnaire will be structured.

B. No more than thirty principals employed by the Omaha Public Schools will be chosen.

C. The selected principals must have received a Masters Degree in Educational Administration in 1970 or after.

D. The selected principals must have been practicing administration for three or more years.

E. The principals will work in elementary and secondary schools.

III. A follow-up letter will be mailed in two weeks to those who did not respond.

IV. Analysis of the data.

A. Review the data.

B. Find similarities and differences of opinion in the questionnaire responses.

C. Draw conclusions from the responses.

D. Based upon responses, make recommendations for changes in the preparation of principals.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter I   Introduction

Chapter II   Review of Related Literature

Chapter III   Methodology of Research

Chapter IV   Analysis of Data

Chapter V   Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

FOOTNOTES

1. Joan Shoemaker and Hugh W. Fraser, "What Principals Can Do: Some Implications From Studies of Effective Schooling," <u>Phi Delta Kappan</u>, Nov., 1981, p. 179.

2. Shoemaker and Fraser, pp. 180-181.

3. Shoemaker and Fraser, p. 182.

4. Ray Cross, "What Makes an Effective Principal?" <u>Principal</u>, March, 1981, p. 20.

5. Cross, p. 21.

6. Cross, p. 22.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The intended result of this literature review is to help clarify the scope, level of importance and source of skills needed to develop administrative competency. The dynamics of identifying, training and selecting qualified employees for the principal position has become an increasingly complex function. Tight budgets, reduced enrollments, government regulations and increased community involvement have made it necessary to choose principals with a broad base of experience and training.

The person selected for the principal position must possess a seemingly infinite number of administrative and leadership skills which can be retrieved and utilized for any possible situation. Where does a principal identified as being effective acquire these necessary skills? It is likely that a combination of areas has contributed to the development of an effective principal.

Five task areas required of a school principal have been identified for the purpose of this study. They are: (1) curriculum and instruction, (2) funds and facilities, (3) school-community relations, (4) pupil personnel services, and (5) staff personnel services.[1]

Educational journals will be used to define some of these tasks, which should enhance the understanding of the principal's role. The reader may then be able to draw realistic conclusions about the complexity of this role.

Finally, it may become easier to understand where effective principals acquire their skills.

As mentioned, the number of skills required to operate effectively in the role of principal are limitless. The amount of literature on the subject is seemingly endless. Therefore, a limit of three to five articles will be used to discuss each of the five task areas identified in the introduction. It will not be intended for these articles to cover every aspect or situation found in the role of school principal. The aim is to discuss some of the more crucial elements of the principal function.

Curriculum and Instruction

Not only do effective schools have strong administrative leadership, they are also headed by principals who are perceived to be strong instructional leaders. Along with this belief it was found that effective instructional leadership includes: (1) defining the school's curriculum, (2) managing curriculum and instruction and (3) promoting a positive school learning climate. The principal helps formulate instructional goals and refers to them for the purpose of instruction and assessment.[2]

The instructional program requires management with four separate leadership functions: (1) knowledge of curriculum and effective instruction, (2) supervision and evaluation of instruction, (3) curricular coordination and (4) monitoring student performance. Principals often encounter conflicts with teachers over uncertainties concerning styles

of instructional technology. Teachers may feel their instructional model may be as effective as the principal's. This conflict may be resolved eventually when the technology of instruction can be specified. Mastery learning models appear in many effective schools. These models are easily eveluated and student progress is easily monitored. Consequently, principals of effective schools make frequent classroom observations. Principals of effective schools are skilled in coordinating instruction so that a sequence is followed and instruction flows between grade levels.[3]

The principal is only one of many people in a building who influence the establishment of a positive learning environment. There are several ways a principal can motivate the entire staff to raise student achievement. These are: (1) establishment of high expectations for students, (2) establishment of academic standards and incentive for learning, (3) protection of instructional time, and (4) promotion of instructional improvement and professional development.

Wynn De Bevoise feels instructional leadership "encompasses those actions that a principal takes, or delegates to others, to promote growth in student learning." She listed the characteristics of instructional leaders that Blumberg and Greenfield observed in their 1980 book. These characteristics are:

1. A propensity to set clear goals and to have these goals serve as a continuous source of motivation

2. A high degree of self-confidence and openness to others

3.   A tolerance for ambiguity

4.   A tendency to test the limits of interpersonal
     and organizational systems

5.   A sensitivity to the dynamics of power

6.   An analytic perspective

7.   The ability to be in charge of their jobs[4]

That author noted that numerous lists like this occur in the literature. She questioned whether "certain personal traits, skills, knowledge, or interpersonal styles" were present in every effective principal. The literature suggests that effective principals are forceful, energetic, and goal-directed. However, the literature does not reveal "conditions under which forceful personalities contribute to increased effectiveness or vice versa." Ms. De Bevois surmised that many different leadership styles work. Insufficient studies have been completed to show how different styles and person-alities influence desirable or undesirable outcomes for specific situations. In spite of this, there are certain leadership functions which must be fulfilled. These are: (1) communicating the purpose of the school, (2) monitoring performance, (3) rewarding good work, and (4) providing staff development. These functions must be carried out by the principal or other designated staff member.[5]

Even though studies have not proven effective principals increase student progress, Ms. De Bevoise feels there are support functions a principal must offer. These are to:

1.   Implement programs of known effectiveness or active
     involvement in curricular improvement

2. Monitor student performance

3. Provide concrete technical assistance to teachers

4. Demonstrate visible commitment to programs for instructional improvement

5. Provide emotional support and incentive for teachers[6]

A. Michael Huberman feels administrative muscle is needed to implement innovation into the curriculum. This can initially lower teacher participation, but substantial assistance can increase the teacher's technical mastery which will subsequently increase their commitment. To institutionalize certain new programs Huberman gives the following suggestions:

1. Central office initiative becomes a strong influence on follow-through.

2. Teachers are given little latitude to make changes. This way innovations are put into practice in one piece.

3. Teacher-administrator friction is eventually resolved when teachers are able to master a well-designed, technically challenging innovation while receiving substained assistance.

4. Stability of program leadership means that central office and building administrators stay with the project.[7]

Funds and Facilities

The individual building principal may at some time be required to participate in budgeting and other areas of financial planning. Each principal should be aware of the requirements and expectations of his role in the funding process. Of all the functional tasks, accounting and financial planning should receive the greatest emphasis. Training

and experience should provide the building principal with
the ability to work closely with: (1) budget compilation
and control, (2) financial reports preparation and reporting,
(3) investments and cash flow analysis, and (4) accounts
auditing.[8]

These tasks are all part of a step-by-step planning
process used in Centreville, Michigan by Superintendent
Ronald R. Mrozinski. He believes full participation by the
staff from the first day of each school year ensures that
each person will have a say in the manner in which the budget
is put together. The process begins with student attendance
accounting on the first day and fourth Friday. This aids the
principals in predicting future enrollment and making staff
assignments for the following year. Staffing needs are
assessed and nonpersonnel expenditures are reported. Pri-
orities are presented to the board. Modifications and changes
are made with final board approval in June.[9]

During the budget process, building principals meet
with teachers, parents and other community people concerning
the budget. It is believed details are handled more efficient-
ly using "proper channels" rather than having board members
waste time trying to resolve situations more easily handled
by other personnel in the system.[10]

Stanten Leggett believes classrooms of the 1980s are re-
markably similar to those of the 1930s, not counting a few
pieces of a-v equipment, televisions and perhaps one computer.
He does not look for a burst of building and the many new

innovations which came with the baby boom of the 1950s and 1960s. Mr. Leggett sees change coming slowly. Only good managers will create educational settings which ensure effective learning. Simple and creative efforts will affect students and teachers in a positive manner. Mr. Leggett states that "if the school looks as though people take pride in it, the odds are that they will." Creative improvement can be achieved by:

1. Improving the teaching spaces

2. Making bare classrooms into learning laboratories

3. Helping teachers manage instruction by the use of computers

4. Providing space for volunteers

5. Providing a good work room for teachers, aides and volunteers

6. Adding large, well-designed storage rooms

7. Providing decent quarters and adequate storage for the custodians[11]

Mr. Leggett feels that education could be improved with simple architectural changes which are pleasing to the eye. A thoughtful designer can create "attractive, unique, individualized learning places."[12]

Dennis A. Conners found that minor design modifications in existing classrooms: (1) produced changes in students' spatial behavior, (2) increased interaction with materials, and (3) decreased interruptions. He felt a strong need for the architecture to meet the needs of the educational program and the persons involved. Mr. Conners cited several studies

concerning: (1) seating position, (2) classroom design and arrangement, and (3) density and crowding. Principals and other school personnel must be aware of the relationships involved between the plant and the people using it. Studies prove that creatively designed classrooms improve: (1) behavior, (2) attendance, (3) student participation, and (4) group cohesion.[13]

School-Community Relations

Current literature reveals that the urgency of public interest in the schools in the 1960s and 1970s is being replaced by different priorities. In the 1960s and 1970s school personnel felt they must respond to parents who saw the schools as a means to solve every educational and social problem. This urgency has been reduced probably because there are far fewer people with children in the schools.[14] This has decreased traditional ties between educators and parents.[15]

Now the community school concept is gaining popularity in many districts. School systems are trying to enhance their own public relations by "extending their own control and influence."[16] Community school programs are seen to have positive effects on: (1) truancy, (2) vandalism, (3) community, and (4) student attitudes toward school. William Liebertz gives several suggestions on getting a program started which makes a community feel it is the focal point of control and that the school really belongs to the community. A few ideas are:

1. Request information from community education re-
    source centers

2. Form a representative community group to consider
    application of community education to your parti-
    cular community

3. Discuss ideas with school leadership

4. Inform school board and seek policy guidance

5. Meet with school staff persons interested in
    piloting a community education program

6. Involve community residents and agencies in
    establishment and management of the program[17]

Liebertz recognizes that "the job of public education
is too big to handle alone." He feels schools must establish
a continuous program that involves more than budgets or bond
issues.[18]

Establishing strong community ties can strengthen
decision making. Community connections can support problem
solving. Power can be gained in dealing with the bureaucracy
of the central office. Community members do not feel as
threatened to challenge the school board and top administra-
tors. After a time in districts with community programs,
people began to see the schools in a broader scope. They
perceived the school as a resource to provide far-reaching
social services.[19]

Principals must not fear the loss of control from
demanding parents. Parents and other community members
who volunteer time, talents, or problem solving skills
will begin to feel some responsibility for the school's
success or failure.[20] Public confidence in education and

the economic health of the school community will improve with sincere effort to organize school-community relationships.[21]

Pupil Personnel Services

One of the foremost concerns of principals when dealing with students is discipline. The question of who will control the school arises daily. School personnel, parents, students, and the community look to the principal to create a stable environment.[22]

Close contact with the students gives the principal time to plan appropriate action rather than reacting to situations. It was found that secondary level principals are more concerned with groups of students accepting school-wide norms. Elementary level principals were more concerned with the behavior of individual students and their success in school-related activities and the curriculum.[23]

Establishing relationships between the principal and students is important. The principal must be visible and the students must know what is expected of them. Principals are now aware that inservice training for teachers on effective discipline techniques will reduce the number of referrals to their office. It is important that principals let teachers know the best way to build good relationships with their students. It is important to learn for themselves how to deal with students.[24]

Due process procedures go hand in hand with discipline problems which exceed the bounds of day to day application.

Occasionally the principal may be required to use the due process structure. Documentation of student behavior may become a critical part of a discipline hearing. The steps outlined in the due process procedure must be followed closely to assure fairness and accuracy when discipline problems are brought before a third party. Due process outline forms are available for principals. Inservice training is valuable when discipline situations can and do occur.

Many school discipline programs are using participation workshops which include not only principals and teachers, but the community at large. Affirmative action offices are being established which: (1) review district policies and procedures, (2) offer staff development, and (3) enlist support from community agencies.[25]

For daily behavior problems which threaten to disrupt the learning environment there are several alternatives available to educators:

1. Demerit systems

2. Restricted academic services rooms

3. School within a school

4. Withdrawl of privileges

5. Parent conferences

6. Contracts

7. In building third party hearings

8. Home visits[26]

Student discipline is a key issue that has prompted school district departments and community agencies to respond. Creative principals learn through experience and training to utilize the resources available to keep their buildings operating quietly with structure and purpose.

Membership reports, pupil accounting, and transfer of records is bound by policies which vary among districts. These are procedures which are generally learned on the job. Many of these situations are clerical in nature and can be handled by the school secretary. However, knowledgeable building principals maintain awareness of class size and plan for effective grouping. Projections are made concerning the number of students enrolled and for those who may attend the following year. Pupil personnel services provide the principal with a framework which outlines present and ongoing needs affecting children directly.

Staff Personnel Services

Many human variables are involved in the complex staff personnel function. There are several steps in the recruitment, selection, and evaluation process. The effective principal utilizes all of his training, talents, and experience in staffing procedures. The human resource plan is carefully controlled.

During the recruitment process, the principal makes

plans to meet the continuing need for properly qualified professional personnel. The principal must be knowledgeable of the position to be filled and the competencies required to fill the position.[27]

In the selection process, the principal uses his skill in matching the requirements of a position with the highest qualified person. A list of specifications can be used as a guide when choosing personnel. Information will be needed on the applicants: (1) education, (2) experience, (3) skills, (4) knowledge, (5) abilities, (6) initiative, (7) judgement and (8) personal characteristics. The interview, employment decision and placement process require much time and careful judgement.[28]

Newly assigned teachers need support and assistance in their new position. The orientation provided by the principal can assure teachers with a smooth adjustment to curriculum, staff members, community and the school system as a whole. There is an obligation to new staff members to reduce anxiety and confusion so they are free to grow and develop to full potential.[29]

Teacher appraisal is one of the most difficult tasks facing the principal. An attitude of firm but fair must be developed. David H. Larson sees the evaluation process as a way to help "the teacher get better or get out." He cautions that due process procedures must be followed to the letter when the question of dismissal arises. The principal must be able to prove: (1) incompetency, (2) in-

subordination, (3) moral misconduct, (4) disability, or
(5) other due and sufficient cause. Each of these areas
can be broken down into specific details and reasons for
dismissal. The purpose of the evaluation should be to
improve teacher performance.[30]

Andrew C. De Santo uses George Redfern's performance
objective approach for his evaluation responsibilities as
a principal. Redfern stated that it is difficult to see
how it is possible to hold individuals accountable for their
performance unless: (1) the dimensions of responsibility
are clear, (2) performance objectives are specified, and
(3) results are evaluated in terms of those understandings
and objectives. De Santo feels goals and objectives should
be established jointly with the evaluator.[31]

Finally, staff development needs are essential to the
principal's school program. William B. Castetter believes
development should satisfy three expectations: (1) the
contribution of the individual to the school system, (2)the
emotional rewards anticipated by the individual in return
and (3) an increase in the ability to perform assignments
effectively. Staff development is "a process of staff
improvement through approaches that emphasize self-realization,
self-growth, and self-development." The principal who is
sincerely interested in promoting the talents of his or her
staff will receive rewards from every dimension of the
educational program in the building.[32]

FOOTNOTES

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5. De Bevois, p. 17.

6. De Bevois, pp. 18-19.

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8. Donald L. Walters, <u>Accounting and Financial Planning:
    Top Priorities for School Business Administrators</u> (ERIC
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    p. 26.

10. Mrozinski, p. 38.

11. Stanten Leggett, "Managing Facilities Creatively or How
    to Increase the Educational Yield of Your Community's
    Investment in It's School Buildings," <u>CEFP Journal</u>,
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13. Dennis A. Conners, "The School Environment: A Link to
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14. Stephen H. Wilson, "Strengthening Connections Between
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    p. 153.

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    <u>The School Administrator</u>, Sept.,1983, p. 26.

16. Howard J. Tolliver, <u>Community Participation in Urban Public Schools: An Overview of Issues</u> (ERIC ED 174 724, 1979), p. 14.

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22. Arthur Blumberg and William Greenfield, <u>The Effective Principal</u> (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980), p. 131.

23. Blumberg and Greenfield, p. 185.

24. Blumberg and Greenfield, p. 205.

25. Wayne R. Robbins and Donald Whitaker, <u>A Guide for Community School Advisory Councils</u> (ERIC ED 160 926, 1978), p. 128.

26. Robbins and Whitaker, pp. 129-132.

27. William B. Castetter, <u>The Personnel Function in Educational Administration</u> (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 140-143.

28. Castetter, p. 163.

29. Castetter, pp. 198-199.

30. David H. Larson, "Dismissing Incompetent Staff," <u>The School Administrator</u>, Feb., 1983, pp. 28-35.

31. Andrew De Santo, "Teacher Evaluation," <u>The School Administrator</u>, July-Aug., 1983, pp. 28-29.

32. Castetter, pp. 312-313.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

In this field project principals in the Omaha Public
Schools were asked in a questionnaire to identify the source
where they acquired their competency in handling certain
administrative tasks. A sample questionnaire is included in
this chapter.

Brief descriptions of thirty administrative tasks were
developed from a review of the literature and after inter-
views with an elementary, a junior high, and a senior high
principal. Six items were selected under each of five task
areas. The areas were: (1) curriculum and instruction,
(2) funds and facilities, (3) school community relations,
(4) pupil personnel services, and (5) staff personnel services.

Items under the same task area were kept together
numerically but the areas were not separated by headings in
the questionnaire.

Next, a response procedure was developed. The respondent
was asked to recall where the competencies were developed.
The four catagories used were: (a) university training,
(b) on the job experience, (c) inservice programs, and
(d) other.

At this point the respondent was given the opportunity
to decide where the primary and secondary sources used to
develop the competencies were acquired. The principal was
asked to number the responses as (1) the primary source
used to develop the given competency and (2) the secondary

source used to develop the same competency. This feature enhanced the data base and gave the respondent another choice to consider while working on the questionnaire.

To establish an adequate data base, it was decided at least thirty principals must return completed questionnaires. The principals had to be employed by the Omaha Public Schools during the 1981-82 school year and reemployed for the 1982-83 school year. To help make the answers more accurate, only principals who received Masters degrees in 1970 or later were asked to complete the questionnaire. It was felt that those graduating before 1970 may have trouble recalling where a given competency was acquired. Out of seventy-nine building principals thirty-two principals who graduated in 1970 or later completed and returned the questionnaire.

Before distributing the questionnaire through the school mail approval was granted by Dr. Irving C. Young from the Department of Research and by Dr. Ron Anderson the head of Staff Personnel Services. A letter from Dr. Anderson was sent to all principals explaining the nature of the survey. His approval was stated and the principals were reminded that their participation was voluntary. A cover letter was mailed along with the questionnaire to introduce this writer and explain the project. The questionnaires were mailed out and returned between April 25 and June 3, 1983.

The questionnaires were collected and tallies were taken on the responses. The response counts were converted to percentages and tables were developed to show the findings.

The data were analyzed to see what this sample of principals perceived as the source of their competency in dealing with certain administrative tasks. Percentages were also used to show which source of competency development was considered most often by the principals. The sample questionnaire and cover letter can be found in the Appendixes.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The major purpose of this study was to determine perceptions of principals as to the source of their competency in certain administrative tasks. The responses have been converted to percentages. These percentages can be found in the tables at the end of this chapter. The responses to the individual tasks are reported in Table 1. An overall assessment of the source of the given competencies is also provided. The findings from the responses will be presented by competency area.

Curriculum and Instruction

University training was perceived to be the primary source of gaining competency in understanding theories of child development. This suggests that principals depend on coursework for their initial conception of childhood's various stages and their relation to the learning process. The secondary source was gained from on the job experience. Information gained from the coursework is enhanced by first-hand experience. This is an ideal situation which is the intention of the university. Items two through six presented an interesting response to questions concerning curriculum organization, revision, and improvement. A significant number of responses considered inservice training as a secondary source of competence in this area. The primary source of competence was almost entirely gained from on the job experience. This may suggest principals are

seeking additional help but not through traditional course-work.

Funds and Facilities

The primary source of competency was gained on the job in five out of six of the items in this group. The secondary source of skill in creating and utilizing budgets was acquired from inservice programs. Policies and procedures used by different districts probably relates to these items. It is improbable that two districts handle budgeting the same way. School district inservice programs are the probable source of information the principals use to carry out the budget function.

School-Community Relations

In this important task area most principals indicated on the job experience as being most important to gaining needed competency. Competency in organizing and maintaining effective two-way communication with the community was gained fairly evenly from the four secondary sources. Principals possibly rely on a variety of means to establish effective neighborhood communication. The secondary source of competency for four of the items came from inservice training.

Pupil Personnel Services

Working directly with students was perceived as being the primary source of competence in this area. However,

concerning due process procedures, the responses were evenly divided between on the job experience and inservice programs. As a group, principals have possibly asked for further assistance in dealing with the mechanics and legalities of due process. The results of the questionnaire suggest that the principals were satisfied with the added training they acquired during inservice programs and workshops. Secondary response percentages on the six items indicate that district procedures have significant impact on the methods principals use in dealing with students.

Staff Personnel Services

The percentages indicate the principals felt their academic program had been of some assistance in helping acquire the competencies in this group. However, on the job experience was credited with providing the most assistance. The highest percentages fell between on the job experience and inservice training. The secondary sources used in organizing, coordinating, and supervising staff assignments were almost evenly divided. The principals apparently felt this function was maintained by drawing from a variety of support systems.

The following tables reveal information which was discussed in this literature review.

TABLE I

SOURCE OF ACQUISITION OF COMPETENCY FOR THE SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL AS REPORTED BY PRINCIPALS (N=32)

Competency		A	B	C	D
I. Concerning Curriculum and Instruction, where was the primary (1) or secondary (2) source from which you developed your competence in:					
1. Understanding theories of child development?	1.	72	13	6	9
	2.	16	68	8	8
2. Curriculum revision and/or organization?	1.	23	75	2	0
	2.	30	22	40	8
3. Ability to lead a group toward specific goals?	1.	14	73	13	0
	2.	26	22	35	17
4. Assessing the existing program curriculum for its relevance to student needs?	1.	7	83	10	0
	2.	29	19	43	10
5. Being able to make knowledgeable suggestions for curriculum improvement?	1.	0	80	20	0
	2.	39	9	43	9
6. School organization, class scheduling etc.?	1.	18	71	7	4
	2.	28	24	36	12

A- University training
B- On the job experience
C- Inservice programs
D- Other

TABLE I (continued)

Competency		A	B	C	D
II. Concerning FUNDS AND FACILITIES, WHERE was the primary (1) or secondary (2) source from which you developed competence in:					
7. Generating an operating budget for your school?	1. 2.	16 27	66 23	19 46	0 4
8. Monitoring school accounting procedures?	1. 2.	0 18	66 30	20 43	14 9
9. Utilizing resources and money to provide the educational program in the school?	1. 2.	4 28	76 16	12 56	8 0
10. Being knowledgeable of the district's tax system and budgeting structure and expenditures, for purposes of being a communication link to the staff and community?	1. 2.	9 21	49 53	28 26	14 0
11. Managing an activity fund through approved accounting procedures?	1. 2.	4 29	79 14	10 38	7 19
12. Having an understanding of a centralized budget system?	1. 2.	19 22	34 52	41 26	6 0

TABLE I (continued)

Competency	A	B	C	D
III. Concerning SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS, where was the primary (1) or secondary (2) source from which you developed competence in:				
13. Organizing and maintaining effective two-way communication with the community? 1. 2.	13 31	69 22	9 31	9 16
14. Utilizing various techniques of public relations? 1. 2.	9 26	63 37	19 33	9 4
15. Coordinating public relations programs and activities of the district? 1. 2.	0 1	84 14	16 63	0 2
16. Providing information to students and parents about school programs and services? 1. 2.	0 15	88 15	9 47	3 23
17. Identifying the community forces which affect the operation of the school and the implication of these forces? 1. 2.	19 15	65 37	13 41	3 7
18. Providing opportunities for parent and resident involvement in advisory groups, vulunteer groups, and functions requesting input? 1. 2.	9 12	78 19	7 50	6 19

TABLE I (continued)

Competency		A	B	C	D
IV.	Concerning PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES, where was the primary (1) or secondary (2) source from which you developed competence in:				
19.	Maintaining effective discipline in the school?				
	1.	3	88	6	3
	2.	35	7	48	10
20.	Understanding due process?				
	1.	3	54	40	3
	2.	4	50	42	4
21.	Developing student rules and regulations consistent with the law and district policy?				
	1.	0	69	25	1
	2.	15	22	56	7
22.	Establishing a climate which will improve student morale?				
	1.	10	84	0	6
	2.	9	18	55	18
23.	Organizing and maintaining pupil accounting procedures for recording students' personal and academic growth?				
	1.	9	68	33	0
	2.	14	36	41	9
24.	Utilizing district resources and community agencies in conducting the student personnel service?				
	1.	2	76	20	2
	2.	13	18	56	13

TABLE I (continued)

Competency		A	B	C	D
V. Concerning STAFF PERSONNEL SERVICES, where was the primary (1) or secondary (2) source from which you developed competence in:					
25. Providing leadership and supervision of all personnel?	1. 2.	19 33	62 25	16 29	3 13
26. Using various methods for the evaluation of teaching?	1. 2.	7 36	48 47	45 17	0 0
27. Developing and implementing an effective program of orientation and induction of professional and support personnel?	1. 2.	3 36	74 18	23 36	0 0
28. Being responsible to make suggestions regarding appointment, retention, promotion, and reassignment of employees under your direction?	1. 2.	0 20	81 25	19 42	0 13
29. Involving school staff in developing educational goals and objectives?	1. 2.	3 8	59 38	38 50	0 4
30. Organizing, coordinating, and supervising staff assignments?	1. 2.	9 26	69 30	13 22	? 22

TABLE II

OVERALL PERCENTAGES OF PRIMARY (1) AND SECONDARY (2) SOURCE
FROM WHICH PRINCIPALS DEVELOPED GIVEN COMPETENCIES (N=32)

Source	%
Primary (1)	
A - University training	9
B - On the job experience	67
C - Inservice programs	21
D - Other	3
Secondary (2)	
A - University training	36
B - On the job experience	28
C - Inservice programs	27
D - Other	9

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The role of the principal is a complex combination of duties, tasks, and expectations. The effective principal may have established procedures and routines with the realization that the unexpected can happen at any time. A remarkable number of situations can occur during any given day. These factors were a constant consideration during the entire course of this project.

Competencies often mentioned in the related literature were chosen and rephrased for use in the questionnaire. Those competencies chosen were never meant to be an all inclusive list. They may not have necessarily been the most important competencies according to principals currently working in the profession nor to those working in other school districts.

The information gathered from this project may be of interest to certain groups of people in and out of the profession. Current principals may assess the source of their competency in certain areas and form goals to improve competency in others.

Those who are in training or have recently completed requirements for certification may want to expand their qualifications. They can take advantage of certain opportunities for experience and training offered by school districts, universities and other educational organizations.

Patrons of the school district or others with special
interests may receive added information from the results
of this project. This information could be valuable if
these individuals are ever involved in development, operation,
or evaluation of their local school program.

Conclusions

The results may have been quite different if the
questionnaire had been given to those currently in training
and to those who have recently completed coursework but are
not currently employed as a principal. These two groups
would likely place greater value on their university training.
Any practical experience would probably be outweighed by
reliance on university coursework and by observations of
principals they had worked under.

It was expected that the overwhelming response to the
questionnaire would indicate on the job experience to be the
most useful basis for dealing with daily principal tasks.
The competencies listed in the questionnaire were expressed
in terms of practicing principals' roles. This probably
influenced the respondents' feelings that the competencies
were primarily acquired while on the job.

Recommendations

The area of principal competencies has been researched
on a wide scale. However, no definite list of effective
behaviors can be stated as proven fact. The way one principal
deals with a situation may be very different from the

techniques used by another. Principals are evaluated in specific roles rather than on their performance in general. A school district would probably benefit from providing inservice programs to help principals deal more effectively with these specific situations. The results of the questionnaire support this recommendation. Most principals considered inservice training to be helpful. It was often credited as a secondary source used in managing administrative tasks.

Although percentages were not high, principals consistently reported their university training to be of some assistance. Emphasis should continue to be placed on certification requirements. Successful completion of coursework can indicate important characteristics and qualifications to those involved in the hiring of principals. The university exposes future principals to a wide variety of information and situations which can be of tremendous help. Those presently employed can upgrade skills and broaden their possibilities for handling administrative tasks in other areas. This same group could work closely with university professors. Through discussion, methods and subject matter could be made more relevant. Critical tasks could be identified for further study and practice.

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APPENDIX A

Field Project Questionnaire

by

Lennard N. Hansen

If you received a Masters degree in Educational Administration and Supervision before 1970 check here and return the question- naire uncompleted. _____

Directions:

Try to recall where you developed the following competencies. Choose your response from the four catagories. It is important that you answer each question as thoughtfully and frankly as possible. Number your responses as (1), the primary source used to develop the given competency. You may also mark the same item with a (2), showing the secondary source used to de- . velop the competency.

The four catagories are:

    A = University training
    B = On the job experience
    C = Inservice programs
    D = Other

Where was the primary (1) or secondary (2) source from which you developed your competence in ...

	A	B	C	D

EXAMPLE:

Working with the staff to develop goals consistent with district goals for various levels and curricular areas? ___ ___ ___ ___

1. Understanding theories of child develop- ment? ___ ___ ___ ___

2. Curriculum revision and/or organization? ___ ___ ___ ___

3. Ability to lead a group toward specific goals? ___ ___ ___ ___

4. Assessing the existing program curricu- lum for its relevance to student needs? ___ ___ ___ ___

5. Being able to make knowledgeable sug- gestions for curriculum improvement? ___ ___ ___ ___

6. School organization, class scheduling etc.? ___ ___ ___ ___

		A	B	C	D
7.	Generating an operating budget for your school?	___	___	___	___
8.	Monitoring school acounting procedures?	___	___	___	___
9.	Utilizing resources and money to provide the educational program in the school?	___	___	___	___
10.	Being knowledgeable of the district's tax system and budgeting structure and expenditures, for purposes of being a communication link to the staff and community?	___	___	___	___
11.	Managing an activity fund through approved accounting procedures?	___	___	___	___
12.	Having an understanding of a centralized budget system?	___	___	___	___
13.	Organizing and maintaining effective two-way communication with the community?	___	___	___	___
14.	Utilizing various techniques of public relations?	___	___	___	___
15.	Coordinating public relations programs and activities of the school district?	___	___	___	___
16.	Providing information to students and parents about school programs and services?	___	___	___	___
17.	Identifying the cummunity forces which affect the operation of the school and the implications of these forces?	___	___	___	___
18.	Providing opportunities for parent and resident involvement in advisory groups, volunteer groups and functions requesting parent input?	___	___	___	___
19.	Maintaining effective discipline in the school?	___	___	___	___
20.	Understanding due process?	___	___	___	___
21.	Developing student rules and regulations consistent with the law and district policy?	___	___	___	___
22.	Establishing a climate which will improve student morale?	___	___	___	___
23.	Organizing and maintaining pupil accounting procedures for recording student's personal and academic growth?	___	___	___	___

		A	B	C	D

24.   Utilizing district resources and community agencies in conducting the student personnel service?   __ __ __ __

25.   Providing leadership and supervision of all personnel?   __ __ __ __

26.   Using various methods for the evaluation of teaching?   __ __ __ __

27.   Developing and implementing an effective program of orientation and induction of professional and support personnel?   __ __ __ __

28.   Being responsible to make suggestions regarding appointment, retention, promotion and reassignment of employees under your direction?   __ __ __ __

29.   Involving school staff in developing educational goals and objectives?   __ __ __ __

30.   Organizing, coordinating and supervising staff assignments?   __ __ __ __

APPENDIX B

April 18, 1983

Dear Coworkers:

My name is Lennard Hansen. I teach sixth grade at Rosehill
School and I'm working on the Field Project requirement for
the Education Specialist degree at U.N.O. Dr. Irv Young has
reviewed my proposal and he has given me permission to send
questionnaires to the principals in the Omaha Public Schools.

Through a review of the research and the information gathered
in this questionnaire, I will try to identify the contributions
of university courses to the development of knowledge, compre-
hension and skills needed for successful administrative leader-
ship in the schools.

One factor in the study makes it necessary to eliminate any
respondent who received a Masters degree in Educational Admin-
istration and Supervision before 1970. If you are in this cat-
agory, refer to the first item on the next page.

Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire and
return it to me as soon as possible. Your help is very impor-
tant to my study. A return envelope has been included for your
convenience. No respondent or schools will be identified in
the paper. I have coded each questionnaire so a follow-up letter
can be mailed to those who did not respond. Thanks again.

Yours truly,

Lennard N. Hansen

Lennard N. Hansen