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1997

A preferred vision for administering elementary/secondary schools : a reflective essay

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A preferred vision for administering elementary/secondary schools : a reflective essay

Abstract

The success and future of our nation, if not the entire world, depends on educating our children. For this reason, I have decided to seek anew career in educational administration after serving as a teacher and coach for.the past twelve years.

As the building principal, you lead by example. What the principal does on a regular basis overtime, becomes the most important aspect of the school (D. Else, Personal. Communication, 1997). I really understood the power of that statement. When looking back at my former principals, I can see how their actions helped or hindered their leadership. Students and.staff will both look to you as an example of leadership and follow if you gain their respect. Recently I have reflected on each of my four teaching experiences and the leadership in each school.

A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING ELEMENTARY/SECONDARY SCHOOLS:

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Department of Educational Administration

and Counseling

University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

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by

Brad E. Small

May 1997

This Research Paper by: Brad E. Small

Entitled: A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING
ELEMENTARY/SECONDARY SCHOOLS:

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirements for the Degree of Master

Arts in Education.

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__4-15-1997__

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Education of our youth is a very important and ongoing issue. The success and future of our nation, if not the entire world, depends on educating our children. For this reason, I have decided to seek a new career in educational administration after serving as a teacher and coach for the past twelve years. I have had the privilege to teach and coach in four different school districts in two different states. Also, I have worked in another six school districts during the summer months throughout this same time span. I have worked for a total of thirteen different elementary and secondary school principals and athletic directors during my twelve year teaching tenure. I feel that these experiences with these different leaders along with my experiences gained from the course work will help me become a successful principal.

A successful principal, in my opinion, is a strong leader. A strong leader is capable of providing guided leadership. Dr. Dave Else, in my opinion, provided perhaps the most significant piece of information. As the building principal, you lead by example. What the principal does on a regular basis overtime; overtime, becomes the most important aspect of the school (D. Else, Personal Communication, 1997). I really understood the power of that statement. When looking back at my former principals, I can see how their actions helped or hindered their leadership. Students and staff will both look to you as an example of leadership and follow if you gain their respect. Recently I have reflected on each of my four teaching experiences and the leadership in each school.

My first teaching experience took place for the Colman Public Schools in the rural community of Colman, South Dakota. Colman, now a consolidated school district, was a very small district of about 275 students in grades K-12. The two

things that I remember most about my first teaching position was my salary of $11,900 per year and driving a total of 75 miles each day to work! I look back and often wonder how I survived. Somehow I managed to teach fifth and sixth grade classes while coaching varsity girls basketball and serving as the assistant boys basketball coach. My first principal was a dominant female who always made sure that I remembered who was the subordinate. I now look back and question myself why she acted this way. I think that she was very insecure with herself and used her power of authority to dominate a then first-year teacher. I taught in Colman for only one year.

I taught in a fourth-grade self-contained classroom during my second year of teaching. My classroom, which also served as the school's washroom, was located directly beside a loud gymnasium. The Harrisburg School District, a district of around 780 students in grades K-12, was growing extremely fast at the time and was extremely short of space. During this one year teaching experience, I quickly learned the value of a bond issue. The tiny town of Harrisburg, located just five miles outside of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, failed in a number of attempts to pass a bond issue. I now feel that the district did not sell the need to those people that lived along the Sioux Falls border. Those people, in my opinion, really never knew how crowded the school was. My principal, the late Jan Eversole, was very helpful and understanding. She was the type of principal that did not want anyone mad at her, and as a result, had a difficult time leading staff. She was very understanding of my coaching duties which included assistant girls basketball, freshmen boys basketball, and assistant boys/girls track. Unlike my principal in

Colman who was antiathletics, she often covered my classes or made sure that a suitable substitute was called.

After taking a year off from education to find myself, I landed my third teaching position in Garretson, South Dakota, which had an enrollment of about 425 students in grades K-12. I spent five years teaching seventh/eighth grade Language Arts and Reading, seventh grade math, and seventh/eighth grade girls physical education. I was also an advisor on the Natural Helpers School Team that helped struggling youth grow up. As in most small school districts, I also coached a variety of sports. In my five years, I served as the varsity girls basketball coach (two years), assistant boys basketball coach (four years), assistant girls basketball coach (three years), assistant girls track coach (one year), junior high girls basketball coach (three years), and elementary girls basketball coach (two years). My principal at Garretson was a super person. He was a flexible, easy-going individual that would do anything for you. As a teacher, I felt that I always knew where I stood with him. He was very honest with you but was somewhat unorganized. I always felt that he treated the entire staff the same, but appeared to become more distant with everyone during my last year there. I later learned that he was told by the district's superintendent to stop being so social around the staff. I think this was wrong, but I now see how a conflict of interests could possibly evolve. I have often wondered what relationship, on a social nature, I should have with teachers.

For the past five years, I have been employed by the Le Mars Community School District in Le Mars, Iowa. My teaching duties include eighth grade Language Arts and seventh grade reading. I currently serve as the varsity girls

basketball coach and head middle school boys track coach. I have also coached seventh grade football and served as the assistant girls basketball coach. While in Le Mars, a district of around 2400 students in grades K-12, I have worked for a male principal along with a female assistant principal. I have found this experience to be quite educational as well as interesting.

My summer experiences, before pursuing a Master's Degree from the University of Northern Iowa, included teaching driver education courses at several different local school districts. I found that each district handled their driver education in very different ways. Some district principals completely let me run the show and do things my way. Other district principals wanted to be more involved and even somewhat in charge.

When looking back at my teaching experiences, I feel fortunate to have worked for so many different principals and school districts. I have found that each of the principals have had their own personalities and leadership style. It is also very obvious, in my opinion, that the school district can have a major impact on the principal's leadership style. From what I have seen, a school's superintendent along with the school board may have a major impact on what a principal can do or say.

There is extensive literature that has been discussed throughout the Master of Arts in Education program that I feel will help me to become an effective principal. I believe that leadership, communication, use of technology, and evaluaiton to be the most important.

Leadership and Power

During our first course, we talked about traditional and emerging concepts of organization and administration. The two principal concepts of organization and administration discussed were the traditional monocratic, bureaucratic concept and the emerging pluralistic, collegial concept (D. Jackson, Personal Communication, September, 1994). The traditional monocratic, bureaucratic concept is defined as a pyramidal, hierarchical organizational structure in which all power flows from superordinates to subordinates (Guthrie & Reed, 1991). I agree with the basic organizational structure of local school systems that Guthrie and Reed referred to. They say that hierarchical arrangement exists where (a) there is relatively clear separation of authority relationships, (b) there is a fixed division of labor, (c) professional personnel are selected on the basis of technical knowledge, (d) implicit rules govern performance, and (e) personnel are separated from official property or the ownership of the means of production (Guthrie & Reed, 1991). Taken together, these characteristics define schools as a bureaucratic structure.

The first assumption that underlies the monocratic, bureaucratic model is leadership. Leadership is confined to those holding positions in the power echelon (D. Jackson, Personal Communication, September, 1994). I believe that the model states that if you're a principal, you had better keep your power or you will be in trouble. I believe that the monocratic, bureaucratic model says that good principals need to be leaders and not followers. The second assumption is that good human relations is necessary in order that followers accept decisions. I feel that this particular assumption is vital to be an effective principal. As the building leader, you must gain the respect of your teaching staff or they will not believe in

your decisions. The first principal that I worked for, in my opinion, lacked this second assumption as teachers often questioned her actions.

The third assumption underlying the monocratic, bureaucratic model is that authority and power can be delegated, but responsibility can not be shared (D. Jackson, Personal Communication, September, 1994). Again, I feel that a successful principal needs to know when and when not to delegate. My experience has taught me that teachers need responsibility, just like kids do. I think that teachers need to know that you as the principal will trust them to make vital decisions and that you respect there ability to do so. As the principal, you must give responsibility to your teachers. I do feel that teachers must take responsibility for their decisions. If we expect kids to become resposible then we should demand it from our teachers. Again, delegation is a delicate but important part of being an effective principal. Knowing who and what to delegate will take time and practice to perfect. The final decision, along with the responsibility, is the principal's, which leads us to the fourth assumption. The final responsibility for all matters is placed on the administrator at the top. I think all administrators need to remember this fourth assumption.

The fifth assumption claims that individuals find security in a climate in which the superordinates protect the interests of subordinates in the organization. I feel that if the teachers know that their principal will "go to bat" for them, the principal will gain the respect by a majority of the staff. In the four school districts that I have taught in, I can honestly say that I really do not feel that my female principals (in Colman and Harrisburg) would "bat for me" if I had ever needed them to. I'm not sure why I feel this way, but I attribute it to the fact that their was never a

climate established that would have made me feel that they would. I feel that my principals at Garretson and now in Le Mars, which both happen to be male, would do anything to support me or "go to bat" for me if I ever needed them to. Again, I'm not sure if it's because of gender or because I'm a more experienced teacher now. "Going to bat" is defined as helping deal with parents, discipline, setting up curriculum, helping with personal issues, and just being a listener.

The sixth assumption, unity of purpose, is secured through loyalty to superordinate, again ties in with assumption five (D. Jackson, Personal Communication, September, 1994). Teachers will respect you, if you respect the them.

The eighth assumption states that maximum production is attained in a climate of competition and pressure (D. Jackson, Personal Communication, September, 1994). As an educator, I agree with this assumption, but how do you incorporate this idea in a school setting? In a middle school, competition is not strongly encouraged with our student body. How then can we encourage competition with the faculty? If we could somehow apply competition within education, could this develop better teachers or better schools?

The ninth assumption states that authority is the right and privilege of a person holding a hierarchical position. I do agree with this assumption, but one must be very careful on how he/she uses this power. When using my experience as a coach, I always told some of my better varsity players to remember a quote that I received from a former colleague, "Talent is God given and we should be thankful, conceit is self given and we should be careful" (T. Fisher, Personal Communication, September, 1988). I believe this also applies to being a principal.

As a teacher, I don't need to be reminded that (the principal) is the boss. I lost or never gained respect for my first principal who continued to remind me of that very issue..

The eleventh assumption reminds us that the individual in the organization is expendable (D. Jackson, Personal Communication, September, 1994). I think that everyone including the principal, teachers, students, and even parents need to be reminded that the school will function with or without them. The last assumption is that evaluation is the prerogative of superordinates. I will discuss this item later in the paper.

Thompson (1976) suggests that the monocratic, bureaucratic organization is not innovative. He offers a number of proposals that would help these organizations to be more innovative. I agree when he says that jobs should be described in terms of professional responsibilities as contrasted with duties. Some individuals need a sense of direction as to what is expected of them. Professional responsibilities need to be communicated.

The emerging pluralistic, collegial concept is best described as a modification of the monocratic, bureaucratic concept (D. Jackson, Personal Communication, September, 1994). It provides for pluralistic sharing of power to make policy and program decisions on a collegial basis. The organization is structured hierarchically in order to implement programs and policies. It is also structured collegially on an egalitarian basis for making policy and program decisions. I don't see how this concept could completely apply to public schools. It should be carefully noted that it is still the principal's responsibility to enforce any programs or policies that are mutually decided. As Dr. Smith stated, "Most schools hire a

principal based on his/her discipline procedures," (P. R. Smith, Personal Communication, November, 1996). This concept or organization is found in most of the colleges and universities of the nation.

Leadership Style

Leadership is an influence relationship between the leader and followers in pursuit of a common goal. This clearly describes the role of a principal. The principal definitely has the responsibility of leading the teaching staff to accomplish the end goal which is educating our children. Power is the leaders influence potential; it is the resource that enables a leader to induce compliance from or influence followers. Power, therefore, will probably make or break a successful principal. As the building principal, one must be careful when using his/her power of leadership. Leadership, in my opinion, needs to be a mixture of power and your ability to use your skills in collaboration, team building; and the respect which is mutually showed.

Since leadership and power are inseparable, a successful leader must identify with the seven bases of power. These powers include: coercive, connection, expert, information, legitimate, referent, and reward (Blanchard, Hersey & Natemeyer, 1979).

With such a wide variety of power bases available, how does one know which power is the right one? I agree with the article when it suggests that the appropriate power base is largely affected by circumstances (Blanchard, Hersey & Natemeyer, 1979). It is believed that the level of maturity of the followers determines which power base to be most effective.

According to situational leadership, there is no one 'best' way to go about influencing people. There are four styles according to the prescriptive curve (Blanchard, Hersey & Natemeyer, 1979). These styles are telling, selling, participating, and delegating. The prescriptive curve is a combination of task behavior and relationship behavior. Task behavior is the extent to which a leader provides direction for people such as: telling them what to do, when to do it, where to do it, and how to do it. Relationship behavior is the extent to which a leader engages in two-way communication which includes active listening and providing supportive and facilitating behaviors.

It is important for administrators to know the appropriate leadership style for the appropriate maturity level. After examining the prescriptive curve, 'telling' is for low maturity people. These people (or teachers) are unable and unwilling to take responsibility and need clear, specific directions and supervision. This style is characterized by the leader defining roles and telling people what, how, when, and where to do various tasks. I would guess that a first year teacher or a new teacher to a district may have this type of relationship with their principal.

The style selling is for people, in our case, who need directive behavior because of their lack of ability, but also need supportive behavior to reinforce their willingness and enthusiasm. The leader in this style still provides direction but tries to get followers psychologically to buy into designed behaviors.

In the style of participating, the leader and the follower share in decision making with the main role of the leader being facilitating and communicating. The follower has the ability to do what the leader wants but lacks self-confidence.

Delegating, the fourth style, is for high mature individuals. People at this level have both ability and motivation. Little support or direction is needed from the leader. Followers are permitted to run the show and decide on the how, when, and where. These individuals are psychologically mature and therefore do not need above-average two-way communication. These individuals would probably be the ideal teaching staff to work with.

The key to situational leadership is for the leader to assess the maturity level of the follower (teachers) and to behave as the model prescribes (Blanchard, Hersey & Natemeyer, 1979). I agree with each of the prescribed styles because each does exist in our schools. I would find it difficult for a new principal to figure out the maturity level of his/her staff. I can see how the first year of being a principal will be a trial an error situation at times. Until I have a grasp of the staff, one should not do too much delegating in my opinion.

<p style="text-align:center">School Laws and the Principal</p>

I have decided to always talk to someone else, preferably the school attorney, about any major issues when dealing with school law. I also can see the importance of writing everything down; no matter how tedious. The Wisconsin Supreme Court has perhaps best explained the common law with regard to the principal's power and authority (Alexander & Alexander, 1992). It states that while the principal in charge of a public school is subordinate to the school board of his/her district, and must enforce rules and regulations adopted by the board for the governance of the school, and execute all its lawful orders in that behalf, he/she does not derive all his/her power and authority in the school and over pupils from the affirmative action of the board. He/she stands for the time being *in loco*

parentis to pupils, and because of that relation, he/she must necessarily exercise authority over them in many areas.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court says, in my opinion, that the school principal must follow school board procedure and policy while acting upon certain matters as if he/she is a student's parent. For any discretionary issue, the school board has the final decision, however, many ministerial issues will be dealt with by the building principal.

I also think what the Wisconsin Supreme Court stated about student responsibility is quite intriguing. The Wisconsin Court defines a student's responsibility in school, as the obligations of obedience to lawful commands, subordination, civil deportment, respect for rights of other pupils and fidelity to duty (Alexander & Alexander, 1992). These obligations are inherent in any proper school system, and constitute the common law, whether it has or has not been reenacted by the district board in the form of written rules and regulations.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court (Alexander & Alexander, 1992), I believe, is telling us that students also have responsibilities in school just like they should in society. In my opinion, lack of responsibility at home is the main reason why we have so many problems in school. Sadly to say, many kids are acting the same way in school as they do act at home! Many kids have no responsibilities at home; that's why they have none in school.

School Law was an interesting and useful course. However, it appears to me that law is continually changing. Case outcomes will continue to change law thus dictating to schools what they can and can not do. Once I become a principal, I

plan to stay abreast of any significant changes pertaining to school laws. Staying

on top of new case law will be advantageous for any principal.

<div align="center">School and Community Relations</div>

School and community relations is also an issue that a principal must nurture.

I noticed the 1993 Youth Survey that's done by the Iowa Department of Education

(Waterloo Courier, 1995). Some positive points that I interpreted from the survey

revealed that more than 80 percent of students in Iowa say that their parents are

setting standards. I was somewhat surprised by this high percent, however, I do

teach in a middle school where kids don't like to include their parents in anything!

Also, more than 75 percent of students say they are motivated to achieve and have

high aspirations about education; another 60 percent say they are receiving support

from family and are involved in church; a majority say they are involved in

community activities and report a high degree of self-esteem. Again, I was a little

surprised to see these percentages so high. Sometimes you only hear about the

low or negative percentages.

The survey also found some not so positive points including: more than 30

percent of high school seniors say they use alcohol frequently, nearly one-third of

seniors say that they have driven a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol,

more than 10 percent say they have used an inhalant to get high, 12 percent of the

students say that they have tried to commit suicide, 16 percent say they have been

physically abused by an adult, another 11 percent say they have been sexually

abused by an adult, and a few students say they have used a weapon for violence

or threats to get money from someone (Waterloo Courier, 1995). These alarming

statistics, in my opinion, show the need to be committed to prevention and intervention of substance abuse and violence.

I also think this further strengthens the idea that every school administrator needs to possess skills in communicating or possibly counseling. We need to be able to talk and communicate with youth even when we become principals. Principals and counselors need to collaborate about the design of the counseling program (Schmidt, 1993). I know too many principals that can not or refuse to communicate with kids.

David Wright, a substance education consultant for the Iowa Department of Education, suggested that the survey does not even include those children who have already dropped out of school or are in jail (Waterloo Courier, 1995). He states that if those responses were included, the negative results would be even higher. Wright suggests that most kids in Iowa, if they are having personal problems, go to other kids long before they will go to their parents or school officials. Because of this, Wright suggests we train more kids who are informed, or educated, and can make appropriate referrals to a responsible adult and can help the troubled teen follow through. This further strengthens my idea that an effective principal needs to have counseling skills as well. We need to use the available resources of kids helping kids. If we can reach the core of our student body, I think that we will be able to reach most of the student body. This was the purpose of the Natural Helpers Program that I was involved in at the Garretson School District.

Wright further suggests in his article other community ideas to help troubled children (Waterloo Courier, 1995). Some of these include: forming partnerships

between schools, youth serving agencies, and church groups; setting up early intervention programs for kids involved in risky behavior; and adopting a zero tolerance policy for violent behavior, alcohol and drug abuse to help change the norm in the community. I agree with Wright's suggestions, but how can schools do all this with limited funds? I think the principal needs to do a better job of discovering what help is available for schools. I think that part of the responsibility to help our youth lies with the entire community - not just the school. Community members and businesses need to approach the schools and offer their help as well as the principal approaching the community and businesses and asking for help. I don't think the schools can do it alone. It takes the whole village (community) to raise the youth in today's mixed up society (R. Decker, Personal Communication, June, 1995).

Utilization of Technology

I was somewhat hesitant when I began to examine technological applications in education. With limited computer skills, I really did not know what to expect. However, I now feel much more competent with the computer. Examining technology really generated my own personal interest in computers and motivated me to start using the computer. I now can see the unlimited potential of the computer in education. Through personal knowledge, however, I feel that the biggest obstacle of computer use in our schools, is educating our teachers/administrators. I feel that money is not the issue rather educating our school personnel.

According to Robert J. Beichner (1993), there are several problems in identifying the knowledge and skills required to be a computer literate teacher.

These problems include the rapid change in educational technology that has resulted in an evolution of the meaning of computer literacy; computers can be used for many tasks. Which capabilities are important for preservice teachers to know? The most difficult problems arise when we look at more encompassing issues such as curriculum integration and technology's impact on student cognition. These are all problems that I can see within my own school district. However, I strongly feel that one must start somewhere.

Studies show that most teachers have an interest in learning more about using computers in their classes but they are unhappy with their limited training. In a recent survey of preservice teachers in Michigan, teachers indicated that 90 percent agree/strongly agreed that they want more experience using computers while another 76 percent felt that computer use enhances learning (Beichner, 1993). I look at these percents and I feel that they closely represent most school districts in Iowa. As a principal, I need to figure a way to educate staff members.

Beichner (1993) went on to list some instructional technology competencies. He feels three such competencies should represent the minimum technology knowledge that teachers possess. The first of these skills is the demonstration of simple word processing skills such as text modification, insertion, deletion, etc. Word processing is, in my opinion, the most useful skill that teachers can develop in students. The second skill is the integration of technology into the curriculum by producing a detailed lesson plan for teaching a particular topic. Each teacher could easily be required to come up with at least one lesson involving the computer for his/her class. As a prospective principal, I would observe that lesson at least one time for evaluation.

The third skill is to write an implementation plan which outlines their intentions for using technology in the classroom. This plan would describe how technology use will affect the student. This skill could be the final stage of an integration plan to get staff using technology.

It will be important for me to facilitate the education of staff. The United States Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) identifies eight keys for improving technology training and education (Scrogan, 1989). The first of these keys is to emphasize hands-on training. The OTA states to analyze your schools current workshops in order to determine how strong the hands-on component really is. I think that before an effective training program can be established your district must have the available technology. The best way to learn anything is by doing it.

The second key is to use credible instructors. The OTA recommends to use teachers or those individuals with close ties to the classroom as the presenters. As a teacher, I agree that most teachers will listen better if teachers, just like themselves, are the presenters instead of non-teachers outside the school district. I think, if available, that a teacher on the staff would be the best instructor for such an activity.

The next key is to build in close support. Support for technology at the building and district level is badly needed. I feel that a technology coordinator who deals only with technology issues is needed in every school district. This coordinator could and should be available to help establish the use of technology in each district.

Increasing access time is the OTA's fourth key. Training must be adequate for the program. Many educational experts believe that minimal competency is

acquired only after 100 hours of training. I firmly believe this; furthermore, I believe that it will take considerable time to just get some educators relaxed around computers. Once educators are competent in technology, each teacher needs his/her own personal computer in the classroom; not just in the computer lab. If the teacher does not have immediate access to the computer, he/she likely will never use it.

The fifth key is one that I strongly and personally agree with. We need to help teachers view and use the computer first as a tool for personal productivity. A teacher who has been personally empowered by the computer will eventually want to empower students in the classroom. I started doing personal things on the computer (such as papers for school) and now I can do things with my class everyday!

The sixth key, integrating technology, I feel goes along with building the teacher's confidence. The more a teacher uses technology the easier it will be for the teacher to use it. Teachers need to be introduced to technology in a way that will not discourage or frighten them from using it.

The seventh key advises education to go on-line (Scrogan, 1989). Electronic networks can help solve the isolation of the classroom teacher. The OTA has cited the benefits of using an electronic network to enhance teacher support. We now have classes in our local school district that work with the internet; the kids love it. As long as it is closely monitored, the internet is very educational for schools.

The last of the eight keys suggests that teachers need to have computers at home. Evidence suggests that those teachers with computers at home have an easier time integrating them into their classroom. As a principal, I would strongly

investigate educator purchase programs, summer or weekend loan programs, or computers as incentives for teachers. Again, every teacher needs to have a computer in his/her classroom.

Student Learning Styles

Learning styles are also an important part of the educational system. Learning styles are particular forms or ways of learning. Learning, on the other hand, is a typical way of perceiving, thinking, problem solving and remembering (R. Al-Mabuk, Personal Communication, March, 1996). As a principal, it is important to help your teachers identify a student's particular learning style.

Dr. Al-Mabuk identified six learning style types that all educators need to be familiar with. The first is convergent/divergent thinking. Convergent thinking is deductive reasoning that leads to a particular solution to a problem. This type of thinking usually involves only one right answer. Divergent thinking refers to the production of a wide variety of ideas; regardless of how unusual or disconnected they are. Open-ended questions are best for divergent thinkers.

Another learning style type refers to cognitive tempo, or speed of thinking. These styles include reflectivity and impulsivity. Students at the reflectivity extreme usually take a relatively long time to respond to a problem and when they do, it is done carefully and accurately. Those at the impulsive extreme, usually respond almost instantly and often make relatively more errors as a result.

We also have low and high conceptual level learners. Conceptual level is the ability to handle easy to complex information processing under low to high task structure. Low conceptual level learners are categorical thinkers, dependent on rules and less capable of generating their own concepts. They have difficulty

directing their own learning. High conceptual level learners can generate their own concepts, provide their own rules, and consider different viewpoints. They are self-assertive and capable of independent complex conceptual learning.

The fourth type of learning styles are visual (simultaneous) and verbal (successive) learners. Simultaneous learners do better on spatial tasks such as reasoning. They are adapted to visual and motor tasks. Successive learners are readily adapted to auditory-verbal tasks.

Field-dependent and field-independent are the fifth types of learners. Field-dependent learners are drawn to people, alert to social cues, and like to work in groups. They prefer people oriented subjects and occupations. Field-dependent learners are also easily influenced by others while being extremely sensitive to social criticisms. They also need more time to solve problems.

Field-independent learners are more impersonal and less alert to social cues. They have less developed interpersonal skills and tend to be aloof, theoretical, and not sensitive to others around them. Field-independent learners like to work alone and have a preference for occupations in which human interaction is less important.

The last learning style deals with hemispheric dominance (right brain/left brain). Left brain learners are analytical and logical. Right brain individuals are verbal, creative, imaginative, and artistic.

As the building principal, we need to remind our teachers to match the task to the student's learning style. We need to remind our teachers that they create the environment while students do the learning. Learning styles also can apply to your teaching staff. When grouping teachers in committees or inservice groups,

knowing a particular teacher's learning style could be very beneficial as well. I also agree with Dr. Al-Mabuk's statement that we can not let students get too comfortable because if one gets too comfortable, we stop growing (Al-Mabuk, Personal Communication, 1996).

Curriculum Development and Instructional Leadership

Curriculum development is also a major part of the administrator's role. Before examining the curriculum, principals need to examine the four prevailing conceptions humanistic, social reconstructionist, technological, and academic to better understand what curriculum the school needs (McNeil, 1996).

Humanists hold that the curriculum should provide personally satisfying experiences for each student. It stresses growth, regardless of how it's measured or defined. Humanists evaluators emphasize process rather then product. Social reconstructionists stress societal needs over individual interests. They place primary responsibility on the curriculum to effect social reform and generate a better future for society. They are convinced that education can effect social change, for example, literacy campaigns that have contributed to successful political revolutions. Technologists view curriculum making as a technological process for achieving whatever ends policy makers demand. Technology has improved curriculum, however, now those who develop curriculum will have to weigh the value of the technologist's model against its heavier development costs. People with an academic orientation, the fourth conception, assume that an academic curriculum is the best way to develop a rational mind. Their goal is to teach people to think better.

As a principal exploring curriculum, I think one needs to consider all four of the conceptions of curriculum that were discussed. I feel that a combination of all four conceptions needs to be examined. I can see the importance of each of the ideas involving these conceptions. However, I did agree with Dr. Krysinski when she recommended that we keep an "open mind" when it comes to developing curriculum (P. Krysinski, Personal Communication, July, 1996). As the principal, we need to examine all proposed materials and options when developing curriculum.

Supervison and Evaluation

Evaluation of teachers by the building principal is, and will be, one of the most important and possibly the most difficult things that a principal will be required to do. But it is vital to have effective instruction and professional growth.

Robert Goldhammer's clinical model highlights the five stage sequence of evaluation (Pajak, 1993). These five stages include: preobservation conference, observation, analysis and strategy, supervision conference and post-conference analysis.

The preobservation conference, according to Goldhammer, is an open, informal, and relaxed relationship between the teacher and supervisor (Pajak, 1993). I feel that the most important point of the preobservation conference is the atmosphere. I agree when Goldhammer suggests that a certain degree of trust is necessary to minimize anticipatory anxieties and any problems. The purpose of the preobservation conference is to inform the supervisor as to what the lesson involves and provides the teacher an opportunity to mentally rehearse his/her teaching before enacting it. This stage is intended to be several days before the

actual teaching of the lesson. One other interesting note that I will remember was also mentioned by Goldhammer; the supervisor should reserve personal concerns for the feedback conference to avoid confusing or undermining the teacher's equilibrium (Pajak, 1993).

The second stage, observation, is where the supervisor actually watches the lesson. An objective, accurate, and complete representation of classroom events is recorded during this stage. Dr. Decker suggested using the technique of scripting for this purpose(R. Decker, Personal Communication, October, 1996). Scripting is writing everything down that the teacher or the students say or do throughout the lesson.

Analysis and strategy, the third stage, actually involves two steps (Pajak, 1993). During the first step, analysis, some sense is made of the observational data. Teachers are encouraged to legitimately question or dispute the supervisor's reasoning or conclusions. This step, in my opinion, emphasizes the importance of collecting reliable data during the actual observation. In the second step, strategy, a plan for managing the supervision conference is developed.

The supervision conference is the fourth stage. According to Goldhammer, the post observation conference is the most essential stage of clinical supervision. I agree, no matter how easy or difficult, that the supervisor owes the teacher a report on what was observed and recorded. Too many times, from my experience, the teacher is left only to fantasize about the supervisor's perceptions. This conference can be very difficult, in my opinion, if you're observing an ineffective teacher. I feel that if this is the case, the importance of the relaxed and open preobservation conference is a must.

The final stage, the post-conference analysis, the effectiveness of the supervisor's own practice is critically examined by him/herself. This ensures continuing personal growth by the supervisor. I feel that time and experience will help a beginning principal become more effective at this stage.

There are two types of data recording/analysis approaches that the principal can use when observing the teacher: (a) the wide lens approach, or (b) the narrow lens approach (R. Decker, Personal Communication, 1996). Both of these approaches can be very effective both the teacher and the principal when providing feedback during the post-observation conference. The wide lens approach has six components to help the principal make his/her observation. The first being that it provides a purpose or purposes of the classroom observation. The principal will be viewing the students as well as the teacher. The second component the teacher gives the principal the lesson design as well as the components of the lesson. The lesson's components include the objective, content vehicle, method, sequence, time, checking for understanding, and evaluation. Using the third component of the wide lens the principal makes supervisory decisions. Was the lesson effective? What were the performance strengths? What are areas for growth? What other behaviors were observed? Lesson analysis constants is the fourth component. During this component, the principal examines what the teacher did to meet the objective of the lesson. The classroom atmosphere is also observed. Are the students on task? Is the classroom comfortable? Is the teacher enthusiastic? During the fifth component, the principal needs to ask him/herself why was the data recording so difficult? Experience has told me that it will take practice to become an effective observer. It is difficult to write and watch at the same time,

but I do believe that I will become better at this with more practice. Type of data recording is the sixth component. The wide lens approach is basically observing everything in the classroom.

The narrow lens approach lets the principal focus on only one or two behaviors during the observation. As a principal, the narrow lens approach is much easier than the wide lens approach. During the narrow lens approach, analysis of the teacher's questions and the feedback to the students is recorded. An analysis of teacher directions is also observed. Again, scripting is used in both the wide and narrow lens approaches.

I feel that when I become a principal, I will strongly consider using both the wide and narrow lens approaches. I would prefer using the wide lens until I get accustomed to each teacher. I feel that the narrow lens can offer specifics to help teachers become better educators, especially if they want their growth areas observed.

One must be careful and precise when offering constructive criticism. Dr. Decker offered a very important piece of advice that I will associate when encountering a difficult conference (R. Decker, Personal Communication, July, 1996). As the principal, one must remember if you did not see it, it did not happen, if you did not write it down, you did not see it. There are four stages of the negative conference; hostility, anger, mediation, and reconciliation. The most important of these four stages is the last. According to Madeline Hunter's decision-making model, the D-type (difficult conference) is where the observer identifies what did not go well in the teacher's lesson (cited in Pajak, 1993). The most important aspect of the D-type conference is that the principal is responsible

for developing alternatives for the teacher as what did not go well with the observation. I believe that it is important that the principal, before any D-type conference, already have developed any alternatives that the teacher could use as help. I believe that it is important that if the teacher's performance is not satisfactory, it must be communicated with him/her no matter how difficult it may be.

Summary

The Life Styles Inventory (LSI) was utilized during the MAE program (Life Styles Inventory, 1989). Each member of the class completed the LSI and later examined the results. I did not completely agree with some of these results but parts of it made a lot of sense. I feel that to get a true picture of what the LSI was telling, one must take the test more than just one time. Also, some of the results seemed to contradict itself. Certain positions where I was located on the life styles circumplex said one thing about me, but another position would say just the opposite. I also believe that one can not completely change their personality just because the LSI tells them they should. To be successful in anything, an individual must be themselves, I agree that they can be made aware of things to improve on, but it is difficult to ask someone to change their personality. The LSI did indicate that I have strengths in most areas but I disagreed with some of the weaknesses. I will however, try to be more conscience of these indicated flaws.

My vision of the perfect principal became much clearer after examining the six major roles of the school administrator. These six roles include: manager, instructional leader, disciplinarian, human relations facilitator, evaluator, and conflict mediator (Gorton & Schneider, 1991). A successful principal must be a

manager. He/she must be able to organize and coordinate as well as carry out school policy. As the instructional leader, he/she must coordinate curriculum as well as monitor student progress. The school principal most importantly must be a disciplinarian. Without discipline, I feel there will be a lack of respect by students as well as teachers. Consistent discipline is where I think most principals fail. The role of school facilitator involves the principal's ability to enhance staff morale and a positive school environment. The role of evaluator is increasingly important in todays society. The public want to know what is going on in school and how/why teachers are teaching. It is the principals responsibility to evaluate all classes. Conflict mediator is an on-going process as a school principal. Mediation is needed with teachers as well as students. These six roles all deal with how the principal is able to build his/her staff. The best way to build one's staff is through evaluation.

Areas that I vision as most important in becoming a successful principal is leadership and technology and the other areas I discussed. My vision of a principal that possesses effective leadership is one that can make decisions, has good human relations skills, is not afraid to delegate responsibility, and does not abuse his/her power. I also feel that they should not be a so-called 'yes' boy, as some principals have been labeled. I feel that a combination of the monocratic, bureaucratic and the pluralistic, collegial organizations would be best. An effective principal must also become familiar with his/her staff. According to situational leadership, I will need to find the appropriate leadership style for my staff. I feel that only time will help me identify the appropriate maturity level.

I also vision technology as an important part of the education system. I believe that training the staff is the most important part of technology. If the staff is not comfortable, technology will not be used effectively. I feel that required inservice training must take place and be taught by computer literate staff members.

In summary, I feel that the University of Northern Iowa has done a good job preparing me to become an effective principal. At times it seemed that we were overwhelmed with information and things to do. I now can see how most of this knowledge will help me become better prepared for what I will encounter. Each class offered something different but I can now see how they all tie together. I am sure that once I land my first principal's job, I will have a thousand questions. I hope to use the knowledge and information that has been presented over the past three years to help me become a successful principal. If I get stuck or confused, I will refer to the network established through this program as well as the survival guide (Krysinski, 1996). This guide offers any first year principal valuable information to help survive that first year. Composed in the guide are legal issues, general procedures, wisdom from the field, and resources. Perhaps the most important information included in the guide is the section on wisdom from the field. It provides tips on how to effectively relate to your staff, community members, and students. I also plan to use classmates as a valuable source once I get my first job.

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