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Effectiveness characteristics and skills for elementary principals: A literature review

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Effectiveness characteristics and skills for elementary principals: A literature review

Abstract

The elementary principal's job is becoming more complex and demanding. The job involves such tasks as: community, staff and student relationships; financial decisions, organization; problem-solving; management, communication, program evaluation, negotiation and others. 1 Researchers cite certain characteristics and skills as important when striving toward effectiveness in elementary school administration.

EFFECTIVENESS CHARACTERISTICS AND SKILLS
FOR ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS:
A LITERATURE REVIEW

A Research Paper
Presented to
the Department of School Administration
and Personnel Services
University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education

by
Beth Haring-Lee
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This Research Paper by: Beth Haring-Lee

Entitled: EFFECTIVENESS CHARACTERISTICS AND SKILLS
FOR ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

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CHAPTER I
Introduction

Background of the Study

The elementary principal's job is becoming more complex and demanding. The job involves such tasks as: community, staff and student relationships; financial decisions, organization; problem-solving; management, communication, program evaluation, negotiation and others.¹ Researchers cite certain characteristics and skills as important when striving toward effectiveness in elementary school administration.

This study will attempt to discern basic characteristic and skill areas that contribute toward being effective elementary principals. The question that comes to mind concerns the effectiveness of elementary principals and how they create an atmosphere where optimum learning occurs. What characteristics and skills do principals possess that cause others to perceive them as effective principals in producing positive results? Are there specific characteristics which need to be internalized for the principal to react in an efficient way? This study will describe several

¹Donald Musella, "There's Nothing New In Administrator Effectiveness: Advice on Being a Good Principal," Education Canada, Winter 1982, p. 29.

models for review, particularly:

1. Carkhuff problem-solving model
2. Waddell's problem-solving model
3. Waddell's communication model difficulties
4. Bradfield's change model.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of effectiveness in school is stated by Klopff (1982) as: "The principal of a school is its leader, and on the effectiveness of its leader depends the effectiveness of a school."²

What characteristics make an elementary school principal effective? What skills do effective principals possess? To answer these questions, it is essential to investigate recent research of effective leaders and study the implications of research results for administrative theory. If research shows that there are certain theories, that when applied create a productive atmosphere, this awareness will be significant in aiding elementary principals and their schools.

Importance of the Study

According to the 14th annual Gallup Poll, the American educational system is under attack by the public. Forty-four percent of citizens polled graded our public schools

²Gordon J. Klopff, Ethel Scheldon, and Kevin Brennan, "The Essentials of Effectiveness: A Job Description for Principals," Principal, March 1982, p. 35.

nationwide at the C level; fifteen percent gave it a D; and four percent said it was failing.³ The public is concerned with many areas. Some of these areas are: selection of books, settling teacher strikes, poor curriculum, discipline, communication problems, college hopes and plans for their children, problems with administration, the quality of education and qualified teachers.⁴

Since the principals are more readily accessible to the public, they must bear the initial brunt of demands and act effectively when outsiders, and those within, question school policies or related concerns. If principals want to enhance education as a positive force, they must cultivate favorable characteristics and employ certain skills which researchers state as pertinent for effective administration.

James Olivero (1980) of the Association of California has defined the aspect of the principal's role as:

Without leaders, any dream is likely to fade in and out of focus. For today's education, the principal--more than any other person--is the keeper of the dream. The principal realizes upward mobility for students in the school is possible when individuals possess the skills, attitudes and knowledge that occur from quality education...⁵

³George H. Gallup, "The 14th Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," Phi Delta Kappan, September 1982, p. 39.

⁴Ibid., pp. 41-49.

⁵James L. Olivero, The Principal in California: The Keeper of the Dream (Burlingame: Association of California School Administrators, 1980), p. 1.

Limitations of the Study

This research study is concerned only with effective characteristics and skills for elementary school principals. Much of the research has been derived from business sources; however, most of the material has been adapted to apply to elementary school principals. From the research reviewed, several models--cited earlier--have been selected, at the writer's discretion, to support the findings in this study.

Definition of Terms

Administrator--a principal who plans, organizes and controls the activities of the elementary school. In this study the term administrator may be used as a substitute for the term elementary principal and principal.

Characteristics--the identifying qualities or traits distinguishing individuals.

Curriculum development--a course of study for students which is refined to ensure maximum learning throughout varied activities.

Effectiveness--the state in which an accomplishment has occurred through successful use of factors which contribute to bring about a desired result.

Elementary principal--a delegated agent of a school board who administers to the needs of the elementary school. In this study the term principal may be used as a substitute for the term elementary principal.

Goal--a desired state which may be reached through planned factors.

Instructional leader--a principal who has responsibilities that are related to the educational program and process of the students.

Leadership--a quality in a principal that is viewed by others as a top position with power to guide and direct.

Model--a series or set of descriptions systematically listed to facilitate predictions.

Organization--the state in which many agreed upon plans are united and placed in a systematic format; the act of uniting the whole process into a workable plan.

School manager--a principal who manages the daily business of the elementary school, facilitates change and implements those changes.

Skill--a state acquired with trained proficiency.

Success--the state of attaining a desired effect.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Organizational Characteristics and Skills

Researchers recognize that the ability to organize effectively is crucial at any level of education. Specifically elementary principals must possess this organizational characteristic to some degree for satisfactory productivity. Results of an American Management Association survey of 1,275 executives cited "...lack of well-defined organizational or departmental goals and objectives..."⁶ as the factor most responsible for unsatisfactory productivity. When principals utilize this skill to organize their goals, the art of consultation with the staff and community must be present. Musella reiterates this idea when he cites organization as one of the "ten highest ranking skills important for success on the job."⁷ Principals must be able to work collectively with personnel, students, and their communities to further the academic and social growth of the persons involved.

Eisner reports in her study involving research of

⁶Herman S. Jacobs and Katherine Jillsen, Executive Productivity: An AMA Survey Report (New York: AMACOM, 1974), p. 1.

⁷Musella, loc. cit.

effective schools, which showed higher than expected student achievement, that:

The principal provides leadership in working with the staff and community to translate the generally agreed-upon goals (i.e. and emphasis on academic achievement) into specific objectives and programs in reading, writing, mathematics, etc... Effective principals work closely with school personnel and patrons to select a reasonable number of goals and objectives to be implemented and evaluated each year.⁸

Benjamin, another journalist involved in the same study, concluded "... (effective principals) set achievement goals for their students, and they judge their teachers and themselves by them..."⁹

After principals have absorbed the ideas, goals and objectives of school personnel, parents and community, they must organize a list of short-term, medium-range and long-term goals. Lipham maintains that these goals must be prioritized and be realistic in terms of school objectives, attitudes, norms, roles, relationships, and the leadership and instructional capabilities of staff and students within

⁸Jane Eisner, "Good Schools Have Quality Principals," Journalism Research Fellows Report: What Makes An Effective School? ed. D. Brundage (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, George Washington University, 1979), p. 3.

⁹Robert Benjamin, "Successful Schools: The Formula Begins With Responsibility," Journalism Research Fellows Report: What Makes An Effective School? ed. D. Brundage (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, George Washington University, 1979), p. 102.

the school.¹⁰

Musella and Lipham concur with Klopff that after careful planning, principals should "...develop specific school objectives and strategies to implement them [goals] by involving appropriate members of the school community..."¹¹

One principal interviewed by Blumberg and Greenfield quipped,

I think more and more principals are going to have to recognize parent groups as a source of power, and one that they are going to have to deal with..Where community people, parents and school combine to make some decisions or effect some change.¹²

Klopff feels that failure to involve appropriate community members could create a lack of support and could be viewed as disasterous. In addition, principals must assist staff members

...to develop the understanding of the children and youth by involving the classroom teacher in sharing perceptions with the specialist staff, the administrative staff, the nonprofessional staff, the children and youth, and the parents and community...¹³

¹⁰James A. Lipham, "Effective Principal, Effective School," National Association of Secondary School Principals (Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1978), p. 3.

¹¹Klopff, op. cit., p. 36.

¹²Arthur Blumberg and William Greenfield, The Effective Principal: Perspective on School Leadership (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980), p. 150.

¹³Klopff, loc. cit.

Jacobs and Jillsen agree with Klopff: "People work together more effectively and accomplish more when they have specific goals in mind."¹⁴

Problem-Solving Skills

Research shows that there may be at least fifty different administrative styles for top-notch elementary administrators to emulate, but when researching the area of problem-solving, Carkhuff's problem-solving model is found to be most preferred by effective administrators. This model suggests administrators use the following steps when a problem arises:

1. Diagnose and define the problem
2. Gather and analyze the facts
3. Develop alternatives
4. Evaluate alternatives (project and analyze consequences)
5. Select best alternative
6. Implement decision
7. Evaluate decision.¹⁵

Another similar model presented to assist many business administrators in solving basic problems is Waddell's problem-solving model.¹⁶ This model entails eight basic steps to stave off problems and produce good planning with

¹⁴Jacobs, loc. cit.

¹⁵Robert R. Carkhuff, The Art of Problem-Solving: A Guide for Developing Problem-Solving Skills for Parents, Teachers, Counselors and Administrators (Amherst, Mass.: Human Resource Development Press, 1973), passim.

¹⁶William C. Waddell, Overcoming Murphy's Law (New York: American Management Association - AMACOM, 1981), passim.

control. The model suggests that principals should:

Step 1: Determine direction. Visualize how the students and staff should perform given the goals of the school. Next, record or describe the problem. Finally, evaluate its extent and write out the problem's 'desired state' or preferred outcome.¹⁷ Blumberg and Greenfield have gathered research which also supports the concept of identifying the problem first.¹⁸

Step 2: Define goals and objectives. Organize a set of goals that give substance to the problem's grand idea or 'referred state.' In this step, principals must put together the criteria to evaluate possible actions and subsequent results.¹⁹

Step 3: Gather information. Although some information has already been gathered to begin studying the problem, this step serves as a greater in-depth study of the facts and information surrounding the problem. Through data collecting, record checking, and countless other checks, principals will gain new insights into problem areas enabling them to make sound judgements in problem-solving.²⁰

Step 4: Examine limitations and available resources.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁸Blumberg, op. cit., p. 51.

¹⁹Waddell, loc. cit.

²⁰Ibid., loc. cit.

This step is closely related to Step 3. There are always time constraints principals must face. According to Waddell, principals need to know that this limitation can be varified and tested. It would be unwise for principals to assume that past practice comprises a policy.²¹ On the other hand, just because there is no precedent, this does not mean that a change cannot be implemented if it is necessary. "If these 'things' require changing accepted routines and patterns of structure and interaction--well, they'll have to be changed, because that's what has to be done."²²

Step 5: Create alternative ways of solving the problem. Remember that one alternative is to do nothing; another "...is to decide not to decide..."²³ Chester Barnard stated that this may be the most important decision. He stated further, "The fine art of executive decision consists of not deciding questions that cannot be made effective, and in not making decisions that others would make..."²⁴

Principals who propose only one solution are subject to many risks. Identifying three possible solutions, for instance, could more fully expose the problem. Effective

²¹Ibid., op. cit., p. 6.

²²Blumberg, p. 53.

²³Waddell, loc. cit.

²⁴Chester Barnard, The Functions of the Executive (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1938), p. 194.

principals will be able to see the problem's many dimensions. The final solution to the problem might not lie with any of the three identified solutions, but rather through creating a fourth or a combination of the three already proposed.²⁵

Step 6: Shape final plan after a choice has been made. In this step, principals should have evaluated the information and the alternative solutions and have a clear idea as to how to solve the problems. Principals who wait for a 'risk-free' choice will become immobilized and make no decision at all when one is required. Principals will make decisions regardless of the risks, because their jobs demand it.²⁶

Step 7: Implement plan. Put the plan into action. This can be the difficult part of solving a problem because change will, most likely, have to occur. This change can create a whole new set of problems. Principals might want to improve the already existing plan, rather than install a new plan altogether.²⁷

Step 8: Follow-up on the implementation plan and progress. This final step entails getting feedback. At critical points in the plan, reports may not be adequate to warn principals of impending problems. Thus principals

²⁵Waddell, op. cit., p. 7.

²⁶Ibid., loc. cit.

²⁷Ibid., op. cit., p. 8.

must acquire additional information from knowledgeable sources. Principals must determine whether the plan is on track or not. If the problem-solving plan is not on course, the principal must act so that the problem-solving process is put back into action and made more effective.²⁸

Byrne, Hines and McClear's problem-solving model utilizes Waddell's principles and steps in their six-step problem-solving model, having combined two steps in the process.²⁹

Management Skills

Effective management refers to the handling of the day-to-day business of school administration. Principals who practice good managerial skills know how to get people to produce valuable results, and "...feel good about themselves, the organization and the other people with whom they work ..."³⁰ Research shows that principals must be clear as to what they expect from their faculty, students and others.³¹

Working with the staff is a difficult part of being

²⁸Ibid., loc. cit.

²⁹David R. Byrne, Susan A. Hines, and Lloyd McClear, The Senior High School Principalship (Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1978-1979), p. 37.

³⁰Kenneth Blanchard and Spenser Johnson, One Minute Manager (New York: William, Morrow, and Company, 1982), p. 10.

³¹James L. Hager and L.E. Scarr, "Effective Schools - Effective Principals, How to Develop Both, "Educational Leadership, February 1983, p. 38.

an effective principal. Getting results in a staff position is not easy and good staff personnel is hard to come by.

Waddell (1981) suggests ten guidelines that will help the principal overcome difficulties 'inherent' in working with the staff:

1. Know your subject thoroughly and completely; keep up with the latest trends and developments in the field.
2. Use the systemized approach to solve problems and get answers that are the hallmark of your profession, avoiding short-cuts that undermine the authority of your profession and reduce your credibility.
3. Look at situations holistically, understanding their systematic qualities.
4. Learn to ask questions and ferret out required information without arousing antagonism.
5. Be able to establish rapport with others having various backgrounds and backgrounds much different from your own.
6. Communicate your ideas clearly, succinctly, and emphatically in writing and orally.
7. Take responsibility for getting tangible results in all your assignments though the methods employed or the solutions adopted are not necessarily your own creation.
8. Create an appreciation for your point of view and, if needed, build a group to carry out programs, procedures, and sentiments that have been initiated with your influence.
9. Give credit and see that credit is given to others who implement changes.
10. Realize that you have much to learn in your own field and accept continued personal growth and improvement as a challenge.³²

Waddell's ten guidelines can be used in or outside the school

³²Waddell, op. cit., p. 120.

setting. If the elementary leader is working with lay citizens and parents on school related committees, for example, these guidelines would be most advantageous for principals to work effectively with individuals of varied backgrounds who present a wide range of opinions.

For school principals, part of the responsibility of working with a staff requires consistent and complete evaluations of the staff. Too often ineffective principals try to catch an employee doing something wrong. In order for principals to be effective, it is imperative to "catch people doing something right."³³ When principals, therefore, need to correct or change situations, teachers will perceive the principal's comments as fair and sound since some earlier observations were positive.³⁴

Lipham and Hoeh concur with Waddell and Blanchard that positive evaluation of staff is important for effective management by school principals.³⁵

It is important for elementary principals who practice good administrative techniques to feel confident in times of adversity. Change can be considered an adversity for some principals if they are not clear about what and whom they want changed. When change is required, elementary

³³Blanchard, op. cit., p. 40.

³⁴Musella, op. cit., p. 29.

³⁵Blumberg, op. cit., p. 26.

school principals attempt "to understand the influences that have played on the individual in the past and to make positive efforts to shape a favorable environment for the individual to operate in at the present."³⁶

Research from Fullan and Park supports Bradfield by showing that the need for change "...must be perceived by those involved and/or affected by the change."³⁷ Bradfield lists six areas for principals to be aware of, as possible "blocks," to prevent needed change:

1. Extreme desire to conform to an accepted pattern
2. Judging the contemplated change too quickly
3. Fear of being mistaken or fear of being ridiculed
4. Fear of criticism from supervisors or colleagues
5. Lack of belief in one's self, lack of self-confidence
6. Failure to distinguish between cause and effect.³⁸

A major challenge for all managers is to understand the mechanics of change and to implement the change in a manner to insure its success.³⁹

Musella claims that a change in human behavior is

³⁶Luther Bradfield and Leonard Kraft, The Elementary School Principal in Action (Scranton: International Text-book Company, 1970), pp. 58-59.

³⁷M. Fullan and P. Park, Curriculum Implementation (Toronto, Ontario: Ministry of Education, 1981), p. 14.

³⁸Bradfield, op. cit., p. 59.

³⁹Ibid., op. cit., p. 60.

very complex and takes a long time to implement fully.⁴⁰ Once these human behaviors have been directed, Bradfield holds that the climate and necessary interpersonal relations have been established for the innovation to be introduced. Principals must then determine the grand strategy that will see the innovation through to its final adoption as an integral part of the school's program.⁴¹

According to Bradfield, understanding the change process will form a basis for implementing innovative changes. First all people involved must realize that change is necessary. Second individual behavior patterns are difficult to alter, thus making change difficult and slow. Third it is difficult to change habitual behavior. Fourth people who are unaware of needed change may become obstacles unless the change is made explicit. Fifth the desired behavior must be clearly presented. Sixth the person involved must be informed of progress made in behavioral change. Seventh positive environment aids change in individual behavior. Finally changing the manner in which two people work together makes for better relations rather than by attempting to change each individual.⁴²

Principals who successfully guided change, according to Fullan's research data:

⁴⁰Muzella, op. cit., p. 31.

⁴¹Bradfield, op. cit., p. 61.

⁴²Ibid., loc. cit.

- monitored teacher activity
- set policy clearly indicating their support of the activity
- worked on problems teachers were having in bringing about change
- were intensely involved during initial stages and continued their interest throughout
- solved problems and overcame obstacles encountered
- explained to faculty the benefits of the projects
- encouraged teachers to visit other schools to observe
- anticipated needs and provided resources as necessary.⁴³

Bradfield, Musella and Fullan "suggest that different change-directed behavior may be more or less effective either in their own right or under different conditions."⁴⁴

Curriculum Development Skills

Effective administrators must assume their share of responsibility for the conditions that exist in varying degrees in our school. Part of that responsibility lies in the selection of the school curriculum and the development of a creative, sound curriculum format.

The primary responsibility of elementary school principals is to create and guide the forces that can move their schools to new heights of effectiveness in learning. This task takes on great urgency in the face of current criticisms of public education and the swirl of demands for change and improvement.⁴⁵

⁴³Ursula C. Pinero, "Wanted: Strong Instructional Leaders," Principal, March 1982, p. 18.

⁴⁴Ibid., loc. cit.

⁴⁵Roscoe Davidson, "Moving Your School From Where It Is," Nation Elementary Principal, January 1973, p. 51.

Effective administrators know that curriculum development cannot fall on their shoulders alone. Rather, working together with a variety of educationally trained personnel at varied levels will enhance the curriculum selection and implementation.⁴⁶ Since the teachers are the ones who will present the curriculum to the students, an exceptional administrator recognizes the value of instructor input in curriculum development. It is doubtful that any group of educators would become motivated by an administrator who has excessive or total control over the school curriculum. It is equally doubtful that principals will be omnipotent and informed about curriculum development without the consultation of their staff and other educational professionals who can contribute first-hand experience and other insightful information to the selection process.⁴⁷

Studies conducted by Cotton and Savard (Micro, Dec. 1980) produced evidence that "active instructional leadership on the part of the elementary school principal" not only aids the staff but also enhances student achievement.⁴⁸ Instructional leadership behaviors cited as promoting student achievement include:

⁴⁶Dr. James Doud, Elementary Curriculum Development, Class, University of Northern Iowa, Summer Session, 1982.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸K. Cotton and W.C. Savard, The Principal as Instructional Leader (ERIC ED 214 702), p. 85.

1. frequent observstion and/or participation in classroom instruction;
2. communicating clearly to the staff what is expected of them as facilitators of the instructional program;
3. making decisions about the instructional program;
4. coordinating the instructional program;
5. being actively involved in planning and evaluating the instructional program; and
6. having and communicating high standards/expectations for the instructional program.⁴⁹

Study data indicated that elementary principals who followed these six behaviors "were found to have a positive effect on reading achievement and an even more positive effect on mathematics achievement."⁵⁰

Davidson's and Bellack's research concludes that effective elementary principals should also be aware of undesirable conditions that currently exist in the schools when working on curriculum development:

1. Schools have habitually perpetuated programs and practices that are unresponsive to children's needs and interests. Some children actively resist; some drop out; some have learned to tolerate.
2. The schools continue to offer large numbers of very different children similar if not identical learning experience through the same materials, the same teaching procedures, the same staffing arrangements, and the same allocation of time.
3. Schools have been less open to the utilization of more efficient and creative human and material resoruces available to them.

⁴⁹Ibid., loc. cit.

⁵⁰Ibid., loc. cit.

4. A whole new look at priorities for individual children, with the full realization that at any one time what is most needed by some is not necessarily most needed by all, is important to the selection process.

5. Most learning in school is cognitively oriented and, with few exceptions, involves only the lower levels of cognitive behavior.⁵¹

6. Schools urgently need to place children in more active roles in the teaching process. Substantial research projects have demonstrated that children typically assume passive roles while teachers make the decisions, do the talking, and dole out the evaluations.⁵²

In developing curriculum, Nicholson and Tracy found that principals must contemplate the scope of the problem presented while listening to the confusing array of solutions offered from every conceivable source.⁵³

The consuming and contradictory input from multiple sources often leaves principals at a standstill when working to create the "proper curriculum" for their schools. That is why simple and clear planning must be implemented.⁵⁴

Data taken from annual Association for Supervision and Curriculum conferences from 1972 to 1977 found that

⁵¹Davidson, op. cit., pp. 54-55

⁵²Arno A. Bellack, Theory and Research in Teaching (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963), p. 158.

⁵³Everett W. Nicholson and Sandra J. Tracy, "Principal's Influence on Teacher's Attitude and Implementation of Curriculum Change," Education, 103, No. 1, 1982, p. 72.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 69.

principals need to incorporate teachers from each grade level to serve on committees that evaluate and design curriculum.⁵⁵ Other special professionals may be included in committees if they possess alternative or enlightening points of view that would aid in the final curriculum selection.⁵⁶

Once the curriculum committee has been formed, a clear set of instructional goals must be organized.

Unless the school staff has a clear conception of the qualities and characteristics it is trying to develop in pupils, and unless it bases its efforts on sound principles of learning, it is buffeted in every direction by the forces that play on it and the endless demands that are made of it.⁵⁷

Klopf, Scheldon and Brennan agree with Davidson in their research which lists the areas and goals the curriculum must reinforce. Their findings show that the curriculum committee must compare different learning programs and tests available through publishers with the committee's goals and decide which series best fits their school's particular needs. If several educational series are under consideration, the committee should choose two or three different sales representatives to present these series to the committee. The staff must be reminded to evaluate the series according

⁵⁵James M. Mahan and Penny G. Chickendantz, "Determinants to Fully Effective Innovations in Elementary Schools," Phi Delta Kappan, October 1977, pp. 131-132.

⁵⁶Dr. James Doud, Elementary Curriculum Development, Class, University of Northern Iowa, Summer Sessions, 1982.

⁵⁷Davidson, op. cit., p. 52.

to their previously designed criteria. Often the sales personnel are skilled in presenting a "flashy" or high-pitched sales format that motivates the teachers to the point of forgetting the previously agreed upon areas of importance. It is important to remember that what determines effective principals and responsive, attuned curriculum committees is their ability to come to grips with what is effective, and what is not, in the learning process of children.⁵⁸

Success and Leadership Skills

An observation to emerge repeatedly in studies of leaders, including studies of educational leaders, is that leaders are people-oriented. They are out-going and successful in dealing with people, and they have good listening, social and interpersonal skills. One effective principal named William Corbett, interviewed by Ken Wilson, believes that these qualities are especially effective when working with special interest groups. Corbett stated that he "genuinely listens to them [special interest groups] to accommodate those concerns he considers legitimate and fair."⁵⁹

The listening skills of principals must apply not only to interest groups, but also they must apply to teaching staffs. Research conducted by Arthur Blumberg

⁵⁸Klopf, op. cit., p. 37.

⁵⁹Ken Wilson, "An Effective School Principal," Educational Leadership, February 1982, p. 360.

and William Greenfield, quoted one outstanding principal named John as saying,

Teachers have to see you [the principal] as caring, as listening to their problems. And after listening, you have to follow through so that teachers know you cared enough to do something, and then communicate back to them. You may not follow through the way the teacher thought you should, but at least you did something. You heard the problem and you dealt with it in a way that you saw fit.⁶⁰

Further research provided by Blumberg and Greenfield showed that educational leaders are very sensitive to what is happening around them. Leaders are not only good at absorbing ideas, but they are also good at communicating ideas.

As well as being a successful listener or people-oriented, principals have to have skills that aid them in social situations. Good principals are "born with verbal abilities, and they need to interact well with others; they know how to communicate."⁶¹

Musella's and Levinson's research expands upon this point by identifying one quality of an "ideal leader" as articulate.⁶² A study of the principalship, by Gordon and McIntyre, found that "significant others" [those educators

⁶⁰Arthur Blumberg and William Greenfield, The Effective Principal: Perspectives on School Leadership (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980), pp. 115-116.

⁶¹Ibid., op. cit., p. 116.

⁶²H. Levinson, "Criteria for Choosing Chief Executives," Harvard Business Review, July-August 1980, p. 115.

who are knowledgeable about the principal's performance] see effective principals as "strong in oral communication."⁶³

This idea of oral communication is reflected by Dr. Eric Marcus in his discourse on rapport. Dr. Marcus alleges that "one difference between persons is their basic language pattern which reflects individual speaking styles."⁶⁴

Therefore, Marcus concludes that the closer principals match the language to persons with whom they are speaking, that these persons will experience rapport.⁶⁵

According to Dr. Marcus, there are three basic styles of speaking: kinesthetic, visual and auditory.

1. "Kinesthetic refers to people who speak in terms of feelings." These people may feel "tingly," experience a pain in their stomach, have headaches or notice excitement in the chest. "Their language contains many feeling-type words such as 'I feel great when I'm around you,' or 'He gives me a pain in the neck.'" "When the effective administrator is establishing rapport with such kinesthetically-oriented people, it is best to use feeling-oriented words as much as possible.
2. "Visual refers to people who talk primarily with visual references." These people use phrases such as "in-focus," "get some perspective," and "out of the picture." For administrators to have the most effective contact with visual people, it is best to use seeing-related words as much as possible.

⁶³Richard Gorton and Kenneth McIntyre, The Senior High Principalship. Vol. II of The Effective Principal (Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1978), p. 8.

⁶⁴Eric H. Marcus, M.D., "The Neurolinguistic Programming: The Medium is the Message," The School Administration, October 1982, p. 28.

⁶⁵Ibid., loc. cit.

3. "Auditory refers to persons whose frame of reference is primarily verbal." These people use such phrases as "sounds to me like..." or "did you get the message?" If the administrator is to be communicating effectively with the auditory person, the use of hearing-related words is imperative for good results.⁶⁶

Another form of communication, in conjunction with oral communication, is that of non-verbal behavior and body language. Research presented by Nagata, Nay and Seidman suggests that non-verbal behavior is dominant over verbal behavior. Therefore, principals need to be aware of their own body language and non-verbal behavior they are projecting.⁶⁷

Marcus goes on to say that body language refers to that pattern of an individual's consistent and repetitive mannerisms. Tilting the head to one side while speaking, tapping a foot or breathing at a certain rate constitutes examples of repetitive mannerisms.⁶⁸

"One of the most effective ways to establish rapport is to 'mirror' someone's body language, that is, to subtly imitate them... The single most potent item to mirror is one's breathing pattern." If principals adjust their breathing rate and rhythm to match someone else's, Marcus concludes

⁶⁶Ibid., loc. cit.

⁶⁷Donna Kiyoo Nagata, W. Robert Nay, and Edward Seidman, "Non-verbal and Verbal Content Behavior in the Prediction of Interviewer Effectiveness," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 30, No. 1, 1983, p. 83.

⁶⁸Marcus, op. cit., p. 29.

that good rapport will occur.⁶⁹

Tolhuizen stated that "observing the communication behavior of others requires practice and sensitivity,"⁷⁰ but is important for principals to develop awareness and establish good rapport.⁷¹

Marcus provided the following example to support his approach of good rapport. "Suppose a principal who is standing next to a superintendent feels some apprehension in discussing a departmental difficulty."⁷² According to Dr. Marcus' conclusions, if principals notice superintendents' breathing rates and then subtly adjust their own to match, better rapport will be created.⁷³

The timing of a communication is very important for effective administration. Dr. Marcus divides communication into "Up-Time" and "Down-Time." One is mentally available for input during Up-Time. One is doing internal mental activity such as thinking, planning, organizing, assimilating or fantasizing during Down-Time. Principals facilitating this model would find it useless to offer information to persons during their Down-Time. Principals should always try

⁶⁹Ibid., loc. cit.

⁷⁰James H. Tolhuizen, "Communication Habits: A Plan for Change," Business Education Forum, May 1981.

⁷¹Ibid., op. cit., p. 24.

⁷²Marcus, loc. cit.

⁷³Ibid., op. cit., p. 27.

to impart information to persons, be they staff or other, during their Up-Time, as this is most conducive to effective reception of information.⁷⁴

Tolhuizen and Marcus confirm that in any kind of communication, it is vital for principals to remain objective. Principals must be able to distinguish between reality and assumptions. Otherwise, according to Tolhuizen, potentially volatile situations could be misdiagnosed and, hence, terminate further communication.⁷⁵

Dr. Marcus affirms that important aspects of communication are rapport, timing and distinguishing assumptions from realities. Research shows that if communication techniques are followed, better communication will enhance relationships that principals will encounter.⁷⁶

Studies show that just as oral communication is necessary for effective administration, written communication is also an important asset for the effective administrator to be perceived as proficient. While much of the communication to the staff will be oral, written communication [handbooks, newsletters, press releases] will be the main form of communication to the public. Gillespie also advises principals to "send home newsletters that are clear and correct

⁷⁴Ibid., op. cit., p. 29.

⁷⁵Tolhuizen, op. cit., p. 25.

⁷⁶James A. Lipham, Effective Principal, Effective School (Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1978), p. 9.

....write memos that are straightforward and not brimming over with 'educational gibberish'."⁷⁷

Gunning recommends "Ten Principals of Clear Writing" for principals to utilize in working with the staff or outsiders. Gunning's principles are:

1. Keep sentences short. Tests show reading tends to be hard when sentences average more than twenty words...
2. Prefer the simple to the complex. This applies to sentence structure and choice of words...
3. Prefer the familiar word. If the reader doesn't understand the words you use, he is likely to miss your meaning...
4. Avoid unnecessary words. Nothing weakens writing more than words you don't need...
5. Put action in your verbs. Action verbs put life in writing...
6. Write the way you talk...A conversational tone is one of the best avenues to readable writing...
7. Use terms your reader can picture...Prefer the short, concrete words that stand for things you can see and touch...
8. Tie in with your reader's experience. Your reader will not get your new ideas unless you link it with some old ideas he already has...
9. Make full use of variety. Develop a fresh form of expression that represents you...
10. Write to express not impress...Make your ideas clear with simple, direct writing...⁷⁸

Gunning's principles supported Gillespie and Musella's findings that principals must write "clearly and directly"⁷⁹ Lipham concludes that "effective principals analyze their

⁷⁷Tim Gillespie, "Our Readers Write," English Journal, April 1983, p. 71.

⁷⁸Robert Gunning, "How to Improve Your Writing," Factory Management and Maintenance, June 1952, p. 1.

⁷⁹Musella, op. cit., p. 30.

own and others' value orientation and work to establish open lines of communication for all personnel and for the community."⁸⁰

Effective communication through writing and becoming proficient in oral communication are vital techniques to facilitate maximum effectiveness on the part of an administrator.⁸¹

Although listening and communication skills, written and oral, are the basis for achieving success skills and good leadership qualities, motivation is the "thrust" used to achieve success on the part of the elementary principal. As the school's leader, principals influence the staff's morale and induce positive productivity and job satisfaction through the use of motivation. This motivation not only benefits teachers, but is also discernible in the students and the community.⁸² In agreement with Walter, Oadwell, and Marshall's research, Sikula's research shows that if teachers and community see the elementary principal as dynamic and motivating, those qualities will rejuvenate them, and they will become more interested and aware by the effective

⁸⁰Lipham, op. cit., p. 6.

⁸¹Ibid., loc. cit.

⁸²James E. Walter, Sarah DeJarnette Caldwell, and John Marshall, "Evidence for the Validity of Situational Leadership Theory," Educational Leadership, May 1980, pp. 618-619.

administrator's example.⁸³

Writer Anthony Cedoline touches upon one key element toward achieving staff motivation by stating "Teachers must be able to find satisfaction and motivation through some degree of autonomy and control."⁸⁴ "If all major decisions are left to various pressure groups or administrators, teachers begin to feel helpless about their control."⁸⁵

As research repeatedly shows in all areas of administration, incorporating those who are involved in a particular situation, with those making the decisions, reinforces awareness and motivation for all persons involved. It is not implied that everyone is getting a piece of the action or making the final decision; rather everyone is involved and, therefore, motivated through being informed.⁸⁶

Writer Peggie Case Paulus provides a list of "commandments" that enables teachers and administrators to "keep fresh and excited" about the whole business of education. The list suggested that all educationally involved personnel must:

⁸³Robert R. Sikula, "A Crucial Issue, School-Community Relations: A Systematic Approach," NASSP Bulletin, February 1981, pp. 58-62, passim.

⁸⁴Anthony Cedoline, Job Burnout in Public Education: Symptoms, Causes and Survival Skills (New York: Columbia University, 1982), p. 99.

⁸⁵Ibid., op. cit., p. 30.

⁸⁶Sikula, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

1. Keep alert to changing methods and philosophies.
2. Attend conferences, workshops, and in-service programs with an open mind.
3. Listen to other teachers in your school.
4. Avoid like the plague the stereotype of talking only about school after hours.
5. Keep alert physically and mentally.
6. Keep in step with students and find out about their hobbies, movies, and music.
7. Discard...discard...discard old ideas, old prejudices, old materials.
8. Read more than "Dick and Jane" books and subscribe to professional magazines.
9. Be flexible and avoid doing something just because it's always been done that way.
10. Keep your senses sharpened, your mind keen, and your heart open to remain an enthusiastic teacher.⁸⁷

Writers such as Cedoline, Paulus and Sikula provide theories and philosophies to help administrators positively influence those around them. It is strongly recommended through literature that effective principals must refine their leadership skills. Since elementary principals are the persons with a great deal of responsibility, it is only practical for them to use researched leadership skills in influencing those around them.⁸⁸

⁸⁷Peggie C. Paulus, "Teacher Burnout," Instructor, January 1979, p. 59.

⁸⁸Susan C. Paddock, "The Principal and the Community: Competencies to Meet the Challenge," NASSP Bulletin, February 1981, p. 67.

CHAPTER III

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to answer the questions in the statement of the problem through reviewing literature and thus making conclusions.

In analyzing research there appeared to be five basic skill areas with overlapping characteristics that competent elementary administrators facilitate. They are: organizational skills, problem-solving skills, management skills, curriculum development skills, success and leadership skills.

The five skill areas are basic in nature, but extremely relevant to effective elementary principals. Each skill area, within chapter two of this research paper, has been visibly separated from the other skill areas in order to present an analytical format. In reality, the characteristics and skills mesh together, for effective principals are 'whole persons' who integrate many of these skills in countless situations.

Musella's conclusions are similar to the writer's when he stated, "We have known, for a long, long time, all we need to know about administrator effectiveness, is how to be an effective administrator."⁸⁹ Other writers have

⁸⁹Musella, op. cit., p. 29.

cited evidence that effectiveness, inside the school and out, depends upon its school leader. That is to say, good schools are not produced by chance or at random. Rather the information within this research paper clearly serves as sound direction for elementary principals who desire complete effectiveness.

Furthermore, if one of the five basic skill areas, cited as important by this writer, was eliminated, the success of elementary principals would be impaired, and consequently, the void would affect others.

As the research shows, elementary principals must strive for excellence if they are going to improve today's schools. That motivation for excellence must come from the administrative realm and filter throughout the entire school system. Effective principals need to work diligently with organizing goals and seeing that they are carried out. Principals should utilize a plan to meet problems as they occur and work intelligently and systematically at correcting those problems. Effectiveness depends upon the whole operation of the school. Visualizing the school as a thriving operation requires a strong managerial sense. Keeping the operation or daily business of the school moving toward excellence demands the power of sagacity on the part of the elementary principal. Minor adjustments are usually needed in maintaining a desirable school environment rather than making major changes.

If the atmosphere is conducive to change, then effec-

tive elementary principals must organize a systematic approach toward gaining a positive environment. Through good communication and strong leadership, optimum productivity will occur in all areas. It is most clearly summed up by writer JoAnn Mazzarella that "excellent leaders have the influence and ability to get things done, and both are necessary in schools today."⁹⁰

⁹⁰JoAnn Mazzarella, "Portrait of a Leader," Principal, March 1982, p. 28.

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