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PREVIEW

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DECISIVENESS PERCEIVED BY CERTIFIED STAFF AND THE PERSONALITY
TYPE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln

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DECISIVENESS PERCEIVED BY CERTIFIED STAFF AND THE PERSONALITY
TYPE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

by

Robert E. Brandt

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
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Major: Interdepartmental Area of Administration,
Curriculum, and Instruction

Under the Supervision of Professor Edgar A. Kelley

Lincoln, Nebraska

December, 1983

TITLE

DECISIVENESS PERCEIVED BY CERTIFIED STAFF AND THE PERSONALITY

TYPE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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DECISIVENESS PERCEIVED BY CERTIFIED STAFF AND THE PERSONALITY
TYPE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Robert E. Brandt, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 1983

Advisor: Edgar A. Kelley

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between secondary school principals' self-reported personality types and their degree of decisiveness as perceived by their teachers. The population from which the sample of this study was drawn consisted of all Nebraska secondary school principals with at least three years of experience in their current position and who supervised fifteen or more teachers with a minimum of three years of experience in that school district. Two instruments were used for the collection of data for this study. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form G, was used to collect data regarding the personality type preference strengths of secondary school principals. A random sample of teachers completed an instrument in which they rated their respective secondary school principal's degree of decisiveness.

The major findings of this study were:

1. Principals typed Extraversion were more decisive than principals typed Introversion.
2. Decisiveness was positively correlated with Extraversion, Sensing, Intuition, Thinking, Judging, and Perception personality types. The degree of decisiveness increased as the personality type preference strength score increased.

3. Decisiveness was negatively correlated with Introversion and Feeling personality types, and the degree of decisiveness decreased as the personality type preference strength score increased.

4. Thinking and Judging were identified as significant predictors of decisiveness for this population of principals.

5. There was no significant difference in the distribution of personality type preferences of secondary school principals when the mean decisiveness scores of all sampled principals were divided into high, moderate, and low categories of decisiveness.

Decisiveness of secondary school principals with particular personality types can be perceived by teachers. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator can identify personality types which can be analyzed in relation to behaviors, traits, and characteristics of individuals.

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R.E.B.

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PREVIEW

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Organizations place a high value and added responsibility upon people who are able to analyze situations and be decisive. Effective decision-making and problem-solving tactics are viewed as desirable skills for administrators in leadership positions. Management and administration processes and practices continue to be refined and analyzed to improve organizational functions. Training, selection, and in-service practices for administrators can be improved based upon the study and use of decisiveness research.

Authors have made contributions to the study and analysis of decision-making methodology, leadership, and their effects upon individuals and organizations (Baird, 1978; Guest, Hersey, & Blanchard, 1977; Likert, 1961; Plunkett & Hale, 1982; Simon, 1957; Stogdill, 1948; Stogdill & Coons, 1957). The study of individual and organizational behaviors has expanded upon the writings of earlier authors to gain additional insight into how these behaviors impact decision-making processes. Behaviors are influenced by individual personality characteristics. These characteristics influence the analysis of situations, the certainty which a person exhibits when approaching a decision, and the confidence expressed when a decision is made and implemented. Decisions and the decisiveness exhibited in

situations are influenced by one's personality.

Due to society's emphasis placed on qualities of management and decision making, and the research which has refined management practices, decisiveness and decision making might be expected to include exacting methodology to promote quality management skills. In 1978, the National Association of Secondary School Principals conducted a study of the senior high school principalship and found that principals did not rely upon a prescribed method of solving problems and making decisions. School principals identified three problem-solving approaches in Gorton and McIntyre's (1978) study including:

1) utilizing the principles and steps recommended in the professional literature; 2) emphasizing personal qualities such as listening, staying "cool," being able to take pressure, and being persistent; and 3) utilizing an intuitive approach. Most of the principals do not employ the "scientific process" of problem solving found in the professional literature. Instead they rely on their intuition and personal qualities to solve problems. Most principals indicated that personal qualities and intuition were important considerations when solving problems. Effective decision making and leadership are characteristics which have been determined in part by individual personality and interpersonal dynamics associated with situations or conditions of the environment. (p. 59)

Decisiveness has been identified as a behavior dimension in the study and refinement of personnel selection. Assessment centers have been used to measure managerial potential and assess the strengths and weaknesses of entry level and practicing managers, administrators, and principals. The National Association of Secondary School Principals Assessment Center identified decisiveness as a

behavior dimension and defined it as the "ability to recognize when a decision is required (disregarding the quality of the decision) and to act quickly" (Hersey, 1979, p. 45). This behavior dimension emphasizes the ability of a decision maker to make quick determinations. Decisiveness can be recognized and perceived as a behavior dimension which allows further actions and production to occur.

Can an individual's personality characteristics contribute to the degree of decisiveness exhibited by a person? Personality assessment instruments, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Myers, 1962), have the capability of identifying personality styles, types, or preferences. Peterson and Peterson (1982), in their study of administrator decisiveness, noted:

Future research may improve our understanding of decisiveness and further credit or discredit its value to effective administrative behavior, but at present the best information available strongly suggests that decisiveness is an important dimension of effective administrative behavior. (p. 45)

Analyses of personality characteristics should be conducted to determine whether behavioral dimensions of administrators are typical for particular personalities.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between secondary school principals' self-reported personality types and their degree of decisiveness as perceived by their teachers.

Hypotheses

Five hypotheses were tested in this study. The MBTI and a rating instrument used by certified teachers to obtain perceptions of the degree of decisiveness of secondary school principals were used to collect data for testing of the following hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference in the degree of decisiveness of secondary school principals who are typed "Extraversion" compared to secondary school principals who are typed "Introversion."
2. There is no significant difference in the degree of decisiveness of secondary school principals who are typed "Sensing" compared to secondary school principals who are typed "Intuition."
3. There is no significant difference in the degree of decisiveness of secondary school principals who are typed "Thinking" compared to secondary school principals who are typed "Feeling."
4. There is no significant difference in the degree of decisiveness of secondary school principals who are typed "Judging" compared to secondary school principals who are typed "Perception."
5. When the mean decisiveness scores of all sampled principals are divided into high, moderate, and low categories of decisiveness, there is no significant difference in the distribution of personality type preferences of secondary school principals as measured by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator among these categories of decisiveness.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used:

Contact person. A person identified by the secondary principal who would distribute, collect, and return the rating instrument used by randomly sampled teachers to determine the principal's degree of decisiveness.

Decision making. The systematic process of making a judgment or drawing conclusions.

Decisiveness. "The ability to recognize when a decision is required (disregarding the quality of the decision) and to act quickly" (Hersey, 1979, p. 45).

Degree of decisiveness. The extent of action taken when a decision is required. In this study, the degree of decisiveness will be categorized as:

- Extremely High - Only one out of ten persons is as decisive
- High - In the top third of all persons in decisiveness
- Average - In the middle of all persons in decisiveness
- Low - In the bottom third of all persons in decisiveness
- Extremely Low - Only one out of ten persons is as low in decisiveness

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form G. The MBTI, an assessment tool, was developed by Isabel Briggs Myers and Katharine Briggs