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DESCRIPTIONS OF AN IDEAL SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
BY FOUR SAMPLED POPULATIONS

by

Duane W. Smith

A DISSERTATION

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I

INTRODUCTION

The secondary school principal has the major responsibility for the educational program of the school he administers. If he is to fulfill the obligations as the educational leader, he must conduct his activities in such a way as to inspire loyalty, promote creativity, develop professional attitudes, and encourage scholarship among the members of his teaching staff.

For the principal to be the educational leader in his school, and to accomplish his objectives in his professional and community relationships, he must command the respect of those people with whom he works. How the principal obtains and retains the respect of his fellow principals, his superior administrative officers, his teaching staff, and other professional educators in higher education is not at all clear. Any conflict that is present among any of these groups will create problems for the school principal that he must reconcile. If a principal were to know the characteristics that these groups tended to view in common as the characteristics of an "ideal" secondary principal, and if he were to know the relative importance of these characteristics to each group, he would perhaps be able to capitalize on this knowledge in his professional relationships with these groups.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to find how teachers, principals,

superior administrative officers, and persons engaged in training educational leaders describe their conceptions of an ideal secondary school principal and to determine any significant relationships among the composite descriptions. Four populations were investigated in an effort to discern possible differences among the descriptions of an ideal secondary school principal as offered by each population and to identify general areas of agreement and disagreement in terms of a series of specific items as determined by a research instrument. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following question: Are there any significant relationships among the descriptions of an ideal secondary school principal as conceived by teachers, as conceived by principals, as conceived by superior administrative officers, and as conceived by persons engaged in training educational leaders?

Justification of the Study

As the demands for educational excellence increase, so the requirements for effectiveness in educational administration become more acute. The demands placed on the secondary school principal are similarly increasing.

Current literature and recent studies indicate a need for definite information in describing the role of the educational administrator and in determining some of the characteristics, both personal and professional, that he must have. In a study in 1962, Hills made the following observation while writing of the elementary principal:

There is nothing new or unusual in the suggestion that the administrator is a middleman; one who serves two masters. Nor is it novel to suggest that the two masters seldom agree on what the administrator should do. But it is not at all clear how these observations can be related one to another to form a coherent pattern within which problems of leadership, administration, and organization can be viewed.¹

At the 48th Annual Convention of the National Association of Secondary School Principals held in Chicago in April of 1964, Drucker summed up what seemed to this investigator to be one of the basic problems of secondary educational administration:

Altogether effectiveness may be the most important attribute of the administrator whether he administers a school, a hospital, a government agency, or a business. And there is no doubt that effectiveness is much scarcer than ability.²

The role of the secondary school principal is of special concern because of the ever-increasing demands being placed on the secondary school to provide well-trained students with backgrounds good enough to keep pace with stepped-up curricula at the college level and the stepped-up pace of living in today's society. The required specialization at the secondary level of teaching creates an even greater demand on the principal in his effort to aid in fulfilling the great American dream of education for all people. Conflict arises as to the duties and role of the secondary school principal among principals themselves, between teacher and principal, between principal and superior, and even

¹R. Jean Hills, "Leadership Behavior of Elementary School Principals," An Examination of the Internal and External Elements of the Administrator's Role, (Cornell University, 1962), p. 7, (mimeographed.)

²Peter Drucker, "The Effective Administrator," National Association of Secondary School Principals' Bulletin, Address, 48th Annual Convention, (April, 1964), p. 157, Speech to General Convention.

between educators in the schools and educators who train principals. The potential effectiveness of the principal is hampered by this conflict and educational leadership is thwarted at a very important level.

Scope and Limiting Factors

Secondary school administration assumes a wide range of duties. As a school increases in size, more variations in the principal's duties occur. Therefore, a principal in a larger school will have to discharge his duties in a manner different from that of a principal in a smaller school. Considering this postulation, this investigator limited this investigation to school systems that had a minimum of 500 students in their secondary schools and employed at least one full-time secondary principal. Further, the sample was restricted to public school officials in the states of Missouri and Nebraska. One hundred each of teachers, principals, and administrative officers superior to principals were selected.

In addition to the public school officials, 100 members of the National Conference of Professors of Educational Administration were asked to contribute to this study. While the reaction of this group was not considered central to the study, it was this investigator's opinion that professors could provide additional information helpful in differentiating the characteristics of an ideal secondary school principal.

Hypothesis

The investigation sought to discover descriptions of the secondary principal as conceived by teachers, by principals, by superior administrative officers, and by persons engaged in the training of principals. It was the basic hypothesis of this investigation that there would be no significant relationships among these descriptions.

The secondary hypotheses were stated as follows:

No significant relationship exists between the conception of an ideal secondary principal by teachers and the conception of an ideal secondary principal by principals.

No significant relationship exists between the conception of an ideal secondary principal by teachers and the conception of an ideal secondary principal by superior administrative officers.

No significant relationship exists between the conception of an ideal secondary principal by teachers and the conception of an ideal secondary principal by persons engaged in training educational leaders.

No significant relationship exists between the conception of an ideal secondary principal by principals and the conception of an ideal secondary principal by superior administrative officers.

No significant relationship exists between the conception of an ideal secondary principal by principals and the conception of an ideal secondary principal by persons training educational leaders.

No significant relationship exists between the conception of an ideal secondary principal by superior administrative officers and the

conception of an ideal secondary principal by persons training educational leaders.

Through the use of a Q-sort, which is a forced-choice rank ordering of items along a somewhat normal curve, the following null hypotheses were tested:

No significant difference exists between teachers and principals--teachers and superior administrative officers--teachers and professors--principals and superior administrative officers--and superior administrative officers and professors in the relative value placed on the category "consideration" as one of the four categories included in the principal characteristic Q-sort.

No significant difference exists between teachers and principals--teachers and superior administrative officers--teachers and professors--principals and superior administrative officers--principals and professors--and superior administrative officers and professors in the relative value placed on the category "initiating structure" as one of the four categories included in the principal characteristic Q-sort.

No significant difference exists between teachers and principals--teachers and superior administrative officers--teachers and professors--principals and superior administrative officers--principals and professors--and superior administrative officers and professors in the relative value placed on the category "disposal" as one of the four categories included in the principal characteristic Q-sort.

No significant difference exists between teachers and principals--teachers and superior administrative officers--teachers and professors--

principals and superior administrative officers--principals and professors--and superior administrative officers and professors in the relative value placed on the category "procurement" as one of the four categories included in the principal characteristic Q-sort.

Definition of Terms

Secondary School: A public supported school encompassing grades nine through twelve or grades ten through twelve, the typical school organization of a grade being equal to one year of school endeavor.

Superior Administrative Officer: Any professional person employed by the school who, as a part of his responsibility, assists in the selection of the secondary principal and/or has continual professional relationships with him in an administrative capacity.

Consideration: Those behaviors of the principal indicative of mutual trust, respect, and friendships.

Initiating Structure: Those behaviors of the principal delineating the relationship between himself and the members of the group and establishing well-defined patterns of organization and methods of procedure.

Disposal: Those behaviors of the principal involved with the setting of priorities among outside demands placed on the school: Integrating the contribution of the school with outside demands through the regulation, promotion, and placement of the schools product--the student.

Procurement: Those behaviors of the principal in providing support--both political and economic--for the staff members: Acquisition of adequate time, favorable decisions, and sufficient resources.

Group: The unit of organization being supervised by the secondary principal.

Member: The persons in the organization being supervised by the principal.

Outsider: Any person not a member of the unit under the supervision of the principal.

Significance of the Study

This study seeks to provide information that will include more comprehensive knowledge about how teachers conceive an ideal principal, how principals conceive an ideal principal, how superior administrative officers conceive an ideal secondary principal, and how persons engaged in training educational leaders conceive an ideal secondary principal. While this investigator feels it is incorrect to predict a principal's potential success as an administrator on the basis of one measurement, it is possible that if there is not a wide diversity of value judgments among the samples, the instrument used for this study might serve as one more way of gaining information about the prospects of someone becoming a good educational administrator. The information obtained may provoke interest in further study in the area of secondary educational administration and therefore provide an additional facet of objectivity in selecting, training, and placement of candidates for positions in secondary administration.

There is a definite need for information regarding the skill of secondary educational administrators. As one of its purposes, this study intended to provide some of that information. The investigation will provide new insights into the problem of secondary administration, problems which are becoming more and more important in the complexity of the society within which modern schools must operate.

The patterns or clusters of characteristics that describe the categories included in the instrument will provide information about the behavioral characteristics of the secondary principal and the emphasis placed on these behavioral characteristics by the participating samples. If there are significant differences noted, avenues will have been opened for future studies of the solutions to the problems facing education in the public schools.

II

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

This chapter will be devoted to the review of selected literature pertinent to the investigation. It will include a brief historical sketch of the secondary principalship, criteria for the description of the duties of the secondary school principal, aspects of the role of the secondary principal, and interpersonal relationships involving a secondary principal. Of major importance to this chapter is a section that will provide information relating to the Q-sort as a method of conducting research in the behavioral sciences and the literature from which the items used in constructing the instrument are found.

Historical Sketch of the Secondary School Principal

During the first half of the 19th century, there were very few schools large enough to justify a principal on a full-time basis. By the middle of the century there were moves to establish, formally, the position of secondary principal. The first agencies used to select principals were city officials or school inspectors appointed by city officials. "In 1840, the principals of Providence were selected at a town meeting. In 1844, the city council of Chicago appointed inspectors who in turn appointed the principal."¹

¹Rulon Smith, "The Selection of the Chief Executive Officers of Public Schools" (unpublished dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, California, 1938), p. 13.

By the end of the 19th century the principalship was well established and the principal was generally regarded as the administrative head of his school. In 1848, a report of the Cincinnati Schools stated:

To secure uniformity and efficiency in the administration of the discipline of the school, and at the same time, to enable the teachers and assistants to give their whole time, as far as possible, to the business of instruction, the Board commits the general government of the school into the hands of the principal.²

Other school systems to follow this policy of placing the principal in charge of all departments were Boston and St. Louis.

Because of the size of schools prior to 1860, there were few management problems in the secondary schools. The most outstanding problem was that of disciplining the children. Baker, in his study, made the following observation:

A teacher who had taught several years and had acquired the technique of handling unruly children, as well as irate parents, was regarded, for the most part, as the person who should be given the opportunity to serve in the capacity of headmaster of the school when the need arose for such an individual.³

Baker also listed the main managerial functions of the headmaster or principal of a secondary school in 1860 as follows: 1) disciplinary; 2) enforcing to a limited extent, the compulsory attendance law; 3) classroom management of teaching procedures; and 4) performing such additional duties as were delegated to him by the superintendent of schools.⁴

²"Nineteenth Annual Report of the Trustees and Visitors of the Common Schools," Cincinnati, Ohio, 1848, p. 26.

³Samuel Harry Baker, Jr., "Management Practices in Large High Schools" (unpublished dissertation, George Washington University, Washington D. C., 1946), p. 7.

⁴Ibid., p. 9.

By the end of the 19th century, there were starting to rise concerted efforts by secondary principals to discuss common problems. The "Principals Roundtable" discussed the following problems in 1896:

1. Systems of recording pupils' marks.
2. Techniques, such as printed forms and conferences for dealing with the home in case the student is doing unsatisfactory work.
3. Semiannual promotions.
4. The use of words instead of percentages for classifying pupils by ability.
5. The double sessions for high schools.
6. The rather lax control of parents over students and the relation of high school to grammar school.⁵

Baker noted that by 1925, the high school principal was called upon to manage the extra-curricular activities in addition to the regular school program.⁶ Immediately following the extra-curricular movement in education came the desire on the part of many educators to bring about other types of curriculum reorganizations: "Although curriculum revision of one kind or another had been going on for nearly a hundred years, there was a marked acceleration of such activities in the period between 1930 and 1940."⁷ It appears that once more the

⁵NEA, "Principals Roundtable," Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, 1896, pp. 587-604.

⁶Baker, op. cit., p. 12.

⁷Ibid., p. 13.

secondary principal was called upon to exercise his judgment in deciding the extent of program change his school should make to meet new social and economic demands. Baker observed that by 1930, some writers began to see the need to expound ideas concerning better management in the high school office by principals in addition to his present responsibilities.⁸

The testing movement, which started during the first ten years of the 20th century, was another development in education which imposed upon the high school principal more responsibilities of a managerial nature. In 1922, the State of Ohio's Department of Education made the following statement: "Not as a new tool of classroom method, but as a new instrument for organizing classes, with an influence that will bear upon method, the intelligence examination looms large on the new horizon."⁹

The literature shows that both the number and complexity of the responsibilities of the principal have steadily increased in proportion to the growth of the high school in size and complexity. Much of this development has been the result of the increased responsibility of the high school in providing youth the opportunities to learn in order that they may face the challenges of modern society.

⁸Baker, op. cit., p. 23.

⁹Department of Education, State of Ohio, Ohio High School Standards, (Columbus, Ohio: The F. J. Hur Printing Company, 1922), p. 17.

Duties of the High School Principal

As the responsibilities of the secondary principal increased, he gradually withdrew from teaching. Some of the duties of the principal have become so urgent that some other duties considered equally important by principals, have been neglected, particularly in the area of supervision. Likewise, duties of an external nature are neglected when the urgency of day-to-day problems clamors for the principal's attention.

The secondary principalship's importance was recognized at the turn of the century and extensive powers commensurate to the position were granted:

As the enrollment swelled and the school drew nearer its public, the principal became public relations man, housing authority, and textbook critic. . . . The constant struggle for financial support for the schools led the superintendency away from direct contact with the personnel and management of the respective schools in the system, and consequently elevated the principal to the post of recognized administrative head of the school.¹⁰

There have been numerous studies made and reports in articles and books outlining the duties of a school principal. The basic duties appear to be essentially the same for both elementary and secondary principal. Hines, in 1917, submitted one of the earliest articles on the duties, powers, and preparation of high school principals in Iowa.¹¹

¹⁰Harold Spears, Secondary Education in American Life, (New York: American Book Company, 1941), p. 312.

¹¹Harlon C. Hines, "Duties, Powers, and Preparation of the High School Principals in Iowa," American School Board Journal, 55:18, August, 1917, p. 70.

In 1920, Boggs made a list of the duties, as secured from the rules and regulations of school boards in thirty American cities.¹² In the same year, Bobbitt published an article in which he listed thirty-one mistakes often made by principals.¹³ Baker, in studying the management duties of a secondary school principal, listed the following duties which are typical of those found elsewhere:

I. Planning for future operations

1. Preparation for opening of school in the fall
2. Preparation of the master schedule
3. Providing for means of instruction

II. Direction of current operations

1. Instructional
2. Non-instructional functions
 - a. office control
 - b. personnel relations
 - c. operation of special auxiliary services within the school
 - d. directing use of free textbooks
 - e. operation of internal school finance
 - f. assisting the central office in preparation of the annual external school budget
3. Evaluation
 - a. direct
 - b. interpret survey results to faculty and community
 - c. direct work of the testing committee¹⁴

The duties of the secondary principal have evolved from those of

¹²J. Boggs, "School Board Regulations Concerning the Elementary School Principal," Elementary School Journal, 20:10, June, 1920, pp. 730-742.

¹³Franklin Bobbitt, "Mistakes Often Made by Principals," Elementary School Journal, Vol. 20, January, 1920, pp. 337-346.

¹⁴Baker, op. cit., p. 15.