THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A SCHOOL PRINCIPAL: AN INTERN'S PERSPECTIVE

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The Roles and Responsibilities of a School Principal: An Intern's Perspective

by

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Introduction

Newfoundland and Labrador's educational system is currently undergoing considerable change, particularly from a structural and organizational perspective. Concern for greater school productivity has stirred much interest in the field of school effectiveness and school improvement. Many schools are now being affected by economic, political and social changes. Each of these changes has directly impacted how a principal deals with his/her school and the individuals involved with that school. Expectations for schools have changed, and school principals have had to adjust their role accordingly. Although many individual differences exist among principals, there is a general consensus that the principal's role has shifted from an authoritative despot or middle level functionary to that of a team leader (Wise, cited in Bolender, 1996). The role of the principal is changing radically, however some aspects of the principal's job have remained constant. Principals are still primarily interested in and accountable for the three "P's" of their schools (i.e., the people, the programs and the plant).

"The principalship, properly defined, is a unique collection of knowledge, skills and attributes" (McCall, 1994, p. xi). The principal's main job is to develop with colleagues purpose and direction, and to move adults and students toward achieving that shared vision. This, by no means, is an easy task. The role of the school principal is broad and difficult, but one that strongly impacts school effectiveness. The school principal plays a key role in facilitating the success or failure of school improvement efforts. Kulmatychi and Montgomerie (cited in Sharpe & Harte, 1996) claim, "the principal is viewed as being the key person to effect change and improvement in the school" (p. 376). The principal needs to believe in the improvement process if the

process is to succeed. The principal generally sets the tone of the school through leadership style, communication skills and decision-making processes. Contemporary perspectives on the roles and responsibilities of the principal stress participative, collaborative and transformational styles as being the most effective leadership styles in promoting school improvement efforts. Leaders who are transformational create change, rather than react to it, for the purpose of organizational and personal growth (Bolender, 1996). English, Frase and Arhar (1992) maintain that an effective school leader is one who acts as a visionary, communicator of the school's purposes, community spokesperson, personnel leader and manager, distributor of resources and advocate for a healthy school environment and climate. Magagula (cited in Sharpe & Harte, 1996) states that because of the multi-dimensional nature of a principal's work, it is not uncommon for principals to be engaged in several tasks at the same time.

There is little doubt that the role of the principal is complex, ambiguous and diverse. Yet, despite this reality, aspiring or new principals are often thrust into the job with little or no preparation and/or support. This poses many problems for both beginning and seasoned principals. One suggested solution to this problem is to have pre-service principals experience a graduate internship training period whereby the intern can observe the functions of the principal, assume leadership in planning, implementing and evaluating programs and acquire new knowledge and skills along the way.

The writer of this internship report did participate in such an internship. She was paired with an experienced principal (of a primary/elementary school in St. John's) in a mentoring relationship. The internship placement began on April 12, 1999 and had a formal duration of ten weeks. The mentoring relationship, however, is ongoing.

This report focuses on that internship training. In particular, it compares what was observed in the practical setting of an internship placement with trends highlighted in current research literature. The report categorizes the duties and responsibilities of the principal into three chapters, each representing one of the three priorities of the principalship: the people, the programs and the plant. A summary containing specific recommendations regarding the graduate internship program at Memorial University is also included.

Chapter 1: People

It is clear that in any school there are three important groups of people with whom the principal must work. These groups include the staff, students and the parents/community. The relationship that a principal has with each of these groups is instrumental in determining whether or not a school will be successful. To successfully deal with each of these groups, two dimensions of the relationship must be considered: the task dimension and the person dimension.

The task dimension represents the content and purpose of the group or, in other words, what needs to be done. The person dimension comprises the interpersonal process and satisfaction participants derive from working with each other. Both are strongly connected. Concern and sensitivity to participants' feelings create a climate of desiring to meet and work together to accomplish and implement task goals (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 1998). Successful schools have productive groups that emphasize both the task and person dimension. It falls to the group leader, the principal, to ensure that both dimensions are present.

One can tell a great deal about a school from its school staff. This group of individuals is very important. A school staff greatly influences the character of the school. Teachers and other school personnel are critically influential in determining a school's culture and thus its success or failure. Culture, though somewhat ambiguous, is a very important aspect of a school and its effectiveness. According to Hopkins (1994), "the culture of a school is the key to successful school improvement" (p. 20). Culture has been defined as "the procedures, norms, expectations, and values of its members" (Hopkins, 1994, p.86).

Two of the major roles and responsibilities of the school principal are staff development and supervision. The primary aim of staff development is to increase and enhance pupil learning by developing staff potential. The instructional leadership role of the principal involves improving the quality of student instruction and learning. This can be facilitated by developing the expertise and professionalism of teachers which results in more effective, happy teachers who, in the end, will increase student achievement. Research indicates that the quality of instruction is usually highest when teachers are satisfied and committed (Firestone & Rosenblum cited in Krug, 1992; Lester, cited in Krug, 1992). The motivated teacher is more likely to result in improved education. Evidence suggests that the quality of school culture is related not only to enhanced teacher performance in the classroom, but also to higher levels of teacher self-esteem (Evans & Hopkins, 1988). If quality schools are a goal, then the focus should not necessarily be on the teacher directly, but instead on an organizational climate that permits teachers to perform their duties in a professional and self-satisfied manner (Verdugo, 1997).

Principals must deal with their staffs from both the task and person dimension. They must provide balance in setting and attaining school goals and making staffs feel involved and important in the process. The principal must act as a provider of school purpose and direction and enable the attainment of this vision. The first step in this process of effective leadership is to perceive accurately the present situation, and notice the difference or gap between that and what ought to be (McCall, 1994). In order to accomplish this, this writer asserts that the effective principal needs two basic virtues - honesty and hope.

The internship placement enabled the writer to observe that the principal was able to accurately see the school as it was. She had noticed that reading and writing skills were not at an acceptable level for the school (though the levels were on or above grade level in most instances) and, in conjunction with the staff, she set out to make these skills prioritized school improvement goals. Immediate plans were made to begin staff development and training in the literacy area. Numerous meeting and workshops were planned for teachers and parents to develop awareness in literacy development skills. Parents, teachers and students were involved in the process and the school worked as a whole in improving these skills. The school principal demonstrated both the task and person dimension in her relations with the staff. Not only did reading and writing skills improve, but people felt motivated and energized through the process. Parents felt relevant. Students noticed improvement and teachers felt satisfied that they were making a difference.

One way to enhance self-esteem is through public recognition of the work of staff and students at staff meetings and/or school assemblies. Empowering teachers to make and implement important decisions within the school also enhances a teacher's sense of self-esteem. Simple gestures, such as writing individual notes of appreciation, offering teachers an occasional break, and sending caring messages go a long way in making an individual feel better about his/her efforts. As Bolman and Deal (1991) note, "the most important part of a leader's job is inspiration - giving people something they can believe in" (p. 364). The principal in the internship setting often provided inspiration for her staff. She truly believed that her school could improve and inspired similar beliefs in her staff.

She also acted as a cheerleader for her staff through the school improvement process, always capitalizing on the individual strengths and talents of her staff. She was instrumental in developing collaboration in the school while showing respect and conveying warmth for all members of the school community. The principal was always first to congratulate and make public the achievements of the school, its teachers and students, when any accomplishments were made.

Delegating power and responsibility is another way to develop and empower staffs. Many ineffective principals feel insecure about their own power and are reluctant to delegate power to others. Effective principals, on the other hand, feel that power is best kept when given away. "The more stakeholders realize they can actually influence and control the school, the more they are enabled, and the more effective the school will become" (McCall, 1994, p. 29). "Shared power flowing from shared vision results in higher job satisfaction and performance throughout the school" (McCall, 1994, p. 29).

The principal with whom the writer mentored trusted her staff to make good decisions and delegated the power required to make those decisions. That trust was well founded. Although involved in most school activities, she did not always assume the leadership role. Responsibilities were delegated and she acted more as a facilitator to get the job done. Power and responsibility were even assigned to this writer. The principal assigned specific functions to the intern (for example, the school report, monthly returns, and school assemblies) and provided guidance and support when necessary. She did not, however, exercise control in how she wanted the tasks to be completed. Instead she allowed the writer full autonomy in the planning, implementation and completion of the tasks.

The principal has a tremendous responsibility in facilitating staff development and training. Traditional staff development efforts are typically isolated workshops selected and presented by people other than those for whom the workshop is intended. Follow-up support and evaluation is usually minimal or non-existent. Research indicates that such forms of staff development are ineffective (Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordan, 1998). Effective schools research advocates that true professional development should be an ongoing process, not a single workshop approach. Substantial staff development time must be provided on a consistent basis, at least in part, during the teacher's regular workday. The involvement and support of the principal is a key factor of effective professional development (Speck, cited in Galbo, 1998). Staff development efforts should begin quickly and in simple ways. Priorities for development should be sharply focused and few in number to prevent teacher and school overload, and support must be made available for staffs engaging in staff development (Hopkins, 1994). Effective staff development can and should occur within the school setting. Quality staff development capitalizes on the knowledge and expertise of teachers in the school. These expert teachers should be sought out to teach effective skills and/or strategies to others on staff. This sharing could occur through the framework of staff meetings, inservice workshops, and peer mentoring/coaching. By empowering these exceptional teachers to share and encourage their skills with others, many benefits result. Moreno (1998) suggests the following advantages to utilizing "in-house" experts:

> First, there is the issue of credibility. Having a fellow teacher address the staff makes his/her success more real and attainable. An onsite expert also knows the school climate and is able to address issues that are specific to the school. Additionally, teachers seeking clarification would have the opportunity to seek help from their co-worker after the staff development day. (p.18)

Teachers need time to share, reflect and ultimately learn from each other. The principal's role is to encourage and facilitate these behaviors and provide teachers with opportunities to collaborate. This requires support such as freeing schedules to allow teacher observations of other classes and/or teacher planning and sharing time; supplying budgetary allotments for required resources; protecting teaching time from interruption; selecting and managing people (e.g., paying particular attention to skills and personalities) who can work effectively together; providing a safe environment and reasonable expectations so that teachers can feel comfortable in taking the risk of applying new strategies and skills; and providing links to outside groups or activities (Dunlap & Goldman, 1991).

The assigned principal did arrange schedules so that similar grade teachers had preparation periods and supervision duties at the same time. This enabled teachers of the same grade to have time whereby curriculum planning and informal pedagogical discussion could occur. Collegiality among staff was greatly enhanced by the provision of this common time. The principal also readily supported projects that required monetary investment. Her view was that if the purchase were not necessary, it would not be requested. She was also very conscious of the varying personalities within her school and was always conscious of carefully matching certain students and/or parents with compatible teachers. Individual needs and differences of individuals were always considered when school decisions were made. The environment of school assigned to the intern was risk-free, in that all teachers felt free and were encouraged to try new things.

Supervision is also an important aspect of staff development and an important responsibility of the principal. The process of supervision is an ambivalent and complex concept which can be described as a delicate process that is largely influenced by the relative importance of the relationship within the total supervisory process and the variables which influence that relationship. Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (1998) describe supervision as "the process by which some person or group of people is responsible for providing a link between an individual teacher's needs and organizational goals so that individuals within the school can work in harmony toward the vision of what the school *should* be" (p. 6). Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) suggest supervision is the means by which leadership is provided to improve teaching and to enhance the learning environment of the school. They also assert that it is the principal who is primarily responsible for providing that leadership. Clinical supervision, as defined by Ubben and Hughes (1987), is

> supervision devoted to diagnosis and prescription and formative, rather than summative, evaluation. It is behaviorally anchored appraisal consisting most frequently of established objectives and desired instructional patterns; systematic observation and recording of teaching behaviors; and post-observation conferences during which any appropriate corrective actions are prescribed and future standards of performance established. (p. 227)

Though the specific definitions of supervision may differ slightly, there is little dispute that supervision is a critical and essential element of successful schools. Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (1998) refer to supervision metaphorically as the *glue* of a successful school. Like glue, supervision is not glamorous, goes largely unnoticed when working properly, and receives much attention and blame when ineffective.

Promoting staff development, an essential component of effective supervision, is an important responsibility of the principal. The development of staff members' competencies is essential if school districts are to maintain environments conducive to learning (Sybouts & Wendel, 1994). Staff development programs that fail are those that are poorly planned, irrelevant to teachers' work, unconnected to other staff development programs, and require passive participation on the part of the teacher. Conversely, effective staff development programs are conducted frequently and regularly, focus on a few important goals and involve the active participation of all staff members. Sybouts and Wendel (1994) posit that formal evaluation, coupled with continuous staff development programs, are powerful means of promoting professional growth. Formal evaluations that are based on one or a few classroom observations, on the other hand, have limited influence upon professional development.

In addition to frequency of supervisory practices, supervisory style is also an important factor which can encourage or discourage professional development of staffs. Principals must be very cognizant of their personal style when supervising others, as there are many characteristics which may facilitate or threaten effective supervision.

Doll (cited in Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990) suggests a number of principles which could be used to guide the work of supervisors. These include working *with* people, not *over* them on an individual and group basis, using problem solving as a means to improvement, and recognizing that improvement rates vary among people. When supervising others, it is also essential that the supervisor keep communication channels open, use status with great care (as it can often serve as a threat or impediment to improvement) and show that there is an inherent desire for self-improvement.

Sybouts and Wendel (1994) indicate that "principals can increase their value as supervisors through many actions, such as being consistent and honest with staff, being available to provide assistance, stating expectations clearly, showing appreciation for positive results, seeking opinions from staff, and basing performance on first-hand information" (p.155). It is also important for a principal to be open, honest and have a trusting relationship with his/her staff. Such traits encourage the risk-free environment required for staff members to feel comfortable engaging in the professional growth process.

Shreeve (1993) contends that teaching is an ongoing growth process, not an end that can be looked at each year. He also asserts that principals must be collaborative partners in a supervision philosophy which promotes the belief that teachers must be treated as professionals, setting their own goals and receiving help in achieving those goals. While it is generally agreed that teacher evaluation/supervisory practices must be ongoing, flexible and continuous, this view, many times, is not reflected in the supervisory practices that exist. Most teachers' experiences with supervision involve pre-designed instruments which encapsulate supervision in an ordered segmented fashion: pre-observation, observation, and post-conference. Observations, notes and recommendations are usually recorded on worksheets or district designed forms. The problem with such an approach is that it is often too rigid. Interactions between principal and teacher become mechanical, lacking opportunity for mutual exchange and reflective thought. This approach also runs the risk of being too top-down, since it is often conducted from the supervisor's frame of reference (Phelps, 1993).

Blase and Blase (1996) suggest that the traditional model of supervision is a top-down authoritative model with power, authority and control conferred on the person in the hierarchically defined position of power. In most cases, the person identified in that position is the school administrator, typically the principal. Supervision is a vital part of what principals must do to create and maintain effective schools. Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (1998) place more emphasis on *what* supervision is rather than *who* is responsible for it. They suggest that "supervision is assistance for the improvement of instruction. This definition allows supervision to be viewed as a function and process rather than a role or position" (p. 8). Regardless of the approach taken, supervision is a necessity. Differences arise when deciding which supervisory model to choose. In the study conducted by Sharpe and Harte (1996), most principals felt that they should be involved in observing, supervising and evaluating probationary teachers, but were less enthusiastic about observing and evaluating tenured teachers.

In the internship placement, direct supervision by the administration was only observed in required cases (e.g. non-tenured teachers and student assistants). In my experience, the principal did not engage in the typical clipboard-style clinical supervision of tenured teachers. That is not to say, however, that supervision did not occur. The supervision in this school, like the metaphor glue proposed by Glickman et al. (1998), went largely unnoticed. The principal did very much have a pulse on the school demonstrating that she did indeed engage in much informal supervision. Her frequent "drop in" visits to the classrooms and regular contact with the teachers and students enabled her to be very aware of activities that were occurring in all classes. In fact, she often was part of these activities distributing medals and awards for work well done!

Classroom projects and student achievements were frequently highlighted on "flashpoints" which was a weekly memo circulated to teachers and parents to keep them regularly informed of school events.

The principal's exceptional interpersonal skills were also evident in her interactions with the 384 students of the school. She knew each child by name and kept regularly informed of those who were experiencing academic and/or behavioral difficulties. She made regular trips to the classroom of a child with behavioral difficulties. This practice conveyed a message of caring and support to both the child and the teacher. Another regular practice which fostered familiarity with the students was her "morning greeting". Each morning she would wait at the main entrance and greet each child and parent who walked through the doors. At first, this routine was viewed by the intern as regular morning supervision. However, it quickly became apparent that the routine served a much more important function than supervision. It was through this action that the principal had the opportunity to know and talk to all the children and parents. Her regular presence provided a non-threatening situation where kids and parents could simply talk to the principal. Many potentially negative situations were diffused by the positive relationships that had been fostered through this regular morning routine. Her presence every morning enabled her to troubleshoot many situations before they escalated. It also provided an excellent opportunity for her to model her belief that all people in this school count. "The principal has the job of making sure that people know what the principal and school stands for" (McCall, 1994, p. 31). Good principals lead by example. Her cheerfulness and enthusiasm were contagious and enabled everyone to start the day in a better frame of mind. As well, her regular presence reduced

a supervision post for other teachers. This was greatly appreciated by the staff. Her presence in this capacity and in other regularly assigned duties enabled her to be perceived by the staff as doing her share of the work and thus she was greatly respected and appreciated.

The principal must also take an active interest in students outside of the classroom if he/she wants to build trust and respect. The principal in the internship setting availed of many opportunities to be present with students outside of the context of the classroom. She was actively involved in extra-curricular activities such as the chess club, field trips, and school concerts. She had the knack of catching people doing something right and celebrating the event, even if the incident was as minor as a child showing good manners in the lunchroom. If a child who was experiencing difficulty is making improvement, she went out of her way to find the child and acknowledge that achievement. She was generous with praise and private with criticism. In dealing with students there was mutual respect and trust.

Mutual respect and trust were also evident in her relations with parents. The principal welcomed parents in the school and encouraged parents to become actively involved with the school. There were many regular parent volunteers who felt very welcomed and comfortable in the school. Those who were not actively present in the school were regularly informed of the school's activities through weekly and monthly handouts. Effective schools literature contends that it is important for the principal to recognize the Parent Advisory Group (known as the school council in this specific school) and give its role and activities high priority (English, Frase & Arhar, 1992). The principal of the assigned school served as an active member of her school council and

always conveyed the message that its work was extremely important to the success of the school. She allowed the parents of this council to assume leadership roles and implement plans which would help improve the lives of the students. The message of the importance of parents was also extended to those parents who were not directly involved in the school council. She was always available to any parent who requested to see her. A lesson apparent to the writer was that if a parent is taking time to see the principal about a certain matter, then the principal must make the time to see the parent. It is important to communicate to parents that the principal is listening, interested and concerned about the parent's issue. Following up on a particular issue is also an excellent means to convey to the parent that the issue has been heard and is being attended to in an appropriate manner.

Chapter 2: Programs

McCall (1994) provides a positive description of the role of the principal when he asserts:

> With all the difficulties facing them, principals today are in a better position than ever before. They do need much more training and support, but they are leaders in an age in which they can grow and help teachers and students get ready for the kind of learning that will be demanded in the 21st century. They can truly build learning organizations, which is what schools were always meant to be. (p.106)

Having a vision of what can and should be is the prime requisite for creating a learning organization (McCall, 1994). The principal needs to have a clear view of where the school is headed and why. Leithwood (1994) posits that a new leader will "infuse the day routines with meaning and purpose for both himself/herself and his/her colleagues" (p.515). Sheppard (1993) suggests that the transformational leader can transform the follower into a subsequent leader through three broad categories of behavior: definition of mission, management of the instructional plan, and promotion of school climate.

The principal has a large role to play in monitoring and promoting instructional programs. Today's public wants to know that progress is being made in improving student achievement. Accountability is demanding that principals work with staffs to ensure they are knowledgeable regarding standards, frameworks and assessments. Principals must support their staffs by providing necessary instructional materials and resources, as well as professional development (Thomas, 1999). To develop quality programming, the focus of the principal should be on teaching and learning which means that the actions of school leaders must model the best of teaching and learning (Brown, Buster & Townsend, 1999). Sharpe and Harte (1996) contend that:

> Administrators, particularly principals, are expected to be instructional leaders of the teaching-learning environment through direct and indirect supervision and

> training of staff. They are expected to be central decision-makers at the school level with an emphasis on change and innovation. They are also expected to establish an ethos or climate in their schools that will foster opportunities for student progress. In addition, they are expected to effectively manage the operations of the school and foster positive relationships with the home and the community. (p.2)

Strong instructional leadership has been shown to correlate with school effectiveness (Andrews & Soder, cited in Heck and Marcoulides, 1993; Bossert, cited in Heck and Marcoulides, 1993). According to Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) principals, as supervisors, can create more effective schools by enhancing teacher belief in a cause beyond oneself and his/her classroom, promoting the teacher's sense of efficiency, making teachers aware of how they complement each other in striving for common goals, stimulating teachers to plan common purposes and actions and challenging teachers to think abstractly about their work.

Sabo (cited in Sharpe & Harte, 1996) concurred that, "frequently principals [spend] more time performing the management and administrative roles than the instructional leadership role" (p. 5). This is a major source of discontent for many principals. Katz (cited in Sharpe & Harte, 1996) maintained that the role of instructional leader was problematic for principals for two reasons. First, finding time for fulfilling their role as instructional leaders was one of the biggest problems facing principals. Secondly, the role of "instructional leadership" is not clearly defined and thus carries uncertainty as to what this role involves. According to McCall (1994), the principal may serve as an instructional leader in four different ways: they possess the basic knowledge about teaching and learning; they plan the instructional programs with the teachers; they

do all they can to empower teachers in implementing instructional plans; and finally, they evaluate the quality of instruction in the school.

In order for a principal to be an effective instructional leader, he/she must know school curriculum trends, new approaches to organizing schools, must have a good grasp of state of the art instructional media and methodology and a wide knowledge of research on improving student outcomes (McCall, 1994). "Holding both the teachers and the students to high expectations is probably the most important thing the principal does for instructional quality" (McCall, 1994, p. 176).

Principals must also be able to recognize true learning. In a true learning organization, all stakeholders are lifelong learners. Unfortunately, information processing is often mistaken for real learning. Effective principals organize their day so that their time and attention are focused on instructional rather than routine matters. Although learning outcomes are mandated by the provincial Department of Education, principals must take an active part in designing and supporting the curriculum and programs the school has to offer. A most important step is conveying to stakeholders of the school the vision of creating a learning atmosphere in which all members will be encouraged to continue learning throughout their lives. Real learning encompasses the whole person. A good curriculum stresses wholeness and connectedness. "As we prepare our students to live in the global village, we need to give them a curriculum which will open their heads, hearts and hands to all the reality in the cosmos" (McCall, 1994, p. 218).

Taking an active role in program design and support is quite challenging. Principals often engage in activities tied to curriculum and instruction (e.g., ordering new language arts programs, organizing for provincial and federal assessments and norm referenced testing and completing required teacher evaluations). These types of activities, however, do not represent thoughtful and engaging interactions about teaching and learning. This balancing act of managing routine matters and providing instructional leadership raises many dilemmas for principals. Today's principals are under enormous pressure to enhance student achievement and raise standards and, at the same time, are responsible for ensuring the day to day tasks of running the school. Sharpe and Harte (1996) conducted a provincial study which analyzed how principals ranked their use of time. Principals ranked providing instructional leadership, promoting goals, mission and vision of the school and conducting teacher evaluation as the top three "ought to be" time consumers respectively. When they ranked these activities according to the current time usage of these activities according realities of their job, the rankings were 4th, 5th and 6th respectively. The administrative task identified as consuming the most time in their job was completing routine administrative tasks, even though this item was ranked fourth on what it "ought to be".

Time management and use are critical issues in administration at all levels in the school system. More efficient use of personnel resources, volunteers and computers may help to alleviate the time problem. This problem needs to be first addressed in order to allow the principal the time to act as the instructional leader he/she should be. Without delegation of managerial responsibilities, there is simply not enough time in the day to do both jobs adequately (Sharpe & Harte, 1996).

In order to have effective programming in a school, principals need to be cognizant of program goals, outcomes and content. They must be able to develop skills and strategies among staff that will accommodate achievement of these goals and outcomes. The principal must also be prepared to pedagogically and financially support resources which support the program. He/she must also be able to exercise good judgement when matching children with specific programs, and/or with specific teachers.

As the literature indicates, much of the principal's day in the internship setting was also filled with attending to routine administrative tasks. Phone calls had to be returned, meetings had to be attended, reports had to be written and sick children had to be attended to. Direct observation indicated that much of the principal's day was reactive rather than proactive. In fact, often the only time constructive pedagogical planning/ leadership was possible was outside the regular school day. After school and weekend meetings, lunchtime discussions and regular phone calls seemed to be the only time when instructional leadership could occur without interruption.

The principal always encouraged her staff to discuss educational ideas, and engage in reflective processes and she modeled these behaviors in her own actions. Teachers on staff were obviously at different levels of this self-analysis and these differences were taken into account in her encouragement. She also tried to promote teaching and learning excellence through informal means. Handouts and brochures describing professional development opportunities, training courses, and teaching tips were readily available to teachers and often present in the staffroom. The invitation to grow professionally was always extended to any teacher who was interested.

The principal took an active instructional leadership role in the development of literacy skills as a school improvement goal. With special education training and background, and many years experience in running a summer reading program, she has expertise in the field of literacy and shared her knowledge and expertise with her staff through formal and informal means. She arranged and organized workshops designed to improve teacher competencies in the development of language skills in children. Specialists in the field, such as Dr. Marc Glassman of Memorial University of Newfoundland, and Ms. Martha Sangar, a language specialist at the Avalon East School Board, presented these workshops. The principal also presented and shared her own personal expertise and experience with both staff and parents at these workshops.

Chapter 3: Physical Plant

The third priority of the principal involves adequate management of the school plant. The role of the principal also involves effective and efficient operation of the "business" side of the school enterprise. "Financial resourcefulness and good planning are necessary ingredients, as well, if the school is to be managed in a manner that provides the best possible fiscal and physical environment" (Ubben & Hughes, 1987, p. 318). Effective schools have two commonalties regarding facilities and resource management. First, successful schools set aside resources to support improvement activities which indicate good budgeting and planning practices. Second, successful schools are invariably clean and attractive. The environment is safe and pleasant. There is obvious attention to the impact physical environment has on educational outcomes.

The fiscal responsibility of the principal is both active and supervisory. It is active in that the principal establishes regular procedures governing the financial operation of the building. The principal also plays a supervisory role in regularly monitoring the detailed functions of the school business office. The principal supervises those individuals assigned the duties of properly recording and reporting financial transactions.

The degree of autonomy that a principal has with respect to fiscal operation depends on a particular school system. Some principals operate in a system whereby all financial decisions are made in central office by the superintendent or designate of the superintendent. In other systems, principals have greater latitude in deciding the direction and focus of financial planning. The movement toward decentralization will increase the decision-making authority for principals.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, most current control of monies spent is in the area of teacher instructional supplies, library books and resource materials. Sharpe and Harte's provincial study (1996) indicates "it is clear that school administrators wanted much more autonomy than granted by school boards over budgetary matters, yet welcomed increased input into budget decisions from other school personnel" (p. 49). The findings regarding the principal's role with the financial side of the school operation presented in this study paralleled the observations made during the internship setting. The principal, like the principals in the study, was primarily responsible for a budget that was designated for teacher instructional supplies, library books and resource materials. She increased school fiscal resources through the promotion and implementation of school fundraising activities such as the Halloween's "Haunted House".

While the principal did assume an active role by establishing procedures and routines for the fiscal management within the school, her direct involvement was more of a supervisory role involved with the management and monitoring of the financial transactions that occurred within the school. The actual duties of performing these financial transactions were delegated to other individuals within the school such as the school secretary. Through her monitoring, however, she was always cognizant of the financial responsibilities of the principalship and frequently checked financial records to ensure that she knew, all the time, where the school stood financially.

Caring for the school plant is also an important and essential responsibility of the school principal. The principal is responsible for identifying the major needs and ensuring that they are systematically attended to. This is very important for as Ubben and Hughes (1987) contend "an inefficiently used building, a poorly kept building, a building

with unpleasant, colorless rooms, or a poorly maintained site all inhibit the development of good educational programs. These negatively impact impact staff and student morale and productivity" (p. 336).

There are two important support groups who must work closely with the principal in the maintenance and improvement of the physical school plant. These groups include classified employees who are assigned to the building (e.g., custodians, cleaning personnel) and districtwide maintenance department personnel. Effective supervision of building maintenance programs can be simplified through the use of simple checklists, good communication, routine work schedules and clear expectations. Timelines (which incorporate systematic planning for major maintenance and repair) coupled with regular evaluation are important.

As with any group of individuals within the school, it is equally important to recognize the custodial and maintenance staff as part of the educational team. They have very important parts to play in the development of a productive learning climate. Attention directed to the motivation, needs and contributions of support staffs is just as important as that directed towards professional staff. When both professional and support staffs work co-operatively and harmoniously towards common school goals, the likelihood of creating an attractive, safe, learning-living-working environment for pupils and staff is greatly increased.

At the assigned school of the intern, the custodian was an involved and important member of the staff. He frequently chatted with the professional staff, was often in the staffroom, and had great relations with everyone. There was a genuine mutual trust and respect between the custodian and all the professional staff including the principal. He

was asked to complete many tasks and was always quick to oblige. This particular custodian was particularly effective and efficient in his duties. He completed his tasks quickly and satisfactorily. This, no doubt, enhanced the relationship that he shared with the principal. Both had the same mission and goal in mind (i.e. keep the school safe and clean) and both worked hard to achieve that goal.

In addition to meeting the general requirements of adequate school maintenance, the principal also focused her attention on improving the appearance of the school facility. Corridors and classrooms were painted in bright colors. Painting and murals decorated the hallways. Parents and teachers donated plants and crafts to help beautify the school. There was even an aquarium filled with fish in the main lobby. Seasonal bulletin boards decorated the main foyer and children's work was always proudly displayed throughout the school. One quickly got the sense that this building was one that was cared for and loved. The school was a nice place to be from both a teacher's and student's perspective.

Summary

It is clear that the role and responsibility of the principal is evolving and complex. If one examines the history of the conceptual developments in the evolution of educational administration, one would see the principal's role varying greatly. The period of scientific management approach, dominant in the first few decades of the century, would show the principal as an authoritative figure whose "emphasis was on productivity and efficiency through an intelligent and authoritative manipulation of wage incentives, the careful planning of work, and the application of key management planning principles covering a span of control and division of labor" (Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie & Hurwitz, 1984, p. 12).

The human relations approach, popular in the 1930s and 1940s countered the scientific management view. This approach emphasized employee-centered rather than production-centered management and democratic rather than authoritarian leadership.

The 1950s and 1960s saw a blending of these earlier movements offering a concept of school management that unified the scientific efficiency and human relations perspective and also moved into research and theory, drawing heavily upon the social and behavioral sciences. The 1970s led to an improved recognition of the importance of the school's exchange with the environment and an appreciation of education's organizational complexity. The 1980s emphasized transformational leadership and collaborative partnerships.

The current definitions offered for the principalship continue to emphasize leadership, particularly instructional leadership. A long surviving tenet of the instructional leadership role is that "the principal should devote by far the largest portion

of the day to direct supervision of instruction and to staff development. As much as three-quarters of the principal's time should be given to the improvement of instruction" (Morris et al, 1984). There is also great emphasis placed on reflective and self-analytical practices each of which serve to improve the daily practices of the principal.

The daily life of the school principal is demanding and full of time-consuming duties and unexpected events, all of which can fall under any of the realms of instruction and curriculum, pupil personnel, community and school relations, staff personnel, organization and structure of the school and school plant facilities (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990). In short, the principal is accountable for the entire operation of the school. Such a responsibility demands certain personal traits of principals. Effective leadership skills, long-range thinking abilities, problem solving skills, interpersonal and human relation skills, professional commitment, sensitivity, decisiveness, stress tolerance, organizational/time management skills and genuine love for children are all examples of traits which will assist an individual in becoming an effective school principal.

It is also an increasingly shared view that the role expectations of the principalship exceed by far the practical resources of time and capacity of most individuals. While most principals appear to be adequately handling the managerial aspect of the job, many fail when it comes to providing sound instructional leadership. Many principals have not had the opportunity to assume the collaborative, facilitating roles central to successful site-based management. The challenges that lay before principals are indeed overwhelming. There is a need for professional development of school administrators to enhance their perceived duties as role models and initiators of

growth and change. In fact the Royal Commission on Education (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1992) recommended that professional development should be mandatory for all principals.

One way to start the process of professional development of administrators is to raise academic qualifications required to be a school principal. Currently, a Master's degree, although desired, is not required to secure an administrative position. Setting stricter guidelines regarding the requirement of a specific completed Master's degree is a fundamental step in developing a pool of administrators who have had some relevant academic professional development.

Academic development, however, still has limitations. One of the common complaints about university coursework is that it often fails to capture the complexities and realities of the workplace. The graduate internship option available in the Master of Education program provides the university an excellent opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and practice by drawing from the experiences of practising professionals in the field. The internship program addresses the need for advanced training for school administrators. It enables a prospective administrator the opportunity to observe, experience and learn about the role of the principal. It also enables the intern to acquire a basic understanding of managerial and human relation skills necessary to be principal, to practise them and to determine to what extent their skills need to be developed. In addition, it provides the intern the opportunity to reflect on one's own abilities to be an effective administrator. In essence it allows a student of leadership studies the chance to "walk the talk" in a true administrative setting, and in doing so makes it easier for a prospective administrator to break into the ranks of a very demanding profession.

Internships have a valuable place in the professional development of principals (Nevill, 1998). As Nevill posits, they build greater skills in administrative tasks and teach beginners about supervision and evaluation, budgeting, use of staff, managing building resources, and communication. Interns see the experience as an extremely important experience which is relevant, authentic and collaborative and promotes independence, accountability and a meshing of theory and practice. It is much easier to develop an appreciation for the "big picture" after the experience of an internship placement.

Interns are not the only individuals who benefit from the experience. Many mentors report feelings of great satisfaction and renewed enthusiasm for the job after having had the opportunity to teach and collaborate with an intern. Mentors feel affirmed in their professional competence for being chosen as a mentor and feel increased recognition from their peers (Cordiero & Sloan, cited in Nevill, 1998). Mentors also report that working with an intern has caused self-reflection and analysis in that the intern forces them to do a lot of thinking about the reasons why they do the things they do.

Although there are many benefits of the internship, there are also many factors which must be considered if the program is to be the best it can possibly be. Following is a list of some of these considerations and possible recommendations for overcoming potential hurdles that may exist in a graduate internship.

Choice of a Mentor

Choosing a mentor for the internship setting raises two key questions: Who should choose - the university, schoolboard or student? And on what basis? Many

excellent principals make poor mentors. While they may excel in their own job performance, they simply do not have the qualities necessary for effective teaching/coaching of the intern.

Personality characteristics are also an important factor when choosing a mentor. Some students prefer to be with "like" personalities in an internship setting, while others recognize that many benefits can be derived from working with someone who possesses a different personality.

Reputation and experience of the mentor are also important considerations when matching intern to a mentor. Some interns prefer to work with seasoned principals, while others prefer to work with beginning principals so as to get the perspective from a beginning stance. In either case, it is necessary for the intern to be matched with a mentor that the intern respects both professionally and personally.

Recommendation:

The intern nominates a potential mentor, indicating reasons for his/her choice and this nomination is to be approved by both the school board and university officials.

Mentoring Relationship

The quality of a mentoring relationship is a critical factor in the professional and personal growth of an intern. An unclear definition of the role of the mentor and/or intern may result in inappropriate assignment of duties and/or tasks. A mentor may be too protective of his/her power or control in the school and thus offer a restricted range of experiences to the intern. This may cause the intern to experience a very limited or

chosen aspect of the principalship and consequently not appreciate the full complexities and issues that exist.

On the other hand, a mentor may expect too much from the intern, failing to offer support and guidance along the way. The intern in this case becomes unjustifiably overwhelmed and underconfident in his/her leadership abilities. The mentoring relationship requires a teaching/coaching component. An intern cannot be expected to succeed in an environment that lacks support and guidance.

Another problem could arise when the mentor will only pass along the undesirable functions of the job and consequently never provide the intern the opportunity to experience the satisfaction and joy that results when significant positive change occurs. In many cases, for example, administrative interns deal only with paper shuffling or student discipline. Such limited and often negative exposure may unfairly prejudice an intern into believing that school leadership is nothing more than a lot of troubleshooting and/or headaches.

Recommendation:

Clear guidelines should be established as to the role and responsibilities of both the mentor and the intern and that regular monitoring by field supervisors be established to ensure that these guidelines are being followed.

Sharing Experiences

In many internship experiences, the intern is usually connected with the mentor only. Rarely does the student have the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon his/her experiences with other administrators, teachers, field supervisors, and interns. Ongoing

discussion, evaluation and feedback are both beneficial and necessary if skills in effective leadership and human relations are to be improved.

Reflection and subsequent discussion proved to be key components in this intern's experience. These activities were instrumental in the development of skills required for effective leadership. This writer created opportunities in which experiences from the internship could be shared not only with her mentor, but also with other administrators and teachers from within and outside the assigned school and university supervisors.

The writer also had the benefit of having two colleagues experience an internship placement during the same period and thus availed of the opportunity to compare and share experiences with these other two interns. This experience in and of itself was most enlightening, as it quickly became clear that although all three interns were participating in the same internship program, with placements in the same city and school board, all had very different experiences, duties and expectations in their placement.

Recommendation:

That regular time is set aside during the internship placement to regularly meet with other individuals such as field supervisors, and other administrators. It is particularly recommended that interns have the opportunity to meet with other interns, if possible in a group setting. During this time, opinions and perspectives on various aspects of the internship could be discussed and experiences shared.

Limited Authority

Unlike the teaching internship, the administrative intern is really an ambiguous concept. The intern is not a teacher but, by the same token, is not *really* an administrator.

Because there is a great deal of emphasis on observation in an internship setting, many interns have the opportunity to "play" some of the roles of the principal, but not live the total life of the principal. Authority is a concern. Legally and ethically, an intern does not have the power to make the decisions that principals must make. Unlike the teaching internship, it is impossible for the administrative intern to assume full power of responsibility of the principal and thus the experience is in many ways not reflective of the true principalship.

Likewise, because of issues of confidentiality and ethics, there are certain component of the principalship to which the intern does not have access. For example, certain schoolboard meetings (e.g., attending staffing meetings at the school board, particularly this year, was not appropriate), specific program planning meetings in which confidential information would be discussed, and parent interviews are all examples of activities that may be off limits to the intern. The ambiguous nature of role of the intern raises questions as to whether or not the intern should be involved in such activities.

Recommendation:

The intern, university field supervisors and school board officials must previously agree upon mutual and agreeable expectations. This would reduce the uncertainty and ambiguity of the intern's role. These expectations should convey the message that the intern needs to be given the authority to perform the duties of a principal under the direction of a mentor, and the responsibility to take charge of their own experience. The university must assure the school boards that the internship is a legitimate component of the Master of Education program and thus should be viewed with the same confidence as the teaching internship.

Conclusion

The internship experience for this writer was an extremely effective learning experience. It provided a multitude of experiences which served to strengthen the skills required for effective leadership in education. The principal, chosen as a mentor, opened her principal's door in all ways to this writer. Complete involvement and risk-taking were encouraged, and support and guidance were always available.

The internship is a valuable and integral aspect of the principal preparation program. The blending of theory and practice afforded from such an opportunity has confirmed that the principalship, while challenging and stressful, provides many opportunities for promoting development and growth in teaching and learning. It provides the chance to make a major difference and that possibility is indeed very exciting and appealing. The returns of effective school leadership are observable in the achievements of students and teachers and that is the primary purpose and greatest reward of the principalship - improving education for all.

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