

The Relationship of Administrative Preparation Programs
and Administrator Perception of Their Relevance to
Position Responsibilities

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Theoretical Framework

School administration competencies are frequently considered too complex for the school administrator, although the school principalship is the most important factor in determining school effectiveness (Trump, 1972).

The literature generally supports Trump's conclusions (1972) that school administrators should function primarily as instructional leaders (e.g., Cunningham and Nystrand, 1969; Hoffman, 1971). Professors of educational administration and supervision (e.g., Brandwein, et al., 1972; Hamphill, et al., 1962) also emphasize the importance of the instructional leadership role (as well as of management skills) in their design of graduate programs to prepare school administrators. This focus is again reflected in the design of inservice programs (e.g., Lutz and Ferrante, 1972). All stress the necessity for training programs, both college/university and inservice, to be relevant to the tasks performed by administrators. They also agree that increasing the relevance of administrator preparation programs depends on cooperative activities between professors, practicing school administrators and exchange arrangements such as school-university problem centered experiences in

which both university and school system personnel work together to solve school-related problems.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the preparation programs of six colleges and universities in a midwestern state for school administrators and the roles of the administrators in their work situations. In other words, what is the relationship between administrative preparation programs and the perception of practicing administrators of the relevancy of these programs to their actual responsibilities?

Position responsibility behaviors were determined through an examination of the literature. For the purposes of this study, the behaviors were placed in one of three generic areas:

1. Instructional Behaviors
 - a. activities related directly to the process of teaching
 - b. the selection of teaching resources
 - c. curriculum and program planning
 - d. relationships between schools and teacher training institutions
 - e. supervision of the teaching process
2. Administrative Behaviors
 - a. fiscal management
 - b. scheduling
 - c. supervision of non-instructional staff
 - d. day-to-day supervision of the school facility

3. Climate Behaviors - establishing, maintaining and improving relationships between and among:
 - a. students
 - b. teachers
 - c. school administrators
 - d. district personnel
 - e. community members

The thirty (30) behaviors as identified, and classified appear in Table 1. For each of the thirty behaviors, this study looked for relationships between and among actual involvement, desired involvement, perceived involvement, and the quantity and effectiveness of graduate level instruction. Also investigated were relationships between the responses of principals and assistant principals, with respect to their perceptions of actual and desired involvement in instructional behaviors.

Data Source

A random sample of two hundred twenty-five (225) school administrators who had completed graduate programs in school administration and supervision was selected from the records of six (6) institutions. One hundred thirty-one (131) returned the questionnaire.

There were 38% of the respondents in the 41-50 year age range, 30% in the 31-40 age group, 23% in the 51-60 age group, 5% under 30 years of age, and 4% over 60 years of age. Most (56%) had earned their highest degrees within the last ten years; 44% had earned degrees prior to 1967.

Method

A questionnaire was developed to gather both demographic data and data which measured respondents' perceptions of the relevancy of their

Table 1
Behaviors Included in the Questionnaire

Instructional

1. Designing and conducting inservice activities, workshops or faculty meetings, the primary focus of which is curriculum and instruction
2. Participating with students in the development and implementation of curriculum and instruction
3. Conducting individual teacher or grade/department meetings for the purpose of formulating teaching strategy plans
4. Participating in the planning and implementation of cooperative inservice activities involving school personnel and teacher preparation institution faculty
5. Participating in research activities to evaluate effectiveness of instructional programs and/or making recommendations and reports to the School Board
6. Participating in the selection of curriculum and instruction materials
7. Participating in the selection, placement and evaluation of student teachers, as well as conferring with student teachers and their supervisors
8. Participating in the selection process of school teaching personnel
9. Conducting classroom visits and conferences with teachers
10. Participating in determining teaching assignments and the format of instruction (e.g., team teaching, open classroom)

Table 1 (continued)

Administration

1. Participating in determining budgetary limitations and assigning fixed amounts for supplies and materials
2. Participating in the procurement/ordering of expendable supplies
3. Participating in discussions with social workers, guidance personnel, etc., regarding student problems
4. Participating in contract negotiations involving the School Board and all school personnel
5. Participating in scheduling school facilities for both school and community activities
6. Participating in tasks such as bus scheduling, grounds supervision
7. Participating in the selection and inservice processes for school personnel other than instructional personnel
8. Supervision of the attendance program
9. Participating in parent conferences
10. Participating in the preparation of student/faculty handbooks, manuals, etc.

Climate

1. Participating with faculty to increase the degree of faculty control
2. Participating in planning P.T.A., etc., activities
3. Involvement in the resolution of problems between students and civil authorities
4. Articulating the school's educational program to the community
5. Participating with students to increase the scope of student control
6. Participating with students in activities/discussions to gain ideas for initiating change within the school

Table 1 (continued)

7. Soliciting inputs from parents regarding changes/improvements in the school
8. Initiating student involvement in the evaluation of instructional personnel
9. Involvement in the resolution of problems between students and teachers, and between/among teachers
10. Involvement in the resolution of problems between and among students

preparation to the roles which they were currently performing. Specifically, respondents were asked to react to the thirty behaviors, identified in Table 1, in terms of: (1) their actual involvement time; (2) their desired involvement time; (3) their perception of the importance of the behaviors; (4) the quantity of preparation (i.e., number of credit hours) in their graduate programs; and (5) their perception of the effectiveness of their graduate programs.

Forty-five percent (N=59) of the respondents returned their material within one week after the first mailing, forty-one percent (N=54) after the second mailing, and fourteen percent (N=18) after the third mailing, yielding a study population of 131. A multivariate analysis of variance was performed to determine if there were any significant differences in responses among the three groups. Since there were none, their responses were combined for all subsequent analyses.

Results

Table 2 shows the results of the correlational analyses. Each numbered behavior refers to the behavior described and similarly numbered

Table 2

Significant Correlations between Variables Using
the Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient
(P=.05)

Relationships	A	B	C	D	E	F
<u>Instructional Behaviors</u>						
1	x	x	.75	x	x	x
2	.79	x	x	x	x	x
3	.86	x	x	-.65	x	x
4	x	x	.70	x	x	x
5	.73	.49	.59	x	x	x
6	.96	x	x	x	x	.64
7	.87	x	.76	x	.76	x
8	.83	.47	.53	x	x	x
9	x	x	x	x	x	1.00
10	x	x	x	.77	.75	.87
<u>Administration Behaviors</u>						
11	.82	x	x	x	x	159
12	.91	x	169	x	.65	.58
13	.92	x	x	x	x	x
14	x	x	.47	x	x	x
15	x	x	.62	x	x	.79
16	.84	x	x	x	x	.94
17	.96	x	x	x	x	x
18	x	x	x	x	x	.82
19	.75	x	x	x	x	.90
20	.48	.57	.75	x	x	.79
<u>Climate Behaviors</u>						
21	.79	.65	.59	x	x	.70
22	x	x	.75	x	x	.78
23	.93	x	x	x	x	.63
24	x	.77	.92	x	x	.97
25	x	x	x	x	x	.70
26	.64	x	.51	x	x	.56
27	.94	.76	.68	x	x	.61
28	.82	.82	.89	x	x	.68
29	.86	x	.53	x	x	.66
30	x	x	.74	x	x	.65

Key: A = Actual Involvement with Desired Involvement
 B = Actual Involvement with Importance of Activity to Role
 C = Importance of Activity with Desired Involvement
 D = Importance of Activity with Quantity of Instruction
 E = Importance of Activity with Effectiveness of Instruction
 F = Quantity of Instruction with Effectiveness of Instruction

in Table 1. Only the significant correlations ($P=.05$) between two variables are indicated. These relationships are defined as:

A = Actual Involvement with Desired Involvement;

B = Actual Involvement with Importance of Activity to Role;

C = Importance of Activity with Desired Involvement;

D = Importance of Activity with Quantity of Graduate Instruction;

E = Importance of Activity with Effectiveness of Graduate
Instruction;

F = Quantity of Graduate Instruction with Effectiveness of
Graduate Instruction

It should be noted that for Perceived Importance of Activity with Quantity of Graduate Instruction and Importance of Activity with Effectiveness of Graduate Instruction there are, for sixty (60) behaviors, only four significant positive correlations. Two of these behaviors are in the "Instruction" category and one in the "Administration" category. No behaviors in the "Climate" category had significant correlations between the identified variables. Further, one behavior (number 3) yielded a significant, negative correlation. Since both D and E relate to respondents' perceptions of their graduate programs in terms of both quantity and effectiveness of instruction and their relevance or importance to the roles which they are actually performing in their schools, this finding is considered to be of major importance in this study.

In addition, column F (Quantity of Graduate Instruction with Effectiveness of Graduate Instruction) shows significant correlations for all ten Climate Behaviors, for seven of the ten Administration Behaviors, and for only three of the ten Instruction Behaviors. Respondents seem to feel that (with the exception of Instruction Behaviors)

the amount of instruction they received in their graduate programs was effective. However, when this finding is considered with the findings for columns D and E, what respondents may be saying is that although they had good instruction, the content of the instruction was not appropriate to the roles they actually need to perform in the schools. Also, if the primary role of the school administrator is considered to be "instructional leader," the results seem to indicate that administrators may not receive either sufficient or effective instruction in this area.

There exists a significant relationship ($P=.05$) between principal and assistant principal perceptions of all behaviors when all five categories of question 2 are considered (Table 3). In other words, both administrators have significantly correlated perceptions of their actual

Table 3

Comparison of Rankings of Principals and Assistant Principals According to Five Categories Using Spearman Correlation Coefficient ($P=.05$)

	Actual	Desired	Importance	Quantity	Effectiveness
Instructional	X	X	X	X	X
Administration	X	X	X	X	X
Climate	X	X	X	X	X

Key: X = significant at .05 level

and desired involvement, their perceived importance of the activity, as well as the quantity and effectiveness of their preparation for the performance of these behaviors.

Since involvement in Instructional Behaviors was a primary focus of this study, the Kendall Coefficient of Concordance was computed. The results (Table 4) show that both the principals and the assistant principals tend to have the same degree of involvement in instructional activities ($w=.94$, $P=.05$), although the level of involvement may not be as high as desired.

Table 4

Agreement of Principals and Assistant Principals
on Actual Involvement in Instructional Behaviors
Using the Kendall Coefficient of Concordance
 $P = .05$

	w =	Probability	Reject at .05 Level
Instructional	.94	.048	No
Administration	.85	.801	Yes
Climate	.91	.057	Yes

Educational Implications of the Study

The major conclusion of this research is that school administrators feel that their preparation programs did not effectively prepare them to perform the thirty behaviors identified in Table 1, behaviors which the literature indicates are priority competencies for school administrators. Hence, it seems essential that: (1) the institutions from which the research sample was drawn revise their programs to better meet the needs of the clientele which they serve; (2) this study be replicated in other colleges/universities with administration/supervision graduate programs; and (3) follow-up research be built into the

program design so that continual program evaluation permit ongoing program revision to maintain program relevancy to position responsibilities. Further, the general design of this study might be utilized to investigate the perceived effectiveness of other college/university programs.

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