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PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF APPROACHES TO ADMINISTRATIVE
TRAINING AND RELATIONSHIP TO PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

BY THOMAS KOWALCHUK

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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(to be filled in by investigator)

Investigator(s) Thomas M. Kowalchuk

Title Relationship Between Urban School Principals'
Background and Perception of Approaches to
Administrative Training.

If applicant is a student, name and SIGNATURE of faculty member
supervising the proposed research
Dr. H. May

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was twofold. The first objective was to determine what practicing school administrators felt constituted appropriate administrative training for new administrators. The second objective was to determine if school administrators would recommend that potential administrators undergo the type of preparation that they themselves received.

The survey was confined to all principals who worked in the eleven Winnipeg based school divisions in the spring of 1989. Data were collected on the professional background of principals, the administrative functions in which they felt administrators must display competency, and what they felt to be the best approach in the development of a number of administrative competencies.

The general conclusions were that practicing school administrators felt that skills related to the human relations and instructional management functions of administration were highly important to effective administration. Skills related to the development of a positive school climate and evaluation were also viewed as important. Principals did not identify any one approach as being superior for the development of administrative competency in potential administrators. Instead, they recommended that a combination

of approaches be employed, with primary emphasis on on the job training, and secondary emphasis on experience as a teacher and inservice training.

The hypotheses that principals would recommend that prospective administrators should undergo the same type of training that characterized their own backgrounds were not supported.

CHAPTER ONE

IntroductionRationale

In determining the content of a program for the certification of administrators, it is important to first determine what administrators do, and then develop a means by which the ability to carry out administrative tasks may be developed in prospective administrators. There has been a great deal of research on both of these topics. Most literature on the identification of essential administrative tasks has followed the approach of either systematically analyzing the functions fulfilled by practicing school administrators, or of surveying school administrators to determine what tasks they feel are central to their positions. Similarly, research has been conducted to determine the best means of developing administrative competency. Formal university study, on-the-job training, and a practicum in school administration have all been cited as effective approaches to school administrator preparation (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1985).

Numerous surveys have been conducted to determine what principals feel are important aspects of their work, what contributed most to their success as a principal, and what characterizes the typical school principal. In some surveys,

data have been collected which permit one to begin examining the relationship between administrators' own professional backgrounds and their perception of what constitutes appropriate administrative training. However, there had not been any studies carried out for the specific purpose of determining if such a relationship exists.

Similarly, there had not been any major surveys undertaken to determine what Manitoba school administrators feel is the best approach to developing administrative competency. However, with the introduction of programs for the certification of school administrators, there appeared to be a need to survey the opinions of practicing administrators. Certainly, it appeared that the information gathered by such a survey could provide some valuable information on the type of training in which practicing administrators feel prospective administrators should engage.

The purpose of this study was twofold. Firstly, practicing administrators were surveyed to determine what they feel constitutes appropriate administrative training. This was followed with an examination of principals' backgrounds to study the relationship between background and recommendations for administrative training.

Significance of the Study

Manitoba has recently introduced a non-compulsory

certification program for school principals and administrators. Currently, there is no fixed content for the program (Breckman, 1987). That is, candidates must complete a number of hours in workshops, conferences, or other professional development activities examining such general topics as the mechanics of administration. There are no guidelines in place which indicate the specific administrative areas in which prospective administrators must receive training. Likewise, the means by which the training is to be delivered are not specified. One likely way to determine appropriate content, as well the best approaches to developing administrative training is to survey administrators already in the field, as is recommended in the literature (NASSP, 1985).

The 1950's and 1960's were periods of rapid expansion for a number of school jurisdictions, and many principals who were appointed during those decades are now approaching retirement (Lawton & Musella, 1986; Lawton & Musella). With the prospect of an exodus of school administrators from their positions as they reach retirement age (Leithwood, 1987), and the need for new administrators to fill the vacancies, it is conceivable that Manitoba, as well as other provinces, will embark on the development of mandatory administrative training programs. Given this scenario, a study which collects information on the views of practicing administrators regarding

appropriate administrative training proves timely.

Statement of the Problem

What do school principals view to be the best approach to developing administrative skills important to effective administration? Also, is there a relationship between principals' professional backgrounds and their perception of the best approach to developing administrative competency? This study secured information from practicing school administrators on what they consider to be the best way to develop administrative skills, and attempted to determine the degree to which principals' levels of formal education, inservice education, experience as a teacher, and experience as a principal were reflected in their responses to questions on the development of administrative competency skills.

Delimitations of the Study

In examining the data that were collected in this study, one must be mindful of the following delimitations. Firstly, the survey population was limited to Winnipeg area school principals. Other administrators, such as vice-principals, assistant superintendents, and superintendents were not included. Additionally, by limiting the population to the Winnipeg region, one cannot generalize the results to principals in rural areas, where in-service formal education is less accessible, or to urban centers outside of Manitoba