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ABSTRACT

Educational administrators' concern with planning and time management results from the fragmentation of their daily activities, which research has documented, and their consequent search for order and control. Time is important because its scarcity affects productivity and its use has social-psychological effects on staffs' perceptions of administrators' priorities. Time management can increase administrative effectiveness through increased control of time and through the wiser use of time that is achieved by setting priorities. Administrators should begin managing their time by keeping a log of their daily activities and then analyzing what priorities can be inferred from the log, how results relate to time spent on activities, what activities were delegated, and to what extent others were involved in particular activities. The log will reveal administrators as doers of tasks rather than managers or leaders. Administrators need to become leaders, which may involve doing less. To do this they should determine priorities, on which in turn they should base written plans that include objectives, strategies, and time guidelines. In setting priorities, administrators should distinguish between the few vital activities and the many trivial ones. (Author/RW)

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The author has taken up the topic of leadership raised in earlier issues of The Australian Administrator. He advances some suggestions on how hassled administrators may obtain a better perspective on the way they utilize their own time, and thus facilitate the provision of educational leadership in schools. (Ed.)

PLANNING AND TIME MANAGEMENT: KEYS TO EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Thomas J. Sergiovanni

INTRODUCTION

In a recent study of U.S. educational administrators of new educational programs, Sproul (1976) found that such words as "local", "verbal", "choppy", and "varied" were used most often to describe a typical administrative work day. Choppiness, for example, was evidenced by the presence of many activities of brief duration. The composite administrator in Sproul's study engaged daily in fifty-six activities, each averaging about nine minutes in duration, and sixty-five events, each averaging six minutes. Events were described as periods of time one minute or longer during which administrators used one medium such as a phone, meeting, individual conversation, memo, or letter to work on one purpose. Activities were collections of events devoted to one purpose. This distinction, according to Sproul, was forced by numerous interruptions that characterized the administrator's work day. Conceivably, without interruption, each activity could by completed by one event. Choppiness, then, is reflected in the vast array of events and activities of short duration which characterize the work day.

Similarly, Mintzberg (1973), in his study of five Canadian executives including a school superintendent, found the work of administrators characterized by brevity, variety, and fragmentation. He noted that the majority of administrative activity was of brief duration, often taking only minutes. The variety was not only great but often without pattern or connectedness, and typically was interspersed with trivia. The administrator, as a result, was required to shift moods and intellectual frames frequently and quickly. These characteristics suggested a high level of *superficiality* in the work of administration. Mintzberg further noted that because of the open ended nature of his job, the administrator was compelled to perform a great amount of work at an unrelenting pace — a further contributor to superficiality. Free time was only rarely available and job responsibilities seemed inescapable. A recent replication of Mintzberg's work by Kurke and Aldrich (1979) substantiates his conclusions.

A study (Hemphill, 1965) of the secondary school principalship in the United States revealed that principals studied spent 50, often 60 hours a week on job activities. A study (Knezevich, 1971) of the superintendency suggests a work week in excess of 60 hours for about one half of the superintendents studied. Evening and weekend work was common to the superintendency. And as Lasswell (1971) suggests, "The man who keeps on top of his responsibilities is likely to suffer from chronic fatigue and exasperation, and unless he has an exceptional natural constitution, a quick mind, and selective habits of work, he falls further and further behind" (p. 34).

Though educational administrators are likely to find this description of their world of work familiar, this familiarity does not lessen their anxiety over what often seems an impossible dilemma. Understandably, attempts are made to bring order to one's administrative life of apparent confusion; to seek control

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over one's work activities. This search for order and control is what makes the discussion of planning and time management theories and models so appealing to educational administrators.

TIME AS A SCARCE RESOURCE

Time is a scarce resource in the sense that any future allocation of time is diminished by the amount allocated to present activities. Further, since the number of activities which can be simultaneously attended to is limited, time spent on one activity results in the neglect of others (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs; & Thurston, 1980). But time distribution is a social-psychological concept as well as one in economics. Symbolically, how an administrator uses time is a form of administrative attention which communicates meaning to others in the school. It is assumed that an administrator gives attention to the events and activities he or she values. Spending a great deal of time on interpersonal relationships, educational program objectives, building student identity with the school and its programs, or in some other area, communicates to teachers and students that this sort of activity is of worth to the administrator and school. As others learn the value of this activity to the administrator, they are also likely to give it attention. Administrative attention then, can be considered a form of modeling for others who work in the school. Through administrative attention, the principal contributes to setting the tone or climate of the school and communicates to others the goals and activities which should enjoy high priority.

Social-psychological effects of administrative attention tend to occur whether or not they are intended. An elementary school principal might, for example, espouse an educational platform which suggests a deep commitment to building a strong educational program sensitive to individual needs of students, taught by happy and committed teachers, and supported by his or her community. But this platform is likely to be ignored in favor of the one which students, teachers, and parents infer on the basis of administrative attention. Protestations to the contrary, if most of his or her time is spent on busy office work and on administrative maintenance activities, observers will learn that "running a smooth ship" is the goal of real value to the principal and school, and will likely behave accordingly.

In sum, administrative attention not only has obvious management effects when considered in an economic sense as a scarce resource, but has social-psychological effects as well. The potency of administrative attention is the reason why discussion of planning and time management are important.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Finding sufficient time to plan and to articulate one's plans is a task of no small consequence. Most administrators are already working long hours and are spending maximum effort at work. To s[illegible] one find additional time or new sourc[illegible] gy to meet present and new job demands is [illegible] onable. But working hard or working long hours and working effectively are not the same. An administrator might be at the length of his or her investment in energy and time, yet still increase effectiveness by managing time more efficiently. Time management experts, for example, often speak of "working smarter not harder".

Time management can help increase effectiveness, but the gains are likely to be modest. Even the most effective administrators are in control of only a small part of their time. One is in control when he or she decides how time will be used, has discretion over this time, and uses it in accord with his or her own judgment. One is not in control when one is reacting to situations and conditions determined by others, or when one is engaged in routine organizational tasks and demands programed by the larger bureaucratic and political environment within which he or she works. An ideal split of discretionary and nondiscretionary time is one-third—two thirds. But most educational administrators control less than one third and probably 10 to 15 percent might be a more accurate estimate (Wolcott, 1973).

Let's assume that an administrator is likely to increase his or her time control from 10 to 15 percent. How much more effective is that person likely to be? A 5 percent increase in time control will probably result in a 10 percent increase in effectiveness. Shooting for 30 percent increase in time control ought to be one's goal. This goal is attainable and realistic and upon being reached should result in a noticeable difference in one's effectiveness. Obtaining more discretionary time is only one stage in increasing effectiveness. Using time wisely is the second stage. In Peter Drucker's (1967) words:

> *Effective executives concentrate on the few major areas where superior performance will produce outstanding results. They force themselves to set priorities and stay with their priority decisions. They know that they have no choice but to do first things first — and second things not at all. The alternative is to get nothing done (p. 111).*

Setting priorities requires that one have a clear understanding of the major components of his or her job and some sense of how they relate to expectations from the school. In attempting to identify these components and how they relate to school purposes, one needs to spend less time examining stated objectives and public lists of critical job components and more time in inferring the real components and objectives from careful study of what an administrator does and how he or she allocates time to tasks and activities. A first step, therefore, in beginning a time-management program is to keep a detailed log of one's activities over a period of several weeks. The inconvenience of recording what it is that one is doing, with whom, for how long and why, every 15 minutes is well worth the effort. In analyzing a time log one might ask such questions as:

1. What actual objectives and priorities can be inferred and how do they compare with my stated objectives and priorities?

2. Do results obtained from different classes of activities justify the amount of time spent?

3. What tasks and activities should be delegated without loss of effectiveness, and what tasks and activities should be retained?

4. When others are involved in one's work, what is the purpose of the involvement? Is involvement necessary? Are you using the time of others effectively?

In reviewing a time log, one should be conscious of omissions as well. What tasks and activities are not appearing as frequently as they should? Since total hours are likely to be fixed, any addition of time given to certain tasks and activities requires that others receive less. The goal of time management is, therefore, one of redistribution.

Analysis of time logs often reveals administrators as doers of tasks rather than as managers or supervisory leaders of people (Sergiovanni, 1977). Too little distinction is made between doing, and supervisory leadership. Tasks could be delegated through another individual. Leadership focuses on helping others to develop personally and professionally, improving their performance, adopting new ways of working, and solving problems. Leadership has to do with getting results through people.

Because of the way schools operate, tasks are often crisis orientated and become top priority by default. Sometimes tasks are systems-orientated; they take priority because delays upset the bureaucratic system. For example, a principal plans to spend time with a teacher who is experimenting with an individually-paced chemistry program. But he or she receives an urgent request to prepare a two-year staff projection from a superior. Then a parent calls to request a meeting that afternoon. Apparently, a teacher detained his youngster for writing obscene words on his notebook cover and the parent feels this represents an infringement of free speech. The first instance is systems-orientated. Lack of response to this request upsets someone else's timetable. The second instance is crisis-orientated. Many administrators seem programmed to respond immediately to pressures from the school community.

Consider the following propositions: 1) top priority needs to go to leadership functions not to doing tasks; 2) one important way to lead more is by doing less; and 3) in any administrative role which contains leadership responsibility, increased effectiveness is associated with doing less. It is unrealistic to assume that the doing side of one's job is going to disappear, but one will not attend properly to the leadership side without establishing priorities linked to the analysis of a job's major components in key result areas.

PLANNING AND PRIORITIES

I have suggested that an administrator should try keeping a log to determine how time is spent. From a log one can infer actual job component purposes and outcomes. A next step might be to analyze key result areas and determine major purposes. Base priorities upon the difference between inferences of what you are doing and ideals. Priorities should be few, perhaps no more than three primary and six secondary for the year. Having too many priorities may be worse than having none. Next, focus on leadership responsibilities and leave the doing tasks to the 60 percent of time that cannot be controlled. Avoid setting objectives in areas of routine activity. Administering the teacher evaluation program is a routine function and does not call for an objective. Helping teachers to set targets for themselves or teaching them to use self-evaluation methods and activities, however, are practices which qualify as leadership objectives.

Rational analysis is important to the development of priorities, but courage may be even more important to the process. Indeed, courage in selecting priorities is the ingredient which distinguishes ordinary leaders from great leaders. In selecting priorities Drucker (1967) advises

> *Pick the future against the past. Focus on opportunity rather than on problems. Choose your own direction — rather than climb on the band wagon, and aim high, aim for something that will make a difference, rather than for something that is "safe" and easy to do (p. 111).*

Once priorities are established, set a specific time for planning. Priorities give us general guidelines — they suggest the major avenues to our work. Plans suggest the specifics with which one deals within a general time. The success of any planning depends upon the establishment of regular times for planning. A yearly plan ought to be developed with monthly times set aside for developing an operational plan. This process needs to be supplemented by a weekly planning session. Friday is good for weekly planning; it permits stock-taking for the previous week and a projection of next week's activities.

From a planning session should come a written sketch or outline of projected targets and activities. A written plan is more binding, less apt to be forgotten then mental plans. Further, a written plan enables stock-taking at the end of the planning timeframe. Plans should be kept simple enough to be readily understood by most teachers or others with whom one works. Yearly plans will be more comprehensive than monthly or weekly plans. Weekly plans should be kept to one page whenever possible.

In summary, the yearly plans speaks to priorities, broad goals and major anticipated accomplishments. The monthly plan is a time map for carrying out yearly plans. The weekly plan is an operational plan from which one works. Written plans should deal with the "whats", "hows", and "whens". The "whats" refer to objectives, targets, outcomes, or goals that one seeks. The "hows" are strategies for achieving these anticipated outcomes. The "whens" refer to the development of a schedule or timetable for implementing one's plans.

THE PRINCIPLE OF VITAL FEW

Educational administrators are likely to overestimate the number of issues which require special attention.

Many management experts, for example, suggest that only about 25 percent of the issues faced by administrators could be classified as vital with the remaining 75 percent being trivial by comparison (Juran, 1964). These experts often refer to "Pareto's Law" as the genesis of the "vital few" and "trivial many" principle. In 1906, the Italian economist, Vilfredo Pareto, suggested that economic inequality was due in part to the unequal distribution of human ability in society, and could be predicted mathematically (Pareto, 1906). Applied to financial and business situations, "Pareto's Law" suggests, for example, that approximately 75 percent of the wealth of the nation is in the hands of 25 percent of the people. As another example, 25 percent of the physical assets of a firm's account, was 75 percent of the firm's value. Though the 25:75 ratio is only an approximation, the main point is that only a vital few, accounts for most of the value, and the trivial many for the remainder. One popular example often used to illustrate the principle is to ask one to list the value of all his or her posessions. Typically, a few items account for most of their total wealth.

In applying "Pareto's Law" to the work of administrators, it is likely that most of one's effectiveness results from only a few of the activities in which one engages. By treating all activities the same, the vital-few activities are slighted and the trivial-many get administrative attention beyond their worth in effectiveness in the school.

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