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ABSTRACT
        Findings of a study that examined the exiting
superintendent phenomenon are presented in this paper. Interviews
were conducted with five state administrator association executives
from California, Massachusetts, Florida, Colorado, and Indiana.
Findings indicate that a trend of exiting superintendents does exist;
however, the trend varies by state. The most common problems faced by
superintendents involve finances or the stress of interacting with
various groups, particularly school boards. There is a strong
possibility that the numbers of exiting superintendents could rise
dramatically. Eight recommendations are made for further study
questions and research design. (Contains 17 references.) (LMI)

State Administrators Association Director's Perceptions of the Exiting Superintendent Phenomenon[1]

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2

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"Stress causing high turnover among school superintendents." (San Francisco Chronicle)

"Urban superintendent turnover, the need for stability." (Sounding Board)

"Superintendent accepts academic post."

These quotes are systematic of the attention that is focused on the school district superintendency and the concern about the rate and frequency of turnover in the position. In many school districts and for many superintendents the door is closed too rapidly. What happens to the persons who leave the superindendency is the subject of an exploratory study in this and three related papers.

To gather information about superintendents who exit this position, a team of researchers have been conducting interviews of current and former superintendents and state administrator association executives. The study is exploratory, with the goal being to develop beginning learnings about the exiting superintendent phenomenon. This paper is part of a symposium that is a summary of the initial findings and impressions from this collaborative study. Each of the papers develops one of the emerging themes, points out basic questions and proposes a limited number of hypotheses that could be the subject of more intense research in the near future.

The Situation

Turnover in the superintendency is not new. However, there appears to be decreasing stability in the superintendency. Consider the following indicators: 102 of 186 superintendencies have turned over in the last three years in Georgia. In V'· ¬o, Texas, there have been three superintendents in two years. In New Mexico, ᴐ5 ᴐf the 85 superintendencies were vacant in 1991. There have been expressions of concern in the national press about the 35 urban superintendencies that have been open during this last year. More specifically, 25 of the 47 urban districts represented by the

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Council of the Greater City Schools had vacancies in the superintendents position in 1991.

School districts are under intense pressure from state and federal governments, school boards, unions, courts, tight budgets, diverse parent interests and the increasingly complex needs of children. The superintendent is in the middle of this array of cross-fires. Turnover in the superintendency is one of the consequences.

Another apparent consequence of this context is that some individuals who have been superintendents are exiting the superintendency career. Instead of seeking another superintendency, they are moving into university positions, becoming consultants, starting their own companies, joining newspapers, purchasing fast food franchises, and choosing from an array of other business and career alternatives.

For all the reasons cited by practitioners, documented in the media, and analyzed in professional and research journals, superintendents are less secure in their positions. They are treated with less respect by their boards and their communities then they have been in the past. Some hypothesize that superintendency turnover, resignation and retirements are increasing. They point out that there is a shortage of strong candidates for the many openings. Are superintendents "hired to be fired" today as the increasingly shortened tenures of urban superintendents suggest? As one state association executive observed, the job has become "too tough, it's too complex." As some superintendents continually experience conflict with their boards, work to solve budget problems, and respond to unreasonable demands for quick fixes, they are deciding they don't want the job anymore. One highly successful exiting superintendent summarized his position by saying, "It isn't fun anymore."

The purpose of this symposium is to offer preliminary findings from an exploratory study of the exiting superintendent phenomenon. The researchers are examining through naturalistic inquiry, the existence and consequences of an exiting phenomenon among superintendents. Data being collected and examined include: indepth interviews with selected superintendents who have or are in the process of exiting, interviews with state and national association executives, power brokers, and school board members; field observations; and collection of community and organizational artifacts. The research team is attempting to include sample subjects from across the country. Although no preordained hypotheses were stated, the study has been framed by these central research questions.

1) Is there an exiting superintendent phenomenon?
2) Why do superintendents exit?
3) Where do they go and what are the consequences of the exit?
4) Who is willing to replace them?
5) What contributes to their vulnerability?

2

6) Are there patterns in the people, the superintendency and/or the times which are related to exiting?

7) Are there indications of a trend toward more/less or the same amount of exiting?

An interagency team of researchers has launched the study of the superintendent exiting phenomenon. The principal investigators are Joan Curcio (1992), University of Florida; Shirley Hord (1992), Southwert Development Laboratory; and Gene Hall, University of Northern Colorado.

In this paper, analyses of interviews of five state administrator association executives are reported. The first objective of the interviews was to ask if the association executives thought there was such a thing as an "exiting" phenomenon. Following this, the interviews rotated to examination of individual cases where the association executive had knowledge of individuals who had exited the superintendency. In addition, an attempt was made to develop an estimate of the numbers and trends in relation to this phenomenon for the respective state.

Turn Over vs. Exiting

This study is based upon the premise that there are individuals who are exiting from the career of being a superintendent. We propose developing a distinction between those who "turn over," by moving from district to district as a superintendent, and those who cease being superintendents altogether. Further, we are drawing a distinction between superintendents who exit and those who have served a full-length career in the superintendency and retired. The exiters are those who have been a superintendent and have a number of years left in a normal career span, and for one or more reasons have selected alternate career moves instead of seeking another superintendency.

Related Literature

There is no doubt that there is stress in the superintendency and a great deal of turnover. There is a wide array of literature documenting the situation and offering advise. The range includes "how to" survive articles for the superintendent, extensive studies of the rate of turnover, and analyses of the conditions that lead to turnover.

For example, in a recent issue of the School Administrator, Anderson (1989) offered ideas on how to predict success in the superintendency. In this article, a general set of school district characteristics is presented that are associated with shorter and longer superintendent tenure. It seems that the annual rate of turnover in the superintendency tends to be around 13.5%. Interestingly, the greatest rate of turnover in the superintendency (16%) is occurring among smaller school districts (those with fewer than 350 students). Further if the community is "less active" than

the superintendents tenure is noticeably longer. The nearing end of a superintendency is strongly associated with an election defeat of an incumbent school board member.

Another extensive set of literature deals with "how to survive and succeed" as a superintendent. For example, Hopkins (1989) summarized many of the basic assumptions about the position of a superintendent and identified a number of indicators associated with success in the position and predictors of crisis.

Others such as Bau' and Willower (1983) have interviewed and studied retired school superintendents. It appears that retired superintendents are much more positive and optimistic about the role during their rein than is true for superintendents of the current era. In fact, Bau' and Williams noted that retired superintendents see a trend of decreasing authority, influence and less job satisfaction across the years.

Another major area of study related to turnover in the superintendency has to do with community dissatisfaction and characteristics of governance in the school system that result in greater and lesser stability for the superintendent. An example of the studies in this set would be one by Rada and Carlson (1985) in which they applied Satisfaction Theory (Lutz & Iannaccone, 1978). The basic premise in this theory is that when community dissatisfaction increases, there is greater risk, and in many instances, near certainty that there will ultimately be an "involuntary" turnover in the superintendency. By observing across a number of districts, patterns have been identified that can be used to a degree, to predict what is likely to unfold. As the level of community dissatisfaction increases, there are more apt to be split votes by the school board, leading to a split in the school board, which leads to a turnover in school board membership and subsequently, a change in superintendent.

March and March (1977) did an extensive analysis of school superintendencies in Wisconsin before 1940 and 1972. They applied statistical analyses to the superintendency as a career system. Their results suggest that, in terms of their model, that for individuals and districts the system is "essentially random." Deviations from randomness seem to be related either to perseverance in sustaining a match, or a chance success in moves to higher status districts. This probability analysis, although interesting, seems more fatalistic than those with a strong sense of internality will want to accept.

An alternate approach to the study of the superintendency and turnover in leaders would be to look at it from the point of view of leader succession and the literature of socialization. For example, Hart (1991) has done a synthesis of studies from this perspective. Hart identifies studies using organizational socialization and characteristics of schools as a basis for understanding leader succession. Based on her analyses, it appears that much more research has been done on the principal and succession of principals than has been done in relation to the superintendency.

4

Contrary to the generalization that could be drawn easily from the newspaper headlines, that turnover in the superintendency is an urban phenomenon, turnover is an issue in rural schools also. For example, Wilson and Heim (1984) documented the turnover in superintendents in rural Kansas. The total rate of turnover in their study was in the order of 13%. One of the findings in their study, that is worth noting here, was that in a majority of districts there was a high degree of stability. Certain districts, however, were more volatile and had a much higher rate of superintendent turnover.

In a more recent study of rural schools, Chance and Capps (1990) studied 41 school districts in Oklahoma where there had been three or more superintendents in the last five years. In their study, they were able to identify a set of critical problems associated with frequent change in superintendents: 1) financial management; 2) personal and professional integrity; 3) communication skills; and 4) immorality.

Giles and Giles (1990) have been compiling the data and studying the rate of turnover in California's more than 1,000 school districts. For the previous six years, ending in 1990, turnover rate in California had been at 16 + % per year. Giles and Giles (1991) have documented that 25% of superintendents do not survive two years.

Turnover in the superintendency is not uniquely a United States phenomenon. In some of the provinces of Canada, superintendency turnover is on the increase as well. For example, in British Columbia, there was a policy change from having superintendents employed by the provincial government to having them locally employed. In a study of the first decade of this transition, Storey (1987) conducted interviews with superintendents and compared the experiences in British Columbia with what was going on in other provinces. Of the 129 individuals who held a superintendency for some time period during the 9-years of the study (1979-1987), 66 remained in the position, 21 retired, and 46 went to other positions.

The point of this, in many ways, cursory review of the literature is to identify an aspect of the phenomenon that has not been studied. By briefly summarizing the areas of study that are well documented, it is now possible to suggest that there is a blind spot that offers potential for study, and may represent an area of critical importance, as the trend lines u old.

The blind spot has to do with the focus on "turnover." The frame of reference for most of the studies and the area of study highlighted is the position and the persons who assume this position. The studies focus on characteristics of the school district which contribute to stability or instability and/or the persons in the superintendency. Or the studies are of the rate of "turnover" in the position. In the practitioner literature, the focus is on selection and surviving in the position. A form of Tape II error is occurring. There is another variable in the equation that needs attention. That is the individuals who are superintendents who leave one superintendency and do not

5

take another superintendency. Instead of examining the district, or persons who take the superintendency, we propose studying those that move on to other types of work. We are calling these persons exiters. They have been a superintendent in one or more districts and at some point in their career, short of normal retirement time, decide to not take another superintendency.

The exiting superintendents, whatever their number, tend to be neglected when these other frames of reference are used for study and analysis. For example, in the Storey (1987) study of British Columbia, there were 46 persons who "went to other positions and activities upon departure." Storey did not report on these 46, other than to note that only four had re-entered since departure. From what can be ferreted out in Storey's report, three of the 46 went to superintendencies in other provinces, the others did not. What happened to the others was not reported.

In summary, there is a sub-set of superintendents who are exiting that are being neglected in the turnover studies. The proportion of superintendents who are exiters, why they exit, where they go, whether there is an emerging trend toward more or fewer are the questions of this study.

Business Parallels

The phenomenon that we are calling exiting is less attended to in education, however, not an undiscovered phenomenon in other fields. For example, in the business literature on career development there are analyses of "executive level transitions." Rainey & Wechsler (1988) report on the turnover in executives in government administrations. When there is a change in the Governor or in the President, there follows a change in the executive staff. In this literature, there are attempts to develop conceptual frameworks for analyzing and explaining these transitions. Analysis of this literature could be instructive to those interested in studying exiting superintendents with a different conceptual framework.

A parallel organization, in many ways to that of schools, would be the administration of hospitals. In the hospital management literature there are analyses of the turnover in hospital executives. There are applied articles dealing with advice to executives about how to anticipate when their job is in jeopardy (Sunseri, 1991). Also, within this literature are analyses of executives and managers who leave the hospital administration for other fields. The term that is used here is more colorful than exiting, i.e. "repotting." Brenner & Singer (1988) report on an analysis of the characteristics of mid-level managers and executives who become "career repotters." It appears that the repotters tend to become dissatisfied with their chosen careers as they approach middle age, and that they seek fulfillment through "new careers that are totally unrelated to their former professions" (page 58). The more predominant reasons for repotters making career changes have to do with seeking more meaningful work and a better fit between values and work. Further, Brenner & Singer propose

6

8

that the "tendency to task risk may be a key factor differentiating repotters and stayers" (page 60).

The Problem?

In summary, there is a great deal of turnover in the superintendency. There is an array of writings about districts and superintendents involved in turn overs. There has not been the same level of analysis of exiting. Further, when the issue of exiting (i.e., repotting) is brought up, the initial reaction in conversations with colleagues, superintendents, etc. is "I am not sure there is anything there". Then, following a brief pause, we have observed each interviewee start identifying individual cases of superintendents who have exited. Yet, the number and proportion of persons who are exiting the superintendency is not documented. Where they are going is not documented. The size of the phenomenon and whether there is any trend line to it is not clear. Thus this exploratory study.

Whether or not there is a phenomenon of sufficient size to identify trends and patterns is not known. Whether the phenomenon is unique to urban superintendents, or rural, or suburban is not known. Whether the exiting phenomenon is more characteristic of certain states or regions of the country is not known. Thus this exploratory study.

Study Methods

The three co-principal investigators (Curcio, Hall & Hord) developed a general set of interview questions and agreed to explore the exiting superintendent phenomenon. There has been no large grant or a cast of thousands to work on this study. Instead, the research team decided to draw in colleagues, to design an exploratory approach, then interview a sample of subjects. Our purpose has been to collect data and shed light on the nature and scope of the exiting superintendent phenomenon. Hord (1992) decided to focus more on the preparation of superintendents for the position. Curcio (1992) decided to focus more on vulnerability, and Hall, in collaboration with Difford, decided to interview state administrator association executives to see what their perspective on exiting phenomenon would be and what sorts of data they might have available. To balance our interpretations we asked Richard Wallace (1992), an exiting superintendent, to describe his perspective.

The objective of this effort is to draw broad brush strokes around this phenomenon, propose some questions that could be the subject of future study, nominate variables, and outline some studies that might make sense as next steps.

What State Association Executives Say

State Association Executive Directors were interviewed by various members of the research team. The sample of association directors range from coast to coast

7

(California and Massachusetts) from large states to small states (Florida and Colorado) and the midwest (Indiana). Highlights of their commentary and perceptions are reported in relation to each of the guiding questions.

-- Is There an Exiting Superintendent Phenomenon?

The first reaction to this question was one of pausing and then offering an answer that tended to combine turnover with exiting. With further probing to separate exiting from turnover, state association directors observed:

- There is a growing problem with superintendents exiting.

- Yes, what I am seeing is people trying to get out at an earlier age. Take a diminished retirement and maybe do something else to supplement it, rather than put up with the superintendency for another 4 or 5 years.

- The answer is yes. I am seeing more leaving. Some are retiring, who would normally not be retiring, if it were not for the conditions that exist in public education today.

-- Why do Superintendents Exit?

- A lack of financial resources. Looking at Florida, for example, in this fiscal year, the 1990-91 year, we have had four cutbacks or rollbacks. Coming from the 1991-92 appropriations bill, we have less dollars per student in K-12 programs than we did last year after the cut.

- Well, the superintendents are the ones that are catching the flack from the public, from teachers, from custodians, bus drivers, the whole group. Superintendents are the ones that have to make the recommendations that we can't afford to have this many teachers or this program. So . . . they make the recommendations to the school board so they are number one on the firing line. They are the ones who have to tell principals and teachers that we cannot continue to have these kinds of programs because we don't have the dollars to fund them. That doesn't make them very popular and doesn't make your work very pleasant when you have to do that.

- The schools have been under such seige during the past few years, with restructuring and all of the reform movements, and all of those things. Now we are in a new phase of accountability, which really isn't new, but is back with us again and all of the things that are created by that that come on top of the lack of resources. You get burned out and just say "I have had it with this. I am going to do something else."

- Three-fourths of all vacancies occur because of problems between the board and the superintendent. Therefore, three-fourths of all experienced superintendents apply for other employment because they must find another position.

- One is the idea of a retirement. One is the idea that I don't want to be a superintendent anymore. There is a third group that get fired and have a hell of a time landing another job. There are a bunch of these guys who are trying like hell to land anything, any superintendency anywhere. They are motivated by two things: one is of course to have a job and money, but the next is trying to get their 20 years in the state retirement system.

- I always believed, until the last year, that the job is really doable. If you just get the right person in there. But I am seeing some really good people have a hell of a time in this past year to two years. I am beginning to question, under the current circumstances, with all of the outside demands and the inside interest groups building up their ability to influence, what the job is? Is it doable?

-- <u>Where Do They Go and What Are the Consequences of the Exit?</u>

  - To universities as faculty members in Educational Administration.

  - Establish a consulting business or join a search firm.

  - To assistant superintendent and other central office positions in other districts.

  - To serving as fill-in superintendents.

  - To consulting on various school district issues, e.g., buildings, budgeting, restructuring.

  - Helping state agencies with accreditations.

-- <u>Who is Willing to Replace Them?</u>

- The superintendency is not easy, but it never has been. The quality of the candidate pool is declining for several reasons.

- The job is too tough. It is too complex. It is a life-style choice. You know (a very well known assistant superintendent) we'll pick on him for just a moment. He has all the capabilities to be a superintendent that any one of us ever would. However, he has made the choice because of the age of his children and

9

because he likes his current school district, that for whatever reasons, he is going to stay as the assistant superintendent probably for a long time and maybe for the rest of his career. I could name a whole series of other people that I know personally in different districts who rise to the level of assistant superintendent, and then take one look at that superintendent and think, no way, let the carpet baggers come and go. I am staying here because I don't want all the responsibility and I don't need it.

- Why do people stop short? One is that the money is not worth it and that is what they are saying. In other words, assistants in the big districts will make $70-75,000. If they go to the superintendency, they make $80-92,000 with a car. They may already have a car allowance.

- Because fewer teachers aspire to the longer work year and the intense pressures of the principalship, and since superintendents comes from building level administration, the pool is declining. Also (in State) the schools of education have become more single issue oriented and therefore it is harder to build consensus.

- What I think they (Assistant Superintendents) are really saying is that I am already out on the road three nights a week and some weekends. I see my superintendent hardly having any time in his personal life. They work Saturdays, they are talking to board members on Sundays. They are gone five nights per week giving speeches. It is hard for them to work in their vacation time. It is harder than ever and that is one part of the lifestyle issue.

- There is a whole cadre of really qualified people who are sitting in the assistant superintendency chair and a lot of area superintendents are there and they don't make bones about it. They just say they don't want the lifestyle. I have enough pressure where I am now and somebody else has to finally take the heat.

-- <u>What Contributes to Their Vulnerability?</u>

- There was a perfectly good case of a very bright dynamic superintendent who would have loved to have stayed in his district, but over a period of a number of years (ten I think), he has made some decisions that evidently made people unhappy, so he is gone. Basically he was doing a really positive and constructive job, but he did not "take care" of the board members.

- The ethics, the integrity of the superintendent, the internal politic thing, the other pressures the superintendent have placed upon them lead to different kinds of burnout and lack of desire to hold the office. There is definitely an issue about the relationships between school board members and the

10

superintendent and what part they play in the superintendent wanting to get out. Results and relationships with staff and internal politics in the district are important too.

- The other part is who gets all the heat. The newspaper is always calling them to say what about the sexual harassment at the school? What about this teen out there selling drugs? Mr. Superintendent you are supposed to know about these things, you answer them. They don't necessarily come to the assistant superintendent, who may be the one who is actually in charge of the school that has the problem. You never see assistant superintendents' names anywhere. You don't see the personnel directors name. The public image all comes to rest on the superintendent.

- There is some kind of shift going on. I don't have a good handle on this but I am seeing more and more of the best superintendents struggle harder and harder to come out ahead. The issues are not necessarily alike, it is just this synergy and the complexity of the whole system of trying to manage your best strategic plan, moving ahead and all that sort of stuff. It has just gotten more difficult. It has gotten extremely difficult.

- One superintendent has been in a district for 10 years. Then he moved. He had built a wonderful school district. They had all sorts of programs going, there were good salaries, high morale among teachers. When I asked him why he was leaving, he said, "I have got to get out of here because I can't live with myself. I am going to have to tear it down (due to budget cuts). If you live in a dump, tear it down. So it is better to go somewhere else then to face what I would have to do here.

-- <u>Are There Patterns in the People, the Superintendency and the Times That are Related to Exiting?</u>

Difford has done an analysis of the changes of the superintendencies in Colorado for 1990-91, (see Figure 1). A similar analysis has been done by Charles Fields in Indiana, (see Figure 2). In both states, the available data indicate a small percentage of exiters (25% in Indiana, 1/40 in Colorado). However, there are differences in how the changes were categorized in the two states. For example, in the Colorado data, six individuals were categorized as "out-of-work." Some of these, by default, may become exiters. Another category where further probing is necessary is the "retired." It appears that many of these persons are moving on to other types of work in and out of education.

Figure 1

Colorado Superintendent Turnover In 1990-91

In a recent analysis done by Dr. Gerald Difford of Colorado Association of State Executive (CASE), superintendent turnover was classified using the following categories:

TAS   A superintendent moves from one position to another as superintendent.

R   A superintendent reitres from the position and draws a retirement annuity.

O   A superintendent is out of work as an educator, but continues to seek the superintendency.

D   Deceased.

E   A superintendent exits from the job indicating no further interest in it.

?   Unknown

Using this typology, Colorado superintendent turnover in '90-91, was charted as follows:

TAS	To another superintendency	16
R	Retired	14
O	Out of superintendent work	6
D	Deceased	1
E	Exit from the job	1
?	Unknown	2
TOTAL		40

Thirty of the forty changes can be accounted for through moves to another superintendency or retirement.

Figure 2

Indiana

Dr. Charles Fields, Executive Director of the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents, has recorded the following changes in Superintendents from 1981-90.

Exit	Number	Percent
Resigned/retired	145	37%
To another Indiana Superintendency	131	33%
To out-of-state Superintendency	19	5%
To other administrative positions	47	12%
Returned to the classroom	9	3%
To higher education	7	2%
To business community	26	6%
To further degree work	5	2%
TOTAL	389	100%

During this nine year period there were 289 districts in Indiana. Further, the Indiana data does not provide evident that the turnover or exxiting phenomena is increasing.

Year	Resign/Retire	To Other Administration Positions
1981	15	6
1982	12	3
1983	13	3
1984	16	6
1985	13	5
1986	10	2
1987	15	8
1988	11	4
1989	21*	6
1990	19*	4

A newly legislated early retirment program accounts for this apparent increase.

Concluding Discussion

There are definitely individual instances of the exiting phenomenon. However, the extent and rate of the phenomenon is not clear. Based upon the interviews of state association directors, it appears that there may be variation in the trend depending upon the state. For example, in Indiana, the shift in the state retirement system created an incentive for superintendents to retire early.

There is unanimous agreement that the job of being a school superintendent is not easy and is becoming increasingly difficult. Financial problems were consistantly tagged. Also, the constant cross-fires from the board, school personnel, the media, courts etc. are significantly reducing the room for movement.

-- <u>What Changes Would Make the Superintendency More Viable?</u>

Another question in the state association directors interview had to do with what they saw as keys to making the superintendency more viable. There was immediate nomination of school boards as a serious problem. Board member tendency toward emphasising personal interest and narrow political agendas are problematic for superintendents and the effective operation of school districts.

- Well, I think the whole system of public education has to change. With that the role of the superintendent has to change. The role of the school board is going to change I think. Maybe not as drastically as the role of the superintendent, but it has to change.

- Yes, the major key is the board president. Board president's tend to function as the funnel and consensus builder for the whole board. How effective they are at doing that is extremely helpful to the superintendent. If the board president doesn't, then the superintendent has to take on some of the issues of dealing with coalitions and trying to keep them together. So one key is who is the board president. Another key that I believe is important is stability. And I don't mean those that get knocked off in elections. I have seen a lot of board members just quit and just say I am out of here. I have been here for four years, goodbye.

- I see boards as micro-managing issues.

- I don't know. I take a look at (a very large city) and just wonder if it is still doable. Or if it doesn't have to change and be broken up into smaller units or something. The way they have attacked it here is they have eliminated the elected school board and have gone to one appointed by the Mayor. If they don't change the way the board operates, then I don't care whether they are elected or appointed, it doesn't make much difference.

14

So is there a phenomenon of exiting superintendents? These authors believe that there is and it has been best documented in California where 4 out of 5 who leave the superintendency do not return within two years. However, factors appear to vary from state to state. Superintendent turnover appears to be increasing in some areas, but in part, the increases are related to changes in retirement policies.

All of the State Association Directors interviewed believe the exiting phenomenon has the potential to be on the increase as this decade unfolds. However, at this time, the data base is not in place, other than perhaps California. Thus, there is need for further study of the dimensions of the phenomenon as well as to develop systems to document the extent to which it is occurring.

In conclusion, we offer the following as suggested directions for those interested in shaping future studies. Some of these suggestions take more of the form of study questions, while others offer recommendations for study design.

1) Are the number of people preparing for the superintendency declining? (Perhaps State Department Certification statistics could be useful to answer this question.)

2) Can judgments be developed about trends in the quality of superintendent applicants? Leaders of preparation programs could be surveyed, superintendent headhunter groups could be surveyed and applicant pools could be analyzed.

3) Is the length of superintendent tenure shortening? If so, is the size of the district a factor? More states could be analyzed systematically.

4) How does the superintendent exiting phenomenon compare and contrast with career transition phenomenon of chief executives in business? Similar studies to Brenner and Singer's (1988) could be done. In that study, analysis of the characteristics of executives who became "career repotters" were compared to those who stayed in their positions.

5) What are the triggers that lead to exiting? Are there things about the selection process that lead to less success on the job? What about the school board and the bureaucracy of the school district? The particularly stressful crises such as fiscal constraints could trigger exiting. For example, one association director hypothesized that it was the second major budget reduction that seemed to trigger exiting.

6) What about the issue of "stopping short?" There was consistent testimony from the association directors that many talented and promising individuals are stopping short from seeking the

15

17

superintendency. Many assistant superintendents are staying where they are. Also, it was suggested that teachers are less interested in becoming principals and principals less interested in becoming district office administrators. Documentation of the degree to which the pool and the development of the next generation of superintendents is at risk should be done.

7) The studies need to be designed from the frame of reference of who is exiting instead of from the position of the superintendency or school districts. Again, the work of Brenner and Singer is instructive. In business, the reasons for leaving executive positions appear to be related more to a personal need for new challenges and interests in experiencing new horizons. On the other hand, it appears that superintendents are existing because of feelings of inability to succeed in the position and to be empowered in their current position. There appears to be a qualitative difference in the dynamics of repotting versus exiting.

8) There needs to be closer examination within the "retired" category. On many of the demographic and descriptive summaries of superintendent turnover, individuals are listed as "retired". They may have reached a threshold of years to be eligible for the retirement program, however, that does not mean that they have stopped being engaged in professional work. In our discussions with association directors, as well as in interviews with exiting superintendents, it is clear that many of these persons have reached the minimum years of retirement, but have not ceased being professionally active. In fact, a large proportion have selected other full-time jobs. The recommendation as well as the caution for those engaged in further studies is to disaggregate the so-called "retired" category.

Summary

The goal in this exploratory effort has been to sketch the general outlines of what appears to be an unnoticed phenomenon, i.e., exiting of superintendents. Our conclusion at this point is that there are cases of able and well-qualified superintendents who are exiting this career. The number appears to be small, however, it also appears that there is a strong possibility that the numbers could increase dramatically. As one association director noted, "Something is changing." We are not sure which way things will unfold, however, this may be the critical time to watch the emergence of a new trend. It may be the beginning of a larger movement.

At the same time we should acknowledge the cautions offered by Larry Cuban, who served as the discussant at the AERA symposium. He noted that the numbers are

16

18

small and there are many career moves that represent logical advancements. Cuban also suggested that attention be given to historical patterns by the ebb and flow of the superintendency, and that attention be given to the studying those persons who remained in the same superintendency for ten years or longer.

We invite others to take a look at what we have been able to do in our initial explorations, offer suggestions and questions. We are most willing to share data bases and our insights, as far as they are developed with others who are interested in persuing this phenomenon further. Whether or not the exiting phenomenon remains small or grows, the exploratory work has clarified a number of possibilities for closer studies. The work has added also to our empathy for those who strive and sacrifice to be effective, successful and long lasting in the superintendency

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18

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19