PRINCIPALS' ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES:

AN ANALYSIS OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ACTUAL AND IDEAL TIME EXPENDITURES AS A FUNCTION OF CAREER STAGE

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Abstract

This study investigated the gap between elementary school principals' rankings on current and ideal allocations of time for staff, student, managerial, curriculum, strategic, fiscal, and community activities as a function of career stage. Most principals surveyed preferred to spend more time on curricular and strategic activities than they were currently spending, and less time on student and managerial activities. Chi-square tests of independence found that these preferences were not related to career stage, years as a principal, years as a professional educator, or gender. Parallels between work-related stages of development and Erickson's adult developmental stages were drawn. Recommendations included finding a balance between internal and external demands and adapting professional development ideas from the psychology and sociology fields to fit the principal's unique needs.

Organizational Activities of Elementary Principals

As accountability increases and schools become more complex environments, today's school administrators are expected to carry out a broader array of activities than ever before (Billot, 2003; Dukess, 2001; Johnson, 2004; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2004; Wildy & Louden, 2000). The research by Portin, Shen, and Williams (1998) on school effectiveness extends the notion that principal leadership is a significant factor in the school's overall success. In nearly all American schools, administrators conduct a plethora of activities to lead their schools through programmatic requirements, such as curriculum and benchmark standards and making financially responsible decisions that foster effective and efficient operations (Holloway, 2000). And nowadays school administrators are becoming more responsible for responding to students with a variety of cultural backgrounds and diverse learning needs that come with differing physical and mental abilities, learning styles and capacities, immigration status, and social services (see especially Dukess, 2001; University Council for Educational Administration, 2003).

In their daily work, principals are called upon and expected to provide instructional, financial, community, and individual leadership, all the while being held accountable for the academic, social, and emotional success of children before, during, and after school hours (Dukess, 2001; Ferrandino & Tirozzi, 2001; Kennedy, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2001). With this deluge, a principal's job continues to expand as new responsibilities are added (Portin, Shen, & Williams, 1998; Sergiovanni, 2001) and the old activities remain (Rayfield & Diamantes, 2004).

While each is a unique individual, principals usually perform a host of common activities. These are typically require good content area knowledge and an understanding

of the intricacies of the curriculum; an understanding of school funding, facilities and maintenance, and efficient and effective daily operations, as well as detailed knowledge of negotiated agreements, district policies and procedures, and school law. Additionally principals are expected to conduct activities in leadership, planning, and team building (Billot, 2003; Ornstein, 1993; Portin, Shen, & Williams, 1998; Sergiovanni, 2001; University Council for Educational Administration, 2003).

Principals simply do not have time in their workday to devote undivided attention to each of these activities (McLeary, 1981). With such an array of activities, how do principals decide which receive priority attention? According to Ornstein (1993) and Wolcott (2003), the more importance the issue is perceived to have, the more attention it will receive. As certain sets of activities receive more attention, the events surrounding them will be more fully developed and have fewer unresolved problems or weaknesses. Some activities are more important to the principal personally; some are more important to the community, district office, and other stakeholders. Often, principals are called away from preferred activities to respond to the demands of others (Thomson, 2001). For a variety of legitimate reasons, principals face a gap between the activities in their daily working worlds and the activities they would like to do in an ideal working world.

As the principal gains knowledge, experience, and expertise in specific areas, the comfort level and preference toward specific activities will change (Oplatka, 2004). Initially, a principal may tend to operate more as a school manager, focusing more on the easily identified and observable issues in the day-to-day maintenance of the school building (see especially Kremer-Hayon & Fessler, 1992). For newer principals, these events are viewed as important and worthy of consuming large amounts of time. With

advancing career stages, the principal will likely begin to make quicker decisions with less information, understand the personal motivation and behavior of others, be able to see the big picture without losing sight of the details, and understand how one's own organization works with others in the same field and across disciplines **(**Oplatka, 2004; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2004). With more experience, taking on new challenges and solving different problems take on increasing importance.

Katz (1955) proclaimed newer administrators spend the largest portion of their workday learning and mastering the technical tasks needed for satisfactory job performance. And, it is not until one masters the technical components that one is able to shift into thinking and acting on a conceptual plane. Although Katz was not speaking specifically of career stages, the same sequence of events is detailed by four part career stage theory proposed by Dalton, Thompson, and Price (1977). In this, and other similar theories, new professionals place prime importance in learning the day-to-day technical aspects of their jobs. Once the technical aspects are mastered, the emphasis shifts from dependent to independent work. And, finally when a professional has enough talent and a thorough understanding of the intricacies of the *lower* positions, that person will begin to understand how each component of the organization fits into the organization as a whole.

According to Dalton, et al. (1977) professionals in Stage I, the novice stage, are those working under the direct supervision of others and who frequently receive guidance and advice from mentors. In Stage II professionals routinely demonstrate independent competency. Their work is recognized as that of an individual contributor not dependent on others. Stage III professionals frequently act as the mentors to novice employees.

And, Stage IV employees concentrate their work efforts on providing direction at an organizational level rather than a personal level.

Table 1

Four Career Stages as identified by Dalton, et al. (1977)

	Stage I	Stage II	Stage III	Stage IV
Central activity	Helping Learning Following directions	Independent contributor	Training Interfacing	Shaping the direction of organization
Primary relationship	Apprentice	Colleague	Mentor	Sponsor
Major Psychological Issue	Dependence	Independence	Assuming responsibility for others	Exercising Power

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of career stage on the differences between how principals currently allocate their time and their ideal time allocations among various activity groups. Also evaluated were the possible affects of gender, years of experience as a professional educator, and years of experience as a principal.

Work Activities

This study focused on seven activity groups common to the elementary principalship. These activity group categories were selected from the professional

literature. They are staff related activities, student centered activities, general school management activities, curriculum and instruction related activities, strategic planning, fiscal accountability, and community relations (See Table 2).

This study asked principals to rank order the seven activity groups by how much time they currently allocate to the issues and again by how they would ideally like to allocate their time. Any differences between the current and ideal time allocations were subjected to statistical tests of significance to determine if the differences were related to gender, years of experience as a principal, years of experience as a professional educator, or career stage.

Table 2

Summary of Principal's Activity Groups

Activity Groups	Description
Staff	Staff selection, mentoring, performance evaluations, promotions, termination, developing leadership capacity, classroom observations, and professional development.
Student	Assessment and reporting of pupil performance, tracking credits, student conduct, direct student involvement, student discipline, and student guidance.
Managerial	Facilities maintenance and planning, safety and security, transportation operations, school law, correspondence, report preparation, and food services.
Curriculum	Monitoring and supervising instructional content, modeling teaching practices, and monitoring instructional methods and curriculum objectives.
Strategic	Promoting the school's vision, mission, and goals, assertive leadership, creating shared understanding, commitment to action, and inspiring others.
Fiscal	Preparation of school budgets, internal accounting, administering purchases, accounting for school monies, and keeping fiscal affairs running smoothly.
Community	Handling parent complaints promptly; conferences and cooperation with parents, PTA, and other community organizations; and school participation in community events.

Methodology

A random sampling technique was used to identify 900 elementary school principals from an available pool of approximately 2,350. Each of the principals contained in the sample was mailed the survey, directions for completion, assurance of confidentiality, a return envelope, and a small thank you gift. A total of 286 principals completed and returned usable surveys.

This randomly selected group was asked to take part in a relatively short, two-part questionnaire. The first part, designed specifically for this project, asked principals to rank order twice the time spent in each of the seven activity groups. The first rank order was according to how they currently spend their time and the second rank order was according to how they would ideally like to spend their time.

The second part of the survey focused on identifying independent variables of gender, years of service as a professional educator, years of service as a principal, and an identification of the principal's career stage. For the first three variables, respondents simply filled in a blank with the appropriate answer to the question. The career stage variable was assessed using the *Four Stage Career Assessment Survey* by Novations Group, Inc. (1998, used with permission)[1]. This was created directly from the works of Dalton, et al. (1977) and was chosen for its focus on professionals' development in organizations. The instrument was modified slightly to fit the school context. For example, *organization* was changed to *school district*. This section of the survey provided data that identified the primary activities, relationships, and psychological requirements in a principal's career stage. Respondents were also asked to classify their district as urban, suburban, or rural, as a way to monitor and guard against bias based on district type.

A comparison between a principal's rankings of actual time allotments and ideal time allotments on a given activity group was classified into one of three categories: (a) the current time ranking was greater than the ideal time ranking, (b) the current time ranking was equal to the ideal time ranking, and (c) the current time ranking was less than the ideal time ranking. These classifications of the differences in the ranks are referred to in this study as the rank-difference classifications.

To investigate the rank-differences classifications obtained by the survey, the following research questions were developed:

Research Question 1: Do the proportions of rank-difference classifications differ for each of the seven activity groups (i.e., staff, student, managerial, curricular, strategic, fiscal, and community)?

Research Question 2: Are the rank-difference classifications related to the principals' career stages?

Research Question 3: Are the rank-difference classifications related to gender?

Research Question 4: Are the rank-difference classifications related to years served as professional educators?

Research Questions 5: Are the rank-difference classifications related to years of service as a principal?

Thirty-five sets of hypotheses were created to test these research questions. Chi-square tests were used to evaluate all 35 hypotheses. Seven chi-square goodness-of-fit tests were used to test the null hypotheses corresponding to Research Question 1, while

28 chi-square test of independence were used to test the null hypotheses corresponding to Research Questions 2 through 5.

The dependent variable for each of these 35 sets of hypotheses was the rank-difference classifications. There were four independent variables in this study: (a) gender, (b) career stage, (c) years of experience as a principal, and (d) years of experience as a professional educator. As an overview, the numbers and proportions of responses in each of these variables are presented in Table 3.

Since the number of statistical tests being conducted was substantial, the alpha level was set at .01 for each test to reduce the effect of inflated Type I error rates that could be caused by the multiple testing. In addition, the alpha level for any pair-wise test, which was used as was a follow-up test to a significant chi-square test, was adjusted for the number of pair-wise tests being conducted. However, if the number of pair-wise tests exceeded three, only a partial Bonferroni-type adjustment was made in order to keep the alpha level from becoming overly restrictive.

Table 3

Numbers and Proportions of Responses for the Independent Variables (N=286)

	Number	Proportion
Gender		
Male	139	.48
Female	147	.51
Career Stage		
I	5	.01
II	56	.19
III	202	.70
IV	23	.08
Years as a Principal		
0 – 5	88	.30
6 – 10	90	.31
11 – 15	53	.18
16 and more	54	.18
Years as a Prof. Educator		
0 – 15	46	.16
16 – 30	160	.55
31 and more	78	.27

Findings

Research Question 1

Seven null hypotheses corresponding to Research Question 1 were tested with chi-square goodness-of-fit tests. The seven null hypotheses corresponded to the seven activity groups (i.e., staff, student, managerial, curricular, strategic, fiscal, and community). Table 4 contains the test results for each of the seven activity groups.

Results indicated a failure to reject the null hypotheses for the staff and community activity groups. Thus, the differences among the proportions of responses in the three rank-difference categories were not statistically significant at the .01 level for either of these two activity groups. The null hypotheses corresponding to the student, managerial, curricular, strategic, and fiscal activity groups were rejected at the .01 level. Thus, statistically significant differences existed among the numbers of rank-difference values in the three categories for each of these five activity groups.

Pair-wise chi-square tests were used to further evaluate each of the rejected null hypotheses. The pair-wise test technique used chi-square, as described by Green, Salkind, and Akey (1997). As previously noted, to reduce the chance of inflated Type I error rates due to multiple testing, the alpha level for each of the pair-wise tests was adjusted for the number of testing being conducted. For this set of pair-wise tests the alpha level was set at .003.

Table 4

Chi-Square Test Results for the Rank-Differences for Each Activity Group (N=286)

Activity Groups	Chi-Square Value	*df*	*p*
Staff	3.72	2	.16
Student	41.6	2	<.01
Managerial	193.2	2	<.01
Curricular	185.1	2	<.01
Strategic	179.5	2	<.01
Fiscal	71.9	2	<.01
Community	.53	2	.77

The pair-wise chi-square tests results for the student activity group indicated the number of responses in the *Current > Ideal* (n = 141) category was significantly higher than the number of responses in both the *Current = Ideal* (n = 93), (χ^2 = 9.85, p < .003) and *Current < Ideal* (n = 52), (χ^2 = 41.04, p< .003) categories. In addition the number of responses in the *Current = Ideal* category was significantly higher than the *Current < Ideal* category (χ^2 = 11.76, p < .003).

The pair-wise chi-square test results for the managerial activity group show another strong pattern. The number of responses in the *Current > Ideal* (*n*=202) category was nearly triple the number in *Current = Ideal* (*n*=68) (χ^2 = 66.50, *p*< .003), and more than 12 times the number of responses in the *Current < Ideal* category (*n* = 16), (χ^2 = 158.70, *p* < .003). The *Current = Ideal* category was also significantly higher than the *Current < Ideal* category (*n*=16), (χ^2 = 32.19, *p* < .003).

The pair-wise chi-square test results for the curricular activity group indicate the number of responses in the *Current > Ideal* (*n* = 25) category was significantly less than the number of responses in both the *Current = Ideal* category (*n* = 59), (χ^2 = 13.76, *p* < .003) or the *Current < Ideal* category (*n* = 202), (χ^2 = 138.01, *p* < .003). In addition, the number of responses in the *Current = Ideal* was considerably less than those in the *Current < Ideal* category (*n* = 202), (χ^2 = 78.35, *p* < .003).

For the strategic activity group, the differences between the numbers of responses in the *Current > Ideal* (*n* = 29) and *Current = Ideal* (*n* = 56,) categories were significantly different (χ^2 = 8.58, *p* < .003). The numbers of responses in the *Current > Ideal* category was significantly less than those in the *Current < Ideal* category (*n* = 201), (χ^2 = 128.63, *p* < .003). In addition, the numbers of responses in the *Current = Ideal* category was significantly less than those in the *Current < Ideal* category (χ^2 = 81.81, *p* < .003).

The pair-wise chi-square test results for the fiscal activity group showed that the differences between the numbers of responses in the *Current > Ideal* (*n* = 113) and *Current = Ideal* (*n* = 143) category were not significantly different (χ^2 = 3.52, *p* =.06). However, the number of responses in the *Current < Ideal* (*n* = 30) category was

significantly less than *Current* = *Ideal* (χ^2 = 73.81, p < .003) and *Current* > *Ideal* (χ^2 = 48.18, p < .003).

Research Question 2

Seven null hypotheses were tested to answer Research Question 2. The null hypotheses corresponded to the seven activity groups (i.e., staff, student, managerial, curricular, strategic, fiscal, and community). Since Research Question 2 investigated whether the proportion of responses in each of the rank-difference categories differed among the principals' career stages, these null hypotheses were tested with chi-square tests of independence. It should be noted that Career Stages I and II were collapsed into one stage as there were too few respondents in Stage I to allow any meaningful statistical test of that stage (see Table 5). Of the 286 respondents, five were in Stage I and 56 were in Stage II. Thus, collapsing Stages I and II yielded a final count of 61 respondents. Two hundred two principals were in Career Stage III; 23 were in Stage IV. The results of these chi-square tests are listed in Table 5.

The probability value for the chi-square value used to test the null hypothesis corresponding to community activities indicated it should be rejected (χ^2 = 13.00, p = .01). This result prompted pair-wise testing using chi-square tests. The alpha levels for these pair-wise tests were set at .001 as a partial Bonferroni-type adjustment for the possible inflation of the Type I error rates due to multiple testing. However, the chi-square values resulting from the pair-wise tests did not reveal any statistically significant differences among the proportions at the pre-established alpha level of .001. Thus, the differences among the proportions of responses in the three categories of the rank-

difference values for the three career stages were not deemed to be statistically significant.

Table 5

Chi-Square Values for Activity Groups for Career Stages (N= 286)

Activity Group	Chi-Square Value	df	*P*
Staff	4.03	4	.40
Student	3.77	4	.44
Managerial	2.75	4	.60
Curricular	6.53[a]	3	.03
Strategic	.28	4	.99
Fiscal	8.38	4	.08
Community	13.0	4	.01

[a] Stages III and IV were combined for this chi-square test.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 was posed to investigate whether the proportion of responses in each of the three rank-differences categories differed by gender for staff, student,

managerial, curricular, strategic, fiscal, and community activities. Seven null hypotheses corresponding to Research Question 3 were statistically tested.

The results of the chi-square tests used to test the seven null hypotheses related to Research Question 3 are listed in Table 6. None of the seven null hypotheses was rejected at the .01 alpha level.

Table 6

Chi-Square Values for Activities for Gender (N=286)

Activity Groups	Chi-Square Value	df	*p*
Staff	1.20	2	.55
Student	1.81	2	.41
Managerial	2.17	2	.34
Curricular	4.45	2	.11
Strategic	1.33	2	.52
Fiscal	2.11	2	.35
Community	.18	2	.91

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 was posed to investigate whether the proportion of responses in each of the three rank-difference categories varied by the number of years participants served as a professional educator for staff, student, managerial, curricular, strategic, fiscal, and community activities. Seven null hypotheses related to this research question were tested the chi-square tests of independence. The results of these chi-square tests, which are listed in Table 7, indicate that none of the null hypotheses was rejected.

Table 7

Chi-Square Values for Activities for Years as a Professional Educator (N=286)

Activity Group	Chi-Square Value	df	*p*
Staff	9.32	4	.05
Student	2.41	4	.66
Managerial	5.76	4	.22
Curricular	1.28	4	.87
Strategic	2.07	4	.72
Fiscal	10.47	4	.03
Community	3.68	4	.45

Research Question 5

Research Questions 5 was posed to evaluate whether the proportion of responses in each of the three rank-difference categories differed by the respondents' years of service as a principal for staff, student, managerial, curricular, strategic, fiscal, and community activities. Seven null hypotheses were formed to reflect this research question. Before these seven null hypotheses tested, the data for years of experience as a principal were categorized for each respondent.

The actual number of years of experience as a principal ranged from 1 to 35, inclusive. The average number of years was 11. The range was too large to use each year as a discrete category. Thus the years of services as a principal were categorized in a way similar to that of years of service as a professional educator. The categories were: (a) zero through five years, (b) six through ten years, (c) 11 through 15 years, and (d) 16 years or more. The numbers of principals in each of these categories were 88, 90, 53, and 54, respectively. The numbers and proportions of responses in current and ideal time expenditures by years of service as a principal were analyzed by staff, student, managerial, curricular, strategic, fiscal, and community activity groups.

The seven null hypotheses were tested with chi-square tests of independence. The results of those chi-square tests, which are listed in Table 8, indicated that none of the seven null hypotheses was rejected at the .01 alpha level.

Table 8

Chi-Square Values for Activity Groups for Years as a Principal (N=286)

Activity Groups	Chi-Square Value	df	*p*
Staff	5.05	6	.54
Student	3.58	6	.73
Managerial	6.69	6	.35
Curricular	2.19	6	.90
Strategic	4.75	6	.58
Fiscal	2.87	6	.83
Community	9.66	6	.14

Summary of Results and Discussion

Summary of the Results

Research Question 1 investigated whether the numbers of responses in each of the rank-difference categories were equal for staff, student, curriculum, managerial, strategic, fiscal, and community activity groups. Statistically significant differences were found for student, managerial, curricular, strategic, and fiscal activities groups. Most principals

ranked current as greater than ideal time allocations for student and managerial activity groups, current as less than ideal for curriculum and strategic activities groups, and current as equal to ideal for fiscal activity groups.

Research Questions 2, 3, 4, and 5 used chi-square testing to investigate whether the rank differences were related to the principals' career stage, gender, years of experience as a professional educator, and years of experience as a principal, respectively. No statistically significant differences were found in the differences between current and ideal time allocations for student, staff, managerial, curriculum, strategic, fiscal, and community activity groups.

Discussion

Ranks of Activity Groups. It is interesting to note how the respondents ranked their preferences for staff, student, managerial, curriculum, strategic, fiscal, and community activity groups. Table 9 presents the proportion and corresponding rank order, for both current and ideal time allocations, as reported by respondents in this study.

Currently, the top three time consuming tasks are student, managerial, and staff activities. That is consistent with the demands placed on principals in today's educational climate (Black and English, 1986; Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; and Smith, Guarino, Strom, & Reed, 2003). Nowadays, principals are expected to ensure student achievement, hire and maintain high-quality teachers, assume responsibility for and be accountable to students and staff, and operate in an inherently competitive and data driven society. Principals' salaries, bonuses, and sometimes jobs are based on their students' ability to demonstrate knowledge. Principals truly have a vested interest in *what* schools

are teaching and *how* they are teaching it, hence a relentless focus on student, managerial, and staff activities.

Table 9

Proportions and Rank Order of Sample Ranking Activity Groups as Most Time Consuming, Currently and Ideally

	Current	Ideal
Staff	.15	.17
	(3)	(3)
Student	.51	.29
	(1)	(2)
Managerial	.21	.01
	(2)	(5)
Curriculum	.05	.38
	(4)	(1)
Strategic	.04	.14
	(5)	(4)
Fiscal	.003	.02
	(7)	(6)
Community	.02	.003
	(6)	(7)

Note: The numbers in parentheses indicate the rank order of the proportions.

Ideally, the top three activities on which respondents would like to spend the most time are curriculum, student, and staff activity groups. These types of activities are consistent with the International Confederation of Principals (2001), Interstate Leaders Licensure Consortium (1996), and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (2002) goals and desires for education in the US and worldwide. These agencies call for a focus on school improvement, creating communities of learners, and ensuring all students have appropriate opportunities to meet high standards. I believe these altruistic and humanitarian types of activities are the reasons most of us entered the principalship. Curriculum, student, and staff activity groups representing the first, second, and third most preferred activities still demonstrate a commitment to the staff and students. In the ideal world, these principals seem to want to focus on the leadership and ideals needed to satisfy the purpose of education while leaving the day-to-day management and subsequent details to others.

Comparison of Current to Ideal. Chi-square test analysis showed there to be statistically significant differences between current and ideal time allocations for student, managerial, curricular, strategic, and fiscal activity groups. Most principals in the sample ranked current time allocations as greater than ideal time allocations for student and managerial activity groups and current time as less than ideal time for the curriculum and strategic groups. Most principals rated current as equal to ideal time for the fiscal activity group. These results were not affected by gender, career stage, years of experience as a professional educator, or years of experience as a principal. When comparing these results with previous studies, one notes several interesting phenomena. Most noticeable is the principal's desire for more time to be spent on curricular activities and less time on

managerial. Other strong similarities in principals' time allocations are also noted when comparing these results to those obtained in studies in the United Kingdom (Ribbins, 1999) and New Zealand (Billot, 2005).

Career Stages. All four stages presented in the work of Dalton, et al. (1977) were represented in the *Four Stage Career Assessment Survey* and respondents from all four stages were represented in the study. Given the duties and responsibilities of elementary school principals, we expected to see most of the respondents in Stage III and, indeed, more than two-thirds of them were identified as such.

Theoretically, in Stages I and II, professionals are learning the basics of their field, and they move from working independently to self reliance and independent work. As the educational leader of the building, one would expect principals to have mastered independent work and be willing to assume responsibility for others. As expected, the data from this study indicated a decline in the number of Stage I and II participants as years of experience rose. See Table 10.

Table 10

Numbers and Proportions of Years as a Principal by Career Stages (N=285)

	Years as a Principal				
	0-5	6-10	11-15	16+	Total
Stage	3	2	0	0	5
I	(.60)	(.40)	(.00)	(.00)	(.02)
	33	13	8	2	56
II	(.59)	(.23)	(.14)	(.04)	(.20)
	45	69	41	46	201
III	(.22)	(.35)	(.20)	(.23)	(.71)
	7	6	4	6	23
IV	(.31)	(.26)	(.17)	(.26)	(.08)
	88	90	53	54	285
Total	(.31)	(.32)	(.18)	(.19)	(1.00)

Note: The numbers in parentheses indicate the proportion of responses in that category.

In Stage III, theory has it that the professional is clearly working independently, usually has a position with supervisory responsibilities, has learned to take care of him- or herself, and now mentors or leads others. The Stage III principal relies on establishing objectives, delegating, and coordinating the tasks he or she cannot accomplish alone, knows he or she must satisfy superiors and subordinates alike, and he or she is able to

assume responsibility for the quality of work produced by others. This is practically synonymous with the elementary principalship.

Dalton, et al. (1977) contend a few individuals use their influence toward growth and survival of the organization, regardless of their position in the hierarchy. Dalton, et al. named this level Career Stage IV. Some school principals may make this kind of contribution to their school districts. As shown in Table 10, principals at all levels of experience were found in each of the career stages except Stage I.

Stage IV principals were identified at all categories of years of service as a principal. Only a few of the principals in the study were at Stage IV. In fact, 13 out of 23 Stage IV principals had 10 years or less on the job; this is consistent with Dalton, et al.'s sample. The wisdom that accompanies and defines Stage IV appears to be independent of years of experience as a principal.

In this study, I expected to see a change in the current amount of time allocated to certain activities (i.e. decrease in managerial and increase in strategic) with the advancement in career stage. I found more than two-thirds of the principals across all career stages reported spending more time than they'd like in managerial activities. And, about 70% of principals in all career stages wanted to do more strategic activities. Thus, no matter what the career stage, the demands of the job dictate how principals spend their time. It may be that principals' deal with two types of activities: those which might be called externally initiated and those that are internally initiated. Externally initiated activities are those that demand the attention of the principal, regardless of his or her intentions or plan for the day. Examples are student discipline or safety issues that require immediate attention, teacher concerns, and phone calls from the superintendent's

office. In this study those activities were grouped under the managerial, student, and staff labels. Principals, regardless of career stage, will always have the immediate demands of managerial, student, and staff activities. As the manager/leader of a building full of students and staff, their presence is inevitable.

Internally initiated activities are those that are not immediate or urgent, but the principal still believes are important. They are activities that the principal would do if the pressures of externally initiated activities were absent. Examples include curriculum and strategic planning, monitoring and supervising instructional content, and promoting the school's mission, vision, and goals. These activities were grouped under curriculum and strategic activities in this study. Regardless of career stage, in the current allocations of time, curriculum ranks fourth and strategic planning ranks fifth overall (see Table 9). However, they would rank first and second after the separation of the external demands of management, students, and staff activities.

There are parallels in the theories of career stage and the theory of adult developmental stages. The data from this study indicate that the vast majority of principals do not reach Career Stage IV, regardless of their years of experience. The principal's job remains the same. It may be that the nature of the principal's job prevents progression to what Erickson called self-fulfillment and contributes to what Brubaker and Coble (2005) define as derailment. This may be why the career theories that were developed from principal data (Day and Bakioglu, 1996; Kremer-Hayon and Fessler, 1992; and Ribbins, 1999) have a stage that may include stagnance or disenchantment.

According to Erickson ("Eight Stages," 2005), adults are always in the process of redefining who they are and their purpose in life, consequently changing how they

approach personal and professional challenges. There are strong similarities between the professional development of principals and the personal development outlined by Erickson in the social sciences.

In Erickson's Stage 6 (young adulthood to 40), adults are in the process of forming close relationships and building their own identity. Success at this stage is represented by close relationships and a sense of having developed their own identity. Failure to achieve this stage is marked with fears of commitment, feeling isolated, and feeing unable to depend on others.

Middle adulthood, or Stage 7 (ages 40-65), has a strong focus on the adult's ability to look outside oneself, the ability to care for others, and the desire to create a personal legacy. Success at this stage is evidenced with nurturing younger generations. Unsuccessful resolution includes self-centeredness and stagnation.

Finally, in Stage 8, late adulthood (ages 65 to death), the focus is on self reflection and one's own role in the "big scheme of things". Success here is marked with a sense of self-fulfillment and unity with others. Despair and a fear of death indicate failure to achieve this stage.

Parkay and Hall (1992) report young principals begin their new careers with frequent frustrations and feelings of professional inadequacy, gain control and stability, and eventually see their own vision aligning with those of the school body. Ribbins (1999) describes the incumbency stage as an early sense of frustration and realism leading to growth, enthusiasm, and a sense of control. Principals then operate with confidence and feel they are making contributions toward school leadership and will then close their careers in a manner succinct with their personal outlook on life. Kremer-Hayon and

Fessler (1992) noted new principals may begin with doubt and struggle, grow from managers to leaders, find their own personal orientation, and finally wind-down their careers. Day and Bakioglu (1996) also express similar initiation, growth and development, and autonomy stages. And Dalton, et al. (1977) report a progression from dependence to independence, to assuming responsibility, and ultimately exercising influence and shaping the organization.

Readers can see obvious parallels in these work-related stages of development and Erickson's adult developmental stages. Success in the work arena yields the same satisfaction found in personal growth. By the same token, a lack of success in the workplace has repercussions similar to the angst, stagnation, and depression noted in adult developmental psychology.

The data in this study illustrates, principals across al career stages expressed a desire to do ore of some activities and less of other activities. In only one activity group (fiscal), were principals spending the amount of time they believed should be dedicated to that activity. Appreciating that elementary schools may not be set up in such a way to allow principals more freedom to choose how they spend their time, how can principals find satisfaction and feelings of success when the workplace demands often do not align with personal preferences?

Brubaker and Coble (2005) state the best way to curtail derailment is with personal reflection, ongoing learning, and the application of learning from previous mistakes in new situations. With greater understanding of the successes and frustrations principals experience, we can better plan for professional development opportunities specifically focused on the issues at hand. Along with providing continuing education to

keep up with ever-increasing demands, we can add a bit of the human factor, consequently allowing more success. With such striking parallels, we can easily borrow from psychology and sociology fields, modify to fit our unique needs, and provide a stronger emotional/social foundation.

Limitations and Ideas for Further Research

Limitations

All studies have unintentional and unavoidable limitations. There were several such limitations in this study. This study surveyed only elementary school principals, and all of the participants were from only one state, Ohio. The study had an initial return rate of 41%; only 32% of the original sample provided usable data. This study used small alpha levels to decrease the chance of Type I errors. Less restrictive alpha levels may have allowed identification of significant findings.

The use of rank ordering format brought inherent limitations. However, its use resulted in less measurement error than would have been found if using an alternative measuring format (such as percentages of time). Specifically, field testing the instrument found principals were unable to judge accurately the amount of time, in minutes or percentages, they spend on specific activities. The collection and processing of data which does not accurately reflect principals' time would have proved perilous. Trial respondents were better able to confidently rank order the activities.

Ideas for Further Research

This study evaluated only seven groups of activities. The staff and community activity groups were not statistically significant for differences between current and ideal time allocations. A targeted quantitative or qualitative study may be needed to identify precisely why these activities proved different than the others. Are the activities in these categories mandated by schools? Do principals feel satisfied with the staff and their professional conduct and aspirations and consequently not sense the need for more time spent here? Does the time spent in these activities justify the benefits?

This study found the student, managerial, curricular, strategic, and fiscal activity groups did have statistically significant differences between current and ideal time allocations. From the testing conducted here, we know these differences were not related to career stage, gender, years as a professional educator, or years as a principal. Further targeted research is in order to identify the extent of those differences.

Principals of all abilities and in all career stages would benefit from knowing which things they (as a group) can control and which things they (as a group) cannot. While the literature overwhelmingly endorses the idea that the day's events control us rather than us controlling the day, an identification of which portions of the day are controllable—and to what extent—would be of great benefit to a principal's peace of mind. This study found unwavering demands on principals' activities related to student, staff, and management. Exactly how these activities differ from other activities would provide interesting knowledge.

Given the misalignment between how principals would ideally like to spend their time compared with how the currently spend their time, an the implications toward

derailment, why is it that some principals express high levels of satisfaction with their jobs while others do not? Is there a difference in environment, expectations, or personal outlook on life between the principals who are satisfied and those who are not? Is there a link between the findings of this stud and other investigations of satisfaction? Perhaps the answer lies within the definitions of success and satisfaction.

Dalton, et al. (1977) developed the Four State Career Assessment Survey with three components: activities, relationships, and psychological requirements. This study examined only the activities in which principals engage. Perhaps the idea of career stage would be better served with further investigation into the relationships and/or psychological requirements components—akin to Erickson's adult developmental stages. Principals cannot significantly modify the activities that demand our attention; but we can modify, or have some control over, the people with whom we spend time and how we feel about our abilities to deal with these oncoming demands.

Of special interest for new or future principals, and those who design their preparation programs, would be realistic, not pessimistic, qualitative or quantitative data on how to balance the current and ideal time allocations on these and other activities.

In replicating this study, other variables to consider include: size of the school building, the number of certified and classified staff, the use of an assistant principal, and the presence of other administrators or quasi-administrators in the building.

While the *Four Stage Career Assessment Survey* is an appropriate tool to measure the career stages of principals and other educational professionals, a tool might be developed and applied specifically for school principals.

Statistically, it was nice to see all four career stages represented. In genuine concern for our colleagues, we wonder about the stress levels of those identified as Stage I and II. Their survival skills would make an interesting qualitative inquiry. Such a study may include an examination of the principal's support system, energetic and emotional capacity, internal motivation factors, and professional development needs.

One factor missing in research is the lack of publicity for studies with non-significant findings. This can bias other studies or lead to unnecessary replication. Although an arduous task, the examination of negative findings is equally important as the examination of positive findings.

Conclusion

One portion of this study's original problem statement included the phrase, "it stands to reason that the activities these incoming professionals find time-consuming are very different from the things experienced principals find time consuming". Based on this study's results, there are some types of daily activities over which we have no control (identified here as student, managerial, and staff). We must respond to the external demands these activities require and find a way to balance these with our own, internal preferences.

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[1] The Novations instrument was used with permission; however the company asked that we not publish it.

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