

Comparing Perceptions of Dual-Role Administrators and Teachers Regarding the Effectiveness of Dual-Role Administrators in a Rural State

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One increasingly utilized option for rural school districts under fiscal constraints is to utilize one person to fulfill both administrative positions of superintendent and building principal in the same school district. This study compared the perceptions of rural school administrators in this Midwest state who are serving in these dual-roles with the perceptions of teachers in this Midwest state whose principal is also tasked with serving as the superintendent. The population for this study consisted of 58 dual-role administrators and a sampling of approximately 350 teachers in schools with dual-role administrators. Results of the t-test for independent samples indicated that dual-role administrators identified school board relations, public relations, and school finance as significantly more important than did their teachers. Teachers desired that dual-role administrators spend significantly more time on student discipline and attendance. A significant difference existed in the perceptions of time allocation between dual role administrators and teachers, with teachers perceiving that dual-role administrators spend more time on the superintendency than the principalship. Results also indicated a significant difference existed in the desired time allocation with dual-role administrators desiring to spend more time on the superintendency than teachers desired of their dual-role administrators.

The importance of building-level leadership is a well-established and accepted requirement for effective schools (Storey & Johnson, 2017). Various researchers for several decades have linked quality school leadership with positive school results (Cotton, 2003; Drake & Roe, 2002; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). The role of being a principal is reported to have become more challenging and more difficult to meet the expectations placed upon school leaders through the increased focus on instruction and on student achievement (Bellibas & Liu, 2018). Rousmaniere (2013) stated, “In American public schools, the principal is the most complex and contradictory figure in the pantheon of educational leadership” (p. 2). The principal role becomes even more complicated when one person is expected to serve as a dual-role administrator. Oftentimes, these dual-role administrators are charged with completing the work of both the superintendent and the building principal: “At its most basic level, creating a hybrid position requires the superintendent to ask a single individual to perform the work responsibilities previously held by two individuals” (Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, & Reeves, 2012, p. 9). The obligations and expectations of one individual fulfilling both roles may result in a position that is difficult to be successfully filled by one individual (Alvoid & Black, 2014; Canales, Tejada-Delgado, & Slate, 2010).

Contextual Framework

Data for this study were collected from a state that meets the definition of rural as defined by United States Department of Agriculture (2014). Rural is defined as a state that has a majority of its counties that are open countryside, rural towns, or urban areas with populations of fewer than 49,999 people (USDA, 2014). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), 18.6% of students in the United States attends a rural school. The NCES identifies a school as being rural if it is located outside of an urban area or outside an urban cluster. In the rural, Midwestern state in this study, 78.6% of the schools are designated as being located in a rural area. Nationally, 15 states have more than half of their schools designated as rural by the NCES. The designation of rural is important due to the decreasing population of rural areas that is very notable in the rural, Midwestern state in this study.

The population density of the rural, Midwestern state in this study is one of the lowest in the nation. Due to the density of the population of the state, the schools in this rural, Midwestern state are schools located in rural areas. Of the schools in this statewide study, 91.0% are located in towns and rural areas. Nationally, the average percentage of schools designated as rural is 33.0%. The rural, Midwestern state in this study leads the nation in percentage of schools identified as being rural at 78.6% (Strange et al., 2012). States with high percentages of rural schools are challenged by the distance created by sparse populations to have consolidated schools (Strange et al., 2012).

According to the American Association of School Administrators (2009), 14.0% (26 districts) of the districts in the rural, Midwestern state in this study experienced growing student enrollments of 10.0% or more, whereas 70.0% (127 districts) of the districts faced declining enrollments of 10.0% or more. Additionally, 25.0% of the districts (46 districts) were experiencing 20.0% or greater decline in their enrollments.

Principal Leadership

Principals face enormous pressure as they work to provide equity for every student while increasing student achievement (Doerksen & Wise, 2016). Another purpose of a principal is to provide day-to-day management functions to ensure orderly and safe schools while putting into practice educational policies. Serving as a middle manager between the central office and the classroom, the principal is charged with solving the immediate problems presented on a daily basis to ensure an orderly school atmosphere while at the same time implementing educational policy (Rousmaniere, 2013).

Additionally, principals are expected to communicate effectively with a wide variety of audiences and to carry out public relations. Principals must also focus on establishing and on maintaining both positive relationships and a positive organizational culture in the school building. At the same time, principals are charged with improving student achievement as measured by standardized test scores. To increase student achievement, principals must focus on improving the instructional capacity of their staff in order to affect overall student achievement (Bellibas & Liu, 2018). The significance of the school principal increased as the leadership of the school had specific, targeted expectations for student achievement with consequences for the principal if the students failed to meet those targets (Rousmaniere, 2013).

Through the accountability movement, student learning as measured by standardized tests became one of the main tasks of building-level administrators. Drake and Roe (2002) stated, “The major task of the principal is to provide educational leadership to improve learning” (p. 151). Yang (2014) reported that failing schools have inadequate leadership, which requires a transformational approach to school improvement. When accounting for student success, successful school leaders must draw on elements of instructional leadership and transformational leaders (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016).

Superintendent Leadership

Kowalski (2013) identified that the superintendent position is one that involves a complex range of expectations and duties, which requires leadership skills, fiscal abilities, and managerial expertise. He identified that superintendents serve as the chief executive officer, providing guidance and recommendations to their boards, as well as leadership for the entire district. Effective superintendents have to be able to create and then manage a process, which causes commitment and action in the school: “For these superintendents, responsibility for student academic achievement cannot be delegated to another administrator” (Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, & Reeves, 2012, p. 2). In addition, Kowalski (2013) reported the need for superintendents to be involved in the legislative process at the state and federal levels.

Historically, superintendents were expected to be the managers for the district, serving as a record keeper, and creating financial reports for the district. The position evolved and changed into one with an increasing focus of being an educator as opposed to a record keeper. As schools became more complex, the role of superintendent evolved over time, away from that of being an educator, and into that of serving as the chief executive officer and advisor to the school board (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, & Usdan, 1985).

Those individuals fulfilling the duties of being a superintendent must work directly with and carry out the directives of the school board. Tekniepe (2015) wrote, “When a superintendent views board members as having a sufficient amount of training and knowledge to effectively

perform their job functions, adversarial tension and mistrust between the two parties both wane” (p. 9). The superintendent is expected to work with multiple stakeholder groups, not only in the school district but also in the community in which a school district is located.

Leadership Challenges

Fiscal constraints and the realities of decreased funding have caused school boards to find ways to reduce their costs: “Superintendents in school districts in which low reserve balances in the general operating fund impact fiscal policy and budgeting decisions were more likely to experience a push-induced departure” (Tekniepe, 2015, p. 9). Due to budget constraints caused by decreased funding, school boards have been challenged to find methods to maximize the available budget dollars to maintain curricular offerings, to maintain facilities, to maintain competitive salaries, to fund increasing benefit costs, and to maintain long-term financial stability. School boards have been faced with having to decrease staff positions, increase class size, and reduce or eliminate funding for reform programs due to the decreased funding (Oliff, Mai, & Leachman, 2011).

As the recession of 2007 impacted state budgets, 35 states decreased the amount of funding for K-12 education. Those 35 states had varying levels of decreased funding, with decreasing funding over 13.0% from fiscal years 2008 to 2013 (Oliff et al., 2011). Additionally, many rural districts have been challenged with decreased student enrollments. Rural districts also faced burdens that were either nonexistent or less problematic in their non-rural counterparts, especially in regard to funding (Yettick, Baker, Wickersham, & Hupfeld, 2014, p. 12). With schools being funded on a per-pupil basis, declining enrollments add to the fiscal constraints faced by many rural districts.

An approach rural districts have utilized to meet the financial challenges has been to combine various administrative positions. A superintendent also serving as a building-level administrator is a common structure utilized in a variety of states across the nation such as California, Illinois, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Texas (Canales et al., 2010; Cronin, 2008; Heath & Vik, 1993). For example, in one Midwestern state a combination of serving as superintendent and as a building-level principal was being utilized in 38.4% (58 of 151) (South Dakota Department of Education, 2014). In some rural schools, two administrators might be assigned all of the administrative duties in a district. In some cases, one individual fulfills all the administrative duties for the entire district, serving as superintendent and the only principal (Cronin, 2008).

The expectation that one individual can perform the duties of both a school superintendent and a school principal results in a position where an individual is expected to fulfill school board and governance functions as superintendent while simultaneously handling the hectic tasks and daily schedule of being a school principal (Yates & De Jong, 2018). These management tasks are to be accomplished by one individual while simultaneously that individual is responsible for the accountability expectations of high-stakes testing and for the learning of each student (Doerksen & Wise, 2016).

Budget realities have forced school districts to make difficult choices concerning decreased funding, with some districts choosing dual-role administrators as an option. Dual-role administrative positions were identified as being less than ideal decades ago. Woll (1988) reported that individuals serving in dual roles are faced with multiple responsibilities of two positions, resulting in a prioritization of their time, which led to many important duties being unfulfilled. Doerksen and Wise (2016) reaffirmed the challenges of such positions, stating that the multiple

roles and responsibilities can interfere with the leadership ability and effectiveness of administrators who are attempting to fulfill the obligations of two positions. Additionally, Hakonson (1998) found that three-fourths of both dual-role administrators and school board presidents in Nebraska cited a lack of administrator time to perform all duties as the primary disadvantage of dual-role positions.

Dual-Role Administrators

Dual-role administrators are charged with completing the work of both the superintendent and the building principal. The expectations for both positions are different and the result may be a position, which is impossible to be successfully filled by one individual (Canales et al., 2010). While the districts utilizing such combined positions tend to be rural, the amount of work is not necessarily similarly decreased for reporting, management functions, school board, and community relations. Additionally, unlike their counterparts in larger districts, the dual-role administrators are not providing oversight and delegating the various duties to fellow staff members, but are charged with actually carrying out the duties (Doerksen & Wise, 2016).

Dual-role administrative positions are not a new creation, having been utilized for decades by various school districts in a variety of states (Anderson, 2007; Canales et al., 2010; Cronin, 2008; Heath & Vik, 1993). As school districts across the nation are facing decreases in school funding, dual-role positions will continue to be utilized as districts look for ways to function with decreasing tax dollars (Canales et al., 2010). Individuals serving in dual-role positions will continue to be charged with fulfilling both roles, i.e. of maintaining accountability of student achievement on standardized test scores, and of facing the challenges of fulfilling the time commitments and duties of both positions (Doerksen & Wise, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

This research study determined and compared the perceptions of dual-role administrators and the teachers in buildings with dual-role administrators in a rural, Midwestern state regarding the ranking of importance of administrative responsibilities, time allocation, advantages, and disadvantages of a district employing a dual-role administrator as both a superintendent and as a building principal.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following questions:

1. What are the differences in perceptions of teachers and dual-role administrators regarding the importance of the following responsibilities of the combined superintendency-principalship in a rural state?
 - a. Curriculum development
 - b. Instructional leadership
 - c. Teacher evaluation
 - d. Classroom walkthroughs
 - e. Student achievement and data analysis
 - f. Parent relations
 - g. School improvement planning

- h. Public relations
 - i. Staff development
 - j. School finance/budget
 - k. Student discipline and attendance
 - l. Student relations
 - m. Administrator/board relations
2. What are the differences in perceptions of teachers and dual-role administrators regarding the adequacy of administrator time commitment to fulfilling the following superintendency-principalship responsibilities in a rural state?
 - a. Curriculum development
 - b. Instructional leadership
 - c. Teacher evaluation
 - d. Classroom walkthroughs
 - e. Student achievement and data analysis
 - f. Parent relations
 - g. School improvement planning
 - h. Public relations
 - i. Staff development
 - j. School finance/budget
 - k. Student discipline and attendance
 - l. Student relations
 - m. Administrator/board relations
 3. What are the differences in perceptions of teachers and dual-role administrators regarding the percentage of time allocated to the superintendency and the principalship in a rural state?
 4. What are the differences in perceptions of teachers and dual-role administrators regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the combined superintendency-principalship in a rural state?
 5. What advice did dual-role administrators give to school districts that are considering combining the administrative positions?
 6. What advice did teachers who have a dual-role administrator as their building principal give to school districts who are considering combining administrative positions?
 7. What are the demographics of the dual-role administrators in a rural state?

Significance of this Study

With ongoing fiscal constraints due to the decreases in school funding and declining enrollment, school districts will continue to look for ways to balance budgets. Declining enrollment and declining rural populations continue to impact school districts with declining levels of funding, and school boards are faced with having to decrease school expenses. Combining administrative positions has been one method some school boards have chosen to reduce costs.

This study provides information to guide school boards and administrators about the potential impact of having one individual charged with carrying out the two administrative positions of being a superintendent and a building-level principal. A review of the literature revealed that there have been isolated studies on dual-role positions in Nebraska (Anderson, 2007; Hakonson, 1998) and North Dakota (Cronin, 2008).

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge concerning dual-role administrators by identifying the perceptions of teachers who teach in buildings with dual-role administrators. The perceptions of teachers help to further guide school boards and administrators in recommending and implementing alternative administrative structures.

The position of being a building principal has taken on new meaning under the accountability movement which features high-stakes testing. School buildings and the leadership of the school have specific outcomes their students are to achieve as measured by school-wide assessments. The importance of the building principal increased as the schools and the principal has specific consequences if achievement targets are not reached (Rousmaniere, 2013).

Building principals must continue to fulfill traditional role expectations to keep their schools functioning in an orderly and smooth manner, being responsive to their students, parents, and other stakeholders (Fullan, 2007). At the same time, current expectations are that school leaders are responsible for improving test results and positively impacting student achievement (Bellibas & Liu, 2018).

The primary purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions of dual-role administrators and teachers regarding the effectiveness of combining the Superintendent and Principal administrative positions. The results of this study were based on comparing the responses obtained from a survey of administrators in a rural, Midwestern state who were serving in dual roles as superintendent and also as a building principal in the same district and a survey of teachers who were teaching in a building served by a building principal who was also the superintendent in the same district.

Methodology

The population of this study consisted of 58 administrators in this rural, Midwestern state who were serving as both the superintendent and as a building principal in the same school district. For the teacher survey, a random sampling of the teachers, which had a building principal who was also the school superintendent, was utilized. The questionnaires that Hakonson (1998) utilized were adapted to answer the research questions posed in this study. Five school administrators in the rural, Midwestern state in this study critiqued the questionnaires. Responses to the research questions were analyzed using the *t*-test for independent samples, descriptive statistics, descriptive analysis, and frequency.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of two groups. The 58 administrators in the rural, Midwestern state who are serving in dual roles as superintendent and also as a building level principal in the same district formed the administrator population. For the teacher survey, a sampling of approximately 350 teachers from the schools who are teaching in a building that is served by a building principal who is also the school superintendent was utilized.

Sampling Design

All of the superintendents who also served as building level principals in the rural, Midwestern state in this study were included in the sample. For the teachers, the principals were asked to identify the last names of the teachers under their supervision and then to identify the first three

and last three teachers on the alphabetized roster. A dual-role administrator forwarded the survey to the randomly selected teachers.

Instrumentation

The researchers in this study received permission to adapt the questionnaire that Hakonson (1998) utilized to study the perceptions of school board presidents and dual-role superintendents. Data was collected using two similar types of questionnaires, one for those individuals serving in dual-role administrative positions and one for teachers who were teaching in a building served by a dual-role administrator. The questionnaires consist of eight multiple-choice items, two Likert scale items, and three free-response items. A pilot study was conducted with the help of a select group of dual-role administrators from the rural, Midwestern state in this study, with the intent of critiquing the adapted questionnaire.

Data Collection

The Department of Education for the rural, Midwestern state in this study provided the researcher with a list of superintendents who were also serving as a building-level principal in the district. Dual-role administrators were emailed a letter of invitation containing a formal request to participate in this study and directions to participate in this study were provided. Also included in the email to dual-role administrators was a letter of invitation to teachers. The dual-role administrators were asked to distribute the survey by forwarding an email to teachers in their building.

Data Analysis

The *t*-test for independent samples was performed to compare the response of the means of the dual-role administrator's perceptions of superintendent-principal responsibilities to the perceptions of teachers in buildings served by dual-role administrators for research questions one and two. Research question three was analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine differences in perceptions related to time spent in the superintendent and principal roles. Using descriptive quantitative analysis, research questions four, five, and six were analyzed to determine the presence of similar and dissimilar themes related to dual-role administration. Research question seven was analyzed using descriptive quantitative analysis and frequency to determine demographic patterns from the demographic characteristics of the dual-role administrators. SPSS version 22 was utilized to conduct the statistical analysis of the collected data for all seven questions.

Results

The primary purpose of this study was to provide guidance to school districts combining the superintendent and principal administrative positions. The results of this study were based on comparing the responses obtained from a survey of administrators in the rural, Midwestern state in this study who were serving in the dual roles as superintendent and also as a building principal in the same district and a survey of teachers who were teaching in a building served by a building principal who was also the superintendent in the same district.

Response Rates

Of the 58 superintendents who were also serving as a building principal in the same district, 35 completed the survey for dual-role administrators. The response rate for the superintendents serving as dual-role administrators was 60.3%. With 35 superintendents agreeing to participate, a population of 210 teachers existed. Of those 210 teachers, 125 completed the survey for teachers who were teaching in buildings that had a principal who is also serving as the superintendent. The response rate for the teachers was 59.5%.

Demographic Data

The dual-role administrators' sample consisted of 13 (39.4%) administrators who were serving as the superintendent and the elementary principal, 12 (36.4%) who were serving as the superintendent and the high school principal, and 8 (24.2%) who were serving as the superintendent, elementary, and high school principal. The teacher sample consisted of 45 (41.7%) elementary teachers who had a principal who was also serving as the superintendent, 46 (42.6%) high school teachers who had a principal who was also serving as the superintendent, and 17 (15.7%) teachers who had a principal that was serving as the only principal in the district as well as being the superintendent.

The majority of both dual-role administrators ($n = 32$, 94.1%) and teachers whose principal also served as the superintendent ($n = 115$, 98.2%) reported a district size of 500 or fewer students K-12. Table 1 provides a summary of the district size by student enrollment.

Table 1
School District Size by K-12 Enrollment

	Dual Role Administrators	Dual Role Administrators	Teachers	Teachers
Student Enrollment	n	%	n	%
Between 1 and 250	15	44.1	72	61.5
Between 251 and 500	17	50.0	43	36.7
Between 501 and 750	2	5.9	2	1.7
Over 750 Students	0	0.0	0	0.0

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100.0 due to rounding

In addition to serving as both the superintendent and as a building principal in the same school district, the majority ($n = 26$, 78.7%) of dual-role administrators were serving additional roles. Respondents were asked to identify whether they were serving in one or more of the additional roles of athletic director, special education director, curriculum director, or technology director. The dual-role administrators reported that 10 (30.3%) were serving one additional role, 14 (42.4%) were serving two additional roles, and 2 (6.0%) were serving three additional roles.

Perceptions Regarding Administrative Responsibilities

Data regarding the dual-role administrators' perceptions and the teacher's perceptions of the importance of superintendent-principal responsibilities indicated that a significant difference existed in three of the responsibilities. Dual-role administrators identified school board relations as significantly more important than did the teachers, $t(79.261) = 2.44, p = .017$. Dual-role administrators also identified public relations as significantly more important than did the teachers, $t(89.118) = 2.02, p = .046$. Additionally, dual-role administrators identified school finance as significantly more important than did the teachers, $t(67.071) = 2.28, p = .026$. No other differences were significant at the .05 level.

Perceptions Regarding Sufficiency of Time Commitment

Data regarding the differences in the perceptions of dual-role administrators and teachers in terms of the sufficiency of time committed to administrative responsibilities indicated that a significant difference existed in nine of the responsibilities. The data indicated that dual-role administrators desired to spend significantly more time than teachers desired of their administrators on the responsibilities of involvement in curriculum development, implementation, and assessment $t(152) = 3.97, p = .000$, instructional leadership $t(152) = 5.52, p = .000$, analyzing and communicating student achievement data $t(151) = 3.29, p = .001$, staff development $t(54.219) = 4.95, p = .000$, school finance $t(43.360) = 4.36, p = .000$, teacher formal evaluations $t(150) = 2.69, p = .008$, school improvement planning $t(152) = 3.84, p = .000$, and classroom walkthroughs $t(151) = 3.06, p = .003$. Teachers desired that dual-role administrators spend significantly more time on student discipline and attendance $t(152) = -3.80, p = .000$ than dual-role administrators desired. No other differences were significant at the .05 level.

Perceptions Regarding Administrative Time Allotment

Sixty-one (52.1%) of the teachers perceived that dual-role administrators spent 75% or more of their time on superintendent responsibilities. In comparison, 12 (35.3%) of the dual-role administrators perceived that they spent 75% or more of their time on superintendent responsibilities.

Perceived Time Allocation to Administrative Positions

Results of the *t*-test for independent samples indicated a significance difference existed in the perceptions of time allocation between dual role administrators and teachers, $t(150) = 3.24, p = .001$.

Additional Allocation of Administrative Time

While a majority ($n = 21, 61.8%$) of dual-role administrators desired to spend more time allocated to superintendent duties, 57 (49.6%) of the teachers desired no change in time allocation and 53 (46.1%) of the teachers desired more time allocated to being principal.

Desired Time Allocation to Administrative Positions

Results of the *t*-test for independent variables indicated a significant difference existed in the desired time allocation, $t(147) = -7.97, p = .000$.

Advantages and Disadvantages Regarding Combined Administrative Roles

Similar themes were reported by both the dual-role administrators and the teachers regarding the advantages of having the combined administrative structure of superintendent-principal. Both groups reported that having one person serve as both the superintendent and principal resulted in less bureaucracy as there was only one administrative layer. Of the 36 open-ended teacher responses, 15 (41.7%) centered on the theme of having one less administrative layer. The teachers reported that this allowed the superintendent to have closer relationships with the staff and students, increased awareness of the daily activities of the school, and a more visible presence than superintendents normally would have. Of the 22 individual administrator responses, the most common ($n = 12, 43.8\%$) responses revolved around the theme of the superintendent being more involved in the day-to-day aspects of the school. Several administrators and several teachers identified financial savings as an advantage of having a combined administrative position.

The disadvantages of a combined administrative position as reported by dual-role administrators cited a lack of time and energy to complete the various tasks of both the superintendent and the principal positions, diminished administrative collaboration or a lack of an administrative team, and a diminished level of administrators to deal with concerns and issues due to one person serving as both principal and superintendent. Of the 60 responses provided by dual-role administrators, 45 (75.0%) either directly cited a lack of time or cited an inability to complete an obligation or duty because of a lack of time due to serving both roles. Several cited that long hours are required to fulfill the obligations of both positions. Of the 30 responses provided by teachers, 19 (63.3%) cited that the dual-role administrator was unable to deal with the needs and concerns of staff and students and was unable to build relationships with staff and students, as their principal was also fulfilling the superintendent role in their district.

Is Combining the Superintendency and the Principalship a Good Idea?

The largest group of dual-role administrators ($n = 16, 45.7\%$) responded that combining the superintendency and principalship was not a good idea, with 11 (31.4%) responding that they were unsure whether the combination was a good idea. The largest group of teachers ($n = 44, 37.9\%$) responded they were unsure that the combination was a good idea and 35 (30.2%) of the teachers responded that the combination was not a good idea.

Results of the *t*-test for independent samples indicated a significant difference did not exist in the perceptions of dual-role administrators and teachers whether combining the positions of superintendency and principalship was a good idea, $t(149) = .161, p = .872$.

Reason for Combining the Superintendency and Principalship

A majority of both dual-role administrators ($n = 32, 91.4\%$) and teachers ($n = 68, 57.6\%$) responded that one of the reasons for combining the positions of superintendent and principal was a financial savings. Declining enrollment was cited as the second most frequent response (37.1%)

by dual-role administrators. The response “Unsure” was cited as the second most frequent response (37.9%) by teachers.

Advice to School Districts Considering Combining Administrative Positions

Many dual-role administrators advised that school districts not combine administrative positions. Several identified that the two positions had more responsibilities than one individual could fulfill. Others identified that districts should be selective in the individual they choose to fulfill a dual-role position. A theme of having a supportive staff, the support of fellow administrators or directors, and awareness by the district that some duties will be impacted existed in the responses of the dual-role administrators’ advice as to what would be necessary for a school district to consider utilizing a dual-role administrator. Many of the teachers also responded that school districts should not combine the positions. Several other teachers advised that combining positions was a viable situation concerning the financial savings. Several also indicated that a plan needed to be in place for when the dual-role administrator was attending meetings outside of the district. Other advice from the teachers revolved around the idea of carefully selecting the individual, having awareness of the stress experienced by individuals fulfilling dual roles, and that districts should ensure support from the teachers.

Based on descriptive and statistical analysis, the following research results emerged:

1. Dual-role administrators identified the superintendent-principal administrative responsibilities of school board relations, public relations, and school finance as being significantly more important in the combined superintendency-principalship than did teachers.
2. Dual-role administrators desired to spend significantly more time on the superintendent-principal administrative responsibilities of curriculum development, implementation, and assessment, instructional leadership, analyzing and communicating student achievement data, staff development, school finance, teacher formal evaluations, school improvement planning, and classroom walkthroughs than teachers desired of dual-role administrators.
3. Dual-role administrators desired to spend significantly less time on the superintendent-principal administrative responsibility of student discipline and attendance than teachers desired of dual-role administrators.
4. 45% of dual-role administrators responded that combining the superintendency and principalship was not a good idea, while a majority of teachers reported that they were unsure if the combining of the superintendency and principalship was a good idea. No significance difference existed in their perceptions.
5. Dual-role administrators and teachers most often cited financial savings as the reason for combining the positions of superintendent and principal. No significant difference existed in their perceptions.
6. A significant difference existed in the perceived time allocation of dual- role administrators, with teachers perceiving that a majority of the time of dual-role administrators was spent in the superintendent role. Dual-role administrators perceived that the administrators allocated their time either equally or spent more of their time on the role of principal.
7. A significant difference existed in the desired time allocation of dual- role administrators and teachers, with a majority of dual-role administrators desiring to spend more time on

the role of superintendent while a majority of teachers desired no change in the time allocation between the two positions.

8. A majority of dual-role administrators reported that more than 50% of their time was spent on principal duties. However, a majority of teachers reported that dual-role administrators were spending more than 50% of their time on superintendent duties.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are developed based on the findings and results of the analysis of the data collected for this study.

1. Dual-role administrators do not believe that combining the positions of superintendent and principal is a good idea.
2. Financial savings are the primary reason for combining the positions of superintendent and principal.
3. Dual-role administrators and teachers have similar perceptions regarding the importance of eleven of the fourteen selected administrative responsibilities.
4. Dual-role administrative structures are most often utilized in school districts with enrollment less than the median enrollment of districts throughout the state.
5. Teachers perceive that dual-role administrators are focusing a majority of their administrative time on the superintendent duties and role, while dual-role administrators perceive that they are spending half or less than half of their time on the superintendent duties and role.
6. While dual-role administrators prefer to spend more time on the role of being the superintendents, teachers prefer the administrators spend more time related to principal duties such as discipline and attendance.
7. The majority of dual-role administrators have additional responsibilities beyond those of being the superintendent and principal.
8. Teachers would prefer dual-role administrators spend more time on management responsibilities while dual-role administrators would prefer to spend more time on leadership and instructional responsibilities.
9. The dual-role position of superintendent and elementary principal was as common as the dual-role position of superintendent and secondary principal. Less common was the superintendent also fulfilling both the elementary principal and the secondary principal roles.

Discussion

Those individuals who were serving as dual-role administrators in the rural, Midwestern state shared that school districts should not utilize the dual-administrative structure of having one individual serving as both the superintendent and the principal. Those individuals reported in their responses to both the direct response question as well as the open-ended questions that the role of superintendent-principal was a difficult position to fulfill due to the expectations and obligations of trying to fulfill both roles. Previous research in South Dakota found similar advice, with Heath and Vik (1993) concluding in their research that combining superintendent and principal positions into one administrative position “is not an ideal arrangement, even for small schools” (p. 9).

The teachers were unsure whether the dual-role position should be utilized, which may be attributed to the fact that they have not attempted to fulfill the role themselves. Due to having not fulfilled the administrative roles themselves, the teachers are unlikely to have an understanding of the time demands and expectations placed upon dual-role administrators. This uncertainty may be compounded by the challenges of being an effective leader while fulfilling the multiple roles and responsibilities of a dual-role administrative position (Doerksen & Wise, 2016).

Both dual-role administrators and teachers cited financial savings most often as the reason for combining the positions of superintendent and principal. The rural, Midwestern state in this study has decreased school funding by 13.6% from 2008 to 2013 (Oliff et al., 2011). These ongoing fiscal challenges have caused school districts to look for ways to reduce their budgets. The elimination of an administrative position has been an option that increasing numbers of school districts have chosen. For example, Heath and Vik (1993) reported 29.6% (50 of 169) of school districts in South Dakota utilized dual-role administrators in 1992. By 2014, dual-role administrators increased to 38.4% (58 of 151) of school districts utilizing the position (South Dakota Department of Education, 2014).

As individuals try to fulfill the dual-role administrator position, a difference of perception exists as to whether those individuals serving as dual-role administrators are allotting more time to the role of the superintendent or the role of principal. Teachers report a perception that their dual-role administrator is spending more time on the role of superintendent. Teachers indicated by their responses a desire for school administrators to spend more time on administrative tasks, which are management-orientated tasks as opposed to instructional tasks. The administrators desired to spend more time on tasks, which are instructionally related as opposed to managerial tasks. The administrators clearly desired to spend more time as instructional leaders. The teachers were in disagreement with the administrators and the teachers desired a stronger focus by the administrators on the management role as opposed to the leadership role.

Dual-role administrators must attempt to fulfill the obligations of both the position of superintendent and the position of principal. The expectations for both positions are different and one person may find they are in an administrative position, which is impossible to successfully fill (Canales et al., 2010). Several of the open-ended responses from the teachers also noted that having a dual-role administrator is a concern when the administrator is out of the district for meetings or training, as a hierarchy of administration is not in place as there would be if two separate individuals were serving in the two different roles.

Individuals serving in the dual-role position face the challenge of being in a position as superintendent where they work directly for the school board and are required to fulfill the district-level obligations and to communicate regularly with the school board while at the same time, being readily available to fulfill the building-level obligations and communication needed to be the educational leader of a school. Role conflict and role ambiguity are a concern for these individuals (Bowling et al., 2017).

A vast majority of dual-role administrators in the rural, Midwestern state in this study serve in districts with total enrollments of 500 students or less. Other researchers in other states identified that dual-role administrators were typically found in districts, which had enrollments of fewer than 600 students (Anderson, 2007; Cronin; 2008).

While the districts utilizing dual-role administrators tend to have lower enrollment than the median enrollment in the state, the work expectations and requirements are not necessarily similarly decreased for reporting, management functions, school board, and community relations. Additionally, unlike their counterparts in larger districts, the dual-role administrators are having

to actually complete the administrative tasks as opposed to providing oversight and delegating the various duties (Doerksen & Wise, 2016).

Larger districts tend to have a team of administrators, which allows the delegation of administrative tasks, with different administrators focusing on a more defined set of tasks and duties with a more focused knowledge base. The dual-role administrator is faced with the challenge of being knowledgeable in all areas as little delegation can take place. As Canales, Tejada-Delgado, and Slate (2010) reported, an administrator in a large district may have various support personnel, curriculum specialists, and fellow administrators to help advise, implement, and fulfill the various tasks and programs.

School districts who utilize the position of having a dual-administrator need to be aware that one person cannot fulfill all the obligations and responsibilities of two positions that are fulfilled by two separate individuals in many districts. The school board, staff, and community should determine what the expectations are for the individual serving in the dual-role position, realizing that the individual will need time for family and non-school activities. Combining the hectic, unpredictable schedule of a building principal with that of the school board relations and governance functions required of the superintendency results in an administrative role whose expectations and duties are unmatched by any other administrative position (Canales, Tejada-Delgado, & Slate, 2010).

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the results of this study, school districts considering combining the positions of superintendent and principal into one dual-role administrative position should consider the following recommendations for practice:

1. If the college serves school leaders from a primarily rural state, then college courses, which fulfill the requirements of becoming certified as a superintendent, should incorporate strategies on how to fulfill the obligations and expectations of dual-role administrative positions.
2. School boards utilizing dual-administrators should collaborate with the individual fulfilling those roles and the school staff to establish reasonable expectations, duties, and obligations of the individual serving in the dual-role position.
3. School boards should be careful in the selection of administrators who will serve in a dual-role position in terms of the personality traits and skills required to successfully fulfill all of the administrative responsibilities.
4. School boards should carefully consider and examine any additional duties expected of the dual-role administrator.
5. School boards who elect to combine administrative positions should consider employing a lead teacher or other personnel to assist in the duties necessary of the dual-role administrator.
6. School districts should consider other multi-role administrative positions in addition to the combination of superintendent-principal when determining which administrative combinations to utilize.
7. School districts who utilize the superintendent-principal dual administrative structure need to plan and implement ongoing communication with their staff concerning the obligations and duties of the position so as to ensure that different perceptions do not develop between the staff and administrator in regard to time-allotment.

8. School boards should engage in a study of the literature, seek guidance from those who have studied dual-role administrative positions, and consult with practicing dual-role administrators if they are contemplating hiring a dual-role administrator.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results of this study, the researchers recommend that further research is conducted on a qualitative level in order to obtain actual stories from dual-role administrators. Additional research should also compare workloads and stress levels between dual role administrators and non-dual role administrators.

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