TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVES ON CHARACTERISTICS NEEDED BY PRINCIPALS TO BE EFFECTIVE LEADERS

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the School of Education
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Master of Science in Teaching

by

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This study is dedicated to my parents, Bob and Eleanor Muncy, who taught me that leadership is a very human interaction and that one must have integrity to be a leader. Also, to my husband Andy, whose patience and support helped sustain me throughout my project, and who daily inspires me to better my leadership abilities.
Approved by:

Official Advisor
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Effective leadership is needed in every facet of the professional realm, including the public elementary school. School leadership comes from the school principal. The characteristics or traits that he/she demonstrates sets the tone and determines the excellence of a school (Hashway, 1992).

Many studies show the importance of the school principal and his/her pivotal role as an educational leader. There seems to be a correlation between the principal and the school climate, student achievement, teacher morale, community support, and even parent involvement (Edmonds, 1979; Brookover et.al., 1979; Persell & Cookson, 1982; Sweeney, 1982; Lightfoot, 1983; Clark, Lotto, & Astuto, 1984). Because of the influence of the principal and the power that he/she has upon a school setting, it is to his/her best interest and to the students’ and school’s best interests that the principal seek to develop the characteristics necessary for effective leadership.

Determining these characteristics is not easy, though. For several years there has been a shift in
the perception of effective leadership characteristics needed by elementary school principals for successful outcomes. The trend has seemed to push managerial skills into the forefront. Qualities such as the ability to set goals and achieve them, create high expectations, and to motivate teachers are given top honors by authors Brookover (1976), Carlson (1977), Brookover and Lezotte (1979), Edmonds (1979), Olivero (1980), Shoemaker and Fraser (1981), Persell and Cookson (1982), Sweeney (1982), and Yukl (1982). Leithwood and Montgomery (1982) also stressed goals by stating that "Goals are the long term aspirations held by principals for work in their schools. No other dimension of principal behavior is more consistently linked to school improvement by current empirical research than goals" (p.321). Additionally, in their writings (1982), they felt that Goals, Factors, Strategies, and Decision Making were the dimensions of behavior central to account for principal effectiveness and differences in effectiveness.

Other writers have hailed communication and interpersonal skills as the primary qualifications
(Neagley, 1953; Briner, 1960; Lипham, 1960; McIntyre, 1974); Newberry, 1977; Bullen, 1983; Cornett, 1983; Roesch, 1986) needed by effective principals. According to Shoemaker and Fraser (1981), and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (1984), being an instructional leader is the main criterion found in literature within the 1980’s.

Literature of the 1990’s has continued to value managerial skills. With the current influx of managerial principles of Deming (Matthews, 1992 and Kraar, 1991) into the business realm, school philosophies are also being affected. Total Quality Management is the "new phrase" of effective schools, along with "school-based management." Leithwood (1992) recognizes the slight shift in the following comments:

"Instructional leadership" is an idea that has served many schools well throughout the 1980’s and the early 1990’s. But in light of current restructuring initiatives designed to take schools into the 21st century, "instructional leadership" no longer appeals to capture the heart of what school administrators will have to become. "Transformational leadership" takes a more appropriate range of practices, and it will
subsume instructional leadership as the dominant image of school administration, at least during the '90's. (p.8)

Nonetheless, the emphasis in literature of the 1990's is still the same and is stressing management skills.

A second type of characteristic that continues to gain recognition by superintendents as they look for "qualified" personnel is that of educational experience. In 1960, Briner wrote that a principal’s formal education should include a broad liberal arts education, extensive exposure to sociology, psychology, biology, philosophy, and a minimum of two years experience teaching. In 1972, Teitelbaum and Lee reported that knowledge of the administrative process and breadth of general education were important criteria according to superintendents. Previous administration experiences was also a serious consideration (Cornett, 1983). Daniel Duke's (1992) more recent comments show an increase in expectations of principals' educational experience. He notes that several reform reports advocated a bilevel process of certification with the second level involving doctoral work and satisfactory performance on a national examination. One report even suggests an Ed.S.
(Educational Specialist degree) be required, while another report insisted that an Ed.D. (Doctor of Education) be mandated for state licensure (Duke, 1992). The requirements for educational experience for principals is continuing to strengthen and even get more difficult.

The least emphasized characteristic in educational literature today is the strong need for personal characteristics such as honesty and loyalty. Verifying that personal characteristics were very important in the past, is Poteet's survey of Texas Superintendents (1968) which revealed that the ten most frequently desired characteristics in principals were honesty, loyalty, cooperativeness, self-control, ability to work with parents, personal enthusiasm, initiative, and patience. In the 1970's, Wagstaff and Spillman (1974) recognized that individuals in leadership positions exceeded their average subordinates in personal characteristics such as intelligence, dependability, and scholarship. They, Wagstaff and Spillman, advocated that an elementary school principal should be committed, self-confident, and have the ability to empathize. Sergiovanni (1982) saw integrity as important to a person's leadership. The things that a
person wholeheartedly believed in gave meaning to his/her leadership. "What a leader stands for is more important than what he or she does. The meanings a leader communicates to others are more important than his or her specific leadership style" (p.331). Even though rarely mentioned in present literature, personal characteristics such as these are very much a part of effective leadership.

No matter what type characteristics are most important, all authors feel it is important for principals to be good leaders for the people that make up their school staffs. Learning what the staff perceives as important characteristics necessary for excellent leadership, can provide valuable information for improving the working relationship between principals and teachers. This insight could help principals or administrators lead his/her team more effectively. Additionally, this information could be used by Superintendents to help select a principal with certain characteristics for a specific need or school. For whatever reason, listening to the teacher's perspectives can help when we evaluate our present needs for a principal.
Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine what elementary school teachers perceive as the most important traits or characteristics a principal should possess in order to be an effective leader.

Assumptions

In order to carry out this study, the writer made the following assumptions. First, it is assumed that the teachers participating in the survey represent the beliefs and ideas of all educators within the school district that was studied. Second, the participants responding to the survey completed it without allowing outside circumstances, such as fear of being honest and fear that the principal might see their responses, to affect their contributions. Third, the design of the instrument is appropriate for determining the opinions of the teachers. And last, that the fifteen characteristics selected from the review of literature promote authentic leadership and adequately represent the three types of traits: educational, personal, and managerial.
Limitations

The writer finds several limitations affecting this project. One limitation is the number of characteristics that can be dealt with adequately in a rank order questionnaire. Fifteen characteristics were chosen so that they could be easily handled by the teacher groups participating in the project. A second limitation is that the sample size may not be adequate to get the most accurate findings. Third and fourth limitations are the effect of history, and the differential participants (the participants’ median ages, race, religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds and differences) who answered the survey may affect the internal validity of the design of the project. Circumstances in the lives of the teachers and principals apart from the study, may have some bearing on the truthfulness of the answers. The confounding effects of experimental procedures, the subject matter, or process of data collection may have altered the responses received. From those that chose to respond, their personal beliefs may have an additional effect upon the results of the survey.

Finally, the external validity of the design is threatened if these results are generalized to another population than that which was surveyed. The results
are only true for those teachers within the city school district surveyed, and possibly for East Tennessee area.

Definition of Terms

"Vision" is the sense of a specific direction and purpose for the school and its staff (Sergiovanni, 1984).

"Expectations" are clearly defined objectives for staff and student body (Donovan, 1982).

"Communication" is the ability to make expectations and goals clearly understood and to be able to relate to staff in a personal manner (Lewis, 1986).

"School climate" is the feeling within the school, and the tone of the school setting (Shoemaker and Fraser, 1981).

"Managerial skills" are those skills necessary for the smooth operation of the school organization.

"Presence/visibility" is the method of being an observer of the classroom and students on a consistent basis (Sergiovanni, 1984); and being a representative of the school to the parents.
"Technical knowledge" is knowledge in relationship to current curriculum, methodology, testing, and evaluation.

"Personality qualities" are those qualities that deal with characteristics such as honesty, loyalty, integrity, values etcetera.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As mentioned earlier, the school principal has a very important role as the leader of an educational facility. A review of the education literature spanning the last four decades revealed three types of traits as most often mentioned as needed for effective leadership by principals. These traits are as follows: 1) completion of several educational requirements for the position (Education Requirements), 2) specific personality characteristics that complement effective leadership (Personal Characteristics), and 3) acquisition of effective managerial skills (Managerial Skills).

Educational Requirements

The authors Teitelbaum and Lee (1972) suggest that principals should have two to five years of classroom teaching experience prior to a position as a principal. The purpose of this seems to be twofold. First, the principals would have a working knowledge of curriculum, methods, students, and parent-teacher relations. Second, the principals would have his or
her finger on the pulse of what is needed administratively for a well-functioning school. Due to the principal’s experience as a teacher, he/she would understand and be more supportive of the teacher’s role. Understanding the "team’s" frustrations and joys would partially help in developing solid communication lines between and among staff members.

School principals are encouraged to have earned a masters degree and should be working towards doctoral status (Porkorny, 1986). Baltzell and Dentler (1983) support this suggestions, but are more specific in asserting that a masters degree in Educational Administration is what is required. Included with this degree should be an internship or practicum, and ideally, an emphasis through course work in bilingual education and special education. Duke (1992) has even seen higher expectations advocated. Several reform reports that he has been involved with state that a bi-level process of certification is needed -- that of doctoral work and satisfactory performance on a national examination. One report suggests an educational specialist degree, while another one called for a doctor of education degree before state licensure would be available.
Further education requirements often include a state's own specifications. Many times a state will require an administrator's certificate or some particular form of competency examination. No matter what specific background the hiring institution or school is looking for, we do recognize that there is an emphasis upon a higher education level that what may have been stressed prior to the 1980's.

Although it is not often viewed as an educational requirement, administrative experience is also an important element. Previous administrative experience is demanded by those selecting elementary school principals for the purpose of learning atmosphere. Briner (1970), Bryant (1978), and Cornett (1983) all argue that according to personnel boards, administrative experience was the most desirable criterion for the selection of a principal. Teitelbaum and Lee (1972) have also found that knowledge of the administrative process and breadth of general education are highly sought by superintendents and may be the factor that is most weighed when evaluating principal applications for further consideration. Previous principalships, school committee chairperson, and
Division Supervisor, are among those experiences listed as most valuable.

**Personality Characteristics**

A second recommendation for selecting principals of elementary schools would be ensuring that the administrator possess a wide variety of personality characteristics. Out of the three areas of recommendations -- educational, personal, and managerial -- this one is the most difficult to determine. As we will see, some studies have found that personal characteristics can weigh heavily in the selection criteria for principalships.

Bryant (1978), Schilson (1965), and Newberry (1977) write that principals should have good health, a positive physical appearance, and be in good physical condition. These qualities may seem discriminatory; however, they are necessary for the success of a school principal. The school principal is a very public position which requires a capacity to convey a positive self image and school image, as well as be an exemplary role model. The characteristics mentioned above are positive images that people, and the public, are influenced by.
Physical health and condition must also be considered for several reasons. The principalship can often be a stressful job. People who deal effectively with the exertion it takes for such a position would best be found among those with good health and conditioning habits. Also, being an effective leader requires an active presence. Good health would allow for the continuance of a stable and controlled atmosphere.

According to Wagstaff and Spillman (1974) there are several characteristics that hired principals have consistently shown over their peers. They state that "... individuals in leadership positions exceed their average subordinates in such characteristics as intelligence, scholarship, and dependability" (p.38). The following represents a partial set of attributes that Wagstaff and Spillman (1974) believe elementary school principals should possess:

1. Commitment to the elementary school principalship
2. Self-confidence
3. Penchant for ambiguity and uncertainty
4. Insight into the interrelatedness of the school to itself and the environment
5. Empathy with those who follow
Poteet's survey (1968), also gave personal characteristics a high emphasis. According to Poteet's survey of Texas superintendents, the ten most desirable qualities in principals include honesty, loyalty, cooperation, self-control, ability to communicate, personal enthusiasm, competence of judgement, initiative and patience. Voicing these same types of personality characteristics over the last four decades are authors such as Neagley (1953), Schilson (1965), Wagstaff and Spillman (1974), Newberry (1977), Cornett (1983), Teitelbaum and Lee (1972), and even the United States Department of Education, Bryant (1978). They add to the list of personality traits by including: appropriate values, integrity, dedication, humanism, flexibility and cooperation, creativity, and innovation.

In a 1984 study of Georgia school superintendents responding to a list of thirteen selection criteria for principals, personality traits such as integrity, dependability, adaptability play a vital role. Of the 179 Georgia superintendents surveyed, over 80% ranked the four most important criteria as follows: a) evidence of integrity, dependability, and willingness
to follow directions (96%); b) evidence of managerial and supervisory skills (92%); c) personality of the applicant (84%); and d) evidence of a candidate’s adaptability to the local environment (81%) (p.8).

These superintendents felt that personal characteristics were very important.

Sergiovanni (1982) also recognizes that integrity is very important for effective leadership. He states:

What the leader stands for and believes in about schooling, the place of education in society, how schools should be organized and operated, and how people should be treated are the guiding principles that give integrity and meaning to leadership. Leaders stand for certain ideas and principles that become cornerstones to their very being. (p.331)

Additionally, he cited that, in a Wall Street Journal Gallop Poll, integrity was considered most important by chief executives of 282 of the nation’s largest firms in describing characteristics of subordinates considered most important for advancement. Integrity, according to Sergiovanni, suggests that the leader values something important and is able to communicate this value to others.
When looking at effective leadership, two other authors have described it as a very "human" interaction. Because of this, personality traits that lend skill to dealing with people are very valuable. Jo Ann Mazarrella and Thomas Grundy (1989) describe leadership in the following manner:

After all, leadership involves interaction: it is not simply the impersonal delegation of duties and responsibilities from machine to machine. No matter how objective and scientific our studies are or appear to be or how objective we try to be in our dealing with others, leadership remains a human activity. Hence, successful leaders must be ultimately aware that they are humans interacting with other humans at a given time or place. (p.9)

Mazarrella and Grundy (1989) further state that one finding to emerge repeatedly in studies of leaders, including studies of educational leaders is that leaders are people oriented. They are out-going and successful in dealing with people and they have good social and interpersonal skills. Such characteristics separate both leaders from non-leaders and effective from ineffective leaders. (p.16)
As we have seen, many authors and studies support the importance of personal characteristics such as integrity, dependability, and honesty. These qualities are still as valuable as they have been in years past. Emphasis has changed in the criterion, though, for principals over the last three decades. More and more literature has been written about the principal and his/her leadership with managerial skills.

Managerial Skills

Baltzell and Dentler (1983) believe that a good principal is perceived as the "embodiment of community values." The principal must be able to move between the community and the school and act as a liaison. To do this effectively he/she must have solid managerial skills.

Shoemaker and Fraser (1981) developed a list of the most important managerial qualities. The following are the ones they identified as most important: 1) Provide assertive achievement-oriented leadership, 2) maintain an orderly, purposeful, and peaceful school climate, 3) have high expectations for staff and pupils, and 4) have well-designed instructional objectives and evaluation system.
Expanding upon these qualities, Persell and Cookson (1982) list nine recurrent behaviors that they have found in their survey of research studies:

1. demonstrating a commitment to academic goals
2. creating a climate of high expectations
3. functioning as an instructional leader
4. being a forceful and dynamic leader
5. consulting effectively with others
6. creating order and discipline
7. marshalling resources
8. using time well
9. evaluation results

As listed above, "goals" is an often mentioned word in an effective principal's vocabulary. Leithwood and Montgomery (1982) feel that the ability to develop goals and help staff share these goals is the main source of effective leadership.

In addition to these personal uses of Goals, highly effective principals, in contrast with their less effective peers, seek out opportunities to clarify Goals with staff, students, parents and other relevant members of school community. They strive in onward consensus about these Goals, and
actively encourage the use of such Goals in departmental and divisional planning. Such behavior can be explained by the principal's knowledge of human functioning and actions consistent with such knowledge. Highly effective principals appear to understand that school improvement goals will only direct the actions of the staff, students and others to the extent that these people also adopt them as their own. Increases in principal effectiveness can be explained as increase in opportunities provided by the principal, for all relevant others to agree upon and internalize approximately the same set of school improvement goals. (p.31)

Leithwood and Montgomery strongly stress that the ability to develop goals and work towards them is the dimension of principal behavior that is consistently linked to school improvement. Researchers in the 1970's and early 1980's often found that those principals thought to be effective insured that goals were clearly stated and achieved, emphasized student achievement, created high expectations, and motivated teachers and students to meet those expectations (Brookover, 1976; Carlson, 1977; Brookover & Lezotte,
1979; Edmonds, 1979; Oliver, 1980; Shoemaker & Fraser, 1981; Persell & Cookson, 1982; Sweeney, 1982; and Yukl, 1982).

Other managerial skills needed for effective leadership have been emphasized by writers such as Morris (1984). He concluded that principal selection should be based on how well a candidate could perform the following responsibilities:

1. Organize desperate elements -- people, equipment, money -- into a self-sustaining enterprise.
2. Coordinate individuals in an intricate division of labor, each person performing a specialized task.
3. Motivate highly skilled individuals, some of them prima donnas.
4. Take care of wounded egos and serve as a counselor and parent figure to troubled subordinates.
5. Maintain frequent, easy going contact with the public.
6. Keep a cool head under provocation and stressful circumstances.
7. Answer to the school and community.
8. Identify with the whole school.
Rutherford (1985) saw effective principals as manifesting managerial leadership through a clear vision, translating that vision into school goals, establishing a supportive climate, monitoring teachers, and intervening in supportive, yet corrective ways.

In August 1984, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission surveyed 182 Georgia school superintendents' responses to a 25 item Chief Administrator questionnaire (1984). Of the 179 who responded, 64% viewed the most important role of principals as instructional leader and 31% viewed the most important role as school manager. Roger Reed (1989) believes this trend could be the reason managerial skills are increasingly emphasized. He reiterates the importance of being a school manager:

A principal, while remaining an educational leader, functions as a manager of a school. Therefore, it is not surprising that the importance of managerial skills for principal candidates is increasingly emphasized. To some authors, command of these skills is considered to be the sole criterions for selection. Sharpe’s (1976) study reveals that criteria used in Australia included professional skills, managerial abilities, leadership and supervision
effectiveness, and use of physical and human resources within his or her sphere of responsibility. Additional criteria used in this selection process were also primarily managerial oriented: organizational and the management skills with regards to pupils, staff, and premises; community relations, and service background; and profession and personal qualities. Likewise Roesch (1986) concluded from a survey of California superintendents that the important principal selection criteria are managerial skills. (p.10)

With this strong emphasis on managerial skills, the '90's have continued to see an abundant amount of literature about its effects on leadership. Despite the push for managerial skills in the '70's and '80's, authors still feel schools have a long way to go. "Quality" and "transformational leadership" are the new key words. Recognizing the importance of managerial skills, but seeing the imperfections of its use as of yet, Glasser (1990) wrote the following:

Nearly all superintendents, principals, and teachers use a method of management that not only
prevents new ideas from being introduced into the system but is also the cause of many problems we have been trying to solve. Before anything else will work, we need to replace the way we manage now with a new method of management that focuses on quality. (p.425)

Seemingly, the influx of the business principles of Dr. Edward Deming (Matthews 1992; Kraar 1991; Bonstingl 1992) are now the "light" to our school managerial difficulties. "Total Quality Management" has become the management goal. Bonstingl (1992) shares four of the principles now used as goals to help improve school quality:

1. The organization must focus, first and foremost, on its supplies and customers.
2. Everyone in the organization must be dedicated to continuous improvement, personally and collectively.
3. The organization must be perceived as a system, and the work the people do within the system must be seen as an ongoing process.
4. The success of Total Quality Management is the responsibility of top management.
With these types of principles in mind, the principal is still seen as the leader for the school's effectiveness. Even more so, he or she is now the initiator of change. Richard D. Sagor (1992) calls the principal a transformative leader stating, "In schools where teachers and students report a culture conducive to school success, a transformative leader is the principal. These principals consistently use what we call the three building blocks of transformational leadership" (p.9). He lists the building blocks as follows:

1. a clear and unified focus
2. a common cultural perspective
3. a constant push for improvement

Interestingly, the focus of the 1990's literature is primarily the same types of managerial skills, but authors (Hashway 1992) are using "new words." The responsibility of the principal's role as a leader is still important:

The myriad of responsibilities placed upon the school principal vary regarding breadth and depth of emphasis. How the principals prioritize and then work toward carrying out these responsibilities or functions is essential to the
effective operation of all schools. The diversity of interpretation by the faculty of the implementation of these responsibilities can become a significant factor in building a positive and productive school climate. (p.29)

As has been discussed, there are three main types of traits recommended for effective principals: education achievements, personal characteristics, and managerial skills. Within a review of literature, no one characteristic stands alone as the skill most needed for effective leadership. In recent years there has been an emphasis upon managerial skills as indicated by the abundance of literature written about these skills for effective principals; however, some authors still credit personal and educational traits as the essentials for success. Rutherford (1983) contended that recommendations for leadership theory "are not consistent from one authority to another, nor are they supported in a consistent manner by research findings" (p.22). It is with this in mind, that the following project was undertaken.
CHAPTER III
PROCEDURE

Subjects

The subjects were the Kindergarten through 8th Grade elementary school teachers of a school district in Upper East Tennessee. The teachers were of a mixed educational background, gender, experience, and age.

Setting

District. The setting for this study was a school district with six elementary schools, and 2,757 students in grades Kindergarten through Eighth. Classrooms range from a cross section of design and teaching style. The school district has been recognized for its academic excellence within the state of Tennessee, and numerous teachers have won awards for their efforts on the state and national levels.

Community. The school system is found in Upper East Tennessee, and is in a growing town built around a high level industry. The nature of the industry makes the community wealthy and highly educated.
Data Collection

Construction of the Instrument. The writer developed a questionnaire (see Appendix B), asking elementary school teachers to rank, in order of importance, fifteen characteristics and traits that elementary school principals need in order to be effective leaders. The characteristics and traits were chosen from a review of literature that was obtained through periodical research, review of books and other literature, and an ERIC search.

Sampling of the Instrument.

This study began with a sampling of the intended instrument being administered to forty-five elementary school teachers in an elementary school in southwest Ohio. This setting was a large school with over six hundred students and it was well known for its progressiveness in educational theory. The school is an all-year round school that uses the open classroom design (four "classes" per room/complex). The forty-five teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire asking them to rank fifteen characteristics/traits that elementary school principals need to be effective leaders. These traits were to be listed in order of
importance in their opinion. These characteristics were taken from a review of the literature. The questionnaire was given to these elementary school teachers at the beginning of the 1991-1992 school term. Of the forty-five teachers surveyed, twenty-two (or 49%) completed the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was then evaluated in terms of clarity, instructions, and subject matter. Mistakes and errors in design were corrected and a final instrument was drafted.

**Administration of the Instrument.**

The geographical area of East Tennessee was chosen as the location for this study because of its interest to the writer, its proximity, and its mix of cultures. After talking with school personnel and parents in the East Tennessee communities, a school district was selected on the basis of its standing within the state of Tennessee and the numerous awards its teachers received on the state and national levels.

In February 1992, the writer contacted the Superintendent of the school district, through written communication, asking for permission to approach the elementary school principals for their support in carrying out the survey. The superintendent invited
the writer to present the proposal of the schools’ participation to the Board Meeting of the principals of the given school district. The principals were informed of the purpose of the questionnaire and the project, their role in carrying out the survey, and the writer’s intention for follow-up of the results. The principals then voted on their participation to assist in the data collection within their school. The proposal passed. Questionnaires and detailed instructions were given to the principals present. It was their job to distribute the surveys, encourage the teachers to participate, and collect the questionnaires by a given date. The writer then collected the data and the results of the study are discussed in Chapter IV.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Presentation of the Results

Of the 189 elementary school (Kindergarten - Grade 8) teachers receiving the questionnaire in the East Tennessee school district surveyed, 53% completed the questionnaire. Two schools chose not to participate in the survey. Those who participated in the survey represented four elementary schools and two middle schools.

Of the 101 teachers who participated in the survey, the following statistics were gathered: 70.3% were female, 20.8% were male, and 8.9% chose not to respond to the question indicating gender. In the category of age, 14% were between the ages of 20-30; 25% were between the ages 30-40; 28% were between the ages of 40-50; 9% were between the ages of 50-60; 1% were older than age 60, and 22% did not list their age. The average age of those indicating their age was 38.66.

The teachers were also asked what grade they taught in their respective schools. Of those who responded to this question, 7% were Kindergarten
teachers, 4% were 1st grade, 6% were 2nd grade, 5% were 3rd grade, 4% were 4th grade, 4% were 5th grade, 7% were 6th grade, 6% were 7th grade, 9% were 8th grade, 16% were other (such as music, special education, art, etc.), and 31% chose not to respond to the question on grade level taught.

The results of the ordinal rank survey have been hand tabulated into a combined ranking computation. Table I shows the results of the combined ranking computation. Table II also shows the results of the combined ranking computation but in order of importance chosen ('1' being the most important, and '15' being the least important). As indicated in both Tables I and II, "demonstrate(s) honesty" was the characteristic that received the lowest ranking computation (4.157), and therefore was ranked as being of greatest importance; "demonstrate(s) appropriate values and integrity" received the second lowest ranking computation (4.344); and "complete(s) two to five years of classroom teaching experience" received the third lowest ranking computation (4.671). Those receiving the highest ranking computation, which indicates they were chosen as least important, included "display(s) a positive physical appearance" (11.383), "successfully completed previous administrative positions" (12.231),
and "complete(d) a doctoral degree, or is working towards one" (13.933).

Other important data received in this study is shown in Table III. This table represents the mode score of frequency each characteristic was chosen as most important for effective leadership by principals. In this area, "demonstrate(s) appropriate values and integrity" was chosen by twenty four teachers to be the most important characteristic needed for a principal to be effective. The second most frequently chosen characteristic to be the most important was "complete(d) two to five years of classroom teaching experience," which received a mode score of 19. And third, "demonstrate(s) honesty" was listed by eighteen teachers as most important. Of the twelve remaining characteristics, eight received a mode score of 2 or more, three received a mode score of 1, and "display a positive physical appearance" received no score, 0.

To show which type of characteristic -- educational, personal, or managerial -- were given the lowest rank (most important) overall by the teachers
### TABLE I

**RESULTS OF COMBINED RANKING COMPUTATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Rank Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Complete two five years of classroom training</td>
<td>4.671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Demonstrate honesty</td>
<td>4.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Exhibit creativity and innovativeness</td>
<td>7.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Display a positive physical appearance</td>
<td>11.383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Complete a doctoral degree, or be working towards one</td>
<td>13.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Exhibit good time-management skills</td>
<td>7.329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Create a climate of high expectations</td>
<td>6.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Function as an instructional leader</td>
<td>7.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Exhibit the ability to organize many elements at one time</td>
<td>7.654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Voice specific goals and have a clear vision</td>
<td>5.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Successfully have completed previous administrative positions</td>
<td>12.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Function as a dynamic and forceful leader</td>
<td>8.541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Demonstrate appropriate values and integrity</td>
<td>4.344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Exhibit high visibility with the school and community</td>
<td>8.898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Serve as a counselor to teachers, parents, and students</td>
<td>8.840</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE II

RESULTS OF COMBINED RANKING COMPUTATION
IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE CHOSEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Rank Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Demonstrate honesty</td>
<td>4.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Demonstrate appropriate values and integrity</td>
<td>4.344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Complete two to five years of classroom teaching experience</td>
<td>4.671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Voice specific goals and have a clear vision</td>
<td>5.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Create a climate of high expectations</td>
<td>6.834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Exhibit good time management skills</td>
<td>7.329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Exhibit the ability to organize many elements at one time</td>
<td>7.654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Function as an instructional leader</td>
<td>7.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Exhibit creativity and innovations</td>
<td>7.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Functions as a dynamic and forceful leader</td>
<td>8.541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Serve as a counselor to teachers, parents, and students</td>
<td>8.840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Exhibit high visibility with the school and community</td>
<td>8.898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Display a positive physical appearance</td>
<td>11.383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Successfully have completed previous administrative position(s)</td>
<td>12.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Complete a doctoral degree or be working towards one</td>
<td>13.933</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE III
MODE SCORE OF CHARACTERISTICS CHOSEN MOST IMPORTANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency Chosen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate appropriate values and integrity</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete two to five years of classroom teaching experience</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate honesty</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function as a dynamic and forceful leader</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function as an instructional leader</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice specific goals and have a clear vision</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve as a counselor to teachers, parents, and students</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit high visibility within the school and community</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit the ability to organize many elements at one time</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a climate of high expectation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit creativity and innovativeness</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit good time management skills</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successfully have completed previous administrative position(s)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete a doctoral degree or be working towards one</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display a positive physical appearance</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
surveyed, Table IV represents the mean score of combined ordinal rank of characteristic groups. The personal characteristics together received an ordinal rank of 7.256. Close behind came the managerial characteristics with a score of 7.563, and third came the educational characteristics with a mean score of 10.278. Additionally, to further study the teachers' perspectives between these characteristics, Table V shows the total mode score of the frequency each characteristic was chosen from each characteristic group. The personal characteristics obtained a mode score of 10.4 which indicates that the personal characteristics were chosen most frequently as the most important characteristics to have. Educational characteristics were second most important as a group, and received a mode score of 7; managerial characteristics received a score of 3.

Discussion of the Results

In the data presented in Tables I, II, and III, several characteristics needed by principals for effective leadership were chosen to be most important to the elementary school teachers surveyed. These Tables show that the following were the top three
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Combined Ordinal Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete two to five years of classroom teaching experience</td>
<td>4.671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successfully have completed previous administrative positions</td>
<td>12.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete a doctoral degree or be working towards one</td>
<td>13.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Score</strong></td>
<td>10.278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate honesty</td>
<td>4.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate appropriate values and integrity</td>
<td>4.344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit creativity and innovativeness</td>
<td>7.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function as a dynamic and forceful leader</td>
<td>8.541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display a positive physical appearance</td>
<td>11.383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Score</strong></td>
<td>7.256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managerial</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice specific goals and have a clear vision</td>
<td>5.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a climate of high expectations</td>
<td>6.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit good time management skills</td>
<td>7.329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function as an instructional leader</td>
<td>7.654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit the ability to organize many elements at one time</td>
<td>7.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve as a counselor to teachers, parents, and students</td>
<td>8.840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit high visibility with the school and community</td>
<td>8.898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Score</strong></td>
<td>7.563</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE V

MODE SCORE OF THE CHARACTER GROUP CHOSEN MOST IMPORTANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency Chosen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Complete two to five years of classroom teaching experience</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Successfully have completed previous administrative positions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Complete a doctoral degree or be working towards one</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mode Score Average 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Demonstrate honesty</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Demonstrate appropriate values and integrity</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Exhibit creativity and innovativeness</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Function as a dynamic and forceful leader</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Display a positive physical appearance</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mode Score Average 10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Voice specific goals and have a clear vision</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Create a climate of high expectations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Exhibit good time management skills</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Function as an instructional leader</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Exhibit the ability to organize many elements at one time</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Serve as a counselor to teachers, parents, and students</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Exhibit high visibility with the school and community</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mode Score Average 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
characteristics needed from the list of fifteen: 1) demonstrate(s) honesty, 2) demonstrate(s) appropriate values and integrity, and 3) complete(d) two to five years of classroom teaching experience. Although the rank in ordinal computation (Table II), and the frequency chosen (Table III) does place these characteristics in a slightly different order, these three are still consistent with being the top three chosen. Of the teachers surveyed, 60% chose one of these three characteristics as their number one characteristic for principals to be effective. Two of these characteristics, "demonstrate(s) appropriate values and integrity," and "demonstrate(s) honesty" come from the personal characteristic list.

The characteristics receiving a combined ranking computation of 5.772 through 8.898 (see Tables I and II), and the characteristics receiving a mode score for frequency chosen between 8 and 2 (see Table III), are the same; however, their order of importance is slightly different. For example, "function(s) as a dynamic and forceful leader" is in the 4th position as most important in Table III, but it is in the 10th position in Tables I and II. Similarly, "exhibit(s) high visability with the school and community" is in position 5 in Table III, and position 12 in Tables I
and II. This type of variation is common to the characteristics in these middle ranges and indicates that in the teachers' perspectives these characteristics were closely related in level of importance.

The characteristics receiving the least recognition in order of importance by the teachers surveyed (see Tables I, II, and III) are as follows: "display(s) a positive physical appearance" (11.383), "successfully completed previous administrative position(s)" (12.231), and "complete(d) a doctoral degree, or is working towards one" (13.933). In Table III, these are listed in a slightly different order with "successfully have completed previous administrative positions" receiving a mode score of 1, "complete a doctoral degree or be working towards one" mode score of 1, and "display a positive physical appearance" no mode score, 0. It is important to note that two of these least favored characteristics come from the educational characteristics.

To study the preference of one type of characteristic over another, a breakdown of the characteristics in their divisions can also be helpful. Tables IV and V both show these divisions and are supportive that the personal characteristics are
slightly preferred by the teachers surveyed, and were chosen to be most important. In the combined ordinal rank computation, the managerial skills came a close second, within .307 of a point; however, the large difference in the mode score of frequency chosen between personal (10.4) and managerial (3) characteristics clearly show that the personal characteristics were considered more important for effective principal leadership by these teachers who were surveyed.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Elementary school principals need to exhibit a variety of characteristics to be effective leaders. These characteristics are often broken down into three divisions: educational, personal, and managerial. In the last two decades, there has been a trend in literature to focus largely on the managerial skills. It is interesting to note, however, that educational characteristics/achievements are considered first when narrowing the field for prospective principals. Personal skills are listed as important, but focus has rarely been upon this type of characteristic.

It is hard to know what traits are most important. Teachers' opinions, however, are a good measure to determine the characteristics that are needed by principals for successful performance. Teachers are the ones who work closely with these professionals and who are guided by their leadership. Teachers are affected directly by the effectiveness of the principal with whom they work, and they can see what characteristics are most helpful.
This study incorporated a questionnaire used to survey elementary school teachers. It was used to determine what these teachers perceived as the most important traits or characteristics a principal should possess in order to be an effective leader. The instrument used for the survey was created after a review of literature upon the subject of characteristics of effective leadership in principals. This writer chose fifteen characteristics from the three types of traits mentioned in the literature: educational, personal, and managerial. The characteristics were mixed up and formulated into a questionnaire that would be used to ordinal rank the characteristics from the teacher’s perspective.

The questionnaire was administered to an elementary school district in Upper East Tennessee. One hundred and eighty-nine teachers were given the opportunity to complete the survey, with a total of six elementary schools, and two middle schools asked to participate. Of the teachers surveyed, 53% completed the questionnaire. The results were hand tabulated and an ordinal rank was computed by the responses of the teachers. Each characteristic was evaluated on how many teachers chose that characteristic as most important. Additionally, an overall ordinal
computation of each characteristic in its division was also recorded.

Conclusions

The results indicate that the top three characteristics chosen by this given group of teachers are: 1) demonstrate(s) honesty, 2) demonstrate(s) appropriate values and integrity, and 3) had completed two to five years of classroom teaching. These three characteristics were chosen to be most important by 60% of the teachers surveyed in this study. Two of the above mentioned characteristics are from the personal characteristic division. Also, the overall ordinal computation of the characteristics in their division show that the personal characteristics were given a mean ranking score of 7.256; managerial skills a 7.563; and educational a 10.278.

The results of this project show that in this Upper East Tennessee school district, the elementary school teachers feel that the personal characteristics such as honesty, appropriate values, and integrity, are as important, or slightly more important, for effective leadership as the managerial and educational characteristics often listed in literature. The data presented in this study supports that personal
characteristics are still very important as criterion for principals, despite the literature emphasis upon managerial skills. Additionally, teachers in this Upper East Tennessee school district chose personal characteristics to be considerably more important than educational achievements for principal effectiveness.

Recommendations

The results of this study can only be generalized to represent the teachers in this Upper East Tennessee school district, and possibly to represent all areas of Tennessee. It is the belief of this author that the results may have been affected by the geographical area, which is considered the "Bible Belt" of the Eastern states. Further surveying, using this questionnaire, or a similar one, is recommended to solidify findings on a broader scale.

Several other recommendations for use of this specific survey, or the results of this study have been made below:

1. Principals can use this study to survey the attitudes of their teachers. Responses can help indicate need areas for personal growth. Additionally, it can provide valuable information regarding possible
Ordinal Rank Study

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relational problem areas between the principal and staff. It should be administered in a non-threatening and positive atmosphere, which means it would be best for principals not to see individual responses, but for a mediator to administer and present the results to the principal.

2. Superintendents can use this survey to gather information about the staff of a school needing a new principal. Based on the responses, the superintendent could more effectively place a principal who could fit well into a specific school.

3. The results of this study indicate that strong, positive personal characteristics are needed by prospective principals. The policies and guidelines for the recruitment and selection of principals need to be reconsidered. Superintendents need to develop ways to learn more about prospective principals’ personalities rather than only their background history. A more thorough reference check is recommended.

4. The teacher’s lower opinion of principal’s educational achievement indicates that a review of the certification criterion for effective elementary level principals may need to be reviewed. Several authors from the review of literature felt that effective
candidates were being passed over and the creative, competent leaders were not being selected (Baltzell & Dentler, 1983; Goodlad, 1983).

5. Prospective principals need to go through personality testing and counseling on test results during their training courses. This would allow principals to see where their strengths and weaknesses are, and their meaning relative to an effective leadership style.

6. Superintendents need to work in conjunction with schools to develop and implement a long range plan to contribute to the continuing professional growth and enrichment of principals. The purpose of this would be to broaden their experiences and enhance their leadership. Two teachers who were surveyed for this study suggested that principals should return to the classroom for approximately ten weeks every five years. Not only would this benefit the principal, it could also allow a prospective principal a chance to "intern" as a functioning principal as part of their training process.

The results of this study indicate that personal characteristics such as honesty, values, and integrity are important for effective leadership. The study was completed to remind readers of personal
characteristics’ value, their existence, and their importance.

A principal needs many different types of characteristics to be effective. He/she needs to have been educated in the theory and practices that lead to successful leadership. He/she needs to strengthen and develop managerial skills that enable him or her to work with and lead others. And lastly, he/she also needs personal characteristics that complement the leadership role. No one area of characteristics can stand alone. They all must be present for a principal to be truly effective.
APPENDICES
March 4, 1992

Dear Teachers,

My name is Gerri Baker and I am a graduate student from the University of Dayton, who recently has been transferred to the Kingsport area. I am completing some survey work needed for my thesis and I would like to have some feedback from the teachers here in Tennessee.

A portion of my thesis deals with leadership characteristics evident in effective principals. I have been surveying teachers in several locations on what they feel are the most important qualities that a principal should have from three areas -- educational, personal, and managerial.

To help me in my project, I would like you to take a few moments and rank the attached characteristics in order of importance to you (1 being the most important, 2 being the second most important, and so on, with 15 being the least important). When you have completed the survey, please place it in the large envelope with my name on it that is located near the teachers mailboxes. I will pick up the completed forms after March 20, 1992.

Sincerely,

Gerri M. Baker
Personal Information:

Name________________________________________ Age_______

Male_______ Female ________ Grade Teaching ______

Please rank the following characteristics in order of importance to you, 1 being the most important, 2 being the second most important, and so on, with 15 being the least important. These characteristics have been taken from the following areas -- educational, personal, and managerial.

Effective principals should . . .

1. complete two to five years of classroom teaching ______
2. demonstrate honesty ______
3. exhibit creativity and innovativeness ______
4. display a positive physical appearance ______
5. complete a doctoral degree, or be working towards one ______
6. exhibit good time-management skills ______
7. create a climate of high expectations ______
8. function as an instructional leader ______
9. exhibit the ability to organize many elements at one time ______
10. voice specific goals and have a clear vision ______
11. successfully have completed previous administrative position(s) ______
12. function as a dynamic and forceful leader ______
13. demonstrate appropriate values and integrity ______
14. exhibit high visibility within the school and community ______
15. serve as a counselor to teachers, parents, and student ______
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Porkorny, N. G. (September 1986). Pass this to a protege: how to principal. Executive Educator, 8(9), 23-35.


