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**The lessons of experience of successful school principals: How
successful principals develop leadership skills on the job**

Morrison, Milton Hall, Jr., Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992

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THE LESSONS OF EXPERIENCE OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS: HOW SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPALS DEVELOP
LEADERSHIP SKILLS ON THE JOB


by

Milton Hall Morrison, Jr

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APPROVAL PAGE

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The purpose of this research was to determine the career experiences that help successful principals develop leadership skills. Eight regional winners of the Wachovia Principal of the Year Program for 1990 were interviewed to find out what experiences they believed to be important in developing their leadership skills.

Interview questions were adapted from a study of successful business leaders conducted by McCall, Lombardo, and Morrison. (1988) The complete interviews with the eight principals were tape recorded and the tapes were transcribed. Career stories of each principal, which represented a chronological biographical portrait of each principal's career, were developed. Comparative analysis was used to determine the common experiences in the careers of these successful principals.

The results of this research indicated that principals can determine significant experiences that have helped develop leadership skills. The following categories of experiences were found to be important in the leadership development of these eight successful school principals: recognizing the influence of family and personal life; having a variety of experiences; perceiving difficult situations as learning opportunities; becoming a good classroom teacher and taking on extra duties and

responsibilities outside the classroom; using the role of the assistant principalship as training for the principalship; learning from interactions with other educators; working on advanced degrees in educational administration; acquiring the opportunity to move into that first principalship; recognizing significant learnings and advice for younger educators; using career planning and taking advantages of leadership opportunities.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The effectiveness of schools is an issue that is currently receiving a great deal of attention. However, it is not a new issue, but one that people have been concerned about for as long as schools have been in existence. People concerned about education have approached this issue in various ways. Both the methods of studying school effectiveness and the criteria used for measuring school effectiveness have varied according to the purpose for which the study was undertaken, the group undertaking the study, and the time and place of the study. (Madaus, Airasism, Kellaghan, 1980)

Coleman (1966) was one of the first researchers to use pupil cognitive gain as a measure of school effectiveness. The Coleman Report is significant because it was interpreted to indicate that schools make little difference in the educational attainment of children when compared to other factors such as family and social background. (Edmonds, 1979)

The Coleman Report began a controversy concerning school effectiveness that served to generate a great deal of further research on the

topic. Coleman's findings did not fit with the way many people had previously thought about schools. Some of these researchers refuted Coleman's findings, indicating problems with his methodology and analysis. Other researchers reached conclusions very similar to those of the Coleman Report. (Madaus, et. al., 1980)

People in the United States had generally looked to education to be the great equalizer of opportunity that would help fulfill the democratic and equalitarian ideals of this country. Madaus (1980) states:

While no one quarrelled with the basic premise that all persons in the society should be afforded equal opportunity, the findings of these studies were interpreted to indicate that schooling-the most time-honored and politically viable means of insuring equality- now appeared to be incapable of providing such equal opportunity. (p. 44)

Researchers on the other side of the school effectiveness controversy (Edmonds, 1979; Oneal, 1987; Young, 1986; Licata, 1987; Fortenberry, 1986; Gottfredson, 1986; Hersh, 1985) arrived at different conclusions. These researchers concluded that some schools were more effective than others; therefore, school effectiveness must be a factor in student achievement.

Much of the research on effective schools has been directed toward identifying specific characteristics of schools that have been determined to

be effective. A fairly comprehensive listing of the identified characteristics of effective schools includes:

1. strong building level leadership
 2. a sense of mission
 3. clearly defined goals
 4. order and discipline
 5. a positive learning climate
 6. high expectations for student and staff performance
 7. frequent monitoring of student progress
 8. recognition of academic success
 9. sufficient opportunity for learning
 10. emphasis on curriculum articulation
 11. staff development
 12. parent involvement
 14. collaborative planning
 15. teacher-designed instruction
 16. district-level support
 17. cooperative group learning
 18. multi-ability grouping
 19. positive teacher-student interactions
- (Oneal, 1987; Young, 1986; Licata, 1987; Fortenberry, 1986; Gottfredson, 1986; Hersh, 1985; Edmonds, 1979)

The five characteristics of effective schools most often cited in the literature are those identified by Edmonds (1979):

1. Strong administrative leadership
2. A climate of expectation of success
3. An orderly, but not rigid, atmosphere
4. An emphasis on pupil skill acquisition
5. Frequent monitoring of pupil progress

The literature indicates that one characteristic very important in effective schools is the leadership of the principal. The principal's instructional leadership and school management are crucial to creating and maintaining a good school. (Lipham, 1981; McCurdy, 1983; Greenfield, 1982; Manasse, 1982; Persell and Cookson, 1982; Yukl, 1982)

Effective schools have effective school leaders. In order to become effective school leaders, principals must develop their leadership skills. The question that intrigues this researcher concerns how school principals develop the leadership skills necessary to become effective school leaders. The hypothesis is that those skills are learned mainly from experiences on the job.

Former Education Secretary William Bennett recommended that school principals should come from a variety of backgrounds. He suggested that experience in education was not as important as general management experience. (Batsis, 1987)

Many educators would take issue with this idea. Almost all school principals have been classroom teachers and many have been assistant principals. Could principals be effective without these background experiences in education? Not according to many principals. Pharis and Zakariya (1978) conducted a survey in which principals identified on-the-

job experiences as being very important in the development of their leadership skills.

The Problem

Surveys (Pharis and Zakariya, 1978) have been conducted to determine the types of career positions and the educational levels of school principals. This research also indicated that principals have identified on-the-job experiences as being most influential in helping them develop leadership skills. However, no research has examined the particular career experiences that principals identify as being important in developing the leadership skills that help them become effective school leaders. A significant research question thus revolves around the issue of what particular career experiences can be identified by school principals as being important in developing their leadership skills.

The purpose of this research was to discover and examine the career experiences that help principals learn leadership skills and become effective school leaders. This research was designed to investigate the important career experiences of school leaders by interviewing principals who have been recognized as effective school leaders. Open ended interview questions were utilized to address this issue, and investigated

the following research questions.

Research Questions

What career experiences do successful principals identify as most important in helping them to learn leadership skills?

What are the common experiences important to the development of leadership skills of successful principals?

Limitations of the Study

This qualitative research utilized case study and interpretive inquiry techniques. These techniques are designed to provide intensive information about the cases under investigation, but cannot necessarily be generalized to larger populations. Therefore, the critical career experiences which were identified in this research cannot necessarily be generalized to larger populations.

However, individuals interested in becoming school leaders may find information in the findings of this research that will be helpful in their own leadership development. In addition, school systems and other institutions involved in school leadership development may also benefit from these findings. Experiences may be identified that will enhance

leadership training for educators.

Rationale for the Inquiry

In searching for a dissertation topic this researcher began by exploring the research on effective schools. The literature on effective schools indicated that one of the most often identified characteristics of effective schools is effective leadership by the principal. In order to provide this leadership, principals must develop leadership skills. This researcher became intrigued with the question of how principals develop these leadership skills.

The process of writing a professional autobiography as one of the requirements for a course in the doctoral program at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro required this researcher to look for key experiences that had influenced his professional development. Certain career experiences were found to have been very beneficial.

In The Lessons of Experience, McCall, Lombardo and Morrison describe how successful executives develop on the job. The research was conducted by interviewing executives of major corporations in the United States of America. The questions were designed to learn about the experiences that had the most influence on their leadership and career

development and the lessons that were learned from those experiences.

The unveiling of these key experiences is important to the organizations interested in developing good leaders and to people who are interested in developing their own leadership skills. This applies equally well to school systems and to aspiring school leaders.

The ideas presented in The Lessons of Experience combined with the experience of writing a professional autobiography aroused a curiosity about the important experiences in the careers of school principals. The expectation is that school principals, like leaders in other settings, learn valuable lessons of leadership from critical experiences in their careers. There are certain critical experiences that are common to the careers of many school principals.

According to Pharis and Zakariya in The Elementary School Principalship in 1978: A Research Study, principals have indicated that on-the-job experiences are the most important factors in developing their careers and leadership skills. If these on-the-job experiences are important, it seems worthwhile to determine what the critical experiences are.

What particular career experiences are the most important in developing the leadership skills of school principals? In searching the

literature, no research that addressed this question was found. This research was designed to address this gap in the literature.

By interviewing the 1990 regional winners of the Wachovia Principal of the Year Award, this researcher first determined what experiences they perceived as being of particular importance in their careers. Then the interviews were examined to determine the common experiences that those successful principals have encountered during their careers that have been especially beneficial in the development of leadership skills.

In summary, The Lessons of Experience, combined with the experience of writing a professional autobiography, helped form this research project by suggesting the idea and the format for interviewing principals to discover their critical career experiences.

Three pilot projects have been completed using the interview format and questions. These studies helped to focus this research and will be described in the methodology section.

This study was conducted using methods derived from qualitative, case study, and interpretive inquiry methodology for the data collection and analysis. Intensive open-ended interviewing techniques were used to identify key events in the careers of school principals. These key events

are those which principals identify as helping them develop the leadership skills that made them successful school leaders. Interpretive inquiry techniques allowed access to the real world of the school principal as perceived by the principal.

The interviews were first analyzed to develop the story of each person's career in chronological order. Then content analysis of each interview was used to identify the key events or critical experiences in the careers of each principal. Finally, comparative analysis of the interviews was used to identify common themes in the experiences of these school principals.

The remainder of this dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter two presents a review of the literature on effective schools, school leadership and how successful leaders develop leadership skills. Chapter three presents the methodology for this study, and describes the three pilot projects in more detail. Chapter four presents the results of the analysis of the interviews with information arranged into categories of experiences, supported by quotations from the principals. Chapter five presents an analysis and discussion of the data along with conclusions and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This review of the literature is composed of three sections: a review of literature on effective schools, a review of literature on school leadership, and a review of literature on experiences that help leaders develop leadership skills. It will be demonstrated that good schools require good school leaders. In order to become effective school leaders, principals must develop and improve leadership skills. Research on leaders in business indicates that leadership skill development is something that results mainly from on-the-job experiences.

Effective Schools Literature

School effectiveness has been a concern as long as schools have been in existence. In looking at earlier traditions of assessing schools, Madaus (1980) states, "The functioning of schools has been assessed by different publics using different techniques and criteria". (p. 3) One group with a continuing interest in school effectiveness is parents. Usually, parents are concerned about the school's effectiveness as it concerns their child.

Parents sometimes choose their places of residence partly on the basis of which school their child will attend. A variety of criteria are used by parents in their assessment of schools, but they tend to operate on the belief that some schools are better than others. (Madaus, 1980)

Administrative and political bodies have also been concerned with school effectiveness, but often their evaluations have been as informal as that of parents. Until 1950 little use was made of empirical data to assess schools. Instead the opinion of "experts" was the basis used to judge school performance. (Madaus, 1980)

Many school evaluations have focused on school inputs such as teachers, curriculum, facilities, teacher-pupil ratio, and library facilities. The assumption was that improvement in school inputs and school conditions would result in better student performance. Sporadic attempts have been made to measure school outputs. For example, tests of achievement were used in Boston grammar schools as early as 1845. These tests were used more often in the second half of the nineteenth century. They were used to measure student achievement as well as teacher and school effectiveness. These tests placed responsibility for student achievement on the teachers. (Madaus, 1980).

The development of intelligence tests changed this focus. As more

and more students began attending schools, and staying in school longer, some children did not learn as well as expected. Intelligence tests indicated that all children were not equally capable of benefitting from the normal school program. As a result of these tests and this line of reasoning the responsibility for learning shifted from the teacher to the student. (Madaus, 1980)

Madaus (1980) suggested that the criteria for measuring school effectiveness should be based on the goals or objectives of schooling. Dodge (1983) agreed with this idea of the importance of goals serving as the guide to measure effectiveness. However there has not been any general consensus on those goals in our society, where local control of schools has been the norm. A related problem is the lack of continuity in goals and objectives, teaching materials, and standardized tests. Individual school systems and individual schools decide on their goals and objectives, the textbooks are produced by various textbook companies, other teaching materials are produced by other companies, and the testing materials are produced by still different companies. The job of the classroom teacher in selecting materials that will satisfy the school goals as well as prepare students to do well on the standardized tests becomes quite difficult. A system whereby the goals, teaching materials,

and testing materials were more coordinated would make assessment more meaningful.

Coleman (1966) conducted a nationwide survey which addressed four issues. What degree of racial and cultural segregation exists? Do the facilities and resources available to different racial and cultural groups result in equal educational opportunity? What is the standardized test score performance of students? What is the relationship between achievement and the availability of resources and facilities?

The most publicized finding of the Coleman Report (1966) was that schools made little difference in a child's development when compared to family and social backgrounds. Other findings of the Coleman study were largely ignored because the public's perception of this report resulted in the idea that schools were not really effective. "Coleman's survey denied the efficacy of schooling as a powerful equalizer in American society". (Madaus, 1980, p. 28)

Other researchers confirmed Coleman's findings. These included Jencks (1972), Mosteller and Moynihan (1972), Averch et al. (1972), Cicirelli et al. (1969), Glass et al. (1970), Picarello, (1968), U. S. Office of Education (1970). Each of these studies added to the idea that schools were not effective in promoting social reform by helping

students from poor or minority backgrounds to become successful.

(Madaus, 1980)

The major effect of the Coleman Report was to focus national attention on schools. This important study created a controversy because it seemed to deny the importance of schooling in the education of children. It implied that those from impoverished backgrounds stood little chance of bettering themselves through education. It also spurred research by those who set out to confirm or disprove these ideas. This report resulted in increased research efforts which focused on school effectiveness.

Edmonds (1979) indicated that Coleman was influential in making pupil cognitive gain a measure of school effectiveness. He disagreed with Coleman's finding that schools have little effect on pupil achievement when compared with the child's background.

Edmonds (1979) reviewed several studies (Gordon, 1923; Green et al., 1966; Averch et al., 1972; Brophy and Good, 1970, Mayeske et al., 1972; Rist, 1970; State of New York, Office of Education, 1974; and Weber, 1971) that indicated that schools did have an effect on pupil progress. He believes that the political climate, particularly the desire to reduce educational spending, was one reason for the influence of the

Coleman Report.

Schools do an adequate job educating most children, but not when it comes to educating poor or minority children. The problem is in the way the schools try to educate poor and minority children rather than any problem with the ability of these children. Edmonds places the responsibility for learning on the teachers and the schools rather than on the students. (Edmonds, 1979)

Edmonds (1979) reviewed a study by Weber (1971) in which several schools were found to be effective in educating poor and minority children. The four schools studied by Weber had several characteristics in common; strong leadership, high expectations, orderly environment, emphasis on pupil skills acquisition, and frequent evaluation of pupil progress.

A study by the New York State Office of Education (1974) resulted in similar findings in New York City schools. A more extensive study completed by Madden, Lawson, and Sweet, (1976), in California, found that school leadership, expectations, and atmosphere had positive effects on student outcomes. (Edmonds, 1979)

Edmonds (1979) states, "Our thesis is that all children are eminently educable, and that the behavior of the school is critical in

determining the quality of that education." (p. 28) He began a Search for Effective Schools project to answer the question: "Are there schools that are instructionally effective for poor children?" (p. 28) Edmonds states, "Pupil family background neither causes nor precludes elementary school instructional effectiveness". (p. 29)

Edmonds proposes the following question to oppose the idea that pupil's family and social backgrounds determine their learning: "how many effective schools would you have to see to be persuaded of the educability of poor children?" (p. 34) In summing up his views on school effectiveness Edmonds states,

We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far. (Edmonds, 1979, p. 35)

Five characteristics of an effective school were identified by Edmonds (1982).

1. The principal's leadership and attention to the quality of instruction.
2. A pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus.
3. An orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and

learning.

4. Teacher behaviors that convey the expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery.

5. The use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis for program evaluation. (p. 4)

In studying some of the efforts to implement effective school characteristics, Edmonds (1982) found several designs for implementation that worked. He indicated that far more is known about the characteristics of schools that have been identified as effective than about how to make a school effective. However, he found that schools must be evaluated on student outcomes, and changes must be made in principal and teacher behaviors that result in institutional and organizational changes in the school.

Curran (1983) offered the following list of eleven characteristics of effective schools.

1. A principal who is an active leader.
2. A positive school climate.
3. Agreeable and workable discipline policies and procedures.
4. Teachers who have high expectations for students.
5. Parents who are involved in the educational process.
6. Productive methods for evaluating the curriculum.
7. Efficient methods for evaluating teacher performance.
8. Consequential methods of developing and evaluating student growth.

9. A realistic philosophy of education.
10. An extensive and adequate student activities program.
11. Significant student services. (p. 71-73)

Brookover (1985) indicated that ineffective schools failed not only minority students but also white students of lower socio-economic status. This means that minority students are disadvantaged by race and low income. His contention is that society tends to identify minorities and low socio-economic status persons as being inferior and has not been very interested in educating people from those groups.

Culturally biased intelligence and achievement tests have compounded the problem. Because of this cultural bias, neither intelligence tests nor achievement tests adequately measure one's ability to learn, but results of these tests have made it easy to defend the lack of learning of poor and minority students. (Brookover, 1985)

Brookover (1985) suggested that educators must be re-educated to believe that "all persons can learn what any person in the world can learn." (p. 267) Educators must "provide appropriate conditions for learning" and "commit themselves to equitable education for all" or "the entire movement to make schools more effective is likely to be displaced." (p. 268)

Stedman (1985) argued that the characteristics usually associated with effective schools were not necessarily the real reasons for their effectiveness. He indicated that some effective schools researchers were biased in favor of these factors and overlooked important contradictions. One study in New York, for example, indicated that the principal was not necessarily the school's instructional leader. A greater emphasis on basic skills was found in some ineffective schools than in some effective schools.

One factor that Stedman (1985) found important in effective schools was "teaching to the test". In these schools instructional emphasis was on the factors that would be tested. This resulted in a lack of emphasis on other important goals of schooling. Equating effectiveness with test score performance results in "short-changing the students." (p. 311) School personnel should find ways to "create effective schools organized around rich curricula." (p. 322)

Instead of the usual six characteristics, Stedman proposed the following seven characteristics which he believed would provide concrete steps that a school could take to produce effectiveness.

1. Personal Attention to Students
-Tutoring

- Extra helpers to lower child-adult ratio
- Smaller classes
- Fluid ability grouping
- Extra attention for slower students
- 2. Skillful Utilization of Teachers
 - Selection (only the best)
 - Assignment (best teachers in important roles)
 - Practical teaching built into program
 - Shared governance and curriculum planning
- 3. Parental Education and Political Involvement
 - Good communication by school
 - Parental involvement in child's education
 - Political action and shared governance
- 4. Ethnic and Racial Emphasis
 - Bilingual sensitivity
 - Curriculum program promotes racial and ethnic identity
- 5. Student Responsibility for School Affairs
 - Peer tutoring
 - Help supervise cafeteria
 - Clean patrol
 - School-wide student commissioners for academics, discipline and safety
 - Student council representatives present concerns to principal's cabinet
- 6. Discipline as a By-product of School Organization
 - Office used as an escape valve for students
 - Student commissioners for discipline
 - Emphasis on student responsibility
 - Special classes for disciplinary problem students with fluid movement to regular classrooms
- 7. Preventative Teaching (p. 319-321)

Purkey and Smith (1982) classified the effective schools research studies into four categories: "outlier studies, case studies, program evaluation studies, and other studies". (p. 64) The outlier studies

involved highly effective schools (positive outliers) and unusually ineffective schools (negative outliers). Most of these studies have focused on elementary schools. Some of these have identified strong instructional leadership as very important in effective schools. Others have found principals who emphasize administrative activities to be characteristic of effective schools. Two problems with the outlier studies were small sample size and errors resulting from using inappropriate measures of effectiveness.

Case study methods have identified five factors as being common to effective schools: strong leadership by the principal or another staff member, high expectations by staff for student achievement, a clear set of goals for the school, a school-wide effective staff training program, and a system for the monitoring of student progress. Case studies indicate that the school social system is important in student achievement. The school social system is composed of social inputs (student body composition and other personnel inputs), social structure (such as school size, open or closed classrooms, etc.), and social climate (school culture as the norms, expectations, and feelings about the school held by the staff and students). A problem with these case studies is the small sample size. (Purkey and Smith, 1982)

Program evaluation studies were found to be stronger methodologically than the two previous types of studies. These studies identified the following characteristics of effective schools: high staff expectations and morale, considerable control by the staff over instructional and training decisions at the school, clear leadership from the principal or other instructional leader, clear goals for the school, and a sense of order in the school. (Purkey and Smith, 1982)

Two flaws found in the effective schools research are indicated by Purkey and Smith (1982). One is that the studies are not longitudinal, they do not require schools to be effective over a period of time. The other flaw is that the studies seem to indicate that once the effective school characteristics are identified, any school can adopt them and become effective. Such systematic interventions in schools are not always successful.

Houlihan (1983) indicated that high test scores, strict discipline, positive school climate, and high attendance patterns were the variables most often used to identify effective schools. He does not believe that such simple statistical data are adequate measures of the effectiveness of a school. Instead, students should be placed on a continuum when they enter school. Their progress on this continuum up to the point where they

leave school should be the measure of the school's success with that student. This method would provide a "measurement over time" of the school's success with each student.

Vincenzi (1985) indicated that qualitative analysis of between-school variance has helped identify effective schools and their characteristics. However, more qualitative studies of within-school differences will help determine what needs to be changed to make an individual school more effective.

Vincenzi (1985) proposed the following list of what could be found in an effective school.

- Staff emphasis on basic reading and mathematics objectives
 - High expectations for students in terms of their mastering basic objectives as well as future accomplishments (i.e., college).
 - As the instructional leader, the principal assumes responsibility for the evaluation of the achievement of basic objectives.
 - A higher percentage of time spent on tasks; active teaching.
 - Discipline problems are handled in the classroom.
 - A system of clear instructional objectives exists, as well as a procedure for assessing student performance.
 - A principal who creates incentives for learning.
- (p. 126)

Effective schools studies should also examine the school climate factors associated with effectiveness. However, some factors are not likely to be changed. For example, few school systems actually eliminate weak principals and teachers. Emphasis should be placed on factors that can be changed. (Vincenzi and Ayrrer, 1985)

Lezotte (1985) identified five premises that provide a framework for defining effective schools.

1. The primary function of schooling is teaching and learning.
2. The primary basis for assessing the increased effectiveness of the school is in terms of students' outcomes.
3. The way in which a local school district chooses to monitor student outcomes is indicative of the educational outcomes that the district cares most about.
4. An effective school is one which demonstrates both quality and equity in its program outcomes.
5. Quality and equity are achieved and maintained only when the school improvement effort has been designed to accrue benefits for "all" students.(p. 305-307)

These premises can be useful in designing school improvement plans. Improvement plans should focus on the individual school with a recognition that change is a long term process and may be achieved without major infusions of resources. Effective schools research provides

a good framework for school improvement plans. Parents, teachers, and administrators must work together to formulate the school improvement plan. (Lezotte, 1985)

Sizemore (1985) found that the following factors were important in effective schools for minority students.

1. The recruitment and selection of moderately authoritarian principals who believed that black poor students could and would learn.
2. The willingness of the principals to take the risk of differing with the system's norm of low achievement for black poor schools.
3. The mobilization of consensus among school and community actors around high achievement as the highest priority goal.
4. The generation of a climate of high expectations for student achievement conducive to teaching and learning.
5. The choice of functional routines, scenarios, and processes for the achievement of the highest priority.
6. The willingness to disagree with superior officers around the choices of these routines and their implementation. (p. 271)

Functional routines, scenarios and processes are important to the achievement of goals. A routine is a "series of activities designed to reach a certain goal, such as high achievement in reading and mathematics. A scenario is a series of routines; a process is a series of scenarios."

(Sizemore, 1985, p. 271)

The most important routines carried out by principals in high achieving schools are as follows;

1. The assumption of responsibility for all student attendance, discipline, and parental conflict through the publication of processes to be followed when violations, infractions, and confrontations occur and prompt enforcement of same with selective sanctions.
2. The rigorous supervision of teacher and staff performance and daily visitation of classrooms and programs.
3. The consistent monitoring of students' reading and mathematics progress, and the supervision of instruction directed toward the mastery of these skills.
4. The use of staff and teacher expertise, skills, information, and knowledge to conduct problem-directed searches for the resolution of school concerns and dilemmas.
5. The involvement of parents in some participatory and meaningful way in the school's program.
6. The prompt evaluation of teacher and staff performances and provision of assistance, help, and in-service where necessary; and, the rating of performances as unsatisfactory where warranted, including persuading such teachers to transfer in spite of central office resistance.
7. The establishment of the school office as the central business command post from which are communicated routines which control information and coordinate school activities.
8. The implementation of a horizontal organization based on some kind of reading skill mastery grouping determined by criterion-referenced tests

with no more than three reading groups per class, within which arrangement grouping for mathematics is permitted accompanied by a teacher assignment routine based on teacher expertise with a particular kind of learner rather than on teacher desire, where the self-contained classroom is modified by some kind of non-grading or team teaching as the norm and where there is high classroom structure moderated by affection and consideration.

9. The expansion of the school day by using preparation periods, in-service time, special subject, social studies and science periods for tutoring and small group instruction for students who need reinforcement and re-teaching, including the differentiation of treatment for advanced, average, and slow learners with the provision of intense concept development instruction to increase growth rates which yield high achievement.

10. The use of materials which proved functional for elevating achievement when such was not approved by the Board of Education, especially in the areas of phonics, Black History, Culture and Literature, and mathematics word problems.

11. The denial of student placement in Educable Mentally Retarded divisions unless all strategies for regular learning had been exhausted.

12. The refusal to accept system programs which consumed administration and supervision time normally given to the regular program. (Sizemore, 1985, p. 271-272)

Sizemore (1985) pointed out the following criticisms of the effective schools research.

1. Measures of effectiveness that are unreliable and invalid because they ignore the variety of school goals and focus only on ones measured by standardized achievement results.
2. A contrasted groups design which provides little

information about the causal relationships among variables.

3. A penchant for describing the global characteristics of the school and ignoring the important variations in school organizations and outcomes that occur within schools. (p. 281-282)

Several areas need more attention in the study of effective schools.

Activities, routines, goals, attitudes, expectations, and characteristics of effective principals and teachers need attention. Relationships of the principal with parents, the community, and central office personnel need to be studied. School climate and interactions among teachers, students, parents and the principal need to be described. Discipline procedures and instructional routines also need to be studied. (Sizemore, 1985)

In conclusion, the research described under the label of "effective schools" research has found that some schools are more effective than others. Researchers have identified several characteristics of schools which were found to be effective. The five most commonly found characteristics are: strong leadership, positive climate, orderly environment, high expectations for pupil acquisition of skills, and frequent monitoring of pupil progress. Good leadership is essential to good schools.

School Leadership

The research on effective schools "consistently highlights the principal as the key to success". (Manasse, 1982, p. vii) As a result, school districts and state agencies are reevaluating criteria for selecting principals and developing new pre-service and in-service training approaches.

There are similarities between management in business and educational administration. Both managers and principals must direct, influence, and motivate subordinates. Effectiveness is measured by "subordinate commitment to task objectives, subordinate satisfaction with the leader, and the success of the leader's group or organization in performing its mission and attaining its objectives". (Yukl, 1982, p. 1)

Leadership studies have used various approaches. The "trait approach" emphasizes personal qualities, traits, and skills of successful leaders. The "power-influence approach" examines the source and amount of power and how it is exercised. The "behavior approach" identifies behaviors and activities of effective leaders. "Situational theories" emphasize various aspects of the situation as being important in determining leadership style. (Yukl, 1982)

Traits identified as important for leaders include "self-confidence;

need for socialized power; need for achievement; desire to compete with peers; respect for authority figures; tolerance for high stress; high energy level; interest in oral, persuasive activities; and relevant technical, conceptual, and interpersonal skills". (Yukl, 1982, p. 2) Personal power, position power, expert and referent power are applicable to both principals and business managers.

A principal's work consists mostly of "brief, fragmented, and varied activities involving scheduled and unscheduled oral interaction with subordinates". (Yukl, 1982, p. 4) Important functions performed by principals compare to those of both the first line supervisor and the middle manager in business. These functions include the following:

1. develop goals, policies, and directions
2. organize the school and design programs to accomplish the goals
3. monitor progress, solve problems, and maintain order
4. procure, manage, and allocate resources
5. create a climate for personal and professional growth and development
6. represent the school to the district office and the outside community (Yukl, 1982, p. 4)

Several situational leadership theories were examined by Yukl. He found Fiedler's (1978) Contingency Model to be unclear in helping to

understand why some leaders were more effective than others. He found Hersey and Blanchard's (1977) Situational Leadership Theory to be too "simplistic" to help understand principal effectiveness. Kerr and Jermier's (1978) model is helpful in identifying situations that reduce the "importance of managerial leadership". Osborn and Hunt's (1978) theory explains aspects of the situation that can shape a leader's behavior. (Yukl, 1982)

The theory that Yukl (1982) found to be most useful for understanding principal's behaviors was developed by Stewart (1976). This theory indicates that managers are strongly influenced by " the pattern of relationships with subordinates, superiors, peers and outsiders; by the nature of the unit's work; and by the degree of manager exposure". (p. 6)

Yukl (1982) states:

The amount of "exposure" appears to be quite high for principals, since they are held accountable for protecting the health and safety of teachers and students, maintaining a favorable learning environment, and achieving a satisfactory level of academic performance. Exposure is increased by the high visibility and seriousness of disturbances (e.g., fights, riots), accidents (e.g., fire, explosion), crime and vandalism, and unprofessional conduct by teachers. (p. 7)

Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971) applies to principals as well as managers. This theory explains how principals behave in defining roles of subordinates and rewarding their behavior for role performance. However, principals have less control over rewards than managers. Charismatic Leadership Theory (House, 1977) provides guidelines for motivating subordinates by appealing to values and ideals. Charismatic leaders have strong "self confidence, a strong conviction in their own beliefs and ideas, and a strong need to influence people". (Yukl, 1982, p. 8)

Yukl's (1982) Multiple Linkage Model indicates that leadership is determined by the extent to which principals can organize subordinate's activities to "make the best use of available personnel, equipment, facilities, and resources." (p. 9) A principal has less power to organize subordinate's work than managers.

The Vroom-Yetton (1973) model is concerned with the degree of subordinate participation in decision making. Subordinate participation increases the possibility of successful action. (Yukl, 1982)

Yukl (1982) indicates that each of these theories on leadership have important implications for improving leadership in schools by "selection, training, and situational engineering". Assessment centers can help identify people who will have a better chance of success as school leaders.

Training and development can improve by identifying relevant "technical, conceptual, and interpersonal skills". The assistant principal position should be treated more like an "internship with regular, structured feedback, instruction, and coaching by the school principal and aid, if necessary, by professional trainers from the district office or a regional center". (p. 10)

Situational engineering involves changing the situation to make it more favorable to the principal. Several things can be done including "making more resources available to the principal, increasing the principal's discretion and authority to cut red tape and solve local problems, better insulating the principal from disruptive outside interference, and giving the principal more control over rewards and punishments applicable to teachers and pupils". (Yukl, 1982, p. 11)

Sapone (1983) indicates "almost universal agreement of the need for schools to have a strong principal." (p. 67) The principal's activities should focus on instructional leadership but overall school management cannot be ignored.

In order for principals to be effective, school superintendents must give principals the following opportunities.

1. The time to work closely with others in a goal planning model.
2. The opportunity to manage conflict and change with higher administrative support.
3. The time to integrate a cluster of demands competing for the time and attention of the school principal.
4. Shared responsibility to plan and execute decisions that affect human, social, and environmental conditions.
5. Encouragement to formulate action plans with teachers and parents in dealing with a fluid school system.
6. Help for principals to integrate new knowledge regarding effective educational and managerial practices. (Sapone, 1983, p. 69)

MacPhail-Wilcox (1983) describes several roles that principals must perform in order to develop effective schools. Principals set "the tone of the school as an orderly, purposeful, organized, relatively quiet, and pleasant place to be." (p. 5) The principal transmits to teachers, and teachers to students, expectations for high levels of performance. Principals clarify goals and transmit their vision to the faculty in a way that engages the faculty in the attainment of those goals. Principals must balance the dual nature of their jobs as managers and instructional leaders. High visibility is maintained by effective principals. Expert power rather than coercive, referent, or reward power is assumed by effective principals. Principals perform a "boundary spanning" function

between the school and its various publics.

Greenfield (1982) indicates that principals have five main roles: "as leader, as instructional supervisor, as administrative decision maker, as organizational change agent, and as conflict manager". (p. 14) Principals must juggle the emphasis they put on the instructional and managerial parts of the job. Several factors influencing this emphasis include expectations of superiors, norms of teachers, disposition and ability of the principal, size of the organization, the in-school administrative resources, the student population, and the larger environment of the school setting.

Several characteristics are critical for a principal's effective performance according to Greenfield (1982). These include:

1. the ability to work closely with others on a face-to-face basis
2. the ability to manage conflict and ambiguity
3. the ability to integrate a cluster of demands competing for the time and attention of principals
4. the ability to anticipate and adapt to rapidly changing human, social, and environmental conditions
5. the ability to think and to exercise discretion in formulating action plans and decisions responding to the contingencies of a system in constant motion
6. the ability to assess and evaluate the consequences of schooling for children in the light of

knowledge regarding effective educational and managerial practices (p. 17-18)

According to Greenfield (1982), more observational research needs to be done to describe what principals actually do. This descriptive research is a "long-overdue strategy in studying principals". (p. 18)

These studies should focus on identifying actual problems faced by principals. In-service training and staff development activities should be developed to introduce new skills and practices to deal with the identified problems. This problem-centered approach to inquiry and practice will result in "action research" that will help with understanding the "antecedents, actions, and consequences of being a school principal". (p. 19)

Persell and Cookson (1982) identify nine recurrent behaviors that good principals display:

- 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. Evaluating results**

Several principal behaviors are important in creating a positive school climate. Principals must have a clear conception of their expectations of the faculty and students and communicate this effectively. Principals must be visible in the school, model the appropriate behaviors, and buffer academic time from outside interference. The essence of strong leadership is "the capacity to mobilize available resources in order to implement policies that lead to desired outcomes".(Persell and Cookson, 1982, p. 28)

Lipham (1981) states, "the local school is the key to educational improvement and ...the leadership of the principal is crucial to the school's success with students". (p. 1) Principals make decisions about eight issues related to school effectiveness:

- Diversity vs. uniformity in educational goals
- Traditional vs. non-traditional values and attitudes
- Centralization vs. decentralization in organizational relationships
- Directiveness vs. supportiveness in leadership behavior
- Authoritative vs. participative decision-making practices
- Managerial vs. instructional tasks to be completed
- Programmed vs. adaptive approaches to change
- Interaction vs. insularity in relations with the public (Lipham, 1981, p. 2)

Several important ingredients are necessary in order for a school to be effective. The school staff must be committed to goals that are clear, reasonable, and uniform. Consensus on values that guide the educational process is essential. The principal must perform a "key linkage function" in organizational relationships between the school and the central office. The leadership behavior of the principal must be appropriate to the situation. For example, decision making should be shared when appropriate. Instructional leadership must be recognized as the most important function of the principal. The principal must provide leadership in carrying out changes that are perceived as necessary, and must work to get community support for the school.

(Lipham, 1981)

Research is needed on the "situational, personal, and behavioral dimensions of effective leadership" and should address "the career performance of principals who head"...effective..."schools". (p. 19) Pre-service programs need change. Currently, candidates for principal positions are "self-selected, meagerly supported, inadequately prepared, and haphazardly placed" (p. 19). School systems should use assessment center techniques to select candidates, provide financial support for their training, and carefully place principals in schools

where they can be successful. (Lipham, 1981)

Brubaker and Simon (1986) provide a framework for viewing the role of the principal historically:

The Principal Teacher (1647-1850)

The Principal as General Manager (1850-1920)

The Principal as Professional and "Scientific" Manager (1920-1970)

The Principal as Administrator and Instructional Leader (1970's-present)

The Principal as Curriculum Leader (present-sometime in the future (p. 5)

The conception of the principal as curriculum leader is based on the idea that: "each principal lives his definition of curriculum in the school setting and everything the principal does turns on this definition". (p. 19)

A new definition of curriculum was also developed. Instead of "a course of study" Curriculum is defined as "what each person experiences in cooperatively creating learning settings". (Brubaker and Simon, 1986 p. 19)

The principal as curriculum leader engages in "reflective action" on the basis of assumptions in five areas: (Brubaker and Simon, 1986, p. 19-24)

-the history and culture of the school setting

- values
- politics
- aesthetics
- spiritual or religious dimensions

Each of these five areas is important in school success. Principals must understand the history and culture of the school setting in order to function effectively. Politics plays a role in the reality of the school system and each principal must deal with it in order to be successful. Aesthetics are involved as the principal establishes a vision of the future of the school and communicates this vision to the faculty. Values are communicated as the principal interacts daily. A powerful value for a principal is the belief that people are basically good and want to do better. "Centering" is a religious attitude that describes the principal as curriculum leader. (Brubaker and Simon, 1986)

In order to be successful as curriculum leaders principals must perform as "scholars on their feet". They must understand the history and culture of the school and give leadership on the basis of "reflective action". (Brubaker and Simon, 1986)

Roueche and Baker (1986) believe that the three most important characteristics in making schools effective are organizational climate, administrative leadership, and teaching excellence. The importance of

each of these three factors is developed in their integrated model of excellent schools: (p. 11)

School climate includes five important factors:

1. Order, Purpose and Coherence

Clear academic goals

Emphasis on academic learning

Well-articulated curriculum

Student rewards and incentives

2. Efficiency and Objectivity

Emphasis on monitoring student progress

3. Student-Centered

Emphasis on student response, abilities,
and participation

4. Optimism

Positive school climate

High expectations

Teacher efficacy

5. Organizational Health

Strong leadership

Teamwork

Systematic evaluation of instruction

Faculty rewards and incentives

Community support and involvement

Effective principal characteristics include:

1. Flexibility in control

2. Cohesiveness within the organization

3. Strong commitment to school mission

4. Recognition of staff

5. Problem solving through collaboration

6. Effective delegation

7. Focus on teaching and learning

Teaching excellence themes are:

1. Motivation:

Commitment

Goal-orientation

Integrated perception

Reward-orientation

2. Interpersonal:

Objectivity

Active listening

Rapport

Empathy

3. Cognitive:

Individualized perception

Teaching strategies

Knowledge

Innovation

Student characteristics include:

1. Effort

2. Performance

3. Motivation

4. Satisfaction

Roueche and Baker (1986) state:

People are the key variable in building excellent schools. The principals and the teachers, along with the support staff, collaborate in achieving quality education through dynamic leadership, effective instruction, and student activities. Together, teachers and principals create a positive atmosphere conducive to student growth and achievement...focusing on people in a fashion that results in hard work, team effort, and strong commitment to shared values and goals is the trademark of exceptional schools...The climate factors, the qualities of effective principals, and exceptional

teaching themes all emphasize the Peters and Waterman principal, "productivity through people". (p. 12-13)

Roueche and Baker (1986) stress that "kid people" are capable of "creating a purposeful, orderly school climate in which real learning occurs". Climate includes " the overall environment, values, shared beliefs, and personality" of the school. Order, purpose, and coherence are created by rules that are " clear, reasonable, fair, and consistently enforced" and by careful planning. Efficiency and objectivity are evident in classrooms where teachers organize, monitor, and assess progress systematically. Teachers focus on student needs to guide their lessons. Optimism and high expectations for performance are evident. Organizational health is maintained by strong leadership, instructional thrust, growth orientation, a sense of accountability, and commitment to community relations. (p. 23-34)

Roueche and Baker (1986) state "agreement is widespread - the principal of a school is the key to its success". (p. 35) They believe that principals must adapt their leadership behaviors to the situation. Authoritarian versus democratic or manager of resources versus instructional leader are not mutually exclusive. Each type of leader behavior is appropriate to certain situations.

Roueche and Baker(1986) use attributes developed by Peters and Waterman (1982) to classify the characteristics of effective principals as illustrated in the following chart.

Relating Principles of Leadership to Principal Characteristics:

(Roueche and Baker, 1986)

Peters and Waterman Principles :	Roueche and Baker Principal Characteristics
A bias for action Simultaneous loose-tight properties Autonomy and entrepreneurship	Flexibility in autonomy
Cohesiveness within the organization Hands-on, value driven	Commitment to school mission
Productivity through people Problem solving through collaboration	Recognition of staff
Simple form, lean staff Close to the customer Stick to the knitting	Effective delegation Focus on teaching and learning

In conclusion, the role of the principal has been identified as essential in creating and maintaining effective schools. The strong

leadership that is needed to establish the vision, create the climate, and guide the accomplishment of school objectives must be provided if the school experience is to be effective.

Principals need a variety of skills in order to be effective school leaders. How are these skills developed? Education and experience are the two recognized methods of learning skills. According to Pharyis and Zakaria (1979) principals have indicated that on-the-job experiences were most beneficial in leadership skill development. No attempt was made in that survey to determine what particular experiences were important.

Background Experiences of Successful Leaders

Gabarro (1987) conducted a study of the process used by leaders in taking charge of their organizations. It covers "how managers learn about their new assignments, act on that learning, and do the organizational and interpersonal work necessary to take charge of their organizations". (p. 2) Gabarro's research also examined the background and situational factors that influence the success or failure of managers in the process of taking charge.

Gabarro states:

All other things being equal, prior experience, especially during the Taking-Hold stage, was the single most powerful factor associated with what the new manager focused on: the changes he made and the competence of his early actions. (p. 39)

New managers tend to take action, Gabarro says, in areas in which they have had the greatest "prior functional expertise". (p. 41) If principals are expected to be instructional leaders, Gabarro's research indicates that prior instructional experience is an asset. This finding does not support Bennett's idea (Batsis, 1987) that educational leaders should come from a variety of management backgrounds.

In looking at the success or failure of managers in the taking charge phase, Gabarro states "the importance of prior experience is also supported". (p. 50) He indicates that a manager's prior experience and skill base must not be ignored in succession planning. Gabarro also studied transferability of skills across industries and found, "industry-specific experience is an important variable and...the transferability of certain organizational and institutional skills across industry settings is low". (p. 163)

In looking at stages of learning and action Gabarro states:

One can safely postulate that managers learn from the process of taking on a new assignment, act on that

learning, and receive feedback from their actions, which further enhances their learning. The enhanced learning in turn becomes the basis for further, but more informed action. (p. 173)

Hall (1986) and associates examined the rapidly changing field of career development from the three domains of theory, research, and innovative practice. In examining the effect that cumulative work experience has on career development, work experience was found to make a significantly greater contribution to career development than education and training.

Morrison and Hock identify a six step process for career pattern design which they believe would be most effective in developing managers: (Hall, 1986, p. 267)

1. identifying career goals in the form of target positions
2. analyzing those key positions for tasks, roles, and associated personal characteristics
3. identifying positions that potentially could provide the development required to perform effectively in target positions
4. establishing a hierarchy of the positions spotlighted in step 3
5. analyzing the content and context of the positions from step 3
6. designing a sequence of positions as a career pattern that focuses on development and provides effective alternative choices at each level

Morrison and Hock believe this six step process would be most effective for the organization and for the individual. They also designed an "Experienced-Based Career Development Model" that illustrates the importance of job sequencing in providing experience for key management positions. Their important contribution to this research is that work experiences are very important in developing leadership and management effectiveness. (Hall, 1986, p. 236-239)

Kotter (1982), in a study of fifteen general managers in nine different corporations in the United States, found that background experiences were important in developing personal characteristics that influenced job effectiveness. Three areas of background experiences were found to be influential: childhood family environment, educational experiences, and early career experiences. (p. 44-45)

Common characteristics in the area of childhood family environment included: (p. 45)

- Upwardly mobile parents
- Both original parents at home while growing up
- Close relationship with one or both parents
- At least one parent with two- or four-year college education
- Fathers associated with business and/or working as managers in non-business setting
- Brothers and sisters (no only children)

Common educational experiences were: (p. 45)

- An undergraduate or graduate (master's) education
- Business-related degrees
- Student leaders in high school, college, or both

Common early career experiences included: (p. 45)

- Joined (or started) a firm (or industry) that closely fit personal interests and values
- Spent the vast majority of career time in that one industry
- Spent the vast majority of career time with current employer
- Rose through one function (or two at the most)
- Rapidly promoted
- Promoted into first general-management job early in career (between the ages of thirty-four and forty)

Kotter also describes what he found to be a "success syndrome"

among these general managers. This was a pattern: (p. 47)

- where they did well in an early assignment;
- that lead to a promotion, or a somewhat more challenging assignment;
- that reinforced (or even increased) their self esteem and motivation and led to an increase in their formal or informal power and an increase in the opportunities available to develop more power. The more challenging jobs also stretched them and helped build their skills;
- that in turn led to an increase in their relevant relationships (including one or more with a mentor in top management), an increase in their relevant knowledge, and an increase in their interpersonal

- and intellectual skills;
- that helped them once again to perform well in their jobs;
- that led to another promotion or a more challenging assignment;
- and that repeated itself, again and again.

The general managers studied by Kotter (1982) changed positions about every 2.7 years and each change brought more responsibility. Most were upwardly mobile socio-economically in that they achieved greater position and income than their fathers.

Based on his findings, Kotter (1982) suggests that general manager's leadership skills were a result of being born into a condition favorable to the development of these skills plus a long series of events that enabled them to learn the skills. Therefore; he says, leaders are both "born" and "made". (p. 47-58)

In research that focused on the differences between management and leadership, Kotter (1990) found that career experiences can be beneficial or harmful to the development of true leadership. Harmful experiences include a long series of narrow and tactical jobs in a vertical career movement characterized by rapid promotions with measurement and rewards based on short term results only. Helpful career experiences include challenging assignments early in a career, having visible

leadership role models who are very good or very bad, and having various types of assignments which broaden experience to give a breath of knowledge about the organization and the people in the organization.

McCall, Lombardo, and Morrison (1988) agree that leadership is a result of factors that are genetic (or learned so early as to be unchangeable) as well as learned. Even though heredity, early environment, and education make a difference in the development of leadership skills, these researchers indicate that the important experiences are those that happen on the job. Their research examined these important work experiences and the effect they have on leadership skill development and promotion.

McCall, et al (1988) indicated that ten to twenty years of on-the-job experience are normal in the development of general managers in the business world. Their thesis is that raw talent is important, but leadership development also depends on "the experiences one has and what one does with them". (p. 5)

In The Lessons of Experience, McCall, Lombardo, and Morrison: (p. 5)

describe some of the experiences that senior executives believe changed them as managers and the lessons they took from them...suggest ways that the developmental potential of a work experience might be assessed,

examine the different learning demands that experience can make, suggest some ways in which managers might make more of the experience they have, and finally give suggestions for organizations to make better use of experience as a developmental tool. (p. 5)

These lessons of experience were learned in four major ways: from job assignments, from dealing with other people, from dealing with hardships, and from formal training. (McCauley, 1986, p. 3)

Five themes were identified in these lessons of experience, also called "fundamental executive skills and ways of thinking," which included the following: (McCall, et al, 1988, p. 7)

Setting and Implementing Agendas

- Technical/professional skills
- All about the business one is in
- Strategic thinking
- Shouldering full responsibility
- Building and using structure and control systems
- Innovative problem-solving methods

Handling Relationships

- Handling political situations
- Getting people to implement solutions
- What executives are like
- How to work with executives
- Strategies for negotiation
- Dealing with people over whom you have no authority
- Understanding other people's perspectives
- Dealing with conflict
- Directing and motivating subordinates
- Developing other people
- Confronting subordinate performance problems

-Managing former bosses and peers

Basic Values

- You can't manage everything all alone**
- Sensitivity to the human side of management**
- Basic management values**

Executive temperament

- Being tough when necessary**
- Self-confidence**
- Coping with situations beyond your control**
- Persevering through adversity**
- Coping with ambiguous situations**
- Use (and abuse) of power**

Personal Awareness

- The balance between work and personal life**
- Knowing what really excites you about work**
- Personal limits and blind spots**
- Taking charge of your career**
- Recognizing and seizing opportunities**

Margerison and Kakabadse (1984) conducted a study of 711 chief executive officers in the United States. Their data revealed two major findings. One is that personal and interpersonal factors are important in selecting top executives. The second is the "need to give young executives practical leadership experience early and to combine these experiences with tasks in which they can exercise their personal drive, determination, and ability." (p.10-11)

Margerison and Kakabadse's findings included several key

influences that reflect personal characteristics, and four that reflect experiences. These four were: width of experience, job challenge, early overall responsibility for important tasks, and leadership experience early in their careers. (McCauley, 1986)

McCall and Lombardo, (1983) in a study of how executives get derailed, found several "fatal flaws" which were reasons for derailment. These flaws included: performance problems, insensitivity to others, arrogance, betrayal of trust, over managing, overly ambitious, inadequate staffing, inability to think strategically, unable to adapt to a boss with a different style, and overdependence on a mentor. Similarities in successful executives and derailers were identified. Both groups were: intelligent, identified early, had outstanding track records, had few flaws, were ambitious, and made sacrifices in order to succeed. The differences were that those who succeeded had more diversity in their background, maintained composure under stress, handled mistakes with poise and grace, focused on problems and solved them, and got along with all kinds of people. These leadership skills were learned from experiences that occurred on the job. (p.6- 9)

Career experiences have been found to be important in developing the leadership skills that are essential in becoming a successful leader

in business. Since leaders in education use similar skills, career experiences should be important for preparing educational leaders as well.

Summary of Review of Literature

In examining the effective schools literature it was found that characteristics of effective schools have been identified. The five most commonly found characteristics of effective schools are strong leadership, orderly climate, expectation of success, emphasis on pupil skill acquisition, and frequent monitoring of pupil progress. One of the most consistently found characteristics of an effective school is the leadership of the school principal.

In order to have an effective school, it is necessary to have an effective school leader. School leaders must develop the leadership skills needed to become effective school leaders. Principals have indicated that on-the-job experience is the best method of acquiring these skills. However, no research has identified the particular experiences that are important.

Research on successful leaders in business has indicated the importance of career experiences in developing their leadership skills.

No research studies were found that identify specific career experiences that are important in developing leadership skills for leaders in education. Surveys have established educational attainment and career positions held by educational leaders, but not the "key events" from which the lessons of leadership were learned. The purpose of this research was to fill this gap in the literature; to discover and examine the important career experiences of school principals, the key events that helped develop leadership skills.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was conducted using qualitative methods derived from interpretive inquiry and case study methodology. Intensive interviewing techniques were used to identify key events in the careers of successful school principals. These key events are those which principals identify as helping them develop the leadership skills that made them successful.

Interpretive inquiry techniques allowed access to the real world of the school principal as perceived by the principal. Content analysis was used to identify themes and patterns in the responses of the subjects. Comparative analysis of the interviews was used to identify the common themes in the career experiences of these school principals.

Three pilot studies were completed prior to this research that allowed this researcher an opportunity to develop interview skills, narrow the focus of the interview, and develop a tentative list of categories of experiences that help develop leadership skills. These pilot studies will be described in more detail later.

Sample

The population from which this sample was selected includes principals in North Carolina who have served more than one year as a principal. The sample for this project consisted of eight principals selected as regional winners in the Wachovia Principal of the Year Project in 1990.

The Wachovia Principal of the Year project is jointly sponsored by Wachovia Bank and Trust Company and the Department of Public Instruction. The project is designed to recognize exceptional principals in North Carolina's public schools. Each local education agency selects one principal to represent the school system in the regional competition.

Each local representative compiles a portfolio of information about his/her career. The portfolio includes information about educational attainments, leadership activities and honors, books or articles published, special educational projects completed, experience in teaching and administration, administrative experiences outside education, activities and interests, leadership style, accomplishments on the job, and involvement in community service organizations.

In addition to this information provided by the representative, others who are familiar with his/her career and accomplishments are asked to submit letters of endorsement. These letters are to include information

about the candidate's character, work habits, adaptability, intellectual ability, quality of service, fitness for leadership, and any special qualities they possess.

The candidate also describes how they are involved in the community and how the community is involved in their school. They describe their philosophy and practice including how they became interested in administration. They must describe a particular administrative problem they have recently encountered, what they did and what they would do differently if the problem were encountered again. Finally, the candidate describes how he/she was able to improve the achievement of students of varied backgrounds and capabilities in their school.

Each of the local school system representatives sends this portfolio to the regional competition. A regional committee studies the portfolios and selects the best representative from the region to compete in the state competition. A state level committee studies the portfolios of these eight winners to select three finalists. These three finalists are screened by an on-site visitation team which selects the state winner.

One reason for choosing the Wachovia Principal of the Year Program as the method of identifying exceptionally effective principals

is the composition of the selection committees. Three committees are involved in the total selection process; the regional selection committee, the state selection committee, and the on-site visitation committee.

The regional committee is composed of one principal, one classroom teacher, one college or university professor (preferably in educational administration or supervision), one lay person, one representative of Wachovia Bank and Trust Company, and the regional center director or his/her designee. The regional center representative is a non-voting member and serves as coordinator of the committee.

The state selection committee and the on-site visitation committee are composed of a similar group consisting of a principal, a classroom teacher, a college or university professor, a lay person, and a representative of Wachovia. In addition the state committee and the on-site visitation team also have one Department of Public Instruction staff member.

This type of broad representation of the members of the educational community on the selection committee indicates an attempt to obtain as many opinions and points of view as possible involved in the selection process. This variety of educators represented on the selection committees makes for a stronger selection process and provides assurance that

these principals are good school leaders.

Instrument

The instrument used to collect data was an open-ended interview format with five sections of planned questions to generate data. This instrument is an adaptation of one used by McCall, Lombardo, and Morrison (1988) in a study of successful leaders in business. The first section of the interview was used with all interviewees. Questions from the other sections were selectively used to "fill in the gaps" in the information given in response to the first section. This will be further explained in the following section about the pilot projects. The interview format and a list of planned questions is as follows:

Section 1

First of all, please give a brief summary of your career. Tell about the different places you have worked and the different positions you have held.

When you think about your career in education, certain events or episodes probably stand out in your mind-things that led to a lasting change in your approach. Please identify as least three "key events" in

your career: things that made a difference in the way you manage now.

When I meet with you, I'll ask you about each event:

- 1. What happened?**
- 2. What did you learn from it (for better or worse)?**

Section 2 Key Events

Having talked about key events that really stood out for you, we'll now address some things that may or may not have had a lasting effect on you. As you look over the following questions, some are no doubt more meaningful to you than others. Please be prepared to go into some depth on the important ones, and comment briefly on the others.

A. Rites of Passage

- 1. What was your first job in education? Was there anything special about it? About your first boss?**
- 2. What was your first "quantum leap" - movement to a job with significantly more responsibility/ challenge/ pressure than prior jobs?**
- 3. What was your first exposure to high-level school administrators? Have there been others that stand out for you?**
- 4. What was your "organizational first date" - a time when you were all**

alone and had to take complete responsibility for something you'd never done before?

5. What was the biggest challenge you ever faced?

6. What was your most frightening first - something you did for the first time that really had you worried?

7. What event (or events) made you realize you were going to be successful as a principal? In this school?

B. Rising from the Ashes

1. What was your darkest hour?

2. What was a significant near miss - a time when you tried something and failed?

3. Describe a time when you pushed things to the brink - that is, a time when you stretched the system by coming perilously close to violating rules, norms, or authority?

4. What was your most significant act of procrastination? By this I mean a time when you didn't face up to a situation that got steadily worse, resulting in a mess.

5. Do you recall a time when you had the rug pulled out from under you - a situation when you had everything ready to go and the door was slammed

shut?

6. Were you ever worn out or fed up, but managed to restart?

7. Did you ever learn a great truth that turned out to be a falsehood? That is, was there ever a case where you thought you'd learned something significant but later found out it wasn't so?

8. Was there a situation you took seriously at the time but were able to laugh about months (or years) later?

C. The Role of Other People

1. Please describe the person who taught you the most during your career.

What did that person do that made him or her so special?

2. Most of us have worked for a person we simply couldn't tolerate for one reason or another. What did you learn from such an experience?

3. What was your most significant interpersonal conflict - a situation in which dealing with another person (or persons) was very difficult for you?

Section 3 General Questions

1. Overall, how have you changed, plus or minus, over your career? If you ran into someone who knew you well years ago, what differences would he or she notice?

2. Are there times when you've been more open to learning than others?

More closed?

3. What part have events in your personal life played in your growth as a principal?

4. What about being a principal has been fun for you? What are some examples of situations or events you particularly enjoyed? That were the most fun?

5. What advice would you give to a younger educator about managing his or her career? What do you need to do for yourself? How much would you let others do for you?

6. What is the most significant thing you've learned - the one thing you'd pass on to someone else if you could?

7. What's next in your career? Are you facing a situation now from which you expect to learn something new?

Pilot Projects

Three pilot projects were conducted using the interview format, questions, and procedures. A brief description of the three projects follows.

In the first project, this interview format was used as part of a larger case study. That case involved studying the leadership of one high school

principal. The complete interview format and questions were used to gain information about the principal's career and the development of his leadership skills. Other people who knew this principal during various stages of his career were also interviewed. Observations of this principal on the job were also conducted. Finally, a survey of the teachers at one of the schools where this principal had formerly served as principal was studied to obtain their perceptions of his leadership.

This first project served to help narrow the focus of the dissertation research project. First, the interview with the principal took over five hours. An hour or more was spent in discussion on five separate occasions. Some of the answers became repetitious, so it was determined that the questions were too repetitious. The questions were designed to be repetitious to some extent so that answers to certain questions would verify answers to other questions. However, it was discovered that many principals were not interested in granting permission for an interview that would take five hours. Therefore, the time required for the interview process was decreased. The new interview process is described in the details about the second project.

The second project involved interviews with three school principals. For this project the first part of the interview, where the principal is asked to

give a brief summary of the career and to discuss at least three events they believed to be beneficial in the development of leadership skills, was used as the basis for the information gathering. The remaining questions were selectively used in each situation to elicit information that was not covered in this first part.

For example, if a principal did not mention a mentor as being important in his/her career, the researcher would ask about a mentor. In only one case out of the seven interviews did a principal indicate that a mentor was not important in her career. Others may not have mentioned a mentor at first, but when questioned about it, they realized that there was a mentor who had helped them. In this way the follow-up questions were used to "fill in the gaps" in information given in response to the first part of the interview.

Shortening the interview process in this way allowed the researcher to get individuals to agree to the interview while also allowing the essential research information to be collected. Once the interviews were completed and the tapes were transcribed, and chronological career stories were composed and analyzed, certain patterns became evident in the careers of these principals. These themes and patterns will be presented below.

Another decision involved selecting the best method of presenting the data about the career experiences of these three principals. Several ways of presenting the data were attempted. First, each question that was asked of all the principals, and their responses, was listed. Then, these responses to each question were analyzed for common themes.

This process was not satisfactory because data was left that did not fit together. There was also information that was given in response to different questions that did fit together.

The decision was made to summarize each person's interview to give a chronological story of their careers, their experiences, and the things they learned from those experiences. That process resulted in highlighting each principal's career story. Much analysis and synthesis went into the building of these career biographical stories from the data gathered from the interviews.

Comparative analysis was used to find common themes and patterns. Several themes were immediately obvious in the stories of these principals. These themes, and quotes from the principals pertaining to these themes, were listed. There were too many entire quotes included in this section which had already been quoted directly in the "stories" section. So the quotes in this section were cut down to the essential parts

needed to illustrate the point. Comparative content analysis allowed the emergence of other themes.

A third project was conducted using essentially the same procedure as the second project. Again, three principals were interviewed. The first section of the interview format was used with each principal. Other questions were asked to "fill in the gaps" in the information given in response to the first section.

For the analysis and presentation of data on this third pilot project, the same procedures were followed that were used on the second project. The tapes were transcribed. A chronological career story for each principal was developed. Texts of each principal's career story were comparatively analyzed to find similarities and differences.

During the interviews each principal identified learning experiences in their careers that helped develop leadership skills, experiences that helped prepare them to become successful school principals. However, the question asking them to talk about at least three key events in their careers resulted in a variety of responses. The follow-up questions asked in each situation resulted in more critical information about key learning experiences, or events, in their careers. Therefore, it was essential to use follow up questions. The skill at

interviewing that was gained in doing these three pilot projects left this researcher feeling comfortable that the appropriate follow up questions could be selected to unveil essential information.

As a result of these three pilot projects and the comparative analysis that revealed the common themes and patterns, certain categories of experiences emerge as important to the development of leadership skills in the careers of these school principals. These categories will be described next.

Common Themes

Several common themes were revealed when analyzing the career stories of these principals interviewed during the three pilot projects.

1. These principals have benefited from a variety of career experiences. They have worked at several different jobs or in several different locations in the same school system or in several different school systems. This variety of experience served to "broaden" their experience and give them a better understanding of the "big picture" of the school system as a whole.

2. Some of the experiences these principals encountered were difficult to handle at the time. Mistakes were made or things were not

handled in the best possible way. However, to these principals, difficult experiences were not perceived as good or bad, but as opportunities to grow and learn.

3. These educators were able to demonstrate fairly early in their careers that they were good classroom teachers. They indicated that, in order to advance, one must focus on the particular job one is responsible for and do a good job.

4. These educators also demonstrated that they were willing and able to take on other duties and responsibilities outside the classroom as well.

5. In order to advance into positions of leadership, these educators realized the importance of being visible and knowing people in all levels of administration in the school system. They found ways to make themselves visible to others who could help them gain experience and career advancement.

6. These principals were able to benefit from their associations with other educators, learning from each and distilling the best from all into their own unique leadership style.

7. Doing a good job in the area of assignment, as stated above, is important. However, career advancement itself is important in the

development of leadership skills. One can perform well and take on extra duties and responsibilities, but one must move into positions of leadership in order to fully develop those skills that make one a successful leader.

These categories of common events in the careers of these school principals interviewed for the three pilot projects served as a beginning point for the analysis of the interviews completed for the dissertation. Other categories emerged from analysis of the new data obtained in the interviews with the 1990 Wachovia Principal of the Year regional winners. These will be described in the results section.

Procedure

Each of the eight regional winners of the Wachovia Principal of the Year project were contacted to obtain their consent to the interview. A copy of the interview questions was mailed to them and a time arranged for the interview.

Interview format and questions were mailed to the interviewees in advance of the scheduled interview in order to give them time to think about their answers. Both a tape recorder and note taking were utilized for data gathering in order to accurately capture the answers given and the non-verbal interaction. The interviews were conducted informally so the

principals could respond in a relaxed manner.

The first section of the interview format provided the basis for the interviews. Questions from the other sections were selectively used to fill in the gaps in the information provided in response to the first section.

The principals were assured that nothing harmful to them would result from this research. I was not interested in judging their experiences, but only in finding out if principals share certain experiences that are important in the development of leadership skills.

After the interviews were transcribed, a copy was sent to each principal for feedback. Although this analysis of each principal's career experiences was not designed to be judgmental, the author wanted every principal to feel comfortable with what is written about them. In the pilot studies, no principal objected to their name being used in the project write-up. This held true for the Wachovia winners also. However, only first names were used to identify the principals.

Data Analysis

First the tapes were transcribed. Copies of the tape were mailed to the principal to get his/her reaction. The principal's reaction was used to determine if anything should be added or deleted from the original. It was

essential that each principal would be comfortable with what was printed about his/her career.

The transcriptions of the tapes of the interviews were then analyzed to develop the story of each person's career in chronological order. Content analysis of each story was used to identify the key events in each principal's career.

The interviews were comparatively analyzed to identify common themes and patterns in the experiences of these school principals. The categories identified in the pilot studies guided this analysis. Careful attention was used to avoid attempting to force events into certain categories. The data from the new interviews was carefully analyzed to determine if there were new categories that would emerge from these interviews. New categories did emerge and are described in the results section.

Finally, conclusions about the concept of the importance of career experiences in the development of leadership skills of school principals and the process used to collect and analyze data is presented. Recommendations for further study are suggested.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

Several categories of experiences that are important in the career development of school principals were derived from analysis of these interviews. The common themes in the career stories of these eight successful school principals are:

1. The influence of family and private life was important and played a role in the development of some of these school principals to the extent that they talked about this influence even though it was not a focus directed by the interviewer.

2. These principals have benefited from a variety of career experiences. A variety of experiences plays a role in several ways depending on the types of experiences involved. If one works in several different schools or several different school systems one has the opportunity to be influenced by a wider variety of people with different leadership styles. One acquires opportunities to see that things are done differently in different places and that there is not necessarily one best way to do things. This allows one to develop the flexibility that is

important in school leadership.

3. Some of the experiences that these successful school principals encountered were difficult to handle at the time. Difficult people were encountered in difficult situations that were new and unfamiliar. However, to these principals, difficult experiences were not perceived as good or bad, but as opportunities to grow and learn.

4. These educators were able to demonstrate fairly early in their careers that they were good classroom teachers. From their comments they indicate that, in order to advance, one must focus on the particular job one is responsible for and do a good job. These principals also demonstrated while they were still classroom teachers that they were willing and able to take on other duties and responsibilities outside the classroom as well.

5. Becoming assistant principals was a step that most of these successful school principals saw as valuable. All of these principals began as classroom teachers. Most moved into an assistant principalship or another intermediate leadership position before becoming principals. These positions allowed the development of skills and leadership styles before moving into a principal position.

6. These educators were able to benefit from interactions and

associations with other educators who were significant to them.

Becoming a successful school leader involves learning from other people and distilling the best ideas and techniques from each of those people into one's own unique leadership style.

7. The process of working on the M.A., Ed.S. and doctoral degrees in educational administration was important to several of these principals. Learning opportunities became available by participating in these activities that included direct classroom experiences and internships that put the learner in contact with other successful leaders from whom they learned. Other outside learning experiences were also cited as being important to the leadership development of several of these principals.

8. Obtaining the opportunity to move into that first job as a principal is critical to the full development of school leadership abilities. Doing a good job in the area of assignment is important. However, career advancement itself is important in the development of leadership skills. One can perform well and take on extra responsibilities, but one must move into positions of leadership in order to fully develop those skills that make one a successful leader. Once an educator moves into the role of principal certain experiences are encountered that require new skills

to be developed. Success with those situations can indicate that one will be successful in the role of school principal.

9. Because of their experiences these principals believe that they have significant learnings that they would like to pass on to others. They have advice for younger educators who are interested in becoming school administrators.

10. These educators talk about plans for the future of their careers. Planning for the future seems to be something these successful principals have done throughout their careers and is one of the important qualities that has helped them become successful.

Now we will look at what these principals said during the interviews that contributes to each of these themes.

Family Influence:

The influence of family was so important in the lives of some of these principals that they talked about this even though that was not a focus of the interview questions. In interview situations, people will talk about what is important to them irregardless of the questions asked by the interviewer. Since this was obviously a significant factor in the leadership development of several principals who were interviewed, that

significance is recognized in this category.

Deborah's father was her high school principal. This at times caused problems for her in her relationships with other students. She went to college with intentions of pursuing a different career, but ended up with a degree in education. She says that her father's influence made her realize that she did not want to spend her entire career in the classroom, but wanted to move into administration.

Linda's parents were not involved in education as a profession, but influenced her in other ways. She says, "I think the role of my family was important), ...my father believed that whatever you did, you did the best you could do...to the best of your ability. He believed in hard work...He believed in honesty, being above board, giving more than a days work, being a good neighbor. He believed in all the qualities we associate with the old school...I was always an individual and did not want to be like everybody else...That was the philosophy in my family... He always told us to do what we thought was right. He always brought us up to believe that you are important and you be what you want to be because you want to do it, not because of somebody else."

Adelaide learned a great deal from her family and neighbors growing up in the mountains. Her parents taught her to work hard and to

be brave when things were tough. Adelaide says, "Basically I learned from my parents many things...I learned you had to work for what you got. I learned you got more by being pleasant and kind than being evil and mean. I learned that if I did things that were against rules and laws, no matter who made those rules and laws, the results were not quite as good as they were if I followed the rules and laws. ...I learned that to get what I wanted I had to be cunning, knowledgeable, persistent, aware, conniving, manipulative, and feeling and caring. I had to put all these things together to get what I wanted...Another thing that was significant was my parents never once gave me the impression that there was an alternative to a college education. From the time that I could even recall anything, it was not even discussed. It was assumed that I would go to college and have a career."

Andrew grew up in a family with a strong tradition of service in the field of education. His father was a state superintendent of public instruction for many years. He has other relatives who are now and have been prominent people in the field of education. Andy says, "I knew I was supposed to (go into education) every since I can remember...The route would have been the principalship...We discussed the range of possibilities. I didn't fight it or challenge it, other than the principalship.

The move to become a male teacher in early childhood education was something he suggested...The suggestion to move into early childhood education, at that time, in this country, it was a good move."

John F.'s family life and his father in particular had a strong influence on him. John says, "I have had a strong family background also. My father was a farmer. He was sort of a leader. The other farmers sort of looked to him to determine when to plant crops. He was the P.T.A. president. He was a Baptist preacher. It was understood in our family that we were going to school...We didn't ask any questions about that. It was also understood that we had to work, we didn't ask any questions about that. We knew we had to go to church, we didn't ask any questions about that. We said prayers at mealtime, we didn't ask questions about that. It was understood in our home. My parents knew, even though they were not formally educated, they saw the need for education."

Mark was born and raised in Ohio. His father was a school principal and Mark feels that had a profound effect on his own career choice. He says, "My father was a career junior high principal. He served as an assistant principal and principal of a junior high school for some twenty two years while I was growing up. He was probably the biggest influence on me. I actually attended the school where he was principal. I

had a chance to see how the school ran and how he interacted with the staff...As I became older, actual discussions began about how he handled conflicts or situations that arose in his school. So I got a feel for school administration right at home."

The Role of Personal Life in Career Development

Personal life is another area of significance in the careers of several of these principals. Especially in cases where they have experienced stressful situations in their personal lives, such as deaths of loved ones or divorces, personal life events were seen as being significant in their overall development as people and as school leaders.

Deborah's personal life has influenced her career in that it taught her about, "Survival, I guess, there I was divorced, with a child, and I needed to survive. Getting out and competing for the positions. I always knew I could do it, just getting someone to believe in me, to give me the opportunity and let me show them I could do it. It is a little different with females. I believe that we have to work twice as hard to get the job and then twice as hard to prove we can do it."

Linda says, "I think my skills were developed a long time ago. When I was growing up at an early age I had a speech defect. This was in

the third grade, and I was so shy that they couldn't get me to talk. I was promoted to fourth grade on a trial basis, because they couldn't get me to talk... My father and mother took me to a speech therapist in Charlotte every day during the summer after third grade. I would not talk at all. When I started school I remember hiding in the bushes because the other children made fun of me...By the time I got to the third grade I had withdrawn into a shell. If I could write it on paper I would do it, but when we had reading circles, they could not make me read. Their assumption was that they could not promote me to the fourth grade because I would not read. I would not communicate with the teachers or the other kids either ...So my parents took me to a therapist in Charlotte and it was a matter of controlling my tongue. It was a thing that could be corrected. When school started back I was promoted on probation into the fourth grade to see if I had improved...I had a teacher in fourth grade who was real interested and she realized my worth and had me start doing little things in front of the class. That was a real turning point in my life, I could have gone either way...In high school I was president of the student body and all the classes. So I think my leadership skills developed very early. I was a national 4-H winner two years in a row, at age fifteen and sixteen. At eighteen I was selected outstanding girl youth in the nation by

the president. So I think the leadership skills I have were developed very early and I think it comes a lot from my parents."

Concerning how things in her private life have influenced her career, Adelaide says, "I have had to deal with adversity and overcome it. I have felt renewed by it. I have convinced myself by doing it that I can handle it. Some things in the principalship have been difficult, but not as difficult as things I had already been through. That has helped me grow as a person and as a principal. I have to be a caring person as a principal and to be a forgiving person and help people grow."

Events in his personal life have influenced Mark's career. He says, "personal life events have played a part in my growth as a principal...Another event that had a major impact on my growth as a principal was the death of a child. I had a two year old son who passed away in 1985. That had a major impact on me as an administrator. I decided that I was going to do everything I could to help the children in our community or in our building...Having one of my own taken away, I do have another child now who will be five next year and will start school, but having one taken away makes you appreciate the gift that you have when you have a youngster in your house. So that is an event that has definitely shaped me as a principal."

A Variety of Experiences

Several principals talked about the variety of experiences they have had both in their careers and in outside pursuits. Having a variety of job experiences may be beneficial in several ways. First of all it gives an educator more opportunity to look at the school system as a whole rather than focusing on only one classroom situation in one school setting. Second, it gives the educator the opportunity to meet other educators on different levels who may be influential in their career and leadership development. Third, having a variety of experiences serves to broaden an educator's experience, giving them the opportunity to learn more skills and prepare them for leadership roles. Once you have done something it is usually easier to do it in the future. As tasks are successfully accomplished, one builds confidence to tackle new challenges. Following are some comments from several of these successful school principals that illustrate the importance of a variety of experiences.

Deborah says, "I taught kindergarten, first, second, and third grades. I taught all grades I was certified for. I told my principal that I did not want to be a first grade teacher for thirty years. I wanted him to move me around. I didn't stay in the same grade for more than two or three years, and I taught several combinations. I am thankful for that, because

I can have a certificate that says I am certified for grades K-3, but until I have had the actual experience, I am not qualified. You need to have those experiences."

Linda says, "Being in a small county and having the opportunity to do a lot of different things, a variety of things, I think has helped with leadership skills. I take on the tough jobs. I like the jobs that nobody else wants to do. I can take that job and make something out of it...I think that (having a variety of experiences) has been good for me too."

Adelaide worked in several different school systems during her career. Early on these changes were brought about mainly because her husband changed jobs and they had to relocate. Later moves were because of career changes or life style changes that Adelaide sought for herself. This allowed Adelaide to experience early in her career several different schools in several different school systems, each with different leaders with different leadership styles. One thing that resulted from all these changes is that Adelaide is not afraid of change. She is not afraid to leave the security of one situation in order to seek opportunities elsewhere.

Concerning variety, Andy says, "The variety of experiences has been helpful. When I was at UNC Charlotte we visited some schools around the country. There are folks who go through college and right on

through graduate school and get their doctorate and are going to teach teachers and administrators without ever having direct experience. These are bright folks, but I'm not sure they can do as good a job without having those experiences...I always felt you need to get in the trenches a little bit. I have had an opportunity to be in most of the trenches, for the area that I am in leadership of now."

Although John G. has spent his entire educational career in one school system, he has also had a variety of experiences in his career and in outside interests as well. He taught in a junior high and was principal at an elementary and a junior high before moving into his present position as principal of a high school. He says, "I have a few other things, too. I was one of the North Carolina High School athletic officials. I was chairman of the Cumberland County Library Board of Directors when we built the new five and a half million dollar library, after the bond issue failed. I have been an elder in my church for eighteen out of the last twenty years. You know where I've spent the least amount of time, less than I should have? ...at home with my wife and three children."

Being a Good Classroom Teacher

Many people have heard the old adage, "Those who can't do teach,

and those who can't teach become administrators." The principals in this group would not agree with either part of that statement. All of these principals believe they were successful classroom teachers, although two of them think they are more suited to the principalship than the classroom. Several were actually recognized publicly and received awards as outstanding classroom teachers before they decided to become principals. None of these principals indicated that they had any particular problems as classroom teachers and certainly did not consider themselves to be refugees from failure in the classroom.

Linda says, "In 1982 when I was Anson county Teacher of the Year, my principal brought my Teacher of the Year book back to me and told me I had the qualifications to be a principal. That planted the seed in my mind...I never realized that I do a lot of things. When I was nominated for Teacher of the Year and had to do that booklet, I was amazed at all the things I had been doing. I do them, but I had never consciously sat down and looked at all the things that I was doing. So when I became teacher of the year and my principal came back and told me I ought to think about administration, I think that was a key event. It started me thinking about the principalship. It made me realize that I should go on.

Early in her career Deborah decided that she did not want to remain

in the classroom, but was more interested in moving into administration. She decided to get an EdS degree in administration and supervision from ASU. Deborah says, "I wanted to make a difference. I knew I was making a difference in the classroom. I'll be honest, I'm a much better administrator than I was a classroom teacher. I was a good teacher. I was nominated for teacher of the year several times. But, I have learned so much more and have a broader view...When you are a teacher, you say, I wouldn't do that if I was in charge...I wanted the opportunity to see what I would do."

Deborah continues talking about this decision, " My father was a high school principal and he encouraged me...I always knew that I wanted to be in administration, when I first went into teaching, I knew that. I never wanted to be one of those people who retired after thirty years at one thing...I was working on my EdS while I was still in the classroom."

Arlin's experience was unique. He decided in high school that he wanted to become a school principal. Arlin describes it this way, "I think a lot of the basis for my going into school administration came about as a result of the high school principal I had. I really got interested in how schools work when I was in high school. I was very active on the student

council. My senior year I was president of the student council. Through working with the principal and the guidance counselor of the school I really came to understand how a school works and the interrelatedness of the parts and was able to see it as a way to help people. I developed the idea that I wanted to go into school administration at that point. When I went off to college, I realized that in order to be a school administrator there had to be a successful teaching experience, so I majored in education. All the time that I was teaching I was looking at going into school administration. I never had any intention of staying in teaching. Probably I would not have gone into the profession if I knew I would have to remain in the classroom. Although I enjoyed that experience and felt that I was very successful at it, the entire time I knew that I wanted to go into school administration. It was a way to learn and to be promoted into the school principalship. I had to touch all the bases as I went through."

Taking On Extra Responsibilities Outside the Classroom

These principals indicate that taking on extra responsibilities outside of the classroom early in their careers was important to their overall career development. This willingness and ability to take on extra duties and extra work assignments indicated to superiors that these

people had leadership abilities and were capable of becoming good school administrators. Some of them actually worked in administrative capacities and gained that experience before moving out of the classroom. This gave them and their superiors the opportunity to see if they were suited to and liked working in school administration.

While teaching at Central, Linda was concerned about children who could not read. She says, "I started teaching and became very interested in teaching and learning. I asked the older, more experienced teachers and they could not tell me why kids could not read. That summer I went back to UNC- Charlotte and became certified to teach...At my school I was the one who always led everybody into trying something new. Anything that came up I was always the one that set it up and was the leader. I served on every committee in the county.

While working on certification to teach elementary school, Linda decided to go ahead and get certification in reading also. She says, "When I went back to school and learned how to work with children who were having learning problems, I shared that with other teachers. I usually took the problem children, or the combination classes. Anything that would be a challenge was interesting to me. I never did teach the same way two years in a row, I was always trying new things. I

gradually just became the one they looked to for advice."

Adelaide taught in Rockingham County and implemented the kindergarten program there. She designed the program for the whole school system. Adelaide says, "I taught in Rockingham county for one year and implemented the kindergarten program in that system. I was in charge of it for the county, based in one school. I designed the Program and it was successful. Parents whose children were not chosen for the program were protesting to the school board to get their children in the program."

Mark stressed that his principal gave him additional responsibilities working in the office soon after he was employed as a teacher. This gave him some direct experience in administration while he was still a classroom teacher. Both John F. and John G. were involved in coaching and both also served in capacities that let them gain administrative experience while they were still classroom teachers.

The Assistant Principalship as a Learning Opportunity

Several of these principals indicated that the role of assistant principal was very valuable in developing leadership skills. The assistant principal position is also valuable in giving aspiring

principals the opportunity to try out administration before placing them in the position of being the top leader at the school level. Sometimes people discover that it is not something they want to do. Other people, like the principals interviewed here, use this situation to learn skills and develop leadership capacity.

Arlin says, "I thoroughly enjoyed being an assistant principal. I probably feel like I was more successful as an assistant principal than I was as a teacher or that I have been as a principal...I really feel like that was one position where I really grew and changed a great deal...I felt really good about that position. It has been one of the more positive things that has happened in my life, the assistant principalship...I truly believe that anyone who is going to become a principal at a high school should go through being an assistant principal at a high school...I don't think anybody should go into a high school principalship without having been an assistant at a high school...I think I gained the confidence as an assistant principal to assure me that I could be a successful principal...I think the assistant principal job should be a training position so that when a person has done that they are ready to move into a principal job."

As the assistant principal at St. Stephens, Deborah became involved

in many activities for which administrators are responsible. She says, I did ..."a little bit of everything. It was a good training situation with the principal there.

In 1985 Linda became assistant principal at Ansonville Elementary. She says, "They were afraid when I graduated (with administrative certification) that I would leave the county. I was one of the key women in the UNC-Charlotte program and had several offers. We have the Smith Trust Fund here so they created the assistant principal position for me. They knew the principal here was retiring, and they wanted to move me into this job." After one year as assistant principal, she became principal at Ansonville Elementary School.

Adelaide worked as an assistant principal in Rockingham county, then moved back to Wilmington and worked as an assistant principal in the New Hanover county system. She says, "The assistant principal job at Sipes Elementary school lasted one year. The principal I worked for was a good principal, a very caring principal, affectionate, warm, an absolute jewel, a people person with personality plus. He taught me to be a caring principal."

Being an assistant principal is an experience that John G. sees as significant in his career. He says, "The first (important event) is when I

served as an assistant principal. The mentor relationship with the principal at that time was very beneficial and influential in my career. He is an associate superintendent with the school system now. He gave me my basic training and got me off to a good start.

John G's relationship with his principal was a good one from which he gained a lot. He says, "The kinds of things that he directed me to do, or allowed me to do, I think are very important. I wasn't a paper principal, I was allowed to do some things. I learned scheduling. He delegated some jobs for me to do, some supervisory things. He set the example of how things should be done well. He believed in quality performances."

John F. taught science and math and served as athletic director and building principal at W. A. Patillo High School for five years. He says, "We had several buildings on the campus and I was in charge of that one building, the high school building. However, it was not as an official assistant principal, just something I was asked to do along with teaching a full load...I think it helped me develop leadership."

Working on Advanced Degrees in Educational Administration

Working on advanced degrees in administration at a university is a learning experience that several of these principals consider to be

valuable in the development of their leadership. They became involved in classroom activities that resulted in valuable learnings. They also gained direct experience working in an administrative capacity as the result of internship requirements in these degree programs.

While working on masters and EdS degrees at Western Carolina, Arlin had one professor who influenced him a great deal. Arlin says, "the head of the school of administration at Western Carolina, he had been a teacher, principal, superintendent, I took a lot of courses with him when working on my masters and EdS degrees. He had a real keen insight into the educational process in the public schools, and taught from the practical standpoint rather than theoretical. He knew how things actually work. I would have to say that he, more than any other one individual, influenced my...operational style."

Deborah earned the EdS degree in administration and supervision while working with a cluster group in the Charlotte Mecklenburg school system. Deborah feels that she benefitted from this educational experience more than any other. In fact she describes that as being one of the key events that greatly influenced her career and the development of her leadership. She says, "Key events?... probably my EdS experience. I learned so much. I was in a cluster class of thirty five people in

Mecklenburg county ...Some of the people who were in that cluster were practicing administrators, associate superintendents, directors of programs, principals, and I was still a classroom teacher at that time. So I learned a lot by being in class with them, just from being around them ...It was just a wonderful experience...It was the best learning experience I have had. That was the best degree I have earned."

Adelaide began working on her EdS degree in administration at Appalachian with a cluster group in Winston Salem. She feels that this program was one of the best educational programs she has been through. Adelaide says, "I got an E.d.S. degree in administration from Appalachian. Of all the degree work that I have done, that was the best because it was job specific...It was the greatest learning I have ever encountered in an institution."

After one year teaching kindergarten Andy decided to go to graduate school. He says, "I went back to graduate school and got a masters degree in early childhood education. I was a graduate assistant at U.N.C.- Charlotte, when John Chase was there, in the human development and learning department. I had some great experiences with those folks..I taught an introductory course in human development and learning to freshmen. I supervised student teachers out in the field

...I got to see a lot of schools...It was a good experience...I saw how important the school leadership role was...I got to meet a number of principals. I got to see different leadership styles...When you put all those cumulative pieces together it gave me a broad range of leadership experiences. I knew in the back of my mind that the principalship was the key pivotal position. This may have scared me. Maybe that is why I avoided it. That is such a crucial, important role."

Asked what encouraged him to go into administration, John G. says, "When I was still in the classroom, the people I worked with whom I admired were administrators. The former principal here was one of those persons who did an outstanding job. He was an inspiration to me. He was highly respected in the community and at Fayetteville State Teachers College. To be real candid with you, at first I didn't start out to be interested in administration. As I stayed in the school business, I got a knack for it. Then I went to Chapel Hill to work on my M.A...in administration, to see if I could do it. I have always sort of liked a challenge. If I hadn't gotten a job in administration I would have kept right on working."

John G. recently received his doctoral degree and sees this as a significant milestone for his career. He says, "the second (key

event)...would be receiving the doctorate from South Carolina State with the concentration on management. Although some people would argue that it is just terminology there is...a lot of difference between leadership and management. Sometimes the terms are used inter-changeably by some educators, but there is a difference. The management of people and things is important. It is a skill that is important and necessary in this era of accountability."

The principal who hired Mark as a teacher in Currituck County North Carolina was also an Ohio native. He became a friend and mentor. Mark says, "In my case my first job actually set the direction for where my career is currently. My original boss...directed me to enter graduate school shortly after I became a fifth grade teacher, because I had expressed an interest in administration. He believed I had the potential to be a successful school administrator. By January of my first year of teaching, only being out of undergraduate school for three months, he directed me to Old Dominion University to begin my graduate program."

Other Formal Learning Experiences

In addition to degree programs, some of these principals were involved in a variety of other formal programs and activities that resulted

in valuable learnings. These school leaders took advantage of these learning opportunities to build their skills.

Arlin says, "The North Carolina Assessment Center is a good program for aspiring administrators. There are different reasons why superintendents send people through that. Sometimes it is to prove that that person is not cut out for administration. They may have someone on the school board who is pushing for one of their relatives or friends to get a principals job. It is a good evaluation. It is good for anyone interested in administration to go through that."

While she was assistant principal at St. Stephens, Deborah also went through the North Carolina Principal's Assessment Center program. In describing this experience, Deborah says, "My superintendent sent me to it after I moved to Catawba county. I had the assistant principal job. After it was all over, I got a lot of valuable information from it about my strengths and weaknesses. It is really thinking on your feet...I think it is a wonderful screening process for any school system to weed out the weak from the strong administrators. A lot of systems will not even hire principals if they have not been through this...It is tough. It is a learning experience. I went through it during my two years as assistant principal at St. Stephens. They were grooming me

so to speak...Afterward they spend an hour or two talking to you about the results and they sent the results to your school system. It is situational leadership, which is what school is all about. School leadership is probably about seventy five per cent situational leadership. One thing after another pops up and you have to deal with each thing as it presents itself. No matter how well you plan, things just pop up unexpectedly. I think the program is a good screening process. Anybody who does not do well there would probably not be a good principal."

Adelaide became involved in the early childhood institutes at the State Department of Public Instruction. When the kindergarten program was begun she taught kindergarten and worked as a consultant at the State Department also. Adelaide says, "I met some interesting people and became involved in the kindergarten implementation. At that time that was one of the most inspiring things that had ever happened to me as a professional. I felt it was one of the key events that influenced my interest in education and gave me a jump start...another experience that goes back about three or four years back into my early time was when I taught summer head start program. That was helpful because I got a new slant on some things that were helpful to children...The next year I began to serve as a consultant with the summer institutes for early

childhood. I went to training sessions every summer for about ten years. Those training session with that institute were just one of the greatest things I had ever done as far as helping me to learn about teaching and to make this profession not only something I did for a living, but fun. It gave me outlets for creativity and opportunity to express myself as an individual...I grew in my attitude toward the profession and in my expertise."

Andy was also involved in the early childhood movement. He says, "I did an internship with the Department of Education in the Early Childhood Education Division...I spent nine months with that and got a terrific opportunity to be right in the middle of the movement in the 1970's of the open education, open classroom program and the beginning of the kindergarten program in this state. I was involved with the pilots and then eventually putting in the whole program...We did the summer early childhood institutes for several summers ...It was almost like me being in school, a process of "sitting at the feet" of the others...I was beginning a philosophy for what I thought education should be like."

Concerning training for the principalship, John G. says, "We've got a course here called The Aspiring Principal. I taught one of those last year. It's an entire package of things. There are some things you have to

know. For example, instructional leadership, how to help teachers make that constant body of decisions they have to make in order to apply their knowledge of subject matter and their knowledge of how children learn to developing learning activities for students. People skills and management skills, all these things have to come together to get them ready for the next step. I have been fortunate to be able to work with some people who have a pretty good grip on that and have helped me with it."

Prior to his career in education, John F. served as an officer in the military. This was an important event in the development of John's leadership skills. He says, "My military experience played a major role. I was fortunate to enter the military as an officer. I served in the Korean military conflict. That gave me the kind of impetus I needed...As a military officer I served as an instructor in military tactics, a liaison officer, an executive officer, a commanding officer. I was not in the field. My military career as a leader, along with starting out in education with excellent mentors, set the stage for me."

Mark says, "I went through the educational policy fellowship program, EPFP, sponsored by the North Carolina School Boards Association...It is a very effective program where educators...from across the state get together in a group discussion setting eighteen or

twenty times a year...It was a very positive experience for me. Two times during the year you get a chance to interact with other educators from across the nation...It was very positive. Lots of ideas were exchanged.... You have to remain open to learning in order to be a successful educator in the twenty first century."

Learning from Other Educators

Learning from other people seems to be a common theme for several principals. Some of these situations involved true mentoring relationships and others were more casual. These principals took advantage of these opportunities to learn things that would help them become more successful.

Arlin comments, "my high school principal was very instrumental. His philosophy of education back then in the sixties and seventies was probably more in tune with mine. He was a real disciplinarian, very strong handed kind of person, not very diplomatic in certain situations, but he was very committed and dedicated to what he did. He had a lot of compassion for people and did a lot of things that people probably did not see as his role. He made sure that students stayed in school. Back then nobody questioned it a lot if a student dropped out of high school. He always made some contact with that person and talked

to them and tried to get them to come back. Even at that age I saw in him a lot of qualities that I admired. He was a well respected member of the community...there was an umbrella of fairness that he operated under. It didn't really matter where someone was from or their social standing in the community, that did not affect how he dealt with them...He really made no differences in the fact of who somebody was. He treated every individual as someone who could be successful in life. I think that was a real strong point of his. I think I have tried to adopt that in dealing with people...I think a sense of fairness and consistency in the way you operate has to be there...I hope I have used that part of his operational style."

A person who has greatly influenced Deborah is, "The superintendent who hired me. I highly respect him. He was a visionary. He pushed you to be all that you could be. He gave you the opportunity to show what you could do...He was excellent."

Asked about people who have been important in her career, Linda says, "My father is number one. The second person who has had a positive influence on me was my school principal who suggested administration to me. Another was an associate superintendent and our present superintendent. Those people have been very supportive. If I needed

someone to talk to I could talk to them and they would be very honest. They have always been here to lend support in the community. They are people I admire and have a great deal of respect for."

The principal Linda worked for as a teacher was influential even though they have different styles. She says, "He is as opposite from me as night and day...He was very traditional and organized...He was very caring about children. He trusted me to try new things. He liked to see people go the extra mile for children. He was very honest and above board. He did not play favorites. He was very supportive."

Adelaide worked as a curriculum specialist in a K-7 school in Duplin county. This was a real learning experience for her because, Adelaide says, "I worked for a very good principal...Other than my father he had an influence on my career. He was very innovative and he designed my position to diffuse his school with good practice."

Adelaide was also an assistant principal in Rockingham county. She says, "The principal in Rockingham taught me how to do things in the most efficient way...she taught me to stand on my own two feet and not ask too many questions. She would not tell me every move to make, she trusted me. If I did something that was incorrect, it was all right as long as I was honest about it."

Two people have been big influences on Andy's career. He says, "My father. Then Judy, my wife. My father's role model as a risk taker and his support in what I wanted to do were important...The risk taking that he has done over the years has gotten him in trouble, but it has paid off too. He stressed the role of the leadership of the principal, and I resisted that. But now I am glad I have moved into that role...Judy and I complimented each other. She is very organized and detail oriented and one of the best at implementing, and one of the best teachers I have known."

John G. was influenced by the principals he worked for. He says, they were "inspirations to me...role models...All three of these guys had unique personalities. They were all different in a way, but each brought something into the work place that I could learn from. One was terrific in dealing with people."

Another significant thing in his career John G. says, is "my association with the new superintendent... and his feel for instruction. This is his third year here. His leadership has had an impact on me because I have gotten a different vision of the instructional focus of helping teachers to do a better job in the classroom."

John F. talks about his first experience in education. "I was very

fortunate to start my career as a classroom teacher under a very strong principal...Apparently he saw that I possibly had potential, and he sort of nurtured those skills for me during my first and second year there. As a matter of fact when he would go to meetings or speaking engagements , he would take me with him. He gave me the opportunity to be all that I could be."

An earlier mentoring situation was also important to John F. These two mentoring situations together seem to John F. to be very important in setting the tone for his career.He says, "I could also say that at my home where I grew up, I had a very good friend who was a high school principal. He thought I had leadership potential and he nurtured me...He was my next door neighbor...back in those days principals did a lot of speaking engagements, and he would take me along with him."

Mark says, "other than the influence of my father which I have had since well before my educational career started, the person who taught me the most during my career would have to be my initial boss. His traits were very effective for him. I saw how he did things and actually copied a Lot of his...methods when I became an elementary principal. One thing that he did that made him very special was encourage me to get into grad school very quickly. He actually rewarded me after I went to grad school.

He made me the principal designate when he was out of the building. I was in the building a grand total of four months and when the principal left I was taking control of the front office. That was a very positive ... responsibility to be given so early in my educational career...As I worked for him during those three years, he continued to extend my time. He worked out my schedule so...I was freed up from monitoring my students and could work in the office gaining experience for my career. This was great for me. During this time I learned how to set up effective discipline programs for a building, how to develop appropriate communication with parents and community leaders, how to interact with several different types of people over the telephone. During the summer break, I did some volunteer work and learned how to schedule and work with the budget and other things that principals do in the summer when the teachers and students are not there. A lot of experiences were given to me during the first three years of my teaching career and that gave me a lot of background for my administrative career."

Becoming a Principal

The opportunity to actually move into the role of school principal is vitally important to the development of full leadership capacity. All of the

other learning opportunities previously described provide the opportunity to develop leadership skills. One cannot become a successful school principal without the opportunity to move into that position.

Arlin says, "The principalship is different. No matter what training or experience you have had, I don't think you are ever really prepared for that job, until you actually get into it and start working. You never can realize the responsibilities and all the things that can go wrong, And all the preparation you need to make on a daily basis until you are in that position...Some of the things I guess you can prepare for, but what makes it interesting is there are many things you simply cannot prepare for. There is something new every day that you did not foresee and are not prepared for. That makes it interesting. You just have to deal with things when they come up."

Concerning preparation for the principalship, Deborah says, "Believe me it does not matter how long you are an assistant principal. When you walk through that door as principal and you are in charge, the buck stops here, it is different. I had a real good experience at St. Stephens as assistant principal. I did everything...But there is no way you can prepare for being in charge. You have to do it. There is no comparison. There is nothing you can do to prepare for that. Nothing."

Deborah says that the biggest difference is, "Everything stops here. You are the initiator...You have to handle the flack from the parents, students and teachers. Everybody is looking to you for the solutions whether you have one or not. It is just so much more responsibility ...Everything... from the new sign in front of the school, to new flags, to the cafeteria did not get the lettuce on time, everything comes to you. It does not matter who comes through the front door, they want to see the principal...the person in charge. It is just overwhelming sometimes."

After one year as assistant principal, Linda became the principal at Ansonville Elementary School. She has been principal there for five years. Linda stresses having a positive attitude as being a big benefit. "Taking the tougher jobs, having a positive attitude...last year I received an award that Nebraska gave to the fifty outstanding administrators in the United States...When they interviewed the people (who recommended me)...one of the things that was said was that if I were walking through a door and the door were to knock me down I would find something positive in it..say something good will come from this...I stress the positive."

Andy got the opportunity to try out the role of principal quite unexpectedly. He says, "I was asked to take the interim principal job at

Stovall-Shaw Elementary, when that principal went to the county office. I finished out the year ...I had not really considered being a principal. When I got my masters degree, I had gotten certification in curriculum, instruction, and in administration. I was more interested in curriculum and instruction than administration...Probably being almost thrust into the interim principal job at Stovall was important. I had almost actively fought going into administration up until then. I was really interested in the cultural arts...When I was half time cultural arts director, I was working with the arts council to develop that into a full time thing. Then the principal opportunity came open. It didn't look like the other thing was going to develop, so I decided to try it. There was an opportunity to do some site based management type things here. I was not an autocratic type person, and it was natural for me to want to include teachers in decisions...In looking at what role I wanted to play in making a difference for children, I wanted as large a role as I am capable of handling. It made sense to try the principalship."

Continuing to talk about the interim principalship position, Andy says, "I said I would do it, then I realized I am suddenly in a role where I am responsible for doing something I said I would never do. I was scared, felt unprepared. I wondered if I could do it. I had ideas for what I wanted

to do, or maybe I had more ideas for what I didn't want to do. I just went in and was "me". I knew not to make changes right away. I was "me" in how I related to people, in how I challenged folks to take some risks, I was "me" in how I role modelled how I wanted teachers to relate to students...I am not as conscious of details as I need to be. I dream more than I can implement. I knew I needed to be careful with that. I probably pushed too much. Especially older teachers who had been around a while, I pushed them to change. I've learned to do that better. I know it takes time. I was just there for half a year...I try to stress with teachers that the most important things that happen with discipline is what they do in their room. Whenever you take discipline out of that environment, or ask anybody else to deal with it, you are losing something...I model what I want them to do with kids...letting them know that you must deal with problems in the environment where they occur ...Taking the time to deal with a difficult child early will pay off in the long run. I know that better now than when I was at Stovall. Then I had to follow established procedures because I had nothing much to base my ideas on, no precedent, except me. So I had to test some things."

In 1971 John G. became an elementary principal. He says, "Then they sent me to an elementary school as principal. I stayed there one

year...Then I went to the junior high as principal for two years..." Then John G. moved to his present position as principal at E.E. Smith High School. He says, "When I became principal here there were teachers here who had taught me when I was a student. There is still one teacher here who taught me. This is my nineteenth year as principal here... Right now I'm what they call a lead principal. I'm the instructional and curriculum leader for the seven schools in this attendance area. I report directly to the associate superintendent... we work with those things that make a difference in the classroom, helping teachers become better."

John F. says, "I left Tarboro City Schools and went to the Halifax County Schools as principal of McIver Union School, grades one through twelve. I stayed in that role for three years...Then the assistant superintendent who hired me in Halifax County became assistant superintendent in the Burlington City Schools. A year later I was invited ...to join the Burlington City Schools. So I came to Burlington in 1965 as principal of Jordan-Sellers Junior-Senior High School. I had grades seven through twelve...I stayed in that role for five years. During that time integration, or desegregation, of schools became an issue. They started phasing my school out by grades...In 1970 we opened a new high school, the Hugh M. Cummings Senior High School and I was

named principal of this new high school in 1969. I had one full year to plan for and organize the new high school, along with functioning as principal at Jordan-Sellers High School. I spent twenty years as principal there, beginning in 1970."

John F. says, "When I first came to Burlington...I came to a school that had deteriorated pretty badly...It was physical deterioration, staff morale, discipline...The year before I came the school had undergone Southern Association accreditation and failed. I established what I felt at the time needed to happen in that school after appraising my first year. I had to move some people and make some changes. I got support from the board to do this. I had to communicate the expectations of what I expected to happen with kids in the classroom. I carried the same thing over to Cummings High School, no difference, a different population, but the expectations were the same...I could not ask for more support from a faculty and community."

Because of the influence of his principal, Mark began graduate school to get his degree and certification to be a school administrator during his first year of teaching. After three years teaching he became a principal. This is pretty fast track advancement. Mark says, "I was only twenty five years old when I received my first elementary

principalship. There is a lot of responsibility there and a lot of pressure or challenge due to the fact that my staff had only two people on it at the time who were actually younger than I was. It was a very challenging situation in that I had to prove myself in a hurry to earn the respect of the other staff members...I believe that I was prepared through experiences I had in the front office while I was teaching. But, due to the age factor and the staff makeup there was a lot of pressure there."

Realizing Success As A Principal

Once a person moves into the role of school principal the opportunity is open to become successful. The situation is almost a "sink or swim" situation. Of course one can rely on others for advice and support, but the decisions made and the actions taken are one's own responsibility. The principals interviewed here had taken advantage of every previous opportunity to carefully prepare themselves for this opportunity and they took advantage of this opportunity to prove their leadership ability.

In describing the event that made her realize that she was going to be a successful principal, Deborah says, "The fact that I had two years experience as an assistant principal, and was given the largest elementary school in the county. That showed the superintendent had a

lot of faith in me. A lot of people had a hard time accepting that, because you usually start in a small school and move up."

Asked what makes him a successful principal, Andy says, "I think that because I encourage people to take risks and I support that, I think that feels good to people to feel free to make decisions and know they will be supported...Whatever decisions we make must be in the best interests of children. If every decision is bounced off that we can't go too far wrong. We will always be doing some things right if we keep that in mind."

When asked about an event that let him know he was going to be successful, John G. says, "There was nothing that told me I wasn't going to be successful. I never really thought about not doing well. There are always things that need work...I'm just foolish enough to think that if you work hard you can do about anything you set out to do."

Mark realized that being a school principal was something that he enjoyed and was going to be successful at. He says, "Other administrators were beginning to ask me for my input or my suggestions or for copies of programs that I was using in my building. This is something that you look for, recognition from your peers...That gives you the feedback or reinforcement that things you are doing are worthwhile. Another event

that made me realize that I was on the right track is the central office personnel began placing me as the sole administrator on certain types of committees. I started to become involved in activities or planning sessions for programs for the whole district. That again was reinforcement from superiors that I was on the right track. Finally, the nomination by my peers for the principal of the year and the regional title of principal of the year being given to me made me realize that our building was doing the right things for children. That is the most important point."

Biggest Challenge

Several of these principals indicated that dealing with challenging situations resulted in leadership skill development. Sometimes failure to accomplish the intended objective was encountered. However, these principals did not look at these situations as failures or defeats. Instead they viewed them as opportunities to learn and grow. Below they describe some of these challenges they have faced.

Arlin says, "When I came to this school as principal the community was embroiled in the idea and the issue of consolidation. The school board was trying to mandate the consolidation of this

(Cullowhee) high school with Sylva Webster. Because of the long tradition of this school in its existing K-12 organization, the community was very much opposed to that...I came here right in the middle of all that. Having lived in Sylva for most of my life, I was perceived as a person from the other side...I came into this situation knowing that it was going to be a real challenge dealing with that. I think that situation more than any other put me on the spot as an administrator...The position I took was that it was up to the school board to decide about consolidation...My position was that presently we are a K-12 school and our job is to be the best school we can possibly be. We are to provide the best experiences possible for our students...But this has been one of the most challenging things I have had to deal with. ..Through all the controversy this school has grown. Our teachers have grown. When I came here there was conflict from teacher to teacher...We have been able to establish what I feel is a really harmonious atmosphere and a good working relationship between teachers...The school has continued to grow and make a great deal of improvement."

Deborah says, "I guess the biggest challenge is trying to bring about change. Trying to get people to be what you know they can be, to get them to grow, to be the best they can be, trying to get people to do what you think is

best for the students...I think you learn from people. When I was a teacher I learned from my principal. He did a lot of things that I knew I was not going to do if I was ever an administrator."

Linda has a unique situation at Ansonville Elementary because the K-3 and the 4-5 classes are on two separate campuses which are two miles apart. Linda says, "It is real difficult. I have two offices, one secretary. You cannot imagine what it is like to be at one school and they need you at the other school. Basically I come to this campus first each morning. Most of the faculty are here early and they can see me then if they need to. My four-six campus, the teachers get in a little later, but stay a little later. I spend the morning here and the afternoons there. But most days, I go back and forth five or six times."

Linda has tried to draw the two faculties together. She says, "The former principal stayed on the other campus and rarely came over here. I was told that I was to unite the staff. We meet once a week and they are together...It is really difficult coordinating two campuses."

After one year as assistant principal at Sipes Elementary Adelaide became principal at J.C. Roe Elementary, where she is currently principal. She says, "I took over a situation here that was critical. The school was deteriorated, the staff was demoralized, things

were bad...We had to improve the facilities, then the curriculum, the skills of the staff. Foremost we had to change attitudes, the hardest thing to do...One of the things I did that worked well was give teachers a chance to shine, to teach one another...They realized I was giving them more input and control over their own destiny. The third year I organized the school in teams. I set up a K-1, 2-3, and 4-5 and assigned a team leader, a teacher who was a little further along in their thinking than the others."

Adelaide continues, "I convinced some people very politely and professionally that they were in the wrong position. Maybe they had some options, some other choices to make, and they did...I did that without any law suits, nor any court action, nor any defamation of character, nor any fallout...I was a very caring administrator, who was very clear in the goals I set for the school. I set forth a plan that I carried through. Persons who were not following it as directed and did not do what the group was doing were very aware that they weren't. They were very anxious and willing to move...Then I proceeded to hire people...The way I go about hiring a person here is to determine what the school needs first... I am looking for someone to fill a certain gap in our team. A positive, professional attitude, a philosophy that matches the schools philosophy,

caring for the type of child we have here. I hire persons who fit certain roles in the school...What you need to do to get a group of people who will work well together is to get a mixture, have people from various personalities."

Asked what has been the biggest challenge he has faced, Andy says, "Combining a sense of knowing I am going slow enough and understanding, juxtaposing the pace at which you want things to happen, and creating the vehicle to allow folks to change and make things happen. How to help people change attitudes that need to be changed about how to prepare kids for the twenty first century...Part of what made the principalship more attractive was the opportunity to play a bigger role with an entire school. What if you could get a whole school to change attitudes and become a place that is magic for kids...the challenge for me when I came here was how do we begin to translate behavior changes into attitude changes for teachers. I see this for new teachers who are not coming in really well prepared, and teachers who have been at it a while who need to be freed up, retaught, who need to unlearn and relearn. How do you get teachers to take risks...Instruction is the most important thing for me. Successful happy kids are important and how do you create a delivery system to do that. It means changing, in some ways, everything. It needs

to be done in a dramatic way. There is a sense of urgency to change. It needs to be a natural evolution...Our whole system is based on antiquated ideas, old paradigms, old rules. There is no natural evolution. School is a microcosm of that whole thing in society...We have taken some steps toward necessary changes."

Asked about a biggest challenge John G. says, "(For my first principalship)... I moved into an elementary school where a lot of people knew me well. I got so much support from them. They just treated me so well. They sort of spoiled me. Then I went back to the junior high as principal, where I had started out as a teacher. So my biggest challenge was coming to Smith, where I started leading people who had taught me when I was a student here. There were other people here whom I did not know. So I had to start doing some things differently. It was very challenging. I was fortunate to have an assistant principal here who had worked with me in the junior high school. He was very supportive...The truth of the matter is, if you want to do well, you need to get a good group of people around you. Don't expect to do everything yourself...We just need to see that it gets done well. That's the key. Sometimes that is more challenging, getting others to work toward accomplishing the organization's goals. Once you get people focused on those goals, it is not

as difficult to keep the snowball rolling, once it gets rolling."

Mark made a major career move that proved to be a real challenge for him. After eight years in North Carolina which featured rapid career moves and successes, he decided to move back to Ohio. He got a principal position at an elementary school there, but the move proved to be a difficult transition. Getting to know new people and a new system proved challenging. He says, "It was a very big challenge for me...I had stability in North Carolina. I had double tenure, as an elementary teacher and as a principal...So I had job security. Coming up to Ohio, there is no tenure for principals. You are on a one year, two year, three year or four year contract. At the present time I am on a two year contract and this year my contract is up for renewal. This is a challenge I have never had to face; the fact of being in a position for a short period of time, and then your position gets reviewed for renewal. At this time I do not foresee any problems. However there are anxieties there due to the fact that I have never had to go through this. I would say just the move and starting in a new building, a new district, and a new state was the biggest challenge for me in my educational career."

A situation developed just after his move to Ohio concerning a sixth grade field trip to Washington, DC, that tested Mark. The sixth grade

teachers believed the field trip needed to be changed because it was too long and too expensive. Mark consulted with a few parents and decided to change the trip. Suddenly other parents who were not consulted became alarmed at this change.

Mark says, " I guess I didn't realize how deep the emotions were for the tradition that had begun at this elementary school. This situation ... basically blew out of control. We had parents returning to my office to discuss the situation with me. Sixth grade parents, kindergarten parents, all ages in our building, parents were coming out of the woodwork saying that our school had a tradition and did not need to lose it. Parents of former students...said this was not a good decision for the education of the students in the elementary school. Editorials were written, letters to the superintendent began rolling in. Basically I had to step back and reevaluate ...my superintendent and my new mentor, the assistant superintendent, believed that I needed to touch base with more of the sixth grade students and parents because they were the ones who worked to run fund raisers to pay for this trip. So I got together with the sixth grade parents."

A compromise was worked out where the trip would continue that year then be reevaluated concerning the problems and the expense and

the extensive fund raising activities needed to raise the money. So the problem was worked out. However, Mark says, "It came to the point where it almost cost me my very short lived career as an Ohio school administrator over a field trip. The thing I learned from that is to get input from all publics before making changes, especially if you are new to an area."

Mark continues, " Moving from North Carolina up to Ohio, the pressure of not knowing anyone in the school district up here except the people I interviewed with. Then having this DC decision hit me, all this happening the first month I was on the job. There was a lot of pressure thrown at me that was basically questioning whether I made the right decision ... I did get a chance to restart and move on. At the end of the year when I was evaluated by the superintendent he believed that I had bounced back rather quickly from that rough beginning. That was a big boost to my restart effort. But I was getting hit from all sides at the very beginning and had no one to lean on for support. At that point, I was definitely worn out and fed up and ready to believe that I had made the wrong decision in moving closer to home. But I did get a chance to restart and I feel more positive about the situation up here."

Personal Changes Over the Course of the Career

In order to develop leadership skills and capacity as a leader, one must undergo personal changes. Personal change was important and significant in the leadership development of these principals.

Concerning personal changes over the course of his career, Arlin replied, "A lot. I have gotten wiser and more patient in dealing with children and parents. I have gotten better at determining what is significant and what is not. When you are young you get tied up in what you believe instead of what you know. The older you get the more you rely on what you know and the less you rely on what you believe. There are certain realities that come home to you. You may believe that, but if you have never seen it work why would you still believe it?...You have to take the things you know at the time and go from there."

Deborah has changed over the course of her career. She said, "I've got a lot more gray hair. I am a much better administrator than I was a teacher. I wasn't a bad teacher. I was teacher of the year three or four times. I just know so much more now. Being an administrator has given me that opportunity to see the broad picture. It is frustrating. I have to learn to gauge myself, because I want it all done yesterday. I have grown tremendously in how I see things. I have my head in the clouds as

far as what I think we can do in education...I guess I'm a maverick. I am not afraid to ask for things. I operate a lot on the philosophy that it is easier to get forgiveness than permission. I try to do things that are not easy. I take chances for kids."

Concerning how she has changed over the course of her career, Linda says, "I think I am basically the same person. I have learned how to handle problem people better...there are certain skills I have developed. In fact I have developed a lot of skills in the last five years in dealing with conflict situations and problem people. I have learned how to deal with site based management. It is easy to be a principal and make all the decisions. It is harder to let others make decisions. I have learned a lot about myself. I am usually thinking out in the future, while often people only think about the present. I think and do, and when I finish with a project I see that it will be carried on. I have learned that I have to prepare others...I have learned how to deal with the staff and their different personalities. I have learned a lot in that way, and learned a lot about myself and what I need to do. I have learned these things just from dealing with situations. I always wanted to have a better school and to make things better. I know we have a happy staff here. I know if you have a happy staff they will give that away to the children. I can want all

the things in the world for the children, but if I can do things to make the staff happy that will relate to the children. That is the bottom line, what happens with the children. When you are a teacher you are working and dealing with children. When you become a principal you are working and dealing with the staff. You have to change your approach and look at what you can do to make the staff happy and more productive. They deal with the children. The bottom line is to get the children to the place where they can be ready for the twenty first century."

In relation to how he has changed over the course of his career, Andy says, "I may have gotten more cynical over the years...maybe that's the wrong word, maybe I've just mellowed. I still dream, but I see the importance of being patient. Change needs to be orderly. We can't change each year just because the state legislature wants change. We have to do what we think is right for children. An educator from another country who had visited many countries to study their educational systems came by and told me that the educational system in the United States is like a fast food franchise system. We fix it fast. We have specials that will be here only for a short period of time. School boards have to stop asking us in the middle of the year if the new program is working yet. Legislatures have to stop putting money into hit and miss

programs. Our theme here at West Oxford is to create the unhurried environment. I have a theme for each school year. The first year it was we are "transisting." This year it is "qualitify." Lets slow down and put some quality into what we do. The in depth experience is worth the time."

Concerning how he has changed over the course of his career, John G. says, "It took me a while to learn that lesson that you can catch more flies with honey than you can with vinegar. I used to be sort of a "get tough" guy with kids...The students here know where the bottom line is. They know that if they don't do certain things I will have the final say. I say make it easy on yourself. We don't need to argue about that. That will spoil our relationship. I am here to help you. That sort of disarms them. When you ask people what can I do to help you, it disarms them and causes them to start thinking another way."

John F. indicated that he has changed over the course of his career. He says, "I have changed some. My overall expectations have stayed high, but I was able to accept differences more that I was earlier. I think that has come through experience. I realized that I was not handling some situations as well as I could have, because there was a problem that I did not understand. Once I understood the problem then I was able to

realize I had made a mistake. Surely I have changed, but not in what I expect to happen in the classroom or what I expect to happen with kids."

Mark has changed over the course of his career. He says, "I was very pleased with North Carolina...parents came up to me and told me that they had noticed a big difference in me as I became more skilled and more knowledgeable about what was expected of a school administrator. I had developed and had the school running in a very positive fashion. Being named principal of the year for our district and our region speaks very well for how our school was educating our students and making those students feel that they were a very important part of our community. I would say that is how I have changed and I would say the changes have all been pluses. I hope that as I become more knowledgeable in every situation that I just grow as an administrator that I will become more positive and more efficient. When I came up here (to Ohio) I am sure that my first year here was not as effective as my fifth year as a principal in North Carolina. But this year is more effective than last year. That is the way I work. I try to work in a positive direction, continue to learn as much as I can learn about situations and progress as an administrator. I believe that you continue to learn always and I am always looking for positive...activities to participate in and to learn as

much information about education as possible so I can continue to improve as an administrator."

Advice for a Younger Educator

These principals have developed skills and moved into positions of leadership in school administration. As a result of their experiences they have some advice for younger educators.

Concerning what advice he would give a younger educator interested in administration, Arlin says, "There are basically three things I would tell that person. One is don't ever bet the farm. If you are going to take a risk make sure it is a calculated risk and you have done everything you can to understand the down side of it. If it turns out to be positive that is great, but you need to have evaluations along the way. If you make a mistake, change. Don't ever do anything that would hurt kids. The second thing is to work as hard as you can, be determined and enthusiastic, but when you close the doors and go home in the evening leave it here. Do not take things home. Do not let parents call you at home every day with minor problems. You need to go home to something totally different in the evening. You will last longer that way. This was not meant to be a person's total life. You will burn out. The third

thing is to make sure that the educational program and the financial situation at the school are squeaky clean. If you set the learning of children, the teaching and learning process, as the focus of the school; and help teachers improve, that is the goal...If the instructional program is your number one priority and you keep the finances solvent so that nothing can be questioned about money that comes in and goes out of the school, you have taken away the two things that people can complain about. People would have to be nitpicking to find problems then. Those are the three things that I would tell any aspiring administrator. Don't go out on a limb by putting all your focus on one program, separate your professional and private life, and make the instructional program your focus and keep finances clean."

Arlin continues, "They need to know that it is not a smooth path from the classroom to the principal's office. They need to be able to come and look at what the principal does. There are many things that principals do that classroom teachers are not aware of. The paperwork, the conferences with parents, the meetings, they need to realize that the job does include those things. Once they understand the down side of the principalship and have compared the good with the bad, and they are still interested, then I would tell them to go ahead and pursue their degree and

certification in administration. Then they need to look at the availability of jobs. Are they willing to move to another system to get a job?...If you are place bound that may hurt your chances."

Concerning the advice she would give a younger educator interested in administration, Deborah says, "Get as many experiences as they can in as many different things as they can. Know what you are talking about. Have lots of experiences. Know what you want, have a vision, know what you can accomplish...You need to surround yourself with good people. You are only as good as the people around you. Have high expectations of yourself and others. Be a good model for them. Let them know what your expectations are."

On advice for others Linda says, "I have a daughter who is twenty seven years old. What you want to know is what advice I would give my daughter. I think I would tell her to start young in planning what you are going to do with your life. My career is one of those things that just kind of happened. I didn't plan it and say I am going to be here in five years. Hopefully, I have helped my daughter plan better...But to plan ahead so you can plan in milestones, just like you do at school, I think you need to plan for your career. Then having a positive attitude about the things that you face. I can't help but to go back to what my father taught me, always do the

best that you can do and go the extra mile...I think I would give anybody the same advice. To get ahead take the jobs that nobody else wants and do a good job with them. You can be recognized for doing a good job with those things...Be willing to take the jobs nobody wants and have a positive attitude and do a good job. The bottom line is doing a good job at whatever you do...That is the advice I gave my daughter."

Adelaide would give a younger educator the following advice, "You need to be willing to deal with ambiguity in your professional life. You need to persevere. The profession tends to fluctuate, but is inherently stable. You have to be a lifelong learner, and to be nourished by learning. You need the point of view that you have the mission to make life better for children...Our future really depends on what we do with these children."

Concerning the advice he would give a younger educator, Andy says, "First become a very good teacher. Become aware of how kids learn. I have a hard time looking at what I do that is good or competent. I know what I value, but whether they are good or not, I don't know. I think you have to be a risk taker, a watcher, and a listener. If you go too boldly or too strongly sometimes there are problems. You have to play the game, you may have to manipulate, orchestrate, to get what you think is needed,

and keep your integrity and honesty."

John G. would give a younger educator the following advice, "Put a whole lot of focus on caring. That is a piece of the puzzle that needs to be in place first. Let the kids know that you care about them. That will help you in all kinds of ways. You can get people to do a whole lot of things if they know you care about them...Some of these people who make these demands on the schools, I don't think they see the real picture. I'm quite sure that we need to do a better job on some things. We need some more help. It's not only help on how to teach, but how to get people receptive to learning. Everybody that walks in the door does not come here ready to learn. We spend a lot of time getting them ready to learn. It used to be that most students were ready to learn. If not, we could notify their parents and they were ready to learn the next day. Now the school has to do all that...we've got to try to deal with all these other things. Sometimes I get the feeling that many people don't realize that those problems exist...You have to know what you are doing in teaching in order to help teachers become better teachers."

John F. has some advice for younger educators, "Get a mentor to show them the ropes of what administration is all about...Just because a person has been a successful teacher does not mean they can be a

successful principal. Give them an opportunity to try doing some administrative tasks to see if they can do it and if they like it. Don't just throw them into a situation and let them sink or swim. Have some way for them to try it out with a mentor and see what it is all about."

Mark's advice for younger educators is, "I would say managing your career is up to the kind of person you are....Don't let anybody else push you into something you don't want to do. Make sure it works with your life pace, your personality. Develop yourself to the fullest extent. One thing I have advised younger educators to do is... unless you are really sure you want to stay in elementary education for your entire life, I would suggest that the masters program be in a different area. Whether it be in math or counseling or administration. A lot of people go back and get their masters in the exact same area. Then if they wish to pursue something else they have to go back and get re-certified. I believe that a masters program should expand your marketability or your expertise. Don't just use the masters program to move up the pay scale, use it to develop yourself. Make it into something that is worthwhile."

Mark continues, "Don't get so caught up in your job that you neglect the rest of your life...There comes a time in education where you have to let go...We can't let every hour of every day be taken up with concerns

about work. Education should not control our lives...We have to let go and enjoy our families and have some time for ourselves, so when we are working we can concentrate on it. I think you need to let others get involved in your educational development whether it is as mentors, or just someone to talk to sometimes for friendship or support. If you are in a decision making capacity you have to involve as many others as possible in your educational career. You cannot delegate everything, but you can involve others. They will appreciate it and you will benefit from it. You don't have to feel like you are an island."

The Most Significant Thing Learned

As a result of their experiences these principals have learned many things. They indicate here the most significant learning that they would like to pass on to others.

The most significant thing that Deborah has learned in her career is, "That nothing should be ignored. You have to deal with the most pressing things first. Everybody matters and everything matters ...Remember that we don't teach subjects we teach kids. That is why we are here. That is our job. Sometimes we get too caught up in the process and we forget that. I am not saying that we don't push them, that

we don't have high expectations. But to do what is right for kids, we need developmentally appropriate courses... Somebody has to have the strength to say we are not going to do it this way any more. We've got to change. We are so antiquated in our thought processes and in what we expect and in what we are teaching. It has just always been done that way. I found out a long time ago that everybody is an authority on school because everybody has been there. They might not have graduated and they might not have been there long, but everybody has been there and everybody has an opinion. That is why we are in the mess we are in. We need leaders."

Andy's most significant learning is, "people can change. People can grow...Teachers want to say what should I do? Tell me. I wanted them to be creative."

The most significant thing he has learned and wants to pass on to others, John G. says, is, "Whatever you do, try to do it well. Leave nothing to chance. I don't believe in miracles, I believe in hard work. Creativity is important. You must try new things...You have to try things to see what works."

Concerning the most important thing he has learned and would want to pass on, John F. says, "Be a good listener. Be consistent in your expectations. Treat people fairly. Convey expectations to people. Listen,

but not to excuses for not doing the job."

The most significant learning, says Mark, is "No problem or situation that comes upon you is insurmountable or unsolvable...you have to make sure that you don't let your emotions get in the way of your effectiveness as an educator...You have to present yourself in a professional manner as an administrator at all times. You don't need to get upset... Whether you are dealing with students, parents, teachers, central office people, you don't need to get upset...You have to keep a cool head and work through every problem. There is no problem that is insurmountable."

Looking to the Future of the Career

Some of these principals have been careful planners in developing their careers while others have simply taken advantage of opportunities that came along. The important thing has not been career advancement. More important to most of these principals was developing skills in order to become better educators and to have the most influence in creating a good environment in which students can learn. At this point in their careers all except one of the persons interviewed are still in the role of school principal. Several see the principalship as being the most

important position that influences the learning environment for students.

Others would like to move into higher levels of school administration.

Concerning the future of his own career, Arlin says, "I really don't know. I am very content to be a school principal. That is all I have ever wanted to be. I spent my entire life preparing for it and working in areas that I felt competent in and trying to help youngsters. There are always things on the horizon... I don't really have any desire to be at the central office. That must be one of the most boring things in the world. I don't know how those people deal with it. I know they don't have the evening activities that persons working in the schools have, but I don't have any desire to do that. I want to be a school principal...Somewhere down the road I might like to work at a high school again. Right now my children are young and I like being able to spend some time with them. If I was at the high school I would not be able to do that. My kids are very important to me. I am right where I want to be."

In relation to the future of her career, Deborah says, "I don't know. I want to get my doctorate. Then sometimes I wonder if I really want to stay in education, because I do have my down times. I really don't know. I don't see myself staying in one place for many years. I have thought about things outside of education, like personnel. I know it would be hard

for me to change and be away from children, but the restraints that keep me from doing things I know I need to do are so frustrating."

In talking about a high school principalship, Deborah says, "I think I could do it. I would shake some people up. I don't think I would want to be a superintendent, because I am frustrated at not being able to bring about the changes that I think are needed. I think that would be even less able to do that at the superintendent level. Superintendents have to have a vision for the system. But they are not always able to do what they think is best because of the restraints on them. There are a few out there who try to do that, but they know they will self destruct. They will not stay long in one system. While they are there they will make a difference, but they won't be there long. It is too tied to politics. You can't do this because you will make this person mad, you can't do that because you will make that person mad. It is too political. Of course everything is political, I know that. I just don't see them making the changes. I think you lose sight of the front line. I consider myself to be in the field. We are the foot soldiers...Central office people are removed from that. I would like to see the central office provide more support than they do...They need to come to the school and spend some time with me and see what my problems are and how they can help solve them...Don't tell us we need to fill out another report, ask us

if that report is really important. Communication is two ways. Site based management is just not there in reality...I know the superintendent has more responsibilities and more people to be concerned about than a principal."

Deborah believes she would do things differently than most current superintendents. She says, "Just as when I was a classroom teacher, looking at the principalship. I do things differently. Who knows. I might go for it one day. I have thought about getting a doctorate in exceptional children because I am so concerned about some of the things we do and don't do for exceptional children."

Concerning what is next in her career, Linda says, "The associate superintendent position is open in this county. We are having interviews Monday. The present assistant superintendent and the high school principal has applied, and myself, and two people from outside the county. My aspiration is to be superintendent of schools. Then I want to be lieutenant governor of North Carolina. I have been offered a job at the Regional Center. I'm not sure that is where I want to be. I have also had an offer from IBM to be their state educational consultant. I'm not sure that is what I want. I really want to be superintendent of a school system one day. But I will have to go back and get my doctorate to do that. There is not any

system in North Carolina that will hire a superintendent without a doctorate degree now...I was recently reading an article about women in administration, and it said the ones who do well are women with strong family backgrounds. It has to do with the feeling of security and the expectations that your parents had and the attitude that you can make it no matter who you are."

Concerning the future Adelaide says, "I want to make this school as brilliant as it can be to achieve our goals of excellence. The slogan we began with is "J.C. Roe, A School Entering Excellence." Last spring I changed the slogan to "J.C. Roe, A School of Excellence." Now I would like for us to become a shining star, an example. A school that shows we can do well with disadvantaged children...Personally, I want to feel that I have been able to sustain the school. If the system desires to leave me here I'll be happy here. If they give me a larger school I'll be content with that. I don't want to be a superintendent because there is not enough outlet for my creativity. I want more autonomy than a superintendent's position would give me. The principalship gives me the maximum autonomy to do what I enjoy doing. I want to remain a principal. I know where I am good. I don't want to work in a situation where I am not in control. I do not view the superintendent's position as one of control.

The principal position is one of maximum control in this profession at this time. I do well at it. I want to continue in it...I probably will not pursue a doctorate, it would take too much of my time. I feel like I have enough degrees. I will continue to take courses and learn. I am fifty three, I want time to do what I like to do."

Andy would also like to finish up projects he has begun in his present principalship. He says, "I want to come to some sort of closure here. We are still in the process. I would like to get this staff to a point where they do not need me. Where they will feel strong and confident in their own decisions...I want the teachers to be comfortable with this by themselves. I want closure here. I do not see myself as becoming a superintendent. I can see that even less than I could see myself becoming a principal before. I did become a principal though, didn't I?...I don't see myself staying right here until I retire. It is hard for me to look past this year, because of the things we are trying to do here. I don't want to be a victim of the "Peter Principal", to rise to my level of incompetence. But I think there are some other things out there for me. I'm not sure what. To assume that the move to the superintendency is the next logical move, I'm not sure. My feeling is that for me that is not where I can make the biggest impact. Some of the things we have done here at West Oxford have had more influence outside this

county than in the county...I would also like to convey the message of what we have accomplished here at West Oxford. Not that what we have done here is so right, but it is right to want to grow and learn, which is what we have done. That is the important message, not to do it like West Oxford, but to do it."

Concerning his career, John G. says, "That is something I am rethinking now. I'm not real sure what direction I want to go. I have been real happy right here, running this school. But it may be time for something else ...I have some interest in teaching at the graduate level, working with young principals, I enjoy that. Sharing experiences with others. I have been fortunate to work with people who have taught me well. I'd like to share some of the experiences I have had to help others be successful."

John F. is near retirement, but says, "I don't see myself retiring and going home and sitting. I think I will continue to be involved. Since my heart problem I have been more health conscious...That is why I decided to leave the principalship and take a central office job. I really am enjoying this job right now. I have been accused of being a workaholic. I have tried to slow down some. But if that is my worse fault, that's not too bad. I have always been a hard worker, but I have enjoyed my

work. I have tried to set a good example."

Mark is younger than the others and says, "I learn something new in every situation and on a daily basis I learn new things...Every situation offers new learning opportunities. Especially me in a new district in a new building, I am still learning about the staff, the curriculum, the expectations of the central office and the community. I just keep learning all the time. My plan is to be the best elementary principal that you can find in the United States. That is no joke. I really pride myself on wanting to be the best at whatever I am doing. I will continue to work on that. I believe that if there is a move in another direction in my career it would basically be one level up on the quantity scale. I began as a teacher with a class of about thirty students. We did some shifting of students on our grade level so I effected basically sixty students as a teacher. My third year of teaching, we took subjects and almost became departmentalized. I effected fourth, fifth, and sixth graders, about one hundred and eighty students, at the building. Then I became an elementary principal and effected approximately four hundred and ninety five students. Here in Ohio there are about three hundred fifty. Now I am effecting hundreds of students at the elementary grades. The next logical step up quantity wise would be the elementary supervisor or

director of elementary education for the district. The elementary curriculum director effects eight elementary schools, thousands of students. The only negative to that is being based at the central office and having limited interaction with students. At that level you have lots of interaction with teachers and principals, but not students. I would have to think long and hard about that type of position, because the number one thing with me is to have that interaction with students. They are the reason that elementary schools exist. As a principal they are the reason that I exist, to make sure they are o.k. safety wise, educationally and developmentally, before they go on to the junior high school. My plan is to remain as an elementary principal. If a junior high principalship or assistant principalship came open and that was where I could best serve the needs of the community, it is possible. But the elementary school is where I believe I belong. An elementary director for a district might be an avenue to look into. At this point in my career I believe an elementary school is where I belong."

Summary and Synthesis:

This analysis of the experiences of these eight successful school principals resulted in the discovery of several categories of experiences

that they believe has contributed to their success. Family influence, the influence of personal life, a variety of experiences, being a good classroom teacher and taking on responsibilities outside the classroom, the assistant principalship, working on advanced degrees and other formal learning experiences, becoming and realizing success as a principal, and challenging and difficult situations were identified as important in the leadership skill development of these principals.

Some of these experiences actually fall outside the realm of career experiences, which was to be the focus of this research. For example, family influence and personal life experiences were two things that several principals talked about. Working on advanced degrees in educational administration was considered by several of these principals to be significant learning opportunities that helped in leadership skill development. Because these principals placed such importance on these experiences, they are included as categories

Family influence was particularly significant to Deborah, Linda, Adelaide, Andy, John and Mark. Linda referred on several different occasions during her interview to the importance of her family, her father in particular, in talking about the things that she learned as a child that have carried over to her adult life. Adelaide began the interview by

talking about the significance of her childhood and the things she learned from her parents and her neighbors while growing up. Deborah, Mark and Andy had parents who were involved in education and influenced them to pursue the same career. John's parents were farmers who worked hard to ensure their children the opportunity of a college education.

Personal life experiences were important to Deborah, Linda, Adelaide and Mark. Deborah, Linda, and Adelaide all went through divorces that either spurred them to move into education as a career, or to move out of the classroom and into the higher paying jobs in school administration. Linda went through a traumatic experience with a speech problem in elementary school that served as a turning point in her life and focused her on skill development and started her on the road to success. Mark suffered through the death of a child which he feels profoundly influenced his development as a school leader.

Deborah, Adelaide, Andy and John G. all talked about the variety of experiences they had encountered as being significant in the development of their leadership skills. Deborah began her classroom career with the knowledge that she wanted to move into administration eventually. She deliberately asked to be moved to different grade levels so that she could have experience in all the areas that she was certified to teach. Adelaide

moved often in connection with her first husband's job changes and then in pursuit of her own career goals. This variety of experiences in a variety of school settings helped Adelaide to develop the desire and the confidence to pursue her career objectives without fear of change. Andy's variety of experiences resulted from being involved as a full time graduate student and also from the desire to pursue career objectives where ever they happened to be. John G. has spent his entire educational career in one school system, but has been involved in a variety of career, educational and outside activities.

All of these principals consider themselves to have been successful classroom teachers. Several were recognized as outstanding teachers through programs such as the teacher of the year program. Both Linda and Deborah were given that recognition. Deborah and Arlin both indicate that they entered the field of education with the firm idea of moving out of the classroom and into administration. However, they both indicated that they feel they were successful classroom teachers and enjoyed the classroom. Most of these principals suggest that the reason they moved into administration was the opportunity to influence the education of a larger number of students.

Each of these principals were involved in some way in extra

activities outside the classroom while they were still classroom teachers. Linda became the person at her school who was the leader on most committees. She also went back to school to further her education and came to be the staff person that other teachers relied on for information and expertise about teaching. Adelaide became responsible for designing and implementing the kindergarten program in her school system. John G. and John F. were both involved in coaching activities in addition to their classroom responsibilities. These two principals as well as Mark were all designated assistant principals in the schools where they taught. This meant that they were responsible whenever the principal was away from school. The willingness of these educators to take on these extra duties and activities indicated their desire and ability to lead.

The assistant principalship was an important position of responsibility that several of these principals saw as helping them develop the leadership skills that resulted in them becoming successful principals. Arlin in particular talks about how much his on the job training as an assistant principal gave him the opportunity to grow in his skills and abilities. Deborah's first assistant principal position was not a good learning experience because the principal did not know how to use an assistant principal. She moved into another assistant principalship where

she was involved in all aspects of running a school and her leadership skills were polished. Adelaide worked as an assistant for three different principals and learned valuable things in each situation. John G. considers his assistant principalship to be a valuable learning situation because his principal nurtured him and allowed him to get involved in several meaningful activities. John F. worked as the "unofficial" designated building principal at a school for five years and feels like this experience helped develop his leadership.

All of these principals except Andy worked on their advanced degrees while working full time as classroom teachers, assistant principals, and principals. Several of them saw this advanced degree work to be particularly valuable. Arlin was greatly influenced by one professor who had been involved in the public schools a great deal and used considerable practical knowledge in his classroom. Deborah was involved in a cluster group of administrators while she was still a classroom teacher and feels that this gave her the opportunity to learn from them as well as the professors. Adelaide feels that her advanced degree work was very beneficial because it was job specific. John G. feels that the focus on management in his doctoral program was very beneficial. Mark was encouraged by his principal to begin graduate work in administration

during his first year of teaching. He feels that this is the reason for his rapid promotion into the role of principal and has contributed to his success. Andy attended graduate school full time and feels that he gained a lot of valuable experiences because he was able to meet and learn from a lot of practicing educators.

Both Arlin and Deborah participated in the North Carolina Principal's Assessment Center and feel that program is a valuable screening process for school administrators. Adelaide and Andy were both involved in the early childhood institutes at the state department and indicate that it was a valuable learning experience in shaping their philosophy of education. John F. feels that his experience as an officer in the military prior to beginning his career in education was a valuable learning experience. Mark participated in the Educational Policy Fellowship Program and believes this to be a positive learning experience.

Learning from relationships and interactions with others was important to several of these principals. Arlin's high school principal was a major influence and helped him decide that being a school principal was his career goal. Deborah was influenced by the superintendent who hired her. Linda was influenced most of all by her father, but also by other educators. The principal who hired her was influential in her development

because he allowed her to try new things and suggested that she would make a good principal. Her current superintendent is very supportive for the things she is trying to accomplish as a principal. Adelaide was influenced by the three principals that she worked for as an assistant principal. Andy says that his father and his wife, both educators, were the biggest influences on him. John G. was influenced by principals he worked for and by the current superintendent. John F. was influenced by two mentors, a school principal who was a neighbor when he was growing up, and the first principal he worked for as a teacher. Mark indicates that his father, a principal, and the first principal he worked for were the biggest influences on his career.

Becoming school principals and realizing that they were actually going to be successful at school administration was important to the leadership development of all of these principals. Each of them talked about the importance of getting the opportunity to move into the principal position and finding someone who believed in them enough to give them that opportunity as being vitally important to their success. Each was able to point out particular experiences that let them know they were going to be successful, but they also indicated that they expected success and were not anticipating failure.

Difficult and challenging situations were important in the development of these principals. All of them were able to pick out particularly challenging situations that were difficult to handle at the time. However, none of these principals looked at challenges or even temporary failures in a negative way. They saw these situations as great opportunities to learn and grow as professional educators and to develop their skills. This attitude is probably one of the big keys in the success of these school leaders.

All of these principals talked about their most significant learnings, their advice for younger educators, how they have changed over the course of their careers, and their plans for the future. In all of these responses it is possible to see that a positive attitude is one of the things that has helped each of them and has spurred them to achieve success as school leaders.

Copies of the transcripts and career stories are available from the researcher.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary

This research was designed to discover the experiences that influence educators to become good school leaders. The researcher was interested particularly in the experiences that educators encounter on the job. However, the interview format used to gather data was open ended, so that the principals who were interviewed could talk about whatever experiences they believed to be important in their careers. The goal was to discover experiences that could become part of a planned leadership development program. If we are interested in improving schools, improving school leaders is a good place to start.

The plan was to interview principals who had been identified as exceptional school leaders to find out what experiences they identified as being important in the development of their leadership skills. Eight regional winners of the Wachovia Principal of the Year program were selected for the interviews. All eight were contacted and each consented to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted and taped during the fall of 1991 and each recorded tape was transcribed. The transcripts

were analyzed to develop a chronological career biography for each of the principals. These were analyzed to discover the common themes in the careers of these eight principals.

This analysis process resulted in the development of several categories of experiences that were common to the careers of these principals. Quotations from the interviews with the principals were used to illustrate each of these categories of experience which are as follows:

1. The influence of family and private life was important and played a role in the development of some of these school principals to the extent that they talked about this influence even though it was not a focus directed by the interviewer.

2. These principals have benefited from a variety of career experiences. A variety of experiences played a role in several ways depending on the types of experiences involved. If one worked in several different schools or several different school systems one had the opportunity to be influenced by a wider variety of people with different leadership styles. One obtained the opportunity to see that things were done differently in different places and that there was not necessarily one best way to do things. This allowed one to develop the flexibility that

was important in school leadership.

3. Some of the experiences that these successful school principals encountered were difficult to handle at the time. Difficult people were encountered in difficult situations that were new and unfamiliar. However, to these principals, difficult experiences were not perceived as good or bad, but as opportunities to grow and learn.

4. These educators were able to demonstrate fairly early in their careers that they were good classroom teachers. From their comments they indicated that, in order to advance, one must focus on the particular job one is responsible for and do a good job. These principals also demonstrated while they were still classroom teachers that they were willing and able to take on other duties and responsibilities outside the classroom as well.

5. Becoming an assistant principal was a step that most of these successful school principals saw as valuable. All of these principals began as classroom teachers. Most moved into an assistant principalship or another intermediate leadership position before becoming a principal. These positions allowed the development of skills and leadership styles before moving into a principal position.

6. These educators were able to benefit from interactions and

associations with other educators who were significant to them.

Becoming a successful school leader involved learning from other people and distilling the best ideas and techniques from each of those people into one's own unique leadership style.

7. The process of working on the M.A., Ed.S. and doctoral degrees in educational administration was important to several of these principals. Learning opportunities became available by participating in these activities that included direct classroom experiences and internships that put the learner in contact with other successful leaders from whom they learned. Other outside learning experiences were also cited as being important to the leadership development of several of these principals.

8. Acquiring the opportunity to move into that first job as a principal was critical to the full development of school leadership abilities. Doing a good job in the area of assignment was important. However, career advancement itself was important in the development of leadership skills. One can perform well and take on extra responsibilities, but one must move into positions of leadership in order to fully develop those skills that make one a successful leader. Once an educator moved into the role of principal, certain experiences were encountered that required

new skills to be developed and success with those situations indicated that one would be successful in the role of school principal.

9. Because of their experiences these principals believe that they had significant learnings that they could pass on to others. They also have advice for younger educators who are interested in becoming school administrators.

10. These educators talk about plans for the future of their careers. Planning for the future seems to be something these successful principals have done throughout their careers and was one of the important qualities that helped them become successful.

These categories of experiences that were unveiled by this research process are not startling or provocative. They are very ordinary, exactly what one would expect. Most educators encounter experiences similar to these. The important thing for these successful school leaders was what they made of these experiences, what they were able to do with them. They were able to use their experiences to learn, to grow, and to develop their attitudes and skills in order to become more successful school leaders.

Recommendations

The importance of experiences in the learning and growth of principals as school leaders indicates that reflective action (Brubaker and Simon, 1986) is important to the development of good school leadership. Because of the nature of the job, principals must learn many of their skills on the job, often in high pressure situations. Those who continue to improve and become successful school leaders develop the ability to reflect on their experiences and learn as they practice the art of leadership. They are not defeated by failures, they learn from them.

The development of school leaders has been a haphazard process. Future school leaders are self selected and develop their leadership abilities mostly on their own initiative. (Lipham, 1981) School systems could become more involved in the process by making the selection and grooming of future school leaders a more open process. Everyone who is interested in school leadership should know about the process used for selection and training so they can make more informed decisions about their own future career paths.

Kotter (1988) indicates several practices that high performing organizations use to enhance the development of leadership in their

organizations and the success of their leaders. These include, "a sophisticated recruiting effort, an attractive work environment, challenging opportunities, early identification, and planned development." (83)

Educational organizations could benefit from using these techniques. More sophisticated recruiting efforts could be used to identify and employ people who will be good educators and good leaders. This process could take place as early as high school. The North Carolina Teaching Fellows program is a step in the right direction. This program identifies potentially effective educators and provides financial assistance for their higher education. In return the student agrees to devote several years to the teaching profession in North Carolina. This program is a good start, but could be broadened to include more young people who promise to become good educators.

One problem that is consistently highlighted in educational circles is that the most talented educators often leave the profession for a more attractive and lucrative career in business and industry. Providing a more attractive work environment in education would help with this problem. Better compensation is needed. Creating a work environment that is more conducive to a professional atmosphere would

also help.

Creating more challenging opportunities for educators is another process that could enhance school leadership development. Site-based management is a process that involves classroom teachers in making decisions about how schools will be organized and operated. This process enables new teachers to become involved in school wide decisions early in their careers, and also enables them to develop a broader perspective on school problems and solutions. This process should allow school system leaders more opportunity to better identify prospective school leaders. It may also allow future school leaders themselves to make better decisions about their career paths.

Several opportunities already exist in education that enhance leadership development. As Linda's career points out, classroom teachers have the opportunity to become involved on many school based and system wide committees that are involved in planning programs and strategies to enhance the educational opportunities available to students. These committee assignments provide opportunities for classroom teachers to be involved in their own leadership development and also give higher level administrators an opportunity to see these potential leaders in action.

According to Kotter (1988) the organizations that are successful in developing leaders have a planned process for early identification and planned programs for development of future leaders. This is an area that school systems need to improve. Often school employees have no idea how the process of career advancement really works. Teachers know that they will need to get advanced degrees and certifications in order to move into positions of higher leadership. However, they can see evidence that this is not enough, because some people who have these advanced qualifications are not moved into leadership positions. Other people who do not have the required certification are sometimes moved into positions of leadership. Information about the process that the school system uses for selection and development of future leaders should be readily available to all who are interested.

Universities that have educational leadership programs could work more closely with school systems in this process of selection and preparation of future school leaders. Assessment center programs could be used to selectively screen applicants for degree programs. Internships that use a reflective practice orientation could become a more intensive part of the training program for university based school leadership programs. Universities and school systems need to work together to

develop programs that will provide the training that is needed for future school leaders.

Two suggestions by Yukl (1982) are relevant to the selection and training of school principals: assessment centers and mentoring programs. Assessment centers can help "weed out" persons who are not suited to the role of school principal. The role of the assistant principalship as a training ground for the principalship needs reassessment. Assistant principals should be placed with principals who will serve as good mentors for them. Systems should reward principals who serve as good mentors. Mentoring programs in school systems could become a more systematic part of leadership development. Assistant principals should become involved in all aspects of school leadership in order to learn the skills needed to become good school leaders.

Suggestions for Further Research

Further research on the learning experiences of school leaders could serve to broaden the base of knowledge in this area. Several are suggested here.

This researcher interviewed principals who were selected as regional winners of the Wachovia Principal of the Year Program. Other

groups of principals who have been recognized as successful could be interviewed using the same interview instrument. That type of research would allow one to determine if the same categories of experiences are important to those new groups of principals. The information resulting from that research could serve to validate or refute the findings of this research. If this research were validated by that process the idea of the importance of career experiences in the development of leadership skills would have a broader base of support.

Another research effort could use the techniques of random sampling. A random sample of principals could be interviewed using the same interview instrument. That type of research could provide data to compare those identified as effective school leaders with a random sample of principals which would theoretically include effective and ineffective principals.

People who have tried the principalship and failed or simply decided that the role is not for them could be sought out and interviewed. This would provide another base of data for comparison with the principals identified as effective.

The categories of experience that were developed in this research could be used to develop a survey instrument that could be used with a

much larger sample of principals. This survey research could provide a much broader base of information to confirm or invalidate the data presented here.

All of these efforts could lead to a broader data base on the importance of career learning experiences in the leadership development of school leaders. It is generally recognized that schools must improve and adapt to changing conditions in society in order to provide an appropriate educational opportunity for all students. One area of improvement that is needed is in the selection and training of school leaders. This research may provide a base of knowledge about the important leadership enhancing career experiences that will further progress in the area of school leadership development. Perhaps a systematic program for the development of school leaders could evolve from this research effort that would benefit school systems, universities and individuals interested in their own leadership development.

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