

AN APPROACH TO DEVELOPING A PROGRAM FOR TRAINING SCHOOL  
ADMINISTRATORS  
1965

W.R. Strong, ED.D, S.A.

The purpose of this paper is not to condemn or to criticize. Its primary purpose is to present a serious problem facing educational leaders and to provide some background into the factors that have created the problem and to suggest a possible course of action which may help to resolve the problem.

Basic problem facing every school administrator and school system.

Change is the biggest problem facing every school administrator. Problems develop whenever the administrator is unable to predict accurately the direction and the force of change. His problems are compounded by that lack of critical human interaction, conceptual and technical skills necessary to cope with new situations.

The evidence is overwhelmingly clear that many school administrators have not learned these skills or their level of proficiency is inadequate to meet the demands of the situations in which they find themselves. One only has to look at the number of teacher strikes the failure of tax and bond levies; student achievement the tenure of administrators- especially superintendents- and the internal and external criticism of the educational system to see the magnitude of the problem.

It is a well known tenet of social behavior that whenever a group fails to perform a service for a society that created and supports it, the society will seek alternatives to satisfy its needs. Houts<sup>1</sup> phrased it well when he said in an editorial, "Unless principals actively take part in this process, (referring to needed changes in education) and like Henry James take an advantage of that second chance to help add to, erase, enhance, and reshape the myriads of functions that compose their role, the principal-ship will be rewritten and unmistakably diminished by others."

Change has rendered many administrators and techniques for training administrators obsolete. While there have been and presently are attempts to up-date our administrative training programs these programs have made little progress. The failure of the program designers to recognize the basic causation factors of the problem negates their efforts towards solving the problem. Mere alteration of old programs and techniques will fail as they are based on ineffectual systems and out-dated concepts. One might say it is a new ball game in which old talent and expertise may be used, but only in accordance to the demands of the new game. This new game demands new perceptions and concepts of what are the roles and scope of the educational leader and of the education process.

Fortunately there are many groups of educators throughout the country working on the problems of educational administration. The task is difficult because of the rapid change taking place in society and the lack of co-operative action on those involved in developing school administrators. Even the training of educational administrators is of very recent vintage.

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<sup>1</sup> Houts, Paul L. "Editorial- The Remaking of the Principalship," National Elementary Principal. 52:7, Spring, 1974.

### More Problems and a plan of action.

It has only been in the last few decades that serious attention has been given to the "theoretical and scientific" process of administration. Even today this phase of training administrators is in an infant stage. The nature of this process demands a greater interaction and cooperativeness on the parts of the administrative training institutions and the institutions which use these administrators. Neither institution has been willing to compromise. There has been much talk but little action. Most of the action that has been precipitated has been unilateral. Several institutions, usually departments of school administration, have studied the problem and have come up with some excellent ideas which result in good publications but little else. College people feel that the public school people don't understand the problem and the public school people are certain that those college professors don't know what they are talking about. It is the "I am right and you are wrong" concept. So each side marshals its evidence to support its position and as a result the schism between these two important elements of the educational structure becomes more pronounced and wider - to the detriment of all.

It was out of such a situation that the following administrative procedure developed. A series of educational conferences were conducted by the Teacher Development Program at Texas Southern University and the Region IV Education Service Center to explore important educational problems. One of the major problems to evolve was the training and role of the school administrator. Everyone of course felt what they were doing was right, but most of them conceded that there was room for improvement. Since the teacher training institutions at that time were under a mandate from the State to develop competency based educational programs it was decided to pool the resources of the major educational institutions, state department, regional centers, local school districts and colleges of education, to determine what was needed to develop an effective school administrator. Some of our university colleagues immediately informed us that we were wasting time and effort as there had been several studies along these lines which would tell us what an effective school administrator should know. For those interested in reading some of these studies I recommend (see bibliography) 2A. A. S.A. Study 1960, 3Miller, 4Campbell, 5 Len, 6Goldhammer, 7 McCleary and the series of reports that came out of the Cooperative Program in Administration (CPEA) and the University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA) sponsored studies. These studies were good and the data informative, but somehow the job wasn't getting done. It was decided that maybe it would be worth our time, effort, and money to go ahead with the project. At least we could be certain that we had input from all involved administrative levels. It would also provide an opportunity to analyze and compare the process as well as the ultimate competencies or administrative skills deemed important. Out of the study would evolve:

1. A unified approach by a school of education, local school districts and a Regional Education Service Center of the State to determine what kinds of skills and knowledge does an administrator need to be effective in a given position.
2. The development of a model for training, school administrators based upon the determined competencies.

3. A verification of the effectiveness of such model. Additional benefits that were felt might accrue from such a project would be:

1. A self-analysis of the present mode of operation by the college of its administrative training program and of each individual administrator involved in the project.

2. A closer working relationship between the various institutions.
3. New strategies for developing school administrators.
4. A better and more comprehensive system of evaluation of the system's operation.

During the initial administrative conferences an attempt was made to secure a representative cross-section of the administrative organizations in the areas. Approximately 188 school districts, ranging in size from a student enrollment of 1000 to over 250,000. Besides school size, these factors were also considered: socio-economic level of the school's population, race, sex, geographical area, type of school, and level of administrative position. The basic strategy was to have this group meet for a workshop in which they would attempt to delineate the competencies they felt were critical for the effective performance of an administrator. Prior to the meeting each person was asked to list in rank order 10 things he felt were critical to the performance of his specific administrative task. At the meeting the 110 administrators were divided randomly into 10 groups and were asked to list what they considered to be critical competencies that administrators in the following positions needed to be effective. The administrative positions selected were: (1) Elementary principal, (2) Secondary Principal, and (3) Superintendent. After listing the competencies each group was asked to rank the 10 competencies they felt most important. It was agreed that the following definition of competency would be used. A competency is a pre-determined level of proficiency or achievement in a skill, in knowledge of content, or in behavior.

From the initial meeting evolved approximately 300 competencies and a recommendation to limit it to the broad area of administration rather than specific areas. It was felt that basically the same skills would be required at all levels and the differentiation could come later and would be one of degree rather than structure. Accepting the suggestion to confine the initial study to general administrative competencies a modified version of the Delphi Technique was implemented. This technique was decided upon as being the most practical and effective procedure of involving the greatest number of administrators in the Consortium area. The original list had been consolidated into 105 competencies and that list was sent to 600 administrators in the region. They were asked to evaluate each item in terms of its importance. The lists returned were analyzed and the ratings and consensus on items were indicated. These lists were then sent to the administrators to re-analyze and revise if they so desired. If they were outside of the consensus on an item they were asked to state their reason. The last or the third list to be sent out included the list of competencies, ratings, the consensus, and the minorities' opinions. It provided a final opportunity for a change of opinion.

From this procedure the group selected a list of 46 competencies which were, generally considered to be important for a person to function effectively as an administrator. It wasn't assumed that these competencies were the final authority. However they do represent what a large number of active school administrators believe are skills and the kinds of expertise that administrators need to do an effective job. The task was begun and a group of college professors and school administrators agreed that each might have something to offer the other and that working together the problem was more likely to be resolved than if each group worked alone.

The future demands that these and other competencies be translated into performances that: (1) are relevant to particular levels and types of administration; (2) programs to achieve them can be developed and (3) they can be reality tested. Progress is currently being made on steps 1 and 2 and if things continue as expected maybe such a model can be developed, implemented and tested within the next few years.

As was stated earlier if educators don't make the needed changes someone else will. The administrators and college people in this area feel that they are best prepared to do what needs to be done and as professionals it is our responsibility to try. The biggest task may be simply recognizing the problem and then pulling together the forces of education to solve it. The author would appreciate any recommendations or suggestions that might facilitate our task. The competencies for an administrator are listed below. If you have any specific competencies or performances relevant to a particular level of administration please share them with us.

(Tentative) CRITICAL ADMINISTRATIVE COMPETENCIES

An effective school administrator must:

1. Be able to organize.
2. Be able to promote change.
3. Be able to conceptualize the educational process.
4. Be able to conceptualize the political interactions and organizational structure.
5. Be able to collect and assimilate information, and translate them into action.
6. Be able to make judgments and decisions.
7. Be able to use effective oral, written and mass media processes of communication.
8. Be able to see beyond the present.
9. Be able to think creatively.
10. Be able to evaluate choices and provide direction.
11. Be able for the individual to recognize his/her abilities and limitations.
12. Be able to talk and work effectively with individuals and groups.
13. Be able to sell himself and his ideas to others.
14. Be a leader.
15. Be able to establish rapport with people.
16. Be flexible.
17. Have a commitment.
18. Be able to live with ambiguity and pressures.
19. Be able to command respect.
20. Be able to resolve conflicts.
21. Be able to see things as the other person does.
22. Know and be able to use human relations techniques.
23. Know basic cultural and ideologies of people with whom he works and associates.
24. Be able to motivate people.
25. Be able to see group goals and help group clarify and achieve their goals.
26. Be able to listen and accept criticism.
27. Be patient. 28.
- Be demanding when situation warrants.
29. Be able to control emotions in stress situations.
30. Be able to establish responsibilities.
31. be able to develop and effectuate effective in-service education programs.
32. Be able to evaluate personnel and educational programs.
33. Be able to explain the school's philosophy, policies and operations to the staff and the community.
34. Be able to interpret and conduct research studies.
35. Be able to facilitate the development and operations of educational programs.
36. Be able to delegate authority and responsibility.

37. Be able to select the personnel needed for the task.
38. Be able to recommend staff members for re-employment, promotion or dismissal.
39. Be able to organize space, time, facilities and personnel to achieve educational objectives.
40. Be able to keep an up-to-date inventory of facilities and instructional materials available.
41. Be able to develop budgets.
42. Be able to use the Systems' approach in educational planning and operations.
43. Be able to do task analysis and write job specifications.
44. Be able to supervise personnel.
45. Be able to coordinate and use the various services and resources available in the district and community,
46. Be able to keep self and staff abreast of legal and educational changes which affect their educational program.

An attempt was made by the Department of Education Administration to incorporate all of these objectives into the training programs for administrators. The structure of the curriculum, university and state regulations along with some factuality resistance made the task difficult. Probably a program like Strong used in The Teacher Development Program would be more effective. The task appears to be overwhelming, but it can and must be done if we are to have an effective public school system.

The job of the administrator is great but if the administrator has an effective organization and team, the task is manageable. The primary task of any administrator is to clearly define what the organization is designed to accomplish and then provide the personnel the freedom and resources to do the job. Another important task is to have an evaluation system to monitor the process and results.

In the final analysis the administrator is the key to any organization.

### **My opinion and evaluation of school administrators in 2008**

In my opinion administrators can be divided into two groups: those who can evaluate a situation and make a decision appropriate to the circumstances and those who rigidly make decisions according to written rules or policy with little regards to the situation or circumstance. Too many school administrators refuse to make important decisions unless there is written instructions. They hesitate to make independent decisions as they are afraid of alienating someone or group which might cause criticism or jeopardize their job. Policies and regulations are important to insure direction and consistency of operation of an organization. They are not intended to, nor can they cover every situation that is why administrators are needed.

There are many good education administrators today but we have too many that lack the leadership abilities for effective and efficient operation of the education institutions and systems. Maybe it is the fear of lawsuits, parental pressure, lack of appropriate training or other factors that determines their administrative style. For whatever reason, the education of boys and girls are suffering. Maybe that is one of the main reasons that discipline in schools has deteriorated, the cost of education has increased, and student achievement has declined.

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