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ABSTRACT

A major movement is underway to reorder preservice
and inservice preparation, certification requirements, and on-the-job
performance of public school administrators in terms of specified
competencies. The movement stems from the recognized need for more
precision in training programs and more valid assessment procedures
for measuring the performance of administrative officers. The intent
of the study reported here was to develop procedures that would
identify and validate statements of competence that could then be
used in satisfying the need for data-based planning of preservice and
inservice educational programs. These same validated statements of
competence could also be used as criteria for personnel selection, or
for advancement and merit considerations. This procedure may thus be
used to produce data for determining which competencies ought to be
acquired in a preservice educational program for preparing
principals, or with inservice programs that seek to improve the
quality of the principalship. (Authors)

COMPETENCIES OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL:

A NEED ASSESSMENT STUDY

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A major movement is underway to reorder pre-service and in-service

preparation, certification requirements, and on-the-job performance of

public school administrators in terms of specified competencies. The move-

ment stems from the recognized need for more precision in training programs

and more valid assessment procedures for measuring the performance of

administrative officers. Whether a suitable interface is accomplished

between profession definition of competence and pressures for accountability

will likely be determined by the development of adequate methods for iden-

tifying and validating competencies needed for various job roles.

Attention to the specification of competencies in the principalship

were begun seriously on a nationwide scale by a national conference spon-

sored by NASSP and the Danforth Foundation which resulted in an entire issue

of the NASSP Bulletin (March 1972) devoted to the "Preparation of the Secon-

dary School Principal." An Interest Group on the Competency Based Curricu-

lum in Educational Administration was formed in August of 1972 by the

National Conference of Professors of Educational Administration, and CFK Ltd.

aided the founding of the CCBC Notebook, a quarterly published at the Univer-

sity of Utah. The Notebook, begun in January 1972, links a national network

interested in competency based administration. With state and foundation

support, an R & D Laboratory was established in the Department of Educa-

tional Administration at the University of Utah and a series of studies on

competency begun. This report concerns that effort and deals with the

methodology and findings of a study which attempts to state and prioritize

competencies for the secondary school principal.

Rationale

The case for specifying competencies in the form of statements deriving from need assessment surveys and the use of judgments relative to those statements to guide preparation program planning is well documented. Webster (1959) studied competencies needed by superintendents using a need assessment survey. Laurence (1958) developed a source book of competencies based upon judgments of principals, supervisors, and professors of school administration. Treblas (1966) studied priorities of listings of competencies in educational administration as perceived by school superintendents. Alberto (1970) carried the need assessment survey approach to a number of groups such as government and university officials, superintendents, and principals. Roger Kaufman has perhaps published the most useful theoretical works relating to need assessment in education (1965, 1968, 1970).

The need for this study arose from two sources. First, earlier studies contained no validation procedures and were limited surveys which terminated with publication of results. Second, no effort has been made to conduct a need assessment of administrative competencies, within the system concept, and carry through to program planning and implementation. Kaufman (cited above) advocates this approach for education. Marshall Frinks (1972), Sheehan (1967), McCleary (1978), among others, have proposed system models. The application of a system model to program planning now becomes a possibility, and the need assessment as exemplified by this study begins that process.

Development of the Study

The study is conceived as one phase of an extended process, in fact a second phase, for an extensive job analysis of the principalship which preceded it. Under the direction of E. T. Demars, Kenneth Van Otten

Halsey Cook each completed a dissertation (1972) which provided the initial competency identification. From the job analysis thirty-nine competency statements were identified. The statements conformed to criteria established by Parsons (1972) and were grouped into seven categories.

A national sample was obtained from a group of secondary school principals identified and invited to participate in CFK Ltd. projects because of "overall excellence" in developmental activities. This sample, it was assumed, would provide a group of principals who were proven administrators, oriented to the future, and capable of judging competencies important to the principalship. Nothing relative to these assumptions was questioned from interviews following completion of the instruments or from an analysis of responses to the instrument itself.

Data were collected in the form of responses to the thirty-nine competency statements. Each competency was rated on a scale of importance from 0.0 to 4.0 and categorized in terms of competency level required for entry to the principalship as "not needed," "familiar with," "understand," and "able to apply."

Findings

The approach taken in tabulating the data was to employ the Mean and Standard Deviation of each area of competence as ranking and concurrence indicators. The Mean was considered the "Index of Importance," a high Mean indicating an important area of high priority. The Standard Deviation was regarded as the "Index of Consensus," a low sigma indicating substantial agreement.

By using these indices, the areas of competence were ranked in order of their perceived importance, the results appearing in Table 1. The first five areas of competence are considered reasonably important by those

sampled in spite of the fact that the degrees of consensus were somewhat low (high sigmas). It is interesting to note that in these data the degree of consensus generally declines with the degree of importance, suggesting that the broader range of opinion lowered the importance of lower ranked areas of competence. This does not necessarily have to occur as is seen in the third ranked area of competence, "Principal and Staff Personnel." The comparative lack of agreement as to the importance of this competence did not cause it to be ranked as a competence of low importance.

In 33 of the 39 competency statements, the responses were the result of a significant difference between the populations responding. In 29 of the competency statements the significance existed at the 1% level, and in 4 of the statements, significance was found at the 5% level.

Of the 39 statements showing significant difference between populations, 32 were judged important, or very important, by the principals sampled. Only one of the competency statements showing significantly different populations was deemed to be unimportant. This statement dealt with the administration of the schools' auxiliary services and programs.

The areas of competence as ranked were also compared with each other to determine whether or not a higher ranked area of competence was significantly different (defensibly dissimilar) when compared with its neighbors. The results were obtained through use of the t-Test and are reported in Table 2.

As can be seen in Table 2, the two highest ranked areas of competence were significantly different from the two lowest ranked areas. The areas of competence falling between the two highest and two lowest areas of competence are not statistically distinguishable from either end of the ranking scale, unless a person is willing to accept the lower levels of dependability indicated in the matrix.

Table 1

RANKING THE AREAS OF COMPETENCE BY THEIR MEANS

INDICATORS

Rank	Area of Competence	Index of Importance (M)	Index of Consensus (S.D.)
1	Principal & Climate	3.39	.70 [2]
2	Principal & Public Relations	3.37	.64 [1]
3	Principal & Staff Personnel	3.22	.87 [5]
4	Principal & Instruction	3.14	.78 [3]
5	Principal, Programs & Planning	3.14	.79 [4]
6	Principal & Student Personnel	2.78	.87 [6]
7	Principal & Management	2.75	.91 [7]

Overall Mean = 3.04

Overall Standard Deviation = .86

Table 2

MATRIX OF t-TESTS' LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Rank	Area of Competence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	Principal & Management	1%	1%	10%	5%	10%		
6	Principal & Student Pers.	1%	1%		10%			
5	Principal, Programs-Plan.							10%
4	Principal & Instruction						10%	5%
3	Principal & Staff Pers.							10%
2	Principal & Pub. Rel.						1%	1%
1	Principal & Climate						1%	1%

1 Principal & Climate
2 Principal & Public Relations
3 Principal & Staff Personnel
4 Principal & Instruction
5 Principal, Programs & Plan.
6 Principal & Student Personnel
7 Principal & Management

Summary

The intent of the study was to develop procedures that would identify and validate statements of competence that could then be used in satisfying the need for data-based planning of pre-service and in-service educational programs. These same validated statements of competence could also be used as criteria for personnel selection, or for advancement and merit considerations.

In this light, this procedure may be used to produce data that can be used for determining which competencies ought to be acquired in a pre-service educational program for preparing principals, or with in-service programs that seek to improve the quality of the principalship.

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