

Report from the Field

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Effective Schools: Focus on the Principal

Abstract

This study focused on what effective school principals do and what belief systems mediate their actions. Three principals were studied in their working environments. The study found that procedures were blended into a pattern of management informed by a system of beliefs. This system seemed to manifest itself in three themes, "mind-set", "reaching out", and "risk-taking" and "intuition" as an administrative tool. The author concludes that effective principals seem to have a clear grasp of the relationship between beliefs and action and that researchers and teachers of administrators will need to understand this if we are to understand how effectiveness is achieved in schools.

Résumé

La présente étude met l'accent sur les interventions de principaux d'école efficaces et sur les systèmes de valeur qui régissent leurs interventions. Elle a porté sur trois principaux, observés dans leur milieu de travail. Il a été constaté que leurs procédures étaient intégrées à un mode de gestion s'appuyant sur un ensemble de convictions. Ce système semble se manifester sous plusieurs formes, à savoir la préparation mentale (mind set), la prévenance (reaching out), la capacité de prendre des risques et l'intuition considérées comme outil administratif. L'auteur conclut que les principaux d'école qui sont efficaces semblent comprendre clairement le lien qui existe entre les convictions et les actions et que les chercheurs et les professeurs qui forment les administrateurs devront comprendre ce fait s'ils souhaitent saisir à quoi tient l'efficacité dans une école.

The principalship has been studied from many angles. Several studies (Bridges, 1982; Griffiths, Clarke, Wynn, & Innacone, 1962; Hoy

& Miskel, 1978; Morris, Crowson, Hurqitz, & Porter-Gehrie, 1981) have focused on tasks, responsibilities, and areas of training for achieving these tasks; other studies (Allison, 1983; Hall, Wuchitech, & Williams, 1980; Rogers, 1980) have examined the principal's status and authority, indicating that principals feel less in control, more governed by rules, and more open to public scrutiny. Another group of researchers (Benjamin, 1981; Dwyer, Lee, Rowan, & Bossert, 1983; Mulford, 1986; Wolcott, 1973) has examined what principals do in a day's work. Most of these reach the same conclusion as Mintzberg (1973) did in his treatise about administrators, namely, that the principal's work is characterized by brevity, variety, and fragmentation and that routines and cycles were necessary for their maintenance and development functions.

Much of the literature on effective schools (Austin, 1979; Behling et al., 1984; Caldwell & Misko, 1984; Edmonds, 1979; Mellor & Chapman, 1984; Mulford, 1986; Rutter et al., 1979) has concentrated on the characteristics common to schools deemed effective. They emphasize such characteristics as sense of mission, high expectations, academic focus, consistent feedback on academic performance, positive motivational strategies, positive climate, and strong administrative leadership. Scholars like Blumberg and Greenfield (1980), D'Amico (1982), Dwyer et al. (1983), and Furtwengler (1985) have indicated that principals make the difference. In the main, however, the focus seemed to be on what aspects of school functioning lead to high achievement gains.

Grady, Wayson, and Zirkel (1989) sounded a cautionary note about the effective school literature, however. They warn us that the research is not as clear as is claimed, that the formula is too simplistic, is primarily concerned with narrow educational outcomes, and obscures what really happens to make a good school. Indeed, the literature on the principalship is complex, presenting the principal at once as both powerful and influential and as one controlled by regulations from a central office and consumed by routine and fragmentation.

What the literature has not concentrated on is what principals do to achieve effectiveness in their schools and what beliefs sustain them in their efforts to attain effectiveness. These questions formed the focus of the study reported here.

Methodology

The methodology chosen was naturalistic. This permitted the researcher to study principals in their actual job environments and to gain some insight into the meaning of the acts they performed and the interactions in which they engaged. Three principals were observed continu-

ously for three days each as they went about the performance of their duties. They were nominated by district administrators using the following criteria: (1) principal had to have spent at least three years in the school; (2) principal was considered an efficient administrator; and, (3) school had undergone positive change under the principal's leadership.

The approach used was that of the participant-observer. The researcher was therefore able to observe and describe activities as they occurred in terms of location, participants, type of contact, type of event, and the content of the interaction. The researcher was provided with space in the principals' offices and accompanied them to whatever location an interaction demanded. Observations were recorded as they occurred. These handwritten notes were later classified according to administrative, supervisory, or curricular functions of the principal's role. In addition to the documentation of the direct observation of the principal's behaviours, interviews were conducted with each principal after the days of observation. The interviews, administered through a semi-structured interview schedule, were designed to elicit information from the principals on their beliefs and the reasons underlying their actions. Questions were developed directly from the observation data. The following are sample questions:

- How do you get staff to subscribe to and carry out school goals?
- A lot of what you do seems fast-paced and unscheduled; how do you account for this and how do you keep the overall school management in perspective?
- Is there a special reason why staff stop by to share personal interest items?
- What is the significance of touring the building?

The responses were then examined for beliefs which principals indicated sustained them in the management of their schools.

Setting of the Study

This background information is provided to make the findings more intelligible.

School A

This is an open concept elementary school with an enrollment of 270 students from junior kindergarten to grade six. It is located in the inner city in a low socio-economic area of a mid-sized city in Ontario. Its roll is about 40% native and tends to be highly transient. Sixty to 80% of the students come from single-parent families and there is a high

proportion of families with social agency involvement. Teachers have to deal with many dysfunctional families and have identified behaviours and values which tend to interfere with learning.

School A has 13.5 full-time staff and undergoes high staff turnover every year. At the time of the research, it had an all-female staff, including the principal and vice-principal. The school itself is built on the community concept, houses a "Parks and Recreation" arm within its walls, and runs a daily breakfast program for needy students.

The principal holds a teaching certificate and BA and MEd degrees. Her Master's specialization is in Educational Administration. She has been a school principal for five years with the last three being spent at School A.

School B

This is a large secondary school with 1,300 students, 90 teachers, a principal (female) and two vice-principals – one male, one female. It is an "inner-city" school in a large city in Manitoba, with a large catchment area which stretches beyond its "geographic" boundaries. It has a high mobility rate, particularly among grades 7-9 students. Immigrant and aboriginal students make up a large percentage of its enrollment.

It offers a variety of programs, including programs for the trainable mentally-challenged, programs for emotionally disturbed students, and a burgeoning work-experience program. It is organized in multidisciplinary teams for grades 7 and 8 and along subject-area department lines for grades 9-12. It has strong industrial arts, home economics, business education, and athletic programs. The school boasts an 80-year tradition of excellence and has a sense of history born of such a tradition.

The principal holds B.Sc. and B.Ed. degrees from a Canadian university and M.Ed. and Ed.D. degrees in Educational Psychology with a concentration in measurement and evaluation from an American university. She has been a school administrator for 13 years, the last eight of these at School B.

School C

This is a small academic school set in the environs of a university in British Columbia. It has an enrollment of 270 students from grades 8 to 12. It has a small catchment area and draws its students from across the school district. It counts a high proportion of the children of university faculty and graduate students among its numbers.

The school's program utilizes multigrade homeroom strategies, a humanities program rather than the district English and social studies program, and now exhibits a structured, academic approach from the previous self-paced, *laissez-faire* process that characterized the behaviour of some students and staff. It has a strong student council presence in the school, fosters a community relationship through a program called "Partners in Education," and supports involvement with the university. Internally, it encourages student participation particularly by having student council members and senior students exercise leadership through such things as work with "English as a Second Language" students.

The principal (female) holds BA and MEd degrees. Her specialization is in mathematics methodology. She has spent the last six and one-half years as principal of this school.

Findings

Internal and external interaction of principals

Table 1 provides a composite of the record of interaction of the three principals over a three-day period. The table, designed by activity, reveals categories of behaviour ranging from desk work and mail to telephone interactions and movement about the school. Desk work represents the time the principals spent in their offices when there was no physical interaction, and tours represent visits to various areas of the school. The number of unscheduled meetings compared with scheduled meetings and the difference in the number of tours taken across the three schools are of particular interest. In School A, unscheduled meetings outnumbered scheduled meetings ten to one; in School B, unscheduled meetings were six times the number of scheduled meetings, and in School C unscheduled meetings ran about seven times the number of scheduled meetings. Tours, mail, and telephone calls also evoke some interest. In the secondary schools, incoming mail outnumbered outgoing mail significantly. The difference in the elementary principal's incoming and outgoing mail can be explained by the information reports she had to send to the district office. In contrast to mail, there were more telephone calls initiated than received by the principals. Out-going calls also tended to be longer. Tours seemed to be a function of school size. The elementary principal made frequent and systematic tours while the secondary principals' tours were fewer and not as strictly planned. Desk work seemed in all three cases to be unplanned and to occur when the principals found some breathing room.

In this section the interaction activities in which the principals engaged and the number and kinds of participants with whom they were

Table 1
Analysis of the chronology record of principals' interaction activities

Category	Principal A	Principal B	Principal C
Desk Work			
No. of sessions	34	28	22
Mail			
In-coming	9	31	34
Out-going	12	18	7
Meetings			
Scheduled	5	15	10
Unscheduled	50	98	67
Telephone Calls			
In-coming	7	11	17
Out-going	17	27	20
Tours*			
Number taken	33	8	19
Activities Recorded	167	236	196
Time Spent Over 3 Days	21 hrs. 36 min.	24 hrs. 50 min.	22 hrs. 4 min.

*Tours often included more than one interaction, hence the difference between these numbers and the following tables.

involved are explored. For purposes of analysis the activities were divided into three broad categories: administrative, supervisory, and curricular, representing the major functions of the principals' role. Administrative represents such things as policy, desk work, building maintenance, budget, secretarial requests, allocation of resources, answering demands from parents, handling emergency situations (e.g., bus problems), custodial dealings, meeting the public (police, probation officers), and decisions about substitutes. Supervisory represents such things as discipline, behaviour problems, evaluation of teacher performance, evaluation of student services and activities, running staff meetings, pastoral care, outdoor recess duty, suspension of students, and personnel matters. Curricular functions include program development meetings, student placement, teaching, reviewing student files, evaluating student programs, visiting classrooms, and authorizing field trips.

The interaction activities were further examined by a participant's location (internal and external) and by time of day. Table 2 indicates that

principals were quite busy before formal classes began in the morning and were even busier after formal closure at the end of the day. Opening to lunch was undoubtedly the busiest portion of the day both for the elementary school and the two secondary schools. Of the total number of activities, administrative activities led the way in all cases. Lunch hour did not really operate as a lunch hour. Principals were often disturbed by unscheduled visits. Of the three functions, the supervisory seemed less demanding than the others.

Table 2
Frequency distribution: Time of day

Time Period	Administrative			Supervisory			Curricular		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Before Classes	6	8	13	9	6	6	6	13	12
Opening to lunch	37	41	49	21	21	19	25	37	33
Lunch hour	7	3	6	7	2	3	-	6	9
Lunch to closure	3	25	26	15	9	14	15	21	19
Closure to departure	11	7	12	5	5	8	5	8	11
TOTAL number of activities	74	84	106	57	43	50	51	85	84
Cumulative Totals							182	212	240
Proportion of activities	41%	40%	44%	31%	20%	21%	28%	40%	35%

Tables 3 and 4 summarize the frequency of internal and external interaction, respectively, by group. Internal groups were defined as teachers, students, administrators within the school, and secretarial staff; external groups were defined as administrators based at the school board office, parents, trustees, administrators outside the school, ministry officials, police, probation officers, social workers, and other professionals. Internal interaction in each case accounted for 75% of all activities in which principals engaged. Interaction with teachers accounted for about half of this interaction in each school. The contact tended to be mainly for curricular or supervisory purposes.

Board officials formed the main external contacts for the elementary principal. This was followed by parents and the general public, in stark contrast to the secondary schools which tended to interact more with the general public. (Two-thirds of their interaction fell into this category.) Contact with board officials comprised less than one-quarter of their interaction. Interaction with parents for the secondary principals

Table 3
Frequency distribution: Internal interaction by group

Internal Group	Administrative			Supervisory			Curricular		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Teachers*	9	30	18	28	28	21	25	37	39
Students	14	10	5	26	13	18	17	19	21
Administrators	4	14	10	-	7	1	2	21	9
Secretarial staff	13	14	18	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	40	68	51	54	48	40	44	77	69
Cumulative Totals							138	193	160

*Counsellors were counted as teachers

Table 4
Frequency distribution: External interaction by group

External Group	Administrative			Supervisory			Curricular		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Board officials	18	9	8	-	-	-	2	2	2
Parents	6	4	3	3	2	3	3	-	1
Trustees	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	10	25	22	-	-	-	2	5	13
TOTAL	34	38	33	3	2	3	7	7	17
Cumulative Totals							44	47	52

was only half that of the elementary principal. In neither the elementary nor the secondary case did the principal initiate communication or receive any communication from trustees. Most internal interaction was face-to-face while external interaction tended to be split between written, telephone, and face-to-face.

The data provided in the tables indicate that both the elementary principal and the two secondary principals operated at something approaching a hectic pace; their interaction was mainly internal; most of their daily contacts tended to be unscheduled as was their desk work; there was more frequent interaction with secretarial staff than with fellow administrators (the latter was of longer duration); curricular contact was more frequent than supervisory though less so than administrative; interaction with students varied among the three schools with less contact occurring as the size of the school increased. Decisions were frequent, seemed minor in the context of running the school, and were

reactive to the ever-occurring daily demands from unscheduled events but seemed to provide a means for participants to resolve their problem or a basis on which they could make their decisions. These daily decisions seemed to be the hub of school operations with the principal being at the centre evidenced by the action of the principal in School C in a staff meeting. I noticed that at a critical point in a prolonged discussion she had interjected to outline a position counter to the prevailing direction. When she was asked about this afterwards, she gave this response:

They know that if I didn't want to listen to them, I wouldn't ask them. They know there is an element of trust. I don't like to see arrogance in administrators. There is a difference. They know I'm willing to try new ideas and risk occasional failure. For example, I tried to have split grades; teachers didn't like it, so we changed it as we had the numbers to permit this. I weigh things and come down on the side of the teacher.

What beliefs mediate their actions

In discussing the findings one is tempted to interpret the principal's decision-making scope as limited and her operation as nondeliberative and circumscribed by the elements of variety, brevity, fragmentation, and speed of action, as is noted in the research literature (Mintzberg, 1973; Crowson, 1980; Willower, 1981; Willis, 1980). Reflection, however, quickly indicates that the effectiveness which characterized the principals' time of administration had to be rooted in other factors. The second phase of this research therefore examined the belief systems which guided the principals' actions and helped them to move beyond the daily operational interactive patterns.

Open door approaches: While the literature reports that principals are generally concerned about the "weighting down" on their time and emotional energies of the open, democratic process toward problem resolution and that standard operating procedures of the organization force principals to abandon the more informal, verbal interactions in task-related situations (Casey, 1980), principals in this study believed that an "open door" policy was essential to their effectiveness. It allowed them to give a more unbiased decision when dealing with students and teachers and allowed them to make use of the special talents and interests. Principal A expressed it this way: "If I had a closed door policy, I wouldn't have the knowledge to deal with staff. There are no cliques as such so that no one has to speak for a group; everyone can express ideas." Principal B held this as critical to her effectiveness. "Education by its nature depends on human interaction; I have difficulty visualizing it

working well if one component – the principal – removed herself from the interaction for some part of the time. With a ‘closed door’ and presumably a ‘by appointment only’ mode of operation, the spontaneous interactions would disappear. . . I believe that would remove a good deal of the day-to-day control of what is happening in the school. It would also effectively remove a couple of important sources of information. Students and, to a lesser extent, parents are not inclined to ‘come back later’ if they have questions, concerns, or suggestions of an immediate nature.”

Getting staff to subscribe to and carry out goals: It was clear that the three principals did not operate on a chance or *ad hoc* philosophy. They held firm beliefs about how to get staff to commit to and carry out goals. Principal A, for example, recruited in such a way that those who joined her staff knew clearly into what goals they were buying. Another approach was to let leadership change hands for different thrusts and to include some formal schemes for teachers by responding to needs for individuals or for groups of teachers. Principal B indicated that her school’s traditions and low staff turnover were helpful factors in building for the long term. She, however, used a process of assimilation/acculturation for new staff – “behaviour that conforms is subtly reinforced; what does not, is corrected, ignored, and ultimately extinguished. The principal’s role is greater than that of staff members. Consistency is important. Change can be slow and difficult but there is the option of beginning a program (with a few teachers), watching it grow, and then seeing other teachers opt in, thereby making it a part of the tradition.” Principal C felt that involving staff in the development of school goals and allowing them ownership and commitment were very effective in goal achievement.

Organizing for effectiveness: Early studies of principals and managers focused on traits of leadership in the belief that leadership was “trait-based” and by extension that effectiveness might depend on the presence or absence of such traits. Principals in this study did not have any strong feelings about traits. They believed, however, that the way in which one organized the school made a difference. Principal C, for example, believed that there was a need for a scheme for organizing oneself and the workplace. “More organization has been possible here by my direct involvement (e.g., asking specific detailed questions) which forces others to be sensitive to details and not to let things slough by.” Principals A and B would also include reliance on the secretarial staff for organizing time and paper flow and an active involvement of teachers as a way of sharing responsibility and providing solutions. One principal put it this way: “Many committee meetings result in decisions which I could have predicted – or dictated – but staff (individual and collective) own-

ership for decisions is important as is the opportunity for people to work through problems together.”

More explicit job descriptions for vice-principals, administrative assistants, and others in the administrative hierarchy and having procedures in place were thought useful, though principals were under no delusions that comprehensive procedures would cover all eventualities.

Touring the building: The principals believed that touring the building provided two-way benefits. On the one hand, it provided an important source of information for them. For example, Principal C: “It also lets me know what’s going on and lets others know I’m interested. It gives me a chance to check the pulse at any given time.” Or Principal B: “You recognize students who are regularly not where they should be; you can see which classrooms have projects and group activities, lab experiments, and manipulative math materials; you notice which teachers are constantly removing students from their classrooms. Two of my main sources of information are walking around the building and chatting with people who drop by the office, the former provides a truer picture of what’s going on.” On the other hand, it gave teachers and students an opportunity to meet with the principal on more informal terms. Principal A put it very succinctly. “I like kids to know that I am here.” Principal B believed that it was important for students to recognize the person in charge of their school and for staff to feel that the principal knew what was happening in the building and for interactions to take place in a less formal way than meetings in the principal’s office.

Understanding and observing the physical security and condition of the building was another objective of touring. Principals indicated that it was the best way to monitor the physical condition of the building itself and to get a sense of the frustration experienced by custodians. Touring was a planned strategy in the principal’s operational repertoire.

Personal touch and the role of friendship: The researcher had observed many staff members and some students just stopping by the principals’ offices to share personal interest items. He inquired about this behaviour. The answer in all three cases related to “friendship.” Principals believed that friendship was a powerful means of establishing relationship, sharing values, and helping staff feel ownership for their role in the school. “It is a matter of being friends, but we are able to maintain a business-like attitude; because we value each other, they can come in when things are difficult. It is encouraged,” was the way Principal A put it. Principals saw it as a helpmate to problem solving as well. Principal B viewed that kind of interaction as a pleasurable way to garner vast amounts of information about what was going on in the school and community,

enabling her to foresee or avoid problems and to pick her times for dealing with various problems.

Focusing on the overall school management: The literature is replete with references to the brevity, variety, and fragmentation of the principal's work (Mintzberg, 1973; Mulford, 1986; Willis, 1980). These studies found that (1) just over one-fifth of activities are interrupted, many never to be resumed; (2) unscheduled meetings occupy the principal for half of the working day; (3) most activities are of one to five minutes duration; and (4) most interaction is on a one-to-one basis. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that many view the principalship as a position of crisis management with the principal moving from one fire to another. Principals in this study acknowledged the brevity, variety, and unscheduled nature of a lot of their activities, but did not let the busy day-to-day activities deflect them from overall school management objectives.

Pursuit of established school goals seemed to be their anchor. They differed, however, in their approach to achieving the goals. Principal A felt that one had to deal with crises as they arose but that an internalized philosophy helped to forward one's goal. Principal B brought a very pragmatic approach to this question, indicating that her pace and approach at school was not unlike that outside of school, "... eight years at the school (therefore) scheduled, regular, standard procedures go on quite nicely without input from me. That leaves the unusual, out-of-the-ordinary and the unscheduled. Even most of these can be handled with reference to some similar situations and implicit behavioural guidelines, hence, the fast pace. I am not sure how overall school management survives. Experience is important. I am always conscious of various deadlines with the school; what needs to be done in advance of what else; where problems may arise; who needs to be kept informed about what; and, how each solution may create a new problem." Principal C saw everything as connected to the overall goals and direction for the school and believed that once the right staff was in place, the overall management could be carried on relying on other people's strengths to support the school's direction.

Discussion

Most studies of school principals tend to be based on perceptions of what principals do. Not often do we find a study combining an investigation of an administrator's beliefs with the observed action of the administrator. This study attempted to explore recorded observations of three principals' activities and their motivating beliefs. The descriptions revealed patterns of principal behaviour either touring the building,

doing desk work, engaging in meetings or telephone activities, pursuing information, or responding to unplanned situations. Interpreting their actions was far more difficult than describing them.

What principals do

Findings in this study confirmed what the literature generally indicated about principals, namely, that the principal's world consists of a hectic pace, brevity, fragmentation, and variety. Comparison of mail and telephone calls revealed that principals received considerably more mail than they sent but made more calls than they received. It may be that principals, like the population at large, are bombarded with inconsequential items of mail and that by virtue of the pace at which they operate and the lack of free time once they arrive at school find the telephone a safer means of interaction in that they can complete interactions before interruption by an unscheduled visitor. The statistics (see Table 1) relating to mail and telephone might be an indicator that effective principals approach their mail and telephones in this way deliberately as a matter of opportunity costs. This supports Mintzberg's proposition about the manager, namely, that "he becomes conditioned by his workload; he develops an appreciation for the opportunity cost of his own time; and he lives continuously with an awareness of what else might or must be done at any time."

With regard to meetings, the high number of unscheduled meetings principals faced makes one wonder how much control principals have over the day-to-day management and whether they may feel a sense of powerlessness to manage the day-to-day affairs of the school and subsequently to control their schools and keep their goals in focus. An answer to this might be found in the beliefs that mediate principals' actions.

What beliefs mediate their actions

In the interviews, responses to questions related to beliefs suggested three themes. The first theme is that effective principals operate with a "mind set" of getting everyone on side through a specific focus. The second theme is that they "reach out" to their staff and, the third theme is that they engage in "risk-taking" and make use of "intuition" as an administrative tool.

Knowing how these themes were manifested may well be a key to understanding principal effectiveness. The first theme, "mind-set", for example entailed more than setting goals or having goals. Principals sought a common understanding of the needs of the school; they talked

of balancing academics with emotional, physical needs and so on and of having enough unity of purpose to define the school's direction. "Mind set" also entailed having staff operate with student success in mind and with very few basic rules to constrain them. As principal B put it, "It's having the realization that there are many ways to achieve purpose and respect for another's ways of doing so and operating from the basic premise that students would really like to succeed and to please the adults who have charge of them." Principal C saw the key as "having staff committed towards a common purpose through strong leadership to promote student opportunities and successes." Principal A stressed freedom within a common framework. "We think through the structures, but don't get bogged down with the mechanical." "Mind set" embraced principal and staff.

The second theme of "reaching out" to their staff seems integral to the effectiveness equation. This seemed to be a way of both building confidence in the operation of the school and also of building trust through the personal touch. Principals did not discourage staff or students from sharing personal interest items. This was considered a function of trust and friendship, two elements high on their list of operational success. "We share common interests. It is a matter of being friends, but we are able to maintain a businesslike attitude." Principal B's view was similar. "These people – staff and students – are at some level friends and we share anecdotes and experiences as does any other group of people who care for each other and enjoy one another's company." Principal C endorsed the theme of reaching out. She indicated that interest in people for their own sake helped them feel ownership for their role in school. This element fostered an interactive collegiality that gave principals legitimacy for their management actions and permitted them the effective use of the strengths of individual staff members.

The third theme, "risk-taking", seems complementary to the two previous themes. Principals having established a favourable working climate through the "mind set" of common school purposes and variation of problem-solving approaches and through the confidence of shared friendships and common interests were not afraid to take risks or use intuition in management of the school. As one principal said, "I can't find it in a book, but I'll go for it." The idea was not to be bogged down but to be willing to try things even at the risk of occasional failure. Risk-taking, however, seemed more than just taking the plunge. It was more akin to putting expectations to work.

Understanding these themes made interpretation of the principals' actions and interaction easier and brought new meaning to the Special

Committee meeting at School A, to the department head meeting at School B, and the staff meeting at School C witnessed by the researcher.

Conclusion

Attempting to separate actions from beliefs motivating those actions can be a risky business for a researcher. Indeed in this study, the open door policy, the various means of getting staff to subscribe to goals, and even activities like touring the building and disposing of mail all seemed to be blended into a pattern of management informed by a system of beliefs. It may be that effective principals have a clear grasp of the relationship of beliefs and action and that researchers and teachers of administrators will need to make greater efforts to understand this if they are to get closer to how effectiveness is really achieved in schools. It is hoped that this study is such a start.

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