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# A Status Study of Elementary School Principals in South Dakota

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A STATUS STUDY of ELEMENTARY - SCHOOL PRINCIPALS  
in SOUTH DAKOTA

by  
James Wade

A problem submitted to the Faculty of South Dakota  
State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Science  
(Plan B)

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years the importance of an adequately trained elementary-school principal has been recognized by many of our school officials. Because of this recognition the State Department of Public Instruction in South Dakota is increasing its requirements for an Elementary-School Principal's Administrative certificate. Effective July 1, 1955, the above certificate will be issued to elementary-school principals who devote one-half or more of their time to administration and supervision, and who have earned nine semester hours of graduate credit in the field of administration, supervision, and guidance, with a minimum of two semester hours of credit in each field. The applicant must also hold a valid high school certificate and must have had one year of successful teaching experience in grades one through eight.<sup>1</sup>

It is the purpose of this study to provide a clearer picture of the status and function of the elementary-school principal in South Dakota.

PROCEDURE

The researcher made one trip to Pierre, South Dakota, and spent a day obtaining information for this study from the annual reports sent in by each high school superintendent in South Dakota for the school year 1953-54. These re-

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1. Journal of South Dakota Education Association February, 1955, p. 217

ports are on file in the offices of the State Department of Public Instruction at Pierre. Additional data were obtained from a questionnaire which was sent to the elementary-school principals employed in South Dakota schools. A list of names of these principals was obtained from the reports previously referred to. The questionnaire was sent to eighty-four principals and returns were obtained from sixty of them which is 71.4 per cent and is considered a valid basis for a study such as this.<sup>2</sup>

This questionnaire, a sample of which is given in the appendices, is in two sections. The first section is designed to determine the status of elementary-school principals, and the second section is designed to determine how much time these principals spend at the various duties they must attend to in their schools. Although the second section is a limited list of the duties of an elementary-school principal and the time spent at these duties, it does include most of the important duties and the ones that most elementary-school principals will come in contact with.

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2. See appendix A

FINDINGS

A great variation is found in the number of years of experience of elementary-school principals. The range of years of experience was from two to fifty years. The median number of years of experience was twenty-two. The principals had been in their present positions from one to forty-one years. The median number of years that the principals had been in their present positions was 8.5.

The range of salaries was from two thousand four hundred (\$2400) dollars to five thousand eight hundred and seventy-five (\$5875) dollars. The median salary was three thousand nine hundred and ninety-five (\$3995) dollars.

Some difficulty was encountered in handling the questionnaire because all of the information desired did not appear on all of the questionnaires.

Thirty of the elementary-school principals believed that their undergraduate training had prepared them for teaching in elementary school. Thirteen of the principals had preparation for high school teaching only, and seventeen principals had preparation for both elementary and high school teaching.

Table I indicates that some of the principals have very little or no undergraduate credit in elementary education. Ten of the principals had five quarter hours of credit or less, however, thirty of the principals had

thirty-six quarter hours of credit or more in elementary education.

Table I

Undergraduate Hours of Credit in Elementary Education

<u>Quarter Hours of Credit</u>	<u>Number of Principals</u>
0-5	10
6-10	1
11-15	5
16-20	6
21-25	2
26-30	1
31-35	3
36-over	10

There were fifty-one responses to the question on the number of graduate hours of credit in elementary education. As shown in Table II eleven principals have five quarter hours of graduate credit or less and thirteen principals have from six to ten hours of credit.

Table II

Graduate Hours of Credit in Elementary Education

<u>Quarter Hours of Credit</u>	<u>Number of Principals</u>
0-5	11
6-10	13
11-15	4
16-20	5
21-25	6
26-30	4
31-35	2
36-over	5

The principals received their undergraduate training in one or more of thirty-six colleges and universities. On an average, each principal had attended two schools. The



principals had been enrolled for undergraduate work 119 times. Sixty-eight of these enrollments had been in eleven South Dakota schools.<sup>3</sup>

The principals having graduate training had made seventy-two enrollments in twenty colleges and universities. Twenty-seven of these enrollments had taken place in three South Dakota schools.<sup>4</sup>

As shown in Table III, thirty-three of the sixty principals were full-time principals. Of the twenty-seven teaching principals only ten taught four hours per day or less. Nine taught five hours per day; six taught six hours per day, and two taught seven hours per day.

Table III

Hours Per Day Spent Teaching School

<u>Number of Hours Teaching</u>	<u>Number of Principals</u>
0	33
1	2
2	2
3	1
4	5
5	9
6	6
7	2
8	0

Some of the principals spent up to ten hours per day at duties other than teaching. Table IV shows that nineteen principals had spent one, two, or three hours per day at these duties. Thirty principals spent eight or more hours

3. See appendix B  
4. See appendix C

per day in attending to these duties.

Table IV

Hours Per Day Given to Principal Duties

<u>Number of Hours at Duties</u>	<u>Number of Principals</u>
1	4
2	10
3	5
4	1
5	0
6	3
7	4
8-over	30

The principals' ages ranged from 27.5 years to over sixty years. The median age as shown in Table V is forty-eight years. One of the principals was under thirty-one years of age and six of them were over sixty years of age.

Table V

Age Groups of Elementary-School Principals in South Dakota

<u>AGE GROUP</u>	<u>Number of Principals</u>
25-30	1
31-35	9
36-40	7
41-45	8
46-50	15
51-55	7
56-60	4
over 60	6

According to the questionnaire responses, most of the principals were married. Of the sixty respondents, thirty-four were married, one was a widow, and twenty-five were single.

Twenty-three master's degrees were held by the principals. That was a combination of thirteen master of arts degrees, three master of science degrees, and seven master of education degrees.

As shown in Table VI, ten principals were in school systems with enrollments of 501 to 750. Six principals were in schools with enrollments of 751 to 1000, and forty-one were in systems having over 1500 children enrolled.

Table VI

Enrollments of Entire School Systems Employing  
Elementary-School Principals

Size of Enrollments	Number of Principals
501-750	10
751-1000	6
1001-1250	2
1251-1500	0
1501-over	41

Forty-four of the elementary-school principals were in school systems employing forty-six or more teachers and administrators, as shown by Table VII. Fifteen principals were in school systems employing fewer than forty-six teachers and administrators.

Table VII

Number of Teachers and Administrators Employed in  
the Entire School System

Number of Teachers and Principals	Number of Elementary-School Principals
1-25	2
26-35	9
36-45	4
46-over	44

About half of the elementary-school principals have more than one type of teaching certificate. There were three First Grade certificates, seventeen State certificates, forty-eight High School General certificates, and twenty-nine others which were some type of administrative certificate.

Table VIII shows the number of children enrolled in the school under the administration of the elementary-school principals studied. Ten of the principals were in charge of schools with enrollments of 250 or less. In twenty-one cases the enrollment was from 251 to 350. Fewer schools were found in the groups having larger enrollments, with only four schools having 651 or more.

Table VIII

Enrollments in Schools Under the Administration of the Elementary-School Principals

Size of Enrollment	Number of Principals
1-250	10
251-350	21
351-450	9
451-550	8
551-650	6
651-over	4

The number of teachers in the schools under the administration of the elementary-school principals included in this study is shown in Table IX. Twenty principals were in schools that had ten teachers or less. Eighteen principals were in schools that had from eleven to fifteen teach-

ers and ten were in schools having sixteen to twenty teachers. Fewer schools were found in the groups having larger numbers of teachers.

Table IX

The Number of Teachers Under the Administration of the Elementary-School Principals

Number of Teachers	Number of Principals in Schools in This Group
1-10	20
11-15	18
16-20	10
21-25	6
26-30	2
31-over	1

Assignments are made for teachers' duties by fifty-six of the elementary-school principals and only two indicated that they did not make these assignments.

To simplify the answering of the second section of the questionnaire, which concerned the time spent by the principals at their duties, the respondents were to fill in the time spent per day, per week, per month, per six weeks, per semester, or per school year. The researcher has used only hours and minutes per month in this study and all times that were given in any other way were changed into time spent per month.

The study shows that fifty-nine principals spent an average of two hours and fifty-two minutes per month at teachers' meetings. Discipline problems took fifty-three administrators an average of eleven hours and forty-three minutes per month. An average of eleven hours and four minutes per

month were used by fifty-six principals in conferences with teachers. Only fourteen respondents indicated that they kept school hot lunch records and they spent an average of two hours and forty-seven minutes per month in keeping them. Keeping records other than hot lunch took some elementary-school principals as much as three hours per day, but the average time spent at these records by fifty-six respondents was seventeen hours and forty-seven minutes per month. Distribution of materials and supplies took an average of six hours and thirteen minutes per month according to fifty-seven principals. Fifty-two principals spent an average of three hours per month in conferences with their superintendents. Conferences with parents took six hours and twenty-eight minutes per month for fifty-two principals.

Several of the principals indicated that they thought they were improving instruction all the time while they were on duty, however, the average time spent, specifically, in improving instruction by forty-four principals was seventeen hours and fourteen minutes per month. Seventeen principals indicated that they had written professional magazine articles and they had spent an average of one hour and forty-two minutes per month in preparing these articles. Twenty-five principals spent an average of fifty minutes per month in giving speeches.

The average time spent by fifty-four principals in doing professional reading was eight hours and thirty minutes

per month. Many of the principals indicated that most of their reading of this type was done outside of school time. Thirty-nine principals spent an average of three hours and fifty-five minutes per month in making home visitations. Counseling was done by forty-seven principals who spent twelve hours and thirty-five minutes per month. An average of seven hours and thirty-three minutes per month was spent by fifty-five principals in attending meetings other than those already mentioned.

Sixty-five other items were mentioned by the elementary-school principals as duties that they had to perform. Most of these duties were either supervisory in nature or they were office routine such as answering the telephone or typing notices. Many of the principals thought that they spent a very large amount of their time doing clerical and office routine work which left very little time for the professional work which the principal was trained to do.

Table X is a summary of the data obtained from the second section of the questionnaire. This table appears on the next page.

Table X

## How the Elementary-School Principals Spend Their Time

Duty	Number of Principals	Time Spent Per Month
Teachers Meetings	59	2 hrs. 52 min.
Discipline Problems	53	11 hrs. 43 min.
Conference with Teachers	56	11 hrs. 4 min.
Lunch Record Keeping	14	2 hrs. 47 min.
Keeping Other Records	56	17 hrs. 47 min.
Distribution of Materials and Supplies	57	6 hrs. 13 min.
Conferences with Superintendent	52	3 hrs.
Conferences with Parents	52	6 hrs. 28 min.
Improving Instruction	44	17 hrs. 14 min.
Writing Professional Articles	17	1 hr. 42 min.
Giving Speeches	25	50 min.
Professional Reading	54	8 hrs. 30 min.
Home Visitations	39	3 hrs. 55 min.
Counseling	47	12 hrs. 35 min.
Attending Meetings	55	7 hrs. 33 min.



CONCLUSIONS

1. When compared with the salaries of beginning teachers, the salaries of the elementary-school principals are low if the preparation and responsibility required of the elementary-school principal are considered.
2. The elementary-school principals do not appear to have had either specific or comprehensive preparation for their jobs.
3. Many of the principals have continued their education by taking graduate work, but some of them have done little beyond their pre-service preparation.
4. The median age and the median number of years that the principals were in their present positions may indicate that they have been in some other type of teaching work from which they moved into the elementary-school principals' positions.
5. Many of the smaller school systems do not have elementary-school principal positions, therefore, a person seeking a position as an elementary-school principal would probably have the best chance at employment in the larger school systems in South Dakota.
6. The time spent at the various duties of a principal will be determined by the particular situation.

7. The elementary-school principal has such a wide range of duties that his schedule is too heavy to allow him to spend much time in improvement of instruction. Many of the duties that he has to do could be done by persons with less training.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This study is not conclusive. More studies should be made concerning the preparation, work-load, and salaries of elementary principals in this and other states.
2. The elementary-school principal should be allowed more time to do the supervisory and administrative work and he should spend less time doing clerical work, routine work, and classroom teaching.
3. Persons preparing to become elementary-school principals should have more training for the specific duties which they will encounter in their jobs.
4. Colleges and universities preparing people to become elementary-school principals should offer programs which will provide the proper preparation for this specific job.
5. The public should be made aware of the need for a well-trained elementary-school principal, and they should be informed of the work and responsibility that he has.
6. Better qualified people should be drawn into this field by providing professional pay, professional status, and professional recognition.

## Appendix A

## Questionnaire

1. Did your undergraduate training prepare you for teaching in  High School  Elementary School.
2. How many undergraduate hours of credit have you in elementary education?  Quarter  Semester
3. How many graduate hours of credit have you in elementary education?  Quarter  Semester
4. At what colleges did you receive undergraduate training?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. At what colleges have you received graduate training?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How many hours per day do you actually teach classes?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How many hours per day are given to the duties of a principal? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Please check your age group.  25-30,  31-35,  36-40,  
 41-45,  46-50,  51-55,  56-60,  over 60
9. Marital status.  single  married.
10. Check the degrees you hold.  B.A.  B.S.  M.A.  M.S.  
 M. of Ed.  Other
11. What is the enrollment of the entire school system?  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. How many teachers and administrators are employed in the entire school system? \_\_\_\_\_
13. How many children are enrolled in the school under your administration? \_\_\_\_\_
14. How many teachers are under your administration?  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. Check the certificates you have.  First Grade,  
 State,  High School General,  Other
16. Do you make assignments for teachers' duties?  
 Yes  No

## Appendix A

## Clock Hours Spent at Principals Duties

Note: Place the amount of time spent in the appropriate column but in only one column

Duties	Daily	Weekly	Month-ly	Six Weeks	Sem-ester	School Year
Teacher's meetings						
Handling discipline problems						
Conferences with teachers						
Hot Lunch Records						
Keeping Other School Records						
Distribution of materials and supplies						
Conferences with Superintendents						
Parent conferences						
Improving instruction						
Writing articles						
Giving speeches						
Professional reading						
Home visitation						
Counseling						
Attending meetings						
Other						

Additional comments:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
 School \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

## Schools Where Undergraduate Training Was Received

Black Hills Teachers College	13
Northern State Teachers College	12
University of Minnesota	10
University of South Dakota	10
General Beadle Teachers College	7
Huron College	6
Yankton College	6
University of Colorado	6
University of Nebraska	4
Augustana College	3
University of Wyoming	3
Southern State Teachers College	3
University of Iowa	3
Sioux Falls College	3
University of Oregon	2
Dakota Wesleyan	2
Nebraska Wesleyan	2
Valley City Teachers College	2
Iowa State Teachers College	2
Dickinson State Teachers College	2
South Dakota State College	2
St. Cloud Teachers College	2
Columbia	1
University of Wisconsin	1
Boston University	1
Colorado State College	1
Midland College	1
Carleton College	1
Miss Wood's	1
University of Washington	1
Colorado College of Education	1
Wessington Springs Junior College	1
Asbury Ky.	1
Winona State Teachers College	1
Kearney State Teachers College	1
York	1

## Appendix C

## Schools Where Graduate Training Was Received

University of South Dakota	19
University of Colorado	12
University of Wyoming	6
Northern State Teachers College	6
University of Minnesota	5
Colorado State College of Education	4
University of Nebraska	4
Columbia	3
South Dakota State College	2
Western Washington College of Education	1
University of Pennsylvania	1
University of Wisconsin	1
University of Arizona	1
University of Michigan	1
Peabody	1
Nat. College of Education	1
University of Chicago	1
Northwestern University	1
University of Denver	1

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