



2004

# A grounded theory analysis of novice and veteran principals through the Dreyfus and Greenfield models

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A GROUNDED THEORY ANALYSIS OF NOVICE AND VETERAN PRINCIPALS  
THROUGH THE DREYFUS AND GREENFIELD MODELS

by

Shobhana Rishi

A Dissertation Submitted to the

Faculty of the Graduate School

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Benerd School of Education  
Educational Administration and Leadership

University of the Pacific  
Stockton, California

2004

**A GROUNDED THEORY ANALYSIS OF NOVICE AND VETERAN PRINCIPALS  
THROUGH THE DREYFUS AND GREENFIELD MODELS**

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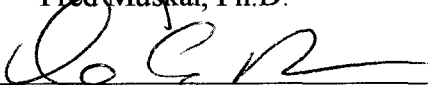
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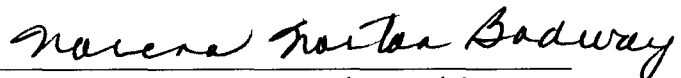
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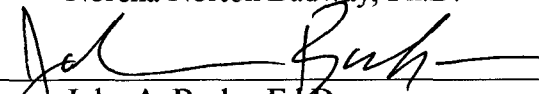
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## DEDICATION



This dissertation is dedicated in praise of Lord Krishna,

Eternal Guide and Mentor,

to

my father, Surendra, who showed me the pleasures of learning, and  
my mother, Shakuntala, who showed me the importance of persisting.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation was made possible by the help and support of many people here and in India.

I would like to acknowledge all my relatives here and in India whose blessings have accompanied me throughout this project, especially, my parents, Dr. Surendra and Shakuntala Rishi, my great aunt, Dr. Shanta Kirtane; my dear deceased grandparents Dr. Ramchandra and Leelavati Rishi and Shivram and Indira Puranik; my aunts and uncles, Meenakshi Bahulikar, Vijay and Hema Mainkar, Ramesh and Shaila Divekar, Vinayak and Sharada Puranik, Padmawati Patwardhan, Bal and Dr. Usha Rishi, and Drs. Usha and Harimohan Saxena; my deceased parents-in-law, Thomas and Margaret O'Brien, Jr.; and my cousins, Tapan and Abhijit Divekar.

I want to thank my sister, Shanta Dube, for her invaluable technical and moral support throughout this project; my sister Pam Washington for her unwavering faith in me as I went through the ups and downs of this process; and my sons, Adam and Sam, for a steady supply of inspiration and love.

I want to thank my friends here and in India who have blessed me with their good wishes and especially, Karen and Josie Johnson and Jane Moffett for their constant love and care; Kathy Nelson, Irene Simonton, Monique Peters, Elliot Kent, and Alice McCurdy for their patience and understanding; Sharada, Navdeep, Suphla, Atul and

Radhika Bali for their affection and samosas; Laura Cawthorne and Martin Milco for their fortifications of courage with tea and cookies; Dr. Fidel Salinas for his moral and technical support every step of the way; Mrudula Vanjara and Gloria Luna for their life saving recipes and reassurances; Madan and Madhavi Kale, Sunil and Suganda Dongre, D. K. Mahlotra, Aruna Vaidya, and Mangal Chawan for their long-distance support; my oldest friend,

Dr. Marsha Lesowitz and my newest friends, Cathy and Gene Orland, for their devotion in proofreading the manuscript; Sheryl Scott for her expert assistance in the final stages of editing; and Larry Hines for saving me from computer crashes.

I want to thank my colleagues who have helped shape my understanding of the work of principals when I first became a principal and since: Dr. Michael Klentschy, Bob Wallace, Judith Wentworth, Jerry Emery, Dr. Kit Oase, Don Adams, Tony Ramos, Ken Narita, Irene Crabtree, Jane Griffith, Jane Moffett, Laverne Shireman, Sharon Colli, Pam Able, Nancy Fontana, James Enochs, Patricia Portwood, Cindy Alba, Dave Mello, Dr. Brian Sarvis, Nancy Jones, Olivia Toy, Carol Ligon, Pam Corbin, Michael Brady, and the students, faculty and staff of Pearson Elementary School.

I want to thank my previous mentors: Emily Kohn, Vona Wright, Paul and Dianne Ganz, Garth Isom, Pat Levy, Ozetta Maggard, Kevin Dorward, Dr. James Stephenson, Tom Eaton, Hal and Davida Brown, and Elaine Foulger,

I wish to especially thank my advisor, teacher and mentor, Dr. Fred Muskal. From inception to submission, Dr. Muskal has coached me as only an expert can with always just the right amount of push and pull at just the right time and place. It has been

an honor to learn grounded theory under him. I want to thank my dissertation committee for their flexibility in working with my schedule and for their helpful suggestions.

Dr. Brennan and Dr. Borba have been wonderful supports throughout my doctoral program as well as when I first began my work as an administrator. I am indebted to Dr. Badway, for her guidance in data collection. Special thanks go to Kay Briggman, who has been there to answer questions, reassure, and help every step of the way.

Lastly, but not least, I would like to thank all fifteen of the respondents who participated in this study and gave of themselves and their time. Their voices are forever etched in my mind. As a result of this study, I have come to an even greater appreciation of the work that elementary school principals do, which takes much courage and heart.



# A GROUNDED THEORY ANALYSIS OF NOVICE AND VETERAN PRINCIPALS THROUGH THE DREYFUS AND GREENFIELD MODELS

## Abstract

by Shobhana Rishi  
University of the Pacific  
2004

The purpose of this exploratory study was to develop categories of work meaningful to elementary school principals that are significant at the beginning of one's career and after ten or more years on the job. A total of 15 public elementary school principals were interviewed. Using grounded theory, the interview data were analyzed and coded for topics that represented work concerns in beginning and later career. The results were interpreted within the Dreyfus model of learning to identify the principals' levels of performance and through the Greenfield model to identify the areas of principal work that presented continuing challenges for both novice and veteran principals.

The analysis of the data revealed that principals confronted by time management issues such as the pace and multiplicity of demands in the first year of work have difficulty gaining control over their jobs, primarily in the Managerial and Social Interpersonal Dimensions. Veterans continue to incorporate changes in the Instructional Dimension that is the focus of educational reform initiatives. Data also suggested that the

performance and behaviors of principals in their first two years indicated that they are functioning as learners at the Novice and Advanced Beginner levels of the Dreyfus model.

Based on the results of this study, it is concluded that the work of principals is learned primarily through job experience, with little or no formal help. Feedback in the form of clear expectations and guidelines for calendaring and district procedures will enhance principal learning and make them more efficient managers of their time; opportunities for guided reflection will provide ongoing support for continuous learning on the job.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the Problem**

The effectiveness of the school principal is of great interest to a growing constituency: state departments, superintendents, parents, students, teachers, school staff, and principals themselves. Research on effective schools in the 1970s and 1980s indicated that the strong leadership of a principal can influence student learning outcomes (Edmonds, 1979; Fullan, 1997; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987). Though there is agreement on the connection between principals and effective schools, research in school leadership continues to investigate the specific nature of the principal's influence (Fullan, 1997; Hart, 1992; Lipham, 1981). Each reform movement in education exerts its unique pressure on defining the role of the principal. In the environment of educational accountability, efforts to increase the effectiveness of principals serves a logical benefit.

The growing demands of the job, however, make the preparation, recruitment and retention of school principals challenging. Each year, new principals complete required coursework and are certified as administrators by universities and licensure agencies to lead schools. They are handed keys to the schoolhouse and charged to maintain a safe and orderly environment and improve student achievement. Entering the principal's office, most new principals are often bewildered about exactly what they are supposed to do (Hart & Bredeson, 1996). As principals manage the multiple demands of subgroups in



their school communities, they awaken to the realities of the job for which they often feel unprepared (Daresh & Playko, 1992). Preparing principals to be effective practitioners is also problematic due to the highly contextual and social nature of the job (Duke & Iwanicki, 1992; Greenfield, 1985; Hart, 1992; Hart & Bredeson, 1996).

Studies conducted on the experiences of new principals report a disparity between their formal preparation and the skills they need to cope with the day-to-day demands of the job (Carillo, 2002; Daresh, 1986; Small, 1994). The unique nature of schools as organizations also makes effective administration full of unique challenges (Bidwell, 1965; Greenfield, 1995). Simulations of 'real world' experiences through field work and reflective exercises have been implemented in a few innovative programs (Murphy & Hallinger, 1987). Some scholars have claimed that although fieldwork may be useful for acquiring specific practical skills, it cannot supplant the on-the-job learning that takes place during the critical first few years of employment (Daresh & Playko, 1992; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987).

Studies in the principalship have increased our knowledge of various aspects of the job, though much of the knowledgebase on the principalship up to 1980 has been criticized for its lack of practical utility and solid theoretical base (Bridges, 1982). Studies that look at specific behaviors among principals attempted to quantify good leadership. However, leadership, like teaching, does not only consist of observable behaviors and actions, therefore operationalization is difficult to achieve (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Recent literature has focused on the relational aspects of principal's job and the importance of the social-interpersonal skills for it (Dyer, 2001; Greenfield, 1987).

Principal leadership has also been examined as a social and aesthetic phenomenon, involving reciprocal and interactive dimensions (Hart, 1993; Duke, 1986).

A major difficulty noted in the literature on educational administration and the principalship shows a consistent need to address the gap between theory and practice (Hart & Bredeson, 1996). Administrative practice has been described as “fragmented, brief, interrupted, consisting of a hundred verbal acts,” while formal university coursework and training has traditionally focused on typologies and technical competencies of administrators’ work. Dissertation research on the socialization processes of principals also concluded that: a) informal, experiential, and on-the-job learning was found to be the most prevalent and powerful for acquiring job knowledge; b) for novice principals, two main areas of difficulty were role clarity and lack of feedback; and c) the contextual and situational factors significantly influenced outcomes of socialization. Induction plans and fieldwork components have been included in formal training programs to help bridge the gap between coursework and practice (Barth, 1990; Levine, Barth & Haskins, 1987; Daresh & Playko, 1992).

Theorists such as Schön and Argyris (1991) argued that the traditional practice of professional training programs in which students are given knowledge that is later to be applied in practice has not been adequate in its depiction of how professionals actually “think in action.” Schön’s (1991) elaboration of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action gave rise to experimentation in various areas of management training, including educational administration (Dana & Pitts, 1993). Hart and Bredeson (1996) summarized the situation in their book as follows:

When expertise in school leadership is defined as the aggregation of various technical skills, educational administration preparation programs tend to decontextualize important skills from the realities of situations of practice that are often characterized by indeterminacy, instability, uncertainty, and competing values. This makes it difficult for new principals to know when to apply the skills they have learned (p. 45).

The newer emphases on mentoring, formation, and induction are also based in ideas from reflective practice (Barnett, 1995; Daresh, 1995; Restine, 1997). As training programs and administrator support systems work in these new directions, a new way of understanding the knowledge of administrative practice is critically needed. The need for more investigations about the learning processes of principals is best summed up by scholars from the Harvard Principals Center, “We are learning that understanding practice is the single most important precondition for improving practice” (Levine et al., 1987, p. 160).

Blumberg (1987), in his elaboration of the principal’s work as a craft, recommended watching principals and talking to them about their work in order to understand it (p. 43). The present study used standardized, open-ended interviews to gather data on principals’ perceptions of their work at different stages of their career. The data was analyzed using grounded theory methodology to identify meaningful categories of work, which were interpreted according to the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition and Greenfield’s five-dimensional framework for principals’ work.

The Dreyfus model of skill acquisition offers a way to understand the acquisition of complex skills on a continuum. The model has been extensively applied in the field of

nursing practice and offered much promise in providing a new perspective on the categories of the principal's job as perceived by practitioners. This model provides five categories that define various levels of skill: novice, advanced beginner, competence, proficiency, and expertise. The model also provides a way of understanding the processes of moving from one level to the next. The work of principals has various aspects that require different skills. Five dimensions of the principal's demand environment have been defined as social-interpersonal, managerial, political, instructional, and ethical (Greenfield, 1995). These areas of work are used in conjunction with the Dreyfus model to interpret the categories of work that are meaningful to principals. Both the Dreyfus model and the Greenfield model are further explained in Chapters Two and Three.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The knowledgebase on the principalship lacks descriptions of meaningful categories for principals' work as perceived by practitioners. Also lacking is the knowledge about how these categories change over the course of the principals' careers. This gap in the knowledgebase called for a new approach to examining principals' experiences and perceptions about their work within developmental and cross-sectional frameworks.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to develop categories of work meaningful to elementary school principals and to see if patterns emerge for issues that are significant at various stages of learning the job. Data from interviews was analyzed to identify categories that represented significant issues for the novice and veteran

principals. These codes were then interpreted according to the Dreyfus developmental model of skill acquisition and Greenfield's cross-sectional model for dimensions of principals' work to identify patterns in the issues and their significance to principals when they first began their careers and after ten or more years on the job.

Participants for the study (including one pilot) were 15 public elementary school principals from the Central Valley region of California. Seven of the principals had ten or more years of experience (veteran). Eight of the principals were beginning their second and third years on the job (novices).

The study addresses the following questions:

1. How do the perceptions of principals about their work in terms of problems, difficulties, mistakes, and successes fit into the Dreyfus developmental model and the Greenfield cross-sectional model to reveal meaningful categories of principals' work?
2. Is there a pattern to the issues that are critical for various levels of practice?

### **Importance of the Study**

This study contributes to the literature on school leadership by providing a view of the professional knowledge of principals embedded in practice within a developmental framework as delineated by Dreyfus. The results of the study, by deepening an understanding of elementary school principals' work, can aid those who are involved in the training and preparation of administrators. The findings of this study will also be of use to those who are in charge of hiring and supervising school administrators. Finally, this study can help beginning administrators make sense of their experiences in practice and thereby improve practice.

## **Operational Definitions of Key Terms**

**Academic Performance Index (API):** The API is the key index in the statewide accountability system in California public education as result of the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) of 1999. It reflects a school's performance on student assessments that are part of California's Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program for elementary schools  
(<http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/api/api0203/growth/expn03g.htm>).

**Annual Year Progress (AYP):** The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 requires all district and schools to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), with the eventual goal that all students reach or surpass the proficient level in reading/language art and mathematics by 2013-14. AYP in Schools with Title I funding are subject to the provisions of NCLB on program improvement, school choice, supplemental services, and corrective action  
([http://www.cde.ca.gov/ayp/2003/ExpNotes\\_03pl.htm](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ayp/2003/ExpNotes_03pl.htm)).

**Accountability:** Standards-based reform under the Public School Accountability Act (PSAA) of 1999 in California that includes standardized tests for measuring student achievement; the test scores are then used to calculate school.

**Administrative Effectiveness:** Used synonymously with principal effectiveness, is seen as a condition wherein successful and appropriate teaching and learning are occurring for all students and teachers in the school; the morale of students, teachers, and other school members is positive; and parents, other community members, and the school district's administration judge the school to be

effectively fulfilling both the letter and the spirit of local, state, and federal laws and policies (Greenfield, 1995, p. 61).

**Category:** Concepts that stand for a group of topics with underlying commonality.

Category may consist of dimensions, and dimensions are made up of topics.

**Dimension:** The range along which general properties of a category vary (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101). Dimensions consist of several topics and belong to a category.

**Dreyfus model:** A five-stage model of experiential learning developed by Stuart and Hubert Dreyfus. The five levels are: Novice, Advanced Beginner, Competent Performer, Proficient Performer, and Expert (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986).

**Greenfield Model:** Model for the work of Administration used for cross-sectional analysis of data. The model posits following five dimensions in the work of school administration that correspond to the demand environment of administrators' work: Instructional, Moral, Social/Interpersonal, Managerial, and Political (Greenfield, 1995).

**Level:** Used synonymously to denote the characteristics of practice at a plateau in the levels of skill between Novice and Expert.

**Novices:** Respondents of sample group who are beginning their second or third year as principals.

**Open coding:** The analytic process through which concepts (topics) are identified, and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

**Principal effectiveness:** See Administrative effectiveness.

**Skill/expertise:** Used synonymously with know-how. A person's ability to apply book knowledge appropriately that is developed through experience.

**Socialization:** Socialization is the term used to describe the process by which a person acquires the knowledge, attitudes, values, interests, and behaviors of a particular group to which they aspire to belong (Brimm & Wheeler, 1966).

**Topics:** Central ideas in the data represented as labeled phenomena.

**Veterans:** Respondents of the sample group who have ten or more years of experience in the job of principal.

### **Overview**

This chapter presented a brief overview of the context of this study. The statement of the problem, purpose and importance of the study, and the research questions provided the basis for this study. Definitions for key terms as they are used in this study have also been provided.

Chapter Two presents a review of the literature that contributes to the foundation for what constitutes the content and process of professional learning for school administrators.

Chapter Three provides a thorough description of the methodology, including the specific procedures used. Included in the chapter are a rationale for sample selection and the steps taken in interview, data collection, and data analysis processes. Descriptions of the Dreyfus developmental model and the Greenfield cross sectional model are also presented.

Chapter Four presents the novice and veteran codes, a portrait of the principals' first year using citations from the interviews, a comparison of the two, and an



interpretation of the novice and veteran codes within the frameworks of the Dreyfus and the Greenfield models. Patterns for significance of issues at the different stages of principals' careers are identified and discussed. The novice codes consisted of the three categories: 1) **Time Management**, 2) **Teachers**, and 3) **District Office**. The veteran codes included the category of **Adaptation**.

Chapter Five concludes the study with a discussion of the findings in relation to existing literature. Conclusions, implications, and recommendations with consideration of the limitations and assumptions are presented.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

This study was informed by research and scholarship on the principalship that addressed the following two questions: 1) What do we know about what is to be learned and what is learned by people who become principals? 2) What do we know about how and when this learning takes place? The literature review includes theoretical works and empirical studies; doctoral dissertations continue to be a major source of empirical research in the field. This review of the literature is not comprehensive but represents prominent trends. The literature is presented in four sections.

The first section is a brief overview of educational administration and the principalship. The second section presents literature in light of the first guiding question: What do we know about what is to be learned and what is learned by people who become principals? The survey in this section includes objectives, external criteria, and competencies that describe the work of principals on the basis of standards, licensure requirements, and existing ideas obtained from empirical research.

The third section presents literature in light of the second guiding question: What do we know about how and when this learning takes place? Covered in this section are traditional methods of training and new approaches. Also included is literature on socialization, beginning principal studies, and related theoretical and empirical works

about professional learning and expertise. The last section presents the Dreyfus model and its application in the field of nursing practice. The Dreyfus model will be used to interpret the data in this study.

### **A Brief Historical Overview of the Principalship and Educational Administration**

Schools have grown from the one-room schoolhouse to mega schools that serve thousands of students. The changing role of the principal has also become complex. (Wanzare & De La Costa, 2001). The general notions about administrative science inform theories and practices about school leadership (Hoy & Miskel, 1982).

Understanding what it means to be a good school leader forms the basis of knowing how to become or train people to become effective principals.

The function of the principal as an authority having organizational capability can be traced back to early writings of Johann Sturm in which he described how to organize and open a school (Hart & Bredeson, 1996). A better-known antecedent to the present role of the principal is the headmaster in the English school who was responsible for clerical duties and for handling discipline. In America, the role of the principal/teacher grew until the size of schools and amount of clerical and disciplinary duties restricted the amount of time spent teaching. Schools continued to get larger, and the role of the principal took on more of its bureaucratic face as a result of the organizational influences on the field of education.

The role and work of principals were also shaped by the influence of the three phases of management theory on educational administration. The Scientific Management perspective pioneered by Frederick Taylor emphasized machine-like efficiency of

workers and organizations and spanned the years from 1900-1930 (Hoy & Miskel, 1982). Recognizable notions and practices that persist from this era are formal and bureaucratic structures, standardization, divisions of labor, and specialization of tasks. Imperfect coordination of factors internal to the organization and failure to accommodate influences of external factors led to dysfunction; rigidity was the major drawback of this approach. The forces of social dynamics and individual idiosyncrasies were also left unaddressed within the Scientific Management Perspective (Hoy & Miskel, 1982, p. 4).

The next phase of administrative science was a reaction to the rigid formalities of scientific management. Headed by Mary Parker Follett, the Human Relations Perspective emphasized that harmonious relationships within an organization were essential to improvement. This approach is most commonly associated with the Hawthorn Studies, which were a series of experiments that tested various changes in the material work conditions of factory workers to see what improved productivity. The experiments were conducted by Professors Mayo and Roethlisberger. Their research concluded that the development of informal social structures and group norms, values, and sentiments were the factors that made a positive impact on performance, rather than the supposed changes in physical conditions being responsible for improved productivity (Hoy & Miskel, 1982). These findings continue to influence how we view factors that affect work.

The third phase is the Social Science Perspective. It provides a balance between the elements of the scientific management and human relations approaches as it acknowledges both the formal and informal aspects of organizations as a social context for work (Hoy & Miskel, 1982). It began in 1938 with Chester Barnard's work (as cited

in Getzels, Lipham, & Campbell, 1968); Barnard stated the need for “systematic conceptualization of administrative behavior within a social science framework. Barnard’s substantial contribution includes the articulation of the differences between “efficiency and effectiveness” and represents the synthesis of the previous two approaches to management (p. 40). His work emphasized the coordination of efforts toward a common purpose in formal organizations while it recognized the existence and vitality of informal structures within the formal. Another classic by Herbert A. Simon, *Administrative Behavior* (as cited in Getzels et al, 1968), continues to show its impact on subsequent research in educational administration in its introduction of the words “behavior,” “decision making,” and “organizations.” Simon’s work stressed the need for conceptual underpinnings for principles of administration, which would allow the operationalization of observable behaviors, and thus pave a way for empirical studies in the field. Achieving organizational effectiveness is a goal for the social science approach that in turn implies the need for development of human resources for the purpose of increasing organizational effectiveness.

Theoretical and empirical studies on school leadership share the common goal of improving the processes of schooling, and thereby the products of schooling. Studies about the various aspects of the principalship contribute to the knowledge base about these processes and products. A rich knowledgebase is important because it allows the generation of a theoretical foundation for understanding empirical data (Hoy & Miskel, 1982). The three perspectives and the overview of the historical roots of the principalship have been briefly reviewed because subsequent research and theoretical studies are informed by them.

## **Professional Knowledge and the Work of Principals**

The knowledgebase for principalship changed as new concepts from the social sciences and new forms of inquiry continue to influence how the work of schools and principals is viewed (Hart & Bredeson, 1996). As the role of the principal changed so did prerequisite training and licensure requirements. The position up until 1900 required no formal training, special degrees, or licenses. The first degrees in educational administration were offered in 1913-1915, and thereafter master's degrees and state licensing requirements have become the standard for administrative practice (Cooper & Boyd, 1987). What do principals do? We begin the investigation of what is known about what principals do by examining the requirements for becoming a principal.

### Licensure requirements and standards for school administrators

Studies have shown that educators become principals through a variety of routes (Magel, 1992; Morford, 2001; Small, 1994). However, all who aspire to become principals must meet the requirements set by state licensure agencies. These requirements vary slightly from state to state, but generally include three to five years of successful classroom teaching experience and completion of university coursework for a preliminary certification for entry into administration (Cooper & Boyd, 1987). In California, for example, a candidate with a preliminary credential may obtain a professional administrative credential within five years of starting his job. The requirements for the professional credential may be met by a combination of coursework, special institutes, and an induction plan (Daresh & Playko, 1992). The state administrative credential authorizes the holder to: a) evaluate the instructional services at the school site; b) evaluate the quality and effectiveness of instructional services at the

school site; and c) handle discipline for students and certificated personnel at the school site (<http://www.etc.ca.gov/credentialinfo/leaflets/cl574c.html>).

Alongside academic standards for student achievement, states have also adopted standards for teachers and administrators. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) was established in 1994, under the guidance of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). ISLLC was a consortium of 32 education agencies and 13 education administrative associations that worked cooperatively to establish an education policy framework for school leadership. No longer active, the purpose of the Consortium was to provide a means for states to work together in developing standards, assessments, professional development, and licensing procedures for school leaders (<http://www.umsl.edu/~mpea/Pages/AboutISLLC/AboutISLLC.html#Anchor-63282>).

The ISLLC standards for administrators cover “topics that formed the heart and soul of effective leadership”

(<http://www.umsl.edu/~mpea/Pages/AboutISLLC/AboutISLLC.html#Anchor-63282>).

All six standards have a catalog of value and competency statements under the components of knowledge, dispositions and performances. Every standard also begins with the same phrase that reflects the Consortium’s premium value for student-centered leadership. A summary of the standards is given below:

1. A school administrator is an education leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

2. A school administrator is an education leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
3. A school administrator is an education leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
4. A school administrator is an education leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
5. A school administrator is an education leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
6. A school administrator is an education leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context  
(<http://www.umsl.edu/~mpea/Pages/AboutISLLC/AboutISLLC.html#Anchor-63282>).

In the attempts to make the standards comprehensive and global, there is also much room for conflicting interpretation of the standards. The standards resemble frameworks and typologies often found in textbooks and books on the principalship (Hart & Bredeson, 1996, p. 30). However, the standards do impart a unified vision of the moral and ethical nature of the work of school administration.



Similar expectations are also reflected in traditional approaches to principal evaluations that use checklists and competency statements, based on typologies derived from theory, empirical research, and practice (Ginsberg & Thomson, 1992). Organizations, such as the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), publish domains for skills for school administrators that are then used to screen applicants or evaluate performance (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998). More recently, following the lead of teacher research, portfolio assessments based on the ISLLC standards for administrators are in the piloting stages in five states (<http://www.umsl.edu/~mpea/Pages/AboutISLLC/AboutISLLC.html#Anchor-63282>).

In summary, standards, textbooks, and publications of professional organizations indicate that the areas of professional knowledge for school administrators are instructional supervision, school organization and structure, dynamics of leadership such as motivation, communication, decision-making, and legal issues. University coursework typically also includes a historical and conceptual survey of the development of educational administration and its changing perspectives (Cooper & Boyd, 1987; Getzels et al., 1968; Hoy & Miskel, 1982; Jensen, 2002; Hoyle et al., 1998).

#### Characteristics of principal's day-to-day work

A stark contrast to the work of administrators as reflected in the expectations stated in standards and competency statements, are the findings of observational studies of the daily work of principals. Inquiries into what principals actually do day-to-day have been pursued using a variety of research methods. Two classic qualitative studies using the methodologies of ethnography and case study provide rich descriptions of principals' work. Wolcott's (1984) The Man in the Principal's Office, the classic

ethnography, presented the findings in narrative descriptions that supply context and a narrative structure to make sense of the observations of the principal's work life. The precise descriptions and incisive commentary by Wolcott reflect the power of qualitative methods for illuminating the details of administrative work. Wolcott's conclusions about the fictional principal, Ed Bell, and his sense of urgency that equalized all tasks may prove to be less a criticism than an accurate description of the demand environment of administrative work, as observed in the following excerpt:

For whether Ed was engaged in a twelve-second encounter with a hurt thumb, a twelve minute search for a record player for a substitute teacher, or a twelve-day administrators' workshop with his colleagues attempting to define an ideal elementary school, his behavior seemed to be guided by an unwritten rule that is at once the *raison d'être* for the role of the elementary principal and the perfect obstacle to ever achieving a radical change in that role: every problem is important (p. 316).

Blumberg and Greenfield's (1980) study of eight exemplary principals combined phenomenological and ethnographic approaches to yield portraits of principals as reflected in metaphorical roles assigned to them: Politician, Catalyst, Juggler, Organizer, Rationalist, and Helper. As the range of titles suggests, one of the major findings of this study was that the formula for effectiveness of principals lay in the idiosyncratic aspects of their own personhood rather than in a set of skills or behaviors that could be named. Blumberg and Greenfield's analysis of characteristics common to the eight principals identified the elements for effectiveness as follows: vision, initiative, resourcefulness, skills in collecting and analyzing data, and much physical and psychological strength.

Other sources of knowledge regarding the actual work of principals are observational studies that give accounts of how principals allocate their time during their day-to-day work. These studies presented data gathered by researchers who shadowed the principals for a number of days and recorded their actions and behaviors. Kmetz and Willower (1982) used Mintzberg's structured observation to investigate the work life of five elementary principals in two northeastern states. Each of the principals was observed for a week, and the weeks were spread out over three different months to allow for different cycles of school activity. The findings from these studies are given as tabulations of tasks that the principals engaged in and the percentage of the time spent on each. Results from this and other observational studies (Bredeson, 1985; Martin & Willower, 1981) indicated that the work and daily activities of principals have the following characteristics: a) long hours, b) high volume of tasks that are brief in duration, c) rapid pace, d) variety, and e) fragmentation of tasks due to frequent interruptions. Studies also suggested that the principal's role has a tendency to be loaded with new tasks and seldom any reductions, resulting in role overload, complexity, and conflict (Bredeson, 1985; Wanzare & De La Costa, 2001). The largely verbal nature of the administrators' work has also been noted (Greenfield, 1995).

#### Effective principals: managers or leaders?

Greenfield (1995) defined effective school administration as: condition wherein successful and appropriate teaching and learning are occurring for all students and teachers in the school; the morale of students, teachers, and other school members is positive; and parents, other community members, and the school district's administration

judge the school to be effectively fulfilling both the letter and the spirit of local, state, and federal laws and policies (p. 61).

The principal's role as instructional leader received special emphasis when scholars linked student outcomes in terms of standardized test scores and administrator's effectiveness (Murphy & Hallinger, 1987). Principal effectiveness as measured by student achievement outcomes is indirect and difficult to measure (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). In their meta-analysis of empirical research from 1980-1995, Hallinger and Heck found that principals did exert an influence on student learning, but that the effect was not precisely measurable and only indirectly related to school processes over which they had control, such as setting high academic expectations, school wide goals, promotion of a vision, supervision of instruction, and protection of academic learning time. Views on the impact of the principal's influence on student learning are kept in check by scholars who write about the conservative and custodial responses of the principal in maintaining stability in the learning environment (Sarason, 1996; Greenfield, 1985). The current standards-based accountability reform movement has again shifted the focus to the instructional leader role of the principal.

Some scholars maintained that leadership, not management, is the work of educational administration even though the principal must perform managerial duties in order to meet the overall goals of a successful school (Greenfield, 1995; Deal, 1987; Weick, 1978). The core technology of schools consists of teaching and learning which, according to March (1976), remain ambiguously understood, poorly routinized, differentially accepted, and questionably efficacious. Regardless of a principal's competency in a discrete skill, he or she must make a judgment on how it should be

applied in a particular situation of learning or teaching which is always unique and complex.

Scholars have studied leadership in various contexts for a long time. The personal characteristics of leaders have been examined, and the following have been associated with successful leadership: sociability and the ability to work with a variety of people (Dyer, 2001; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994); strong sense of self (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980); moral and spiritual strength (Sergiovanni, 1999; Bolman & Deal, 2001); and vision (Blumberg & Greenfield). The structure of leadership has also been studied as a social phenomenon (Duke, 1986; Hart & Bredeson, 1996) and a shared phenomenon (Lambert et al., 1995).

Deal (1987) proposed a four-dimensional model of school leadership. In his model, the principal's four roles address the four main areas of concern for schools as organizations. These roles are: a) Counselor or Parent to meet needs of individuals; b) Engineer or Supervisor to design and coordinate a system of relationships and structures; c) Pawn Broker or Statesperson to manage and coalesce forces of various subgroups towards school goals; and d) Hero/ine or Poet to be a symbolic leader who articulates the values and cherished images of the school in emotionally powerful ways.

In examining principals' work, Arthur Blumberg (1987) said that observations of principals at work may result in myriad disparate actions and events, but that the "montage" of these would in fact suggest what the work is if examined in light of intentions. Blumberg recommended watching principals and talking to them about their work in order to understand it (p. 43). Blumberg described the work of school administration as a craft by likening it to how a potter approaches his work. Blumberg

explained that the aims of principals' activities are: a) keeping things going as peacefully as possible; b) dealing with conflict or avoiding it; c) healing wounds; d) supervising the work of others; e) developing the organization; and f) implementing educational ideas (p. 43). According to Blumberg, the likeness between the principal and the potter lies in the way they go about doing their work. They both have an intention linked to what the finished product will look like; they both take stock of the materials they have to work with; they both have a nose for what kinds of shifts may occur in the circumstances of that particular project. Blumberg argues that the advantage of looking at the principal's work as a craft is that it can be demystified and communicated, unlike art.

A model for educational administration that takes into account both managerial and leadership roles and the unique nature of the demand environment of educational administration is set forth by Greenfield (1995) in Figure 1. He asserted that leadership is central to the work of principals because:

...leadership involves a complex set of influence processes and activities undertaken to improve a school's effectiveness through voluntary changes in the preferences of others that are initiated, stimulated, guided, cultivated, and sustained by the school administrator (p. 62).

In his model, Greenfield describes the three factors that shape the demand environment as the moral character of the school; a highly autonomous, educated and essentially permanent workforce; and regular and unpredictable threats to stability. The following five dimensions define the principal's demand environment of work:

- 1) Instructional
- 2) Moral

- 3) Political
- 4) Managerial
- 5) Social Interpersonal.

He explains that though all five dimensions are always present, in any given circumstance they may receive greater or lesser emphasis. The degree to which any one dimension is operative is determined by the following assumption: "...that the work of school administration (its pace, content, focus, activity, etc.) is largely a product of this demand environment and its interaction with the perspectives, abilities, skills, values, and motives of the school administrators" (p. 63).

Leadership is seen as the most effective means of influencing teachers and others to change preferences voluntarily because it is the basis of how administrators negotiate and respond to the demands of their work environment. This model will be used for cross-sectional interpretation of data in this study and the dimensions are further explained in Chapter Three. A diagram of the model is included in Figure 1.

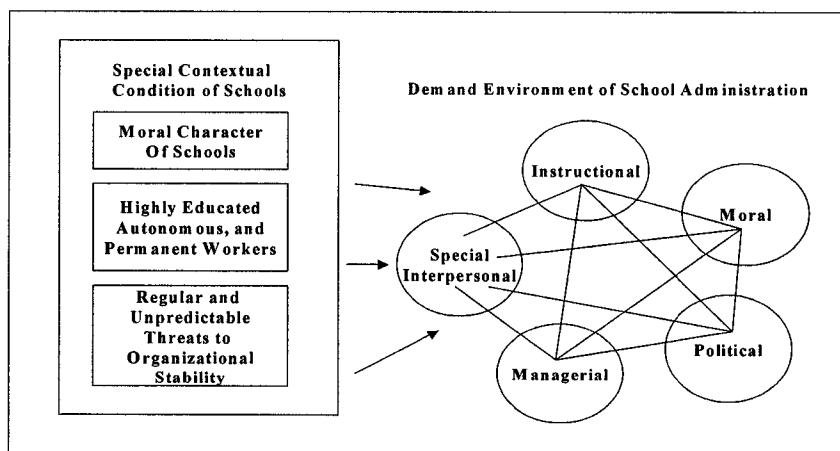


Figure 1. Greenfield Model for Educational Administration

Source: Greenfield, 1995, p. 68

Other strands in the literature emphasized the importance of principals as learners within the school as a learning community (Fullan, 1997; Barth, 1990), and as researchers and users of data for action research (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; Heck et al., 1993; Holly, 1991). Studies that investigated principal behaviors associated with school climate and staff morale reported a positive correlation with collaborative governance structures (Blasé, 1990) and shared decision-making (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Dana & Pitts, 1993; Eisler, 2000; Reitzug, 1992).

This concludes the survey of literature that addressed the nature of principal work. The topics covered included the findings of leadership traits and characteristics, behaviors, and theoretical models that describe the principal's work.

### **When and How Professional Knowledge is Acquired**

The previous section looked at the “what” of professional knowledge in primarily formal settings. This section looks at how professional knowledge for the principalship is acquired. Learning for administrative work occurs in both formal and informal settings, and the importance of experiential learning after employment stands out as a prominent factor confirmed by various studies. This section begins with the traditional method for the training and preparation of administrators in university coursework that goes with licensure requirements and standards.

#### University coursework and preparation programs

Cooper and Boyd (1987) referred to the traditional approach to administrative training that consists of coursework in school management, leadership, and supervision with an introduction to school law, union negotiations, and politics as the “One Best Model.” The One Best Model, overseen by the state, has evolved in response to the need



for more administrators and the growing complexity of American schools (p. 6). This model has been criticized and the following factors have been found to contribute to its weakness: a) pool of candidates is poor because of the decreasing popularity of education as a career due to tedium and bureaucratic constraints; b) low admission standards lower the level of training and experience possible; and c) programs are incoherent due to varying and conflicting requirements regarding courses and credits which result in lack of focus and meaning in the coursework as a whole. The inclusion of measurable competencies is among the efforts used to improve the One Best Model (p. 16). Standards are the newest branch of this model.

Murphy and Hallinger (1987) presented alternative approaches to training such as the Peer-Assisted Leadership, The Harvard Principals' Center, The Institute of Educational Administration in Australia, and Lewis and Clark College's Summer Institute for Beginning School Administrators. The new approaches were created in response to the demand for more effective instructional leaders in the 1970s and 1980s. They were different from the One Best Model described earlier in that they relied more on the educational effects literature rather than the previous reliance on intellectual paradigms borrowed from social psychology, management, and the behavioral sciences.

#### New directions in training

New principals and scholars confirmed the significance of experiential learning (Akerlund, 1988; Gill, 1992; Mannon, 1991; Oliver, 1992; Peterson, 1987) and that situations exert a greater force than theory in determining action in administration (Murphy & Hallinger, 1987). University preparation programs for administration usually provide some field-based experiences as for teaching (Daresh & Playko, 1992). In order

to address the gap between declarative knowledge or “know that” and procedural knowledge or “know how” (Ohde & Murphy, 1993) and to facilitate the transition to the job, scholars have recommended the use of induction, formation, and mentoring (Daresh, 1990; Daresh, 1995; Daresh & Playko, 1992).

Daresh and Playko (1992) used a tri-dimensional conceptual model for the professional preparation and training of school administrators. Their model draws on the work of Lortie who suggested three sources for occupational socialization: 1) formal education, 2) apprenticeship, and 3) ‘learning by doing.’ The model addresses the gap left by traditional approaches that emphasized university coursework but did not provide a formal effort to facilitate the reflection and awareness of the administrator’s application of descriptive and prescriptive knowledge through formation (Daresh, 1990; Daresh & Playko, 1992). Their model consists of academic preparation, field-based learning, and personal and professional formation applied within the chronological phases of pre-service, induction, and in-service.

The notion of formation deserves attention as it is aimed at addressing the gap between formal coursework and on-the-job learning. Formation is defined as “...the effort to enable an individual to become more aware of this or her own personal values and assumptions regarding the formal role of a school administrator (Daresh & Playko, p. 54).” The five elements in formation are: 1) mentoring, 2) personal reflection, 3) educational platform development, 4) appreciation of alternative styles, and 5) professional and personal action planning. The key factors for each of the elements are also identified. Mentoring provides the often lacking but essential ingredient of feedback. The importance of thinking before and after experiences and its facilitation is

at the heart of personal reflection. The development of an educational platform allows an administrator to have a frame from which to respond to individual situations that arise in the daily work. An understanding of different interpersonal styles is deemed crucial to administrative work in the appreciation of alternative styles. Finally, personal professional planning allows administrators to be in charge of their career development. This model provides for the changing foci and needs of administrators in the different stages of their careers.

In their daunting work, Hart and Bredeson (1996) set forth a theory and model for principal learning. The model incorporates the concepts and empirical knowledgebase on organizational and professional socialization and succession research, Schön's reflection-in-action, and notions from cognitive psychology in expert thinking and theorizing. They use the term "professional visualization" to describe the process that principals can engage to direct their own learning towards the ideals that can be visualized by them based on their experiences and knowledge about good practice (p. 264). This process consists of professional theorizing as a means of creating theories or mental maps for taking action and is based in the processes of reflective practice as elaborated by Schön (p. 226).

### Socialization

Socialization describes the process by which people acquire the knowledge, attitudes, values, interests, and behaviors of a particular group to which they aspire to belong (Brimm & Wheeler, 1966). Professional socialization refers to the process by which a person learns to become a member of a professional group; and organizational socialization refers to the process by which an outsider acquires membership into an

organizational setting (Hart, 1993). The processes of professional and organization socialization have played a major role in providing a way to understand the process by which educators become principals (Greenfield, 1977a & b; Greenfield, 1985; Parkay & Hall, 1992).

Role theory defines the nature of roles in social organizations such as schools. Roles are defined as positions in institutions that come with given expectations to be fulfilled by anyone who occupies the role. These expectations define what may or may not be done by anyone occupying the particular role. Roles can vary in their flexibility (Getzels et al., 1968). The constructs of role theory and socialization have been used by scholars to examine the processes of becoming a principal.

New principals experience professional and organizational socialization simultaneously. Studies indicated that due to the power exerted by the immediate surroundings of the new job and the new principal's need to fit in to the new work place, organizational socialization often takes precedence over professional learning that may have preceded arrival at the new job (Hart, 1993). Hart emphasized the power of organizational socialization over learning from previous experiences or formal structures. Hart provided a description of organization socialization as follows:

Organizational socialization, then, examines the effects of leaders and organizations from many directions, recognizing that leader successors are newcomers who must be integrated into existing groups, validated by social processes, and granted legitimacy by subordinates and superiors before they can have significant impacts on actions taken by others.

Authority granted by the members of the group in this way differs from other forms of influence to which people voluntarily submit (p. 13).

The converse also was found to be true for principals in later stages of their careers by Parkay and Hall (1992) who asserted that professional socialization and not organizational socialization was experienced more powerfully by principals in the latter two stages of their socialization model. This type of professional socialization is characterized by the principal's strong sense of what it means to be a principal. The model is discussed later in this chapter.

A search on Dissertation Abstract International on the socialization of principals indicated an increased interest in examining socialization processes of administrators during the 1980s and 1990s. A majority of the studies used survey descriptive research methodologies to investigate different aspects of socialization (Akerlund, 1988; Boullion, 1996; Carrillo, 2002; Choi, 1991; Delaware, 1996; Gill, 1992; Hertting, 2000; Miller, 1995; Nalls, 1994; Norton, 1995; Rhodes, 1994; Walling, 1996). Qualitative studies that used case study, personal narrative, phenomenological inquiry, and grounded theory were also found (Barton, 1998; Gorious, 1999; Gussner, 1974; Hurley, 1989; Mannon, 1991; Mascaro, 1973; O'Brien, 1988; Oliver, 1992). Common findings of these studies were: a) principals reported that informal, experiential, and on-the-job learning is the most prevalent and powerful in acquiring job knowledge; b) novice principals reported two main areas of difficulty were role clarity and lack of feedback; and c) situational and contextual factors significantly impacted outcomes of socialization.

Mascaro (1973) used a grounded theory approach to build a model that explained the on-the-job socialization of first year principals. It specifically investigated possible

conflict between the initial role concept of the principal that candidates bring to the principalship as a result of their prior experiences in school organization and what they actually experience in the role. The first unifying concept that emerged from Mascaro's data was the theme of "not enough time." A closer look at the causes and effects given surrounding "not enough time" also indicated that principals' initial norm for defining their effectiveness in their new role related to their ability to effect change through personal contact with teachers in classrooms. Mascaro found the new demands that they confronted soon frustrated them. Mascaro concluded that the principal: a) relinquishes direct responsibility, although, of course, not legal responsibility, in the classrooms to the teachers, b) relinquishes primary responsibility for initiating change in the classrooms to the teachers and to teacher groups, and c) reinforces the teachers' perceptions of the principal as taking care of "running" the school while they take care of educating the children.

Greenfield (1977 a & b) investigated anticipatory socialization and situational adjustment of 18 new principals in a longitudinal study in which he interviewed principals prior to assuming the role and after assuming the role. The study used the constructs of anticipatory socialization, interpersonal orientation, situational adjustment, and organizational space. Greenfield found that the individual's interpersonal style (measured using an instrument called MACH V from affective to analytical) interacts with situational factors to influence the individual's socialization to the new role. Greenfield (1985) stated that the formal preparation and certification of administrators were not sufficient for appointment to an administrative position (p. 100). In this article,

he examined the moral socialization of administrators, which included socialization to the values, attitudes, and beliefs that are central to members of the administrative group (p. 100). In another paper referring to the same concepts, Greenfield (1985b in Parkay & Hall, 1992) posited four aspects of the work context that shape the socialization process of new administrators are their relations with teachers, community, peers, and superiors and the necessity of establishing and/or developing routines for maintaining stability in the school. He further stated that which of these is most problematic for the new administrator is a function of the role learning that takes place during candidacy and the characteristics of the work that the rookie encounters. It was found that role expectations of new principals is a significant factor in how they cope with the work that is new to them. Greenfield's earlier work is reflected in his model of educational administration (Greenfield, 1995).

Daresh (1986) conducted a study at Ohio State University with 12 principals in their first and second years. The principals were interviewed about the surprises and difficulties encountered by them during their first and second years. The study also asked principals what could have been done to make them more successful in attaining their goals. Results of the study indicated that the concerns of new principals fell in three areas: 1) role clarification, 2) limitations on technical expertise, and 3) difficulty with socialization to the profession and the system.

Duke, Isaacson, Sagor and Schmuck (1984) explored the issues involved in the transition to the role of principalship in a retrospective study conducted with 34 veteran and 14 second-year principals from a mixture of elementary and secondary schools. The participants were invited to a one-day workshop at the Lewis and Clark College. The

study used interviews and questionnaires to gather data. Their study applied the following four features of professional socialization that surfaced in their review of the literature: 1) the duration of the socialization period, 2) the mechanisms by which new principals are socialized, 3) the relationship between the expectations of new principals and the realities of their jobs, and 4) the formal and informal preparation for school administration (p. 2). A summary of their results of their study indicated that: a) socialization begins when principals first become teachers; b) second year principals had spent more time as assistant principals than veterans due possibly to increased complexity of the job; c) support and influence was most felt with those with whom there was daily contact; and d) principals reported three sources of formal socialization—required credential coursework, district orientations, and written job descriptions. The study also found that the major source of conflict and satisfaction for new principals were teachers and that a major source of information for new principals was other principals in the district.

The Beginning Principals Study was an ambitious work undertaken by a group of 16 scholars who collected interview data from 12 new high school principals and survey data from 113 principals for a total of 120 hours of interviews. The survey data and 2,000 pages of transcribed interview data collected in this study produced several papers that are anthologized in the book, Becoming a Principal (Parkay & Hall, 1992). The book focused on the following questions: a) What is it like to be a first time high school principal? b) What do beginning principals need to know? c) What critical incidents occur during that first year? d) How do beginning principals go about establishing their professional identities? e) What crises of integrity occur and, depending on how they are



answered, how do they shape the professional identity of the new principal (Parkay & Hall, 1992, p. xi)? A grounded theory approach was used to analyze the data, and a career development model of socialization for principals was developed. Their analysis resulted in a model consisting of five stages of socialization for the role of principal as: 1) survival, 2) control, 3) stability, 4) educational leadership, and 5) professional actualization. The new principal's progress in the model is reflected in the movement from positional power to personal power and from restriction to learning and growth. Four assumptions underlying this model are that: 1) principals begin their careers at different stages of development; 2) principals develop within their careers at different rates; 3) no single factor determines a principals' stage of development, rather situations exert a greater influence; and 4) principals may operate on more than one stage simultaneously. Figure 2 shows the Parkay & Hall Model.

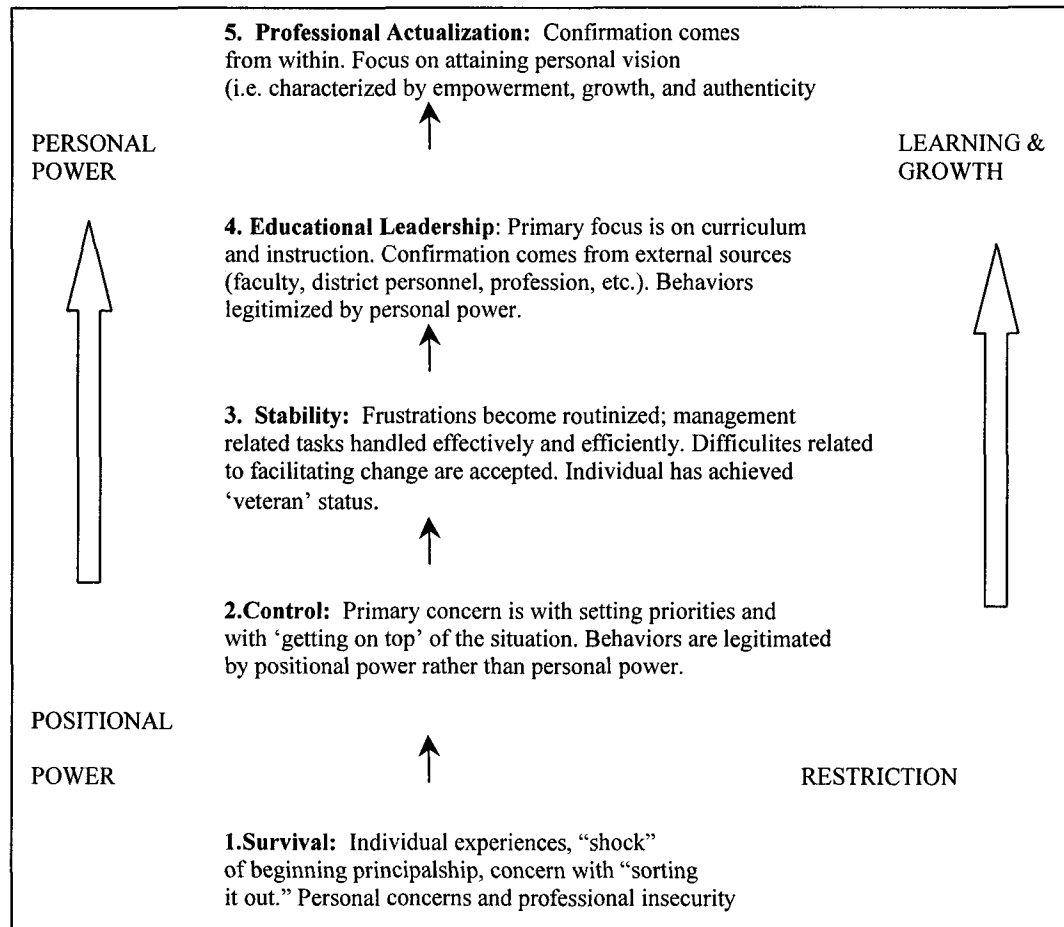


Figure 2. A Career Development Model for Beginning Principals

Source: Parkay & Hall, 1992, p. 352

Individual case studies of principals are also given and confirmed the role that individuality plays in leadership.

A number of studies were conducted by the authors on their own experience as beginning administrators. Of these, two are included because of their thorough treatment of methodology and background (Burchfield, 1997; Gussner, 1974). Burchfield examined his own first year in the principalship in light of the existing literature on

socialization and succession theory and research. Using phenomenological/heuristic methodology, his data consisted of a daily journal kept during his first year as a principal in an elementary school. Data also included artifacts such as calendar and memos. Seven themes emerged as a result of data analysis, which is presented in a week-by-week personal narrative:

1. Learning the way things work—getting the firsts under my belt
2. Set up for success and stress
3. Tensions and balances
4. In search of support and guidance
5. Turning corners and settling in
6. Finding my focus and re-discovering my roots
7. Reflections on keeping a journal.

He concluded that the process of making sense of one's experience and of hearing practitioners' unique stories of learning is most valuable for learning for self and others.

Gussner (1974) in order to document, describe, and analyze the process through which an individual is socialized into the administrative role, recorded his observations about his own experiences during the first year of his principalship. Data analysis was arduous due to the volume of data. In his study, Gussner used perspectives as defined by Becker to identify the various issues that were significant to him as he underwent on-the-job socialization. He identified nine perspectives initially and later expanded them to 16, which are as follows: 1) getting involved and acquainted, 2) awareness for problems, 3) hash out the old and plan for the new, 4) personal apprehensiveness, 5) the second beginning, 6) that lost feeling, 7) groping for an identity, 8) developing self confidence,

9) perceived problem: organizational goals, 10) a role established: the center of communications, 11) exercising responsibility, making decisions, 12) personal dilemmas and insights, 13) on top of things, a true contributor, 14) a critical event, 15) an analyzer, and 16) coasting out and beginning again. Further analysis reduced the perspectives to five clusters: 1) *a*, *b*, *c*, and *e* as absorbing information; 2) *d* and *f* as emerging personal concerns; 3) *g* and *h* as establish self assurance; 4) *j* and *k* as role established; and 5) *l*, *m*, and *n* as a true contributor.

#### Other works about professional knowledge

The cognitive studies approach applies constructs from cognitive psychology to focus on how the personal qualities of administrators shape their thinking and problem solving processes. The cognitive approach defines expertise as the skilled use of knowledge and complex skills. Experience turns unrelated facts into knowledge and forms the basis of expertise (Ohde & Murphy, 1993). Expertise is different from “effectiveness,” which is linked more with favorable outcomes (Leithwood, Hallinger & Murphy, 1993). According to this perspective, problem solving consists of two general categories of processes: understanding and solving (p. 272). For the development of expertise four elements are necessary: 1) models of expert problem solving, 2) practice opportunities across a variety of problems, 3) task demands increasing over time, and 4) performance feedback. These elements essentially define the landscape for learning in general.

Investigations about human expertise have been made extensively due to the application of artificial intelligence (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986). Researchers over the last three decades found that experts performed differently than novices in what they know, in

the patterns of their thinking, and in their actions. They found that experts' strategies for problem solving are proceduralized and are immediately accessible to them, unlike novices who must struggle with the problem solving process (Ohde & Murphy, 1993). Expertise develops over many years of practice (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986).

Three doctoral studies relevant to the present inquiry investigated professional learning of administrators. Magel's (1992) descriptive study surveyed the elementary school principals in the Los Angeles Unified School District with a return rate of 32% and sample size of 132 principals. He used an eight-page questionnaire to identify places and methods of professional learning employed most frequently by principals. The results indicated that principals engaged in different modes of learning that were ranked in order of most frequent use: a) On-the-job learning, b) supervisor coaching, c) networking: non-formal, d) incidental/informal learning, e) mentor coaching: non-formal, f) networking: formal, college/university coursework, formal self-study, g) internships/practica, h) cooperative district-university academies, i) staff development/in-service conferences/seminars/workshops, teaching, j) professional writing/public speaking, k) mentor coaching: formal, and l) administrator training centers. This study indicated that on-the-job learning is the most powerful and influential according to the principals.

Based on the ideas of Blumberg's (1987) description as a craft, Mack (1991) used an exploratory interview methodology to investigate the professional learning experiences of seven principals from all three levels: elementary, middle, and secondary. The process of principal learning was examined within three conceptual categories: learning from experience, formal learning, and learning informally from others.

Respondent data revealed that principals focused on their practical experiences as sources of learning, and that specifically the ‘mistakes’ they made were the catalysts for new learning. The ‘mistakes’ were classified into three categories of ‘survival,’ ‘political,’ and ‘technical.’ The principals’ process of making sense of their experiences via their interpretations of their ‘mistakes’ is discussed in relation to Schön’s idea of Reflection-in-action. In this study also, informal learning was found to be the more prevalent and influential than formal.

McGough (1998) conducted a phenomenological investigation of 23 veteran principals to examine how principals’ personal philosophies and tacit approaches to practice are formed and modified over the course of their careers through stories of learning episodes in relation to personal histories, preparation programs and on-the-job experiences. Personal storylines and career pathway analysis revealed that each career is unique, although the teacher-leader role is a prominent forerunner for principals. McGough also concluded that principals are influenced throughout their careers by personal histories, preparatory programs, and on-the-job experiences. Theories of adult learning, principalship studies, and organizational learning informed his study.

While we have a plethora of information about the “know that” knowledge in administration, and a growing number of qualitative investigations are providing knowledge about the different aspects of principal’s work, we still lack a systematic, descriptive account of the “know how” of principals’ work and how it is developed. The Dreyfus model not only clarifies “the fuzzy” areas that occur as a novice is transformed into an expert, but also provides a framework for explaining why all novices do not become experts (Ohde & Murphy, 1993, p. 85). Patricia Benner (1984) used the Dreyfus

model to examine the categories of knowledge in clinical nursing practice and her work has provided guidance as well as inspiration for the present study.

### The Dreyfus Model of Skill Acquisition and its application

The Dreyfus model of learning is the result of phenomenological studies conducted over the last twenty years regarding human skill development. The model is a five-level framework that describes the progression of how skill(s) develop with experience. The five levels of the Dreyfus model are: 1) novice, 2) advanced beginner, 3) competent performer, 4) proficient performer, and 5) expert. The Dreyfus model will be used for interpreting data in this study to generate categories of principals' work along a developmental continuum. According to the model, during the first three levels, the learner uses rational problem solving and analytical abilities. Only with greater experience does the learner develop into a proficient performer and expert that are the last two levels in the model (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986). The model will be further elaborated in Chapter Three under methodology.

The Dreyfus model was applied by Patricia Benner (1984) in the field of clinical nursing practice. The goals of her study were to examine experiential learning in nursing practice, examine skill acquisition based in clinical learning, and articulate the knowledge embedded in nursing practice (p. v). Benner used the model developed by Stuart and Hubert Dreyfus and grounded theory methodology to explain the acquisition of complex skills involved in clinical nursing. Benner explained that the model is “based on studying a practice situation by situation and determining the level of practice evident in the situation. It elucidates strengths rather than deficits and describes practice capacities rather than traits or talents” (p. x). Her study yielded descriptions of clinical nursing

practice that show how nursing expertise is developed in passages and vignettes from practitioners' clinical experiences. Benner's study, although much larger in scope, provided a model for the present study.

### **Summary**

The literature review indicated that the traditional approach in educational administration, referred to as "the One Best Model," emphasized university coursework and bodies of book knowledge that tend to remain theoretical and prescriptive. Empirical research on the principalship has included mainly quantitative approaches that used effects of student achievement and survey research. A growing number of qualitative studies were found that examined the day-to-day activities of principals as well as aspects of professional socialization. Theoretical works based in the existing research were also reviewed. Two models that will be used in the present study, the Dreyfus developmental model for skill acquisition and the cross-sectional model of educational administration by Greenfield were presented. These will be further explained in the next chapter on Research Procedures.



CHAPTER III  
METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

**Introduction**

The aim of this study was to explore principals' perceptions about their work in order to generate categories of principal's work that are meaningful at various stages of their careers from the perspective of practice. This chapter will discuss the research methodology and procedures used to conduct this study.

**Methodology**

Qualitative methodology was used for this investigation for the following reasons:

According to Creswell (1998):

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (p. 15).

Creswell also recommends the use of qualitative methodology for the following reasons:

1. The nature of the research question often starts with *how* or *what* so that initial forays into the topic describe what is going on.

2. The topic needs to be explored; theories are not available to explain behavior of participants or their population of study and theories need to be developed.
3. A *detailed view* of the topic needs to be presented.
4. There are sufficient time and resources to spend on data analysis of “text” information.
5. Audiences are receptive to qualitative research.
6. The researcher’s role as active learner will be emphasized.

All six of these reasons were appropriate for the present study. Due to a lack of similar approaches, the purpose of this study was to *explore* the nature of principals’ work from the point of view of principals in the field. This investigation sought to define categories based on *how* principals view their work (Creswell, 1998, p. 17). Findings in the form of descriptions of categories provided a *detailed view*. Criteria 4, 5, and 6 were met as they concerned the attitude and aptitudes of researcher and audience, including the dissertation advisor. The researcher and advisor both were receptive to qualitative methodologies. The study was also suited for qualitative methodology because of the analysis of texts involved. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), qualitative analysis “involves nonmathematical process of interpretation, carried out for the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organizing these into a theoretical explanatory scheme” (p. 11).

Patton (1990) explains the significance of interviewing for qualitative research as follows:

The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind. ... We interview people to find out from them those things we

cannot directly observe. The issue is not whether observational data is more desirable, valid, or meaningful than self-report data. The fact of the matter is that we cannot observe everything. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meaning they attach to what goes on in the world (p. 278).

The underlying assumption in this method of data collection is that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and capable of being made explicit (Patton, 1990). The standardized open-ended interview was used because it allows the respondents to present their experiences in their own terms while it yields data that is systematic and thorough since guiding questions are used to standardize the interviews. This method also retains flexibility for follow-up investigation as needed (p. 281).

The interpretation of data is shaped by the researcher's perspectives; therefore, it is necessary for readers to know the significant factors that inform the researcher's perspective. The researcher has worked as an elementary school vice principal and principal for one and three years respectively. The benefits of this background are that it made her sensitive to the specific issues and concerns of the elementary school principalship. This knowledge also has the potential to bias the interpreter since it is based on her own experience.

The grounded theory approach was used because "Grounded theories drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action (Patton, 1990, p. 12)." As such, data systematically gathered was analyzed using the process of open coding and then axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Since

all procedures in grounded theory are aimed at identifying, developing and relating concepts, theoretical sampling is a method used for comparison of events and incidents to identify how a category varies in terms of its properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998 p. 202). The sample in grounded theory can be purposeful in order to gather data related to categories, their properties, and dimensions. Accordingly, the numbers of years of experience used to define the novice and veteran groups were purposeful since the aim of this study was to investigate principals' work experiences at various stages of their careers as interpreted through the lens of the Dreyfus model of learning.

#### Sampling and data collection

Criteria for the sampling were based on phone consultation with Dr. Patricia Benner, who has done extensive work with the Dreyfus model in the areas of clinical nursing practice. The criterion of one to three years of experience for novice principals was further corroborated by the results of an informal survey of veteran principals in which they were asked how long it took them to "get the hang of the job." In order to restrict the variables for the relatively small sample size of 15, including the pilot novice principal, sample selection criteria were used to minimize variables and provide a basis for theoretical sampling. The principals used in this study were all public elementary school principals from one of two similar-sized large school districts in central California. The principals in the veteran group, with the exception of one individual, had fifteen or more years of experience to allow for respondents in this group to have undergone similar experiences with regard to the changing foci of educational reform. One veteran principal was in his tenth year. The novice group included principals in their

first three years of practice. Data collection took place from August through October of 2003.

### Open coding

The procedures for open coding as recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1998) were used. Strauss and Corbin explain the process of generating categories as a sequence of the activities of closely examining data, breaking them down into discrete parts, and comparing them for similarities and differences which allows for the differentiation and discrimination among categories (p. 102). Categories are defined as

...concepts derived from data that stand for phenomena. ...They answer the question, 'What is going on here?' They depict the problems, issues, concerns, and matters that are most important to those beings studied. The name chosen for the category is the one that seems the most logical descriptor for what is going on. The name should be graphic enough to remind the researcher of its referent.

The structure of codes from the simplest to the most complex and their stylistic designations are as follows:

<i>Topics</i>	labeled phenomena	<i>italicized</i>
<b>Dimensions</b>	made up of group of topics share common property; topics make up a dimension dimensions belong to a category	<b>boldfaced</b>
<b><u>Categories</u></b>	made of dimension or topics	<b><u>boldfaced &amp; underlined</u></b>

The following excerpt from a memo for the novice category, *Time Management*, illustrates the development of a category based on the commonalities found in labeled events in the novice data:

The issue of meeting deadlines, prioritizing, finding a way of organizing the work day, checking procedures, having to do discipline investigations, answering emails, being away from campus, and losing continuity all pointed to some aspect of time management being an issue in the earliest stages of the job (N101 & N103). Sylvia mentioned the difficulty especially of going from traditional to year-round calendar where she had no break or slow down time to catch up and get prepared for the next year. Principals indicated that time management did improve as the year went on, and they learned to delegate or decided that every discipline case did not need to be investigated so fully. Bill mentioned several times that everything took so long because he did not know the answers so he had to make sure until finally he decided to just 'fly by the seat of his pants'... I farmed that responsibility out to my secretary this year (N104). (See Appendix F).

In summary, the present study utilized Grounded Theory to develop meaningful categories of principal work when principals first began and after ten or more years of experience. The Dreyfus model was used to measure growth and experience. And finally, the Greenfield model helped identify training as well as persistent issues for principal work.

## Procedures

1. An initial pilot interview with a principal in her second year was conducted to test the feasibility of obtaining data that could be used for this study. The questions for this interview were developed by the researcher in consultation with Dr. Muskal and are based upon the Dreyfus model.
2. A list of potential participants was made with the help of Dr. John Borba and invitations to participate in the study were sent to principals by email. See Appendix D.
3. Upon receipt of acceptance by email, principals were informed by phone of the nature and purpose of the study. Interview questions and Demographic Questionnaire were emailed to the principals one week prior to the interview date. See Appendices G and H.
4. The interview questions were revised by the researcher with the guidance of Dr. Muskal based on the pilot interview result.
5. After obtaining the written permission of the interviewee, all interviews, with the exception of one, were conducted and recorded in person by the researcher at the school site. Interview N101 was conducted off-site. See Appendix F.
6. All interview tapes were coded to protect the identities of the participants. Interviews were transcribed by a typist who had no knowledge of the participants. Both numerical and fictitious names were assigned to individual respondents' transcripts. See Appendix B.
7. Interviews were examined by Dr. Muskal and the researcher for adjustments in questioning techniques.

8. The interview transcripts were emailed to the respective respondents for review for accuracy prior to analysis.
9. Open coding in this study began with the researcher and the advisor listening together to the first interview, wherein both concurred on the significance of time management as a major issue. The purpose of listening together to the first issue was to calibrate the researcher to listening and seeing data as might an expert. The novice interviews were analyzed first. Initially the interviews were read closely for any “events” that stood out to the researcher. The following questions were used to examine the data for the purpose of identifying any significant events in the novice principals’ responses and formed the basis for the memos. See Appendix C.
  - a. What are the problems that principals are describing?
  - b. What surprised them about the job?
  - c. What do they indicate they do not know?
  - d. What is their understanding of the job for themselves?

These events were identified in the data as mistakes, challenges, difficulties, surprises, or even successes. These are the issues that the principals reported as significant in their new work and are used as the indicators of what is of special significance for them in principal work. The veteran group’s responses regarding their challenges during their first two years were added to the novice list. All events that are listed were found to recur in the data.

10. Categories were defined as labeled events were classified for the general phenomenon they revealed. For example, data revealed that novice principals



experienced the various demands on their time and began to cope with these demands in different ways; thus the category of “time management” emerged to reflect this dominant concern of novice principals. Memos about the issues related to time management revealed dimensions of this category.

11. The categories for novice and veteran groups were examined using the Dreyfus model to see which ones were significant for different levels of experience. See Appendix A.
12. The Greenfield model was used to compare the categories for novices and veterans to determine their significances in relation to the dimensions defined by Greenfield. See Appendix A.

### **Theoretical Models**

#### Dreyfus Learning Model

The Dreyfus learning model describes the stages of skill development as one makes use of experience. According to the model, during the first three levels, the learner uses rational problem solving and analytical abilities. Only with greater experience, does the learner develop into a proficient performer and expert, which are the last two levels in the model. The different levels reflect changes in three different aspects of performance as follows: 1) a movement from reliance on abstract principles to use of past concrete experience as paradigms; 2) a change in the learners’ perception of the demand situation, in which the situation is seen less and less as a compilation of equally relevant bits, and more and more as a complete whole in which only certain parts are relevant; and 3) a passage from detached observer to involved performer where the performer no longer stands outside the situation but is engaged in the situation (Benner, 1984, p. 13). In

summary, the Dreyfus learning model examines the stages of skill development as learners make use of experience. It can explain how learners become more sophisticated or, in some cases, why they do not progress.

Below is a general description of the performance at each level.

**Novice:** The novice is new to the field or context. He does not know what is what. When presented with a task or situation, he must follow explicit instruction or direction that does not require him to have prior knowledge of the context. The instructions at this stage could be followed by anyone. The learner relies on external rules/procedure formulas to complete a task. At this stage, the learner does not know what there is to know in the field

**Advanced Beginner:** The advanced beginner has had a chance to try out the rules he has learned in real-life situations. He is learning what is what. He understands the jargon, though he may not understand the implications of actions and their interrelations. He is, in short, becoming familiar with the context. His theoretical knowledge interacts with his experiences. He learns by trial and error, and his learning depends on his effectiveness in how he learns from experience. He still relies on external prompts and may refer to rules and procedures but continues to reflect, check, and predict new experiences to broaden his understanding. At this stage, the learner may have some inklings of what there is to know and has some access to knowing what he does not know.

**The Competent Performer:** The competent performer has had enough experience to internalize routine rules and procedures. He is now very much aware of the context; with context comes more meaning. Thus he may feel overwhelmed by the

amount of data or information that presents itself to him (now that he sees it). He still needs a plan to operate, but now it is a plan of his own making. He must interpret and decide what is important. He must prioritize and devise a plan based on these judgments. He must decide the elements that he wishes to focus on and plan what to do and how to do it. He knows that if the plan fails or succeeds, it is his responsibility. Even if he chooses not to do anything, it is an action and he is responsible for it. At this skill level, the learner knows what he needs to know and do to be effective in his job though he may not necessarily know how to do it or do it perfectly.

**The Proficient Performer:** The proficient performer is performing in a mode beyond analytical rationality. His mass of experience allows him to process new situations more holistically and to consider actions to address them in a more intuitive manner. Dreyfus seems to use the word "intuitively" to refer to alternative mental processes instead of the cognitive based rational/analytical that have been relied on thus far. Where as the earlier stage was still characterized by a deliberate, conscious problem-solving mode, at this stage the decision-making is more fluid and comes from a cogent and established perspective. This 'evolved perspective' that is the source of fluid decisions and actions maybe likened to a performer developing his "own style" which incorporates his synthesis of experiences and stances with regard to conceptualized issues.

**The Expert:** The expert gives the virtuoso performance. He does not have to think about what to do, how to do it, or when to do it. He simply does what works. Even if it fails in a given circumstance, he is not baffled, for his plethora of experience allows him to understand deeply that there are no guarantees, even though there are calculated

probabilities that have been incorporated unconsciously into his intuitive decisions.

While the actions are “automatic”, undeliberated, and while responses are quick and sure, these could not take place without the due experience in the field. There are no shortcuts to this level other than massive practice. It is also possible, as pointed out by Stuart Dreyfus in his example of his own skill at chess playing, that mental propensities such as the analytical wheel may disallow a person from reaching the proficient or expert stage which requires the "no hands" approach. Those who are wedded to their analytical-reasoning abilities may find that these interfere in developing expertise in the fourth and fifth levels of this model that require the use of intuitive faculties.

#### Greenfield Cross Sectional Model

The Greenfield (1995) model describes the work of educational administration as encompassed in five dimensions. The five dimensions named in Greenfield’s model are: 1) Moral, 2) Social/Interpersonal, 3) Managerial, 4) Instructional, and 5) Political. These dimensions of work are based on the interactions between the administrator’s perspectives, abilities, skills, values, and motives and the demand environment of principals’ work. Since these dimensions describe the nature of principals’ work, the novice and veteran categories will be examined in light of Greenfield’s dimensions to determine how the significance of the dimensions changes for principals from the beginning of their career and after ten or more years on the job.

Greenfield’s (1995) model takes into account the following three unique features of schools as organizations: 1) the moral character of schools, 2) a highly educated, autonomous, and permanent workforce, and 3) regular and unpredictable threats to organizational stability. Greenfield adds, “the magnitude of these role demands and the

nature of relations among them will change depending on other variables including group, organizational, and community factors (p. 69).” The Greenfield model is especially appropriate for this study as it accounts for the contextual factors of principals’ work that are significant to the problems of practice and that influence individual principals’ experience and perceptions. The model is used to compare how the veteran and novice principals differed in their concerns. The categories for novices and veterans are placed on Greenfield’s model in order to describe how the different aspects of the principal work changed in significance with growing experience.

Salient features and explanations of each dimension are given below (Greenfield, 1995):

**Moral Dimension:** The role demands require the administrator to make judgments regarding school programs and policies in the best interest of all children and teachers in an environment of competing and often conflicting interests. Due to the complexity of this dimension, often competing standards of goodness and values are applied by various stakeholders (p. 69).

**Social/Interpersonal Dimension:** Principals accomplish most of their day-to-day work through face-to-face interpersonal interactions. Principals work directly and through other people to influence, coordinate, and monitor their efforts as well as to develop and implement programs to accomplish school goals. The ability to use influence and build trust in order to persuade others to accomplish tasks is associated with this dimension (p. 69).

**Instructional Dimension:** Instructional role demands include activities, problems, and processes associated with the core activities of teaching and learning.

These activities include technical and substantive matters related to the content and objectives of the school's curriculum, the processes of teaching and learning, the organization of and climate for instruction, and the supervision and evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's instructional programs and processes and of the teaching and learning efforts of students and teachers. A central criterion associated with this dimension is effectiveness as measured by accomplishment of school goals (p. 70).

**Managerial Dimension:** Developing and implementing effective organizational routines are the central role demands of this dimension. Situations of urgency that require immediate action and decisions are characteristic of this dimension, including the smooth and safe running of the school. Two criterion that are associated with this dimension are efficiency and compliance (p. 71).

**Political Dimension:** The political dimension for the school principal includes the greater context of the school such as the district and even city but more importantly the micro-political level involving internal politics of the organization. Understanding and being responsive to the political dimension is critical in that the school represents a negotiated social order. In this dimension, realities are multiple, as they are constituted by individuals' subjective understandings. Activities of this dimension include ongoing efforts by teachers and administrators to influence others through the exercise of formal and informal power (p. 71).

### **Limitations and Assumptions**

It is assumed that the sample was adequate for the generation of categories and that further empirical research will be required to validate the findings of this exploratory study. It is also assumed that principal participants were honest, sincere, and forthright in their responses.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter examines how principals addressed the responsibilities and duties of the principalship in the early part of their career and after ten or more years of experience. The chapter begins with a description of the novice group followed by a discussion of the novice codes, which are the categories for principal work that reflected concerns of principals at the beginning of their careers. Next, *A Portrait of Principal Work in the First Year* depicts the concerns of novices in a descriptive narrative that incorporates the testimonies of principals. The third section, *Veteran Codes*, discusses how the single category, Adaptation and its dimensions, addresses the concerns of veterans who have been on the job for ten or more years. The Novice and Veteran Code summaries are provided at the beginning of each section. Following the *Veteran Codes* is an *Overview of Novice and Veteran Codes* which provides a general comparison of the two sets of codes. The last section presents an interpretation of the codes using the Dreyfus and the Greenfield models.

#### **Novices**

The principals in the novice group were from two large school districts of similar size in California. Six of the eight novices were beginning their second year as principal (N101, N103, N106, N107, Pilot) and one was starting her third year (N104). Only one of the principals in this group was beginning her first full year as a principal, although



she had been acting principal in the previous year (N102). Classroom experience for novices varied from one year to 17 years. All of the novices had held positions as a vice principal prior to becoming principals and only one had been a vice principal at the same school site (N102). The demographic data is summarized in Appendix B.

The novice codes are summarized in Table 1. Categories of **Time Management**, **Teachers**, and **District Office** represent the main concerns of novice principals as they confronted their work and began to learn from on-the-job experiences. The topics for each of the categories illustrate the range of responses in which the category is grounded.

Table 1. Novice Codes

Category	Dimensions	Topics
<b>A. <u>Time Management</u></b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Surprise at amount of work</i></li> <li>b. <i>Surprise at the extent of responsibilities</i></li> <li>c. <i>Mistakes of omission</i></li> <li>d. <i>Missed deadlines</i></li> <li>e. <i>Time away from site</i></li> <li>f. <i>Lengthy discipline investigations</i></li> <li>g. <i>Need to check procedures</i></li> <li>h. <i>Work hours</i></li> <li>i. <i>Sort, prioritize, delegate</i></li> </ul>
<b>B. <u>Teachers</u></b>	<b>B1. Credibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Supervising peers</i></li> <li>b. <i>Being younger than teachers</i></li> <li>c. <i>Self confidence</i></li> <li>d. <i>Thinking of yourself as the 'boss'</i></li> <li>e. <i>Elementary instruction and curriculum</i></li> <li>f. <i>Handling younger children</i></li> </ul>
	<b>B2. Rapport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Building relationships</i></li> <li>b. <i>Teacher attacks</i></li> <li>c. <i>Fear of principal</i></li> <li>d. <i>Support for teachers</i></li> <li>e. <i>Not being too friendly</i></li> </ul>
	<b>B3. Managing adults</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Shock at teacher behavior</i></li> <li>b. <i>Inflexibility of teachers</i></li> <li>c. <i>Listen more</i></li> <li>d. <i>Give only appropriate information</i></li> </ul>
	<b>B4. Making decisions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Consult teachers before making a decision</i></li> <li>b. <i>Communicate decisions clearly</i></li> <li>c. <i>Stand your ground</i></li> </ul>
<b>C. <u>District Office</u></b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Knowing who is who</i></li> <li>b. <i>Procedures</i></li> <li>c. <i>Meeting their director's expectations</i></li> <li>d. <i>Support from their director</i></li> <li>e. <i>Higher salaries</i></li> <li>f. <i>Feedback</i></li> <li>g. <i>Accountability</i></li> </ul>

**Time Management** is the issue that initially confronts novices. The next category, **Teachers**, is the most complex and intricate, and as such, its topics have been divided into four dimensions: 1) **Credibility**, 2) **Rapport**, 3) **Managing adults**, and 4) **Making decisions**. The third category for novices is **District Office**.

### Time Management

The dominant issue for novice principals when they first confronted their jobs was how to do what they thought needed to be done in time, without always knowing which task was more important or how to get it done. The principals were overwhelmed at times with the papers that landed in their in-boxes, not sure how to sort or file since they did not yet know the relative importance of each item. The unpredictable set of problems to solve each day did not seem to leave time to read and respond to emails or items requested by different departments.

The first four topics reflected the overall surprise at the extent of principal work in its quantity, quality and variety. Novice principals were hit with two surprises: *a) Surprise at the amount of work* as well as *b) Surprise at the extent of the responsibilities* they found as they confronted their new job (V111, V107, N101, N103, N104). *Mistakes of omission*, which were later pointed out to them by school or district staff, alerted them to things they were responsible for doing, such as calling a rainy day or conducting a fire drill (N104). *Missed deadlines* also reflected the novice's difficulty in coping with the amount and nature of work. The challenge for the new principals was to understand the interpretation of their specific duties as dictated not only by the district job description, but also by the role expectations at each particular school site (N101, N103, N104).

As they coped with the amount and extent of work, novice principals were sensitive to anything that compounded the problem of too much to do and too little time to do it. Thus, novices found *Time away from site* an extra burden, as it meant more time required to review student discipline issues (N101, V108). Principals without vice principals also found they could no longer conduct *Lengthy discipline investigations*, since this, too, contributed to the lack of time for other tasks (N101, V108). Finally, being a novice itself was time consuming due to the *Need to check procedures* (N101, N104, N103). These topics described factors that were perceived by novices to reduce available work time.

The novices' early attempts to cope with the various demands on time are reflected in the last two topics for **Time Management**, *Work hours* and *Sorting, prioritizing, and delegating*. Early attempts to create and organize time are seen in novices' experimentation with organizing their *Work hours* (N101, N103, N104, N106). Attempts at *Sorting, prioritizing, and delegating* early on the job proved to be of little use, since principals themselves were not clear on what needed to get done first (N101, N103, N104). These coping responses by principals to the time pressures of the job illustrated the novices' difficulties in confronting the job.

In summary, **Time Management** reflects the importance of the issue for novices. The topics for this category illustrate the range of concerns voiced by principals as they were confronted with site problems to solve and paper to manage. Novices experienced *Surprise at the amount of work* and *Surprise at the extent of responsibilities*, which they continued to discover through *Mistakes of omission* and *Missed deadlines*. Novices' early attempts to rearrange their *Work hours* and to *Sort, prioritize or delegate* were

reflected in their responses to the problems of time management. However, they found that sorting, prioritizing and delegating were difficult since they did not know the relative importance of the tasks. Novices expressed their frustration about factors that seemed to further limit their time such as *Lengthy discipline investigations* and *Time away from site*. They further noticed that the *Need to check procedures* was itself time consuming. The topics described above indicate the range of concerns of the **Time Management** category.

### **Teachers**

The novice's concerns regarding **Teachers** proved to be the most complex. With the largest number of events labeled, the category of **Teachers** included the many nuances of internal realizations in the processes of establishing leadership as well as principals' evolving strategies for managing adults. An examination of the concerns voiced in this category could easily also provide a rationale for calling it "Establishing Leadership." However, the researcher felt that the term, "Teachers" was preferable because it maintained the emphasis and focus on teachers who are the key group involved in daily interactions with the principal as well as being the direct link to the achievement of instructional goals of the school. An analysis of the events in the **Teachers** category led to the definition of the category's four dimensions: **1) Credibility, 2) Rapport, 3) Managing adults, and 4) Making decisions.**

**Credibility** Credibility is an essential ingredient for both leading and managing teachers. All novices reported the need to establish credibility in the eyes of the teachers that they were charged to lead and supervise. The sub-dimensions of **Credibility** reflect the range and the complexity of the **Teachers** category. The topics for this dimension

identify the specific challenges in establishing credibility. *Supervising peers* (V108) and *Being younger than teachers* (V107, V112) posed special challenges for principals' own sense of credibility with teachers. Some novices reported a lack of *Self-confidence* in relation to tasks that they were uncertain (N103). Another internal obstacle experienced by novices was *Thinking of self as 'boss'* (N101). Principals who had not worked in an elementary setting previously noted the need to learn about *Elementary instruction and curriculum* and *Handling younger children* ((N107, V112, N103). The lack of experience at the elementary level proved to be a hindrance to principals' own sense of confidence as well as their credibility with teachers.

**Rapport** Rapport is a necessary component of healthy working relationships and important for effective communication. Thus, establishing rapport is a step towards *Building relationships*, a goal expressed by novices (N102, N103, N104, N106). However, the relationship between the new principal and teachers must also be tempered due to the principal's managerial relations with teachers. The sub-dimensions of *Rapport* included indicators and causes of positive rapport and negative as well as obstacles to establishing rapport.

Novices who had worked successfully as vice principals at the site before becoming principal reported having positive rapport and relationships with teachers. They also wanted to maintain their positive relationship by demonstrating their *Support for teachers* in the context of various conflicts between parents and teachers (N102). The other extreme of a positive rapport is the presence of hostility, which was experienced by some novices in the form of *Teacher attacks* (N103). *Fear of the principal* was a hindrance to establishing rapport; fear of the principal may be the result of the new

principal being perceived as a threat. This was the case for the novice who made several staffing changes (N106).

Tempering the need for positive rapport was the novice's realization of the importance of *Not being too friendly with staff* (V108, N102). Thus, establishing rapport for the new principal was a balancing act of friendliness and professionalism; of showing care without partiality to the diverse groups of teachers with whom they worked.

**Managing adults** The area of greatest surprise for novice principals was in the area of managing teachers' work behaviors. The sub-dimensions represent these specific realizations or causes for surprises experienced by the novices. Novices had to come to terms with the unprofessional conduct of some teachers. Novices expressed *Shock at teacher behaviors*, such as not showing up on yard duty, not submitting documents when asked, sitting in front of a computer every time the principal walked in, and leaving students unattended (N105). Other novices remarked about the *Inflexibility of teachers* and the realization that others do not share their viewpoint (V108, V111). Still others exhibited a shifting perspective as they expressed it was wiser to *Listen more* and *Give only appropriate information* (N102). **Managing adults** involved the novice principals coming to terms with a range of teacher behaviors and learning to manage them in order to accomplish their objectives.

**Making decisions** Faced with the many small and large decisions that principals must make, novices learned a few lessons quickly, through mistakes they made. They learned to *Consult teachers before making a decision* (N107, N106), and to *Communicate decisions clearly* (N106). Novices also found that making a decision was not as difficult at times as sticking to it. Thus, learning to *Stand your ground* on

decisions (*N105, N102*) seemed to mark a turning point for the internalization of what it meant to be the ‘boss’ who made the decisions at the school. The novices had begun to assume the role of ‘principal’ in ways that were unique to each yet also with markers that were shared with others. All of the above represented lessons that new principals learned after making ‘a mistake’ or as a result of observing the social dynamics of their school.

In summary, the category of **Teachers** consisted of four dimensions:

**1) Credibility, 2) Rapport, 3) Managing adults, and 4) Making decisions.** The topics of each dimension reflected the complexity of the interactions and social dynamics that are involved in managing and leading a group of professionals whose compliance is essential to the successful work of the principal. The issues regarding teachers covered a wide range of internal and external actions on the part of novices. Their internal shifts in understanding and becoming the principal of the school, the boss, and the decision maker was for some smoother than others. All principals voiced some situations that were problematic at first and to which they soon brought strategic solutions, drawing on their own experience of managing students when they were teachers (*N105*).

#### District Office

The seven topics of the category illustrate the range of concerns that novices experienced in relation to the **District Office**. The order of these topics is not hierarchical within the category.

The importance of *Knowing who is who* in the district office and *Procedures* for getting things done was expressed by most novices (*N101, N103, N104, N105, N106, N107, V109, V110*). With all the small and large problems that principals face in the operation of a school site, it is most valuable to know whom to contact for assistance and



services and even more so to have a rapport with them. Several veterans recalled how this was their first concern and that the first thing they did as newly hired principals was to acquaint themselves personally with each department head at the district office (V110, V109).

For novices new to the district with relatively few years in the profession, the concerns regarding expectations from the **District Office** remained at the forefront (N103, N101). In their new roles, their most frequent contacts were still with their supervisors, which tended to emphasize whether things were being done according to district expectations or supervisor's requests. Their responses also indicated that they felt somewhat precarious about their position in the district. These principals seemed more concerned about *Meeting their supervisor's expectations*, while principals with more years in the profession but new to the district appreciated *Support from their directors* (N104, N105, N106).

The *Higher salaries* of school administrators remain one of the major attractions to the work of administration. The increase in salary is especially dramatic for those who are newer to the teaching profession (N103). In the face of all the new challenges and demands, their higher salaries served as an affirmation as well as reinforcement to persevere. The importance of doing things correctly or meeting their supervisor's expectations was worrisome for novices since they were still in the process of proving themselves to the district (N101, N103, N104). The sense of urgency was more apparent in the principals who were new to the district and did not have tenure as teachers in the district. Therefore, a lack of *Feedback* regarding principal's performance was perceived

as stressful (N103) and the presence of *Feedback* from the supervisor was considered as supportive, since it allowed the novice to adjust and learn (N104, N103).

The directives from the supervisors or directors most frequently related to *Accountability*. All novices referred to directives from the district office and were concerned with their API growth. This concern was expressed in different ways by principals. Principals' actions associated with accountability aimed at improving student outcomes included new program adoptions, working with outside agencies, extensive monitoring efforts required by districts, and staffing changes. The specifics of what had to be done or what was in the process of being done in relation to the instructional program differed from novice to novice, though all instructional improvements were identified as a district office directive under the theme of *Accountability*.

In summary, the topics for the category of **District Office** illustrate the various ways in which the district office is significant for new principals. The concerns with **District Office** for novices who were new to their districts emphasized communication and relationship with their supervisors and knowing the personnel and procedures of the district office. *Knowing who is who at the district office* as well as the required procedures for obtaining services and supplies undoubtedly make the principal's job of solving site problems easier and more efficient. In light of their many uncertainties, novices relied on *Feedback* from their supervisors as well as others in the district office in order to self-correct and find affirmation of what they were doing right. *Support from their supervisor* in the form of *Feedback* was valued by the novices. Much of their communication with their supervisors was related to the *Accountability* measures that each district was implementing. All novices viewed growth in student achievement as

their overall charge, although they differed in the level and mode of their involvement. Novices know it is important to understand and follow their supervisor's directives in order to *Meet their supervisor's expectations*. At times, in the face of the pressures and demands of the new job, the *Higher salaries* they were earning as principals helped to maintain their motivation.

### **Summary of Novice Codes**

All three categories for Novices, **Time Management**, **Teachers**, and **District Office**, depict the concerns of the novice principals when they first confronted the job and as they began to learn from their experiences. The topics for each category illustrate the range of concerns voiced by principals.

**Time Management** emerged as the most immediate concern, showing the principals' struggle to juggle the various demands facing them when they began. The topics for **Time Management** illustrated the range of concerns voiced by novice principals. The topics for Time Management are: a) *Surprise at amount of work*, b) *Surprise at the extent of responsibilities*, c) *Lengthy discipline investigations*, d) *Missed deadlines*, e) *Mistakes of omission*, f) *Time away from site*, g) *Need to check procedures*, h) *Work hours*, and i) *Sort, prioritize, and delegate*.

**Teachers** was the most complex of the three novice categories. Its four dimensions of: 1) **Credibility**, 2) **Rapport**, 3) **Managing adults**, and 4) **Making decisions** portrayed the internal and external events of establishing leadership at the school site. The eighteen topics in this category reflect its complexity and intricacy; the topics were discussed in the context of their dimensions. The dimension of **Credibility** consisted of factors that played a role in the principals' own sense of confidence and

credibility with teachers. These included: a) *Supervising peers*, b) *Being younger than teachers*, c) *Self confidence*, d) *Thinking of yourself as the 'boss,'* e) *Elementary instruction and curriculum*, and f) *Handling younger children*. The topics for the dimension of **Rapport** represent the need for, hindrances to, lessons about negative and positive rapport as recognized by principals. These included: a) *Building relationships*, b) *Teacher attacks*, c) *Fear of principal*, d) *Support for teachers*, and e) *Not being too friendly*.

One of the areas of greatest difficulty for principals was **Managing adults**, which is the third dimension in the **Teachers** category. The five topics under this dimension show the principals' shock at teacher behaviors and their early strategies to manage them. These topics are: a) *Shock at teacher behavior*, b) *Inflexibility of teachers*, c) *Listen more*, and d) *Give good information*. The last dimension in this category is **Making decisions**. Making many small and big decisions is a central part of principal work and teachers voiced their concerns regarding the difficulties they experienced in relation to making decisions. The topics for this dimension reflect lessons learned by principals in relation to the making of decisions: a) *Consult teachers before making a decision*, b) *Communicate decisions clearly*, and c) *Stand your ground on the decisions you have made*. The dimensions and topics for the category of **Teachers** reflect the concerns voiced by novice principals regarding their duties as managers, supervisors and leaders of teachers at the school site.

**District Office** reflected the challenges that novices face in learning and understanding district procedures in order to be effective and efficient problem solvers at the school site as well as for meeting district expectations in their performance. The

topics for **District Office** were: *a) Knowing who is who, b) Procedures, c) Meeting their supervisor's expectations, d) Support from their director, e) Higher salaries, f) Feedback, and g) Accountability.* This concludes the discussion of the Novice codes.

### **A Portrait of Principal Work in the First Year**

The following account of the principals' experiences during the first year on the job weaves testimonies of principals in a descriptive narrative to depict the principals' first year. Pseudonyms are used to refer to individual principal respondents as well as their data codes. A list of the names and numbers with their demographic information is shown in Appendix B. Tom's observation very succinctly depicts the new principal's general dilemma:

The biggest challenge in stepping in as the principal the first day is that you are aware that it is your first day but everyone else thinks you have been an administrator all your life (V112).

As the school day progresses hour by hour, the new principal must handle situations related to facilities, student discipline, and staff requests. While the principal takes care of running the school, emails, phone calls, and mail continue to pour in. Often at a loss to sort and prioritize due to lack of knowledge about the relative importance of things, the hours in the workday do not seem to be sufficient. During the first year, new principals struggle to make sense of their work in order to manage their workload.

Mary recalls learning about her mistakes of omission the hard way—at a district in-service when it was pointed out how 'one site' had neglected to conduct fire drills. Such recognition can be frightful for the novice who does not yet know the consequences of such blunders. Mary comments on her mistake:

Any mistakes I made were mistakes of omission, where I just simply thought well this isn't that important and therefore I didn't do it or did it late. That was a definite mistake (N104).

Carlos attests to his surprise at the extent of his job responsibilities when he first took the job almost thirty years ago and which can vary from site to site:

I knew what principals did. I did pay attention to what they were doing at my school when I was a teacher, but I didn't realize the amount of time that principals had to put in if they were going to do their job effectively. It's just an enormous amount of time to do the job (V111).

A major difference in the workday of an administrator and teacher is the seeming flexibility available to administrators in arranging their work hours. One of the first challenges for Bill was to arrange his workday in order to accomplish all of his daily tasks. He reported:

Early on I was coming to work at 7:00 o'clock. Well, I was working out before school, getting there at seven, and then staying until five-thirty or six, sometimes until six-thirty or seven and a lot of times I would still have a huge pile. So, it was about half way through the school year, I realized the system was not working because I kept thinking I would have time after school to work on stuff and think about stuff. But then I realized, for myself this is the worst time of the day—it always has been. I am a morning person. I'm tired and there are still the teachers who hang around and want to come in and talk...while I am trying to learn my job. So I

switched my schedule around and started coming in at six or six thirty, and I have my door closed until eight (N101).

For Sylvia, managing the YRE calendar was a major challenge, as it was for Carlos during his first year. One of the problems noted by her about the YRE calendar is the inadequate interval of time between school years for closure or reflection. Sylvia describes her experience, “I always felt like I was catching up, I never felt like I was ahead...meeting deadlines, staying afloat” (N103).

Missing deadlines was a common problem mentioned by principals who were new to the district. Mary mentioned the difference she noticed in the bureaucracy of the present district as compared to her previous district. She also noted the immense quantity of paperwork required from all the different departments (N104). Bill mentioned not being certain about exactly what was requested of him (N101). Not knowing the district staff as well as the annual cycle of required reports and their relative urgency compounded the problem of meeting deadlines for the new principals.

Sorting and prioritizing seem to offer relief for time management problems, yet their solutions are limited at best. Living through one or more cycles of the school year allows the principal to understand the paper flow, which makes it easier to determine the significance of the papers that land in the principal’s inbox (N101, N104).

For principals without vice principals, delegating presents a similar difficulty. Not having another administrator at the site made delegation more tricky if not impossible for novices, as it required extra sorting and supervising of tasks. Both lengthy discipline investigations and being away from the school site for district meetings caused an added burden for the principals who already found the time required to meet this

workload exceeded the number of hours in their workday. Sooner or later, principals discover that they have to change the way they do discipline investigations in order to keep up with the rest of their workload. Bill's testimony reflected this concern when he said, "I think at a certain point you realize you don't have the time for that and you have to put your time into other things..." As Bill said, any time away from the site compounded the work at the site, since additional time was required to address situations that occurred when he was away. Bill commented on the problem:

I'm a smaller campus where there is no vice principal. I have a teacher in charge when I am away and I would say I average at least one meeting a week away from the campus; there were some weeks where I had two or three meetings away...that's a lot of time getting back, finding your place, picking up what has gone on...putting together some things that had fallen—let's say while I was out. A lot of times that would be discipline that happened while I was away or a parent request or other requests from departments...so it would be that sort of thing and just trying to get up to speed with that (N101).

Success of principals depends on their ability to motivate teachers. Simply being appointed principal and occupying the principal's office does not establish leadership. The negotiations of power, compliance, and trust are the results of many small and large events during the initial stages of the principalship. Through these incidences, principals learned what to do and what not to do. Principals felt they needed to establish credibility, develop rapport, and build relationships. The common ingredient to these three facets is



trust, which can only be gained over time since it is time that tests the truth of first impressions.

As Bill discovered, sitting in the principal's office did not automatically make him believe he was the 'boss.' Teachers who refused to comply after being told to submit papers also were not convinced that their new principal (Barbara) was in fact the 'boss.' Establishing leadership includes the internal understandings achieved by the principal as well as those of his or her major stakeholders, the teachers.

Bill expressed his need for credibility:

...I think it has more to do with communication and having teachers feel like I know what's going on, whereas this last year, I think a lot of time although I tried to convey that, I don't think they got that....I want to know a little bit more of what's going on because I am accountable to a certain extent (N101).

Sylvia on the other hand spoke of her own lack of confidence in leading her teachers in the district's mandated curriculum development activities:

So, I think one challenge for me was that it wasn't consistent, it kept changing so when I went back to my staff, I didn't feel credible. I didn't feel confident like I knew like hey, here is a task that we're going to do together...(N103).

Charles and Mike spoke of the difficulty in supervising teachers who had been former peers. Mike mentioned the need to serve in teacher leadership positions before actually taking the principal's role in order to establish credibility with teachers.

Mike describes his experience:

A lot of the first year was developing recognition of your leadership, so that the folks you are working with really did respect you and look up to you and would follow your direction....Like for myself, I've always been strong in curriculum. So, curriculum was an easy area for me to talk to teachers about and to lead them in (V113).

From their initial shock at the unprofessional conduct of some teachers to their need to remind teachers repeatedly about paperwork, novices found the task of managing adults challenging for a number of reasons. Being younger and less experienced than the teachers one supervised posed a hurdle.

Norman recalled his experience:

The hardest thing was for me, the whole area of management, not managing, but when I first became a principal or even vice principal, I was twenty-nine years old and there were teachers on my staff who were much older than I. In fact, I was one of the younger persons on staff. I think that was challenging, not so much telling or administrating, it's just that you looked at people and they had a lot more experience than you....or the fact that they knew more about how to teach a classroom than you did, but you were their manager... (V107).

He later talked about how he met this challenge. He explained that he realized he could not compete with teachers with regard to the nitty-gritty of classroom life since the teachers were the experts. Charles, on the other hand, spoke of the problems of establishing credibility and the general difficulty of supervising teachers who had been

peers:“...I had been a teacher at that site for a number of years, so I knew everyone as a co-teacher and now I had to be the leader and that was difficult (V108).”

Principals, who were strong and successful as teachers, expressed shock or surprise at discovering that not all teachers behave professionally.

As Barbara put it:

When you are a strong teacher and you are told to do something, you think this is my job and you do it. It doesn't occur to you that there are people who don't do that. So the shock of having actually to stay on people and manage the teachers' behavior to make sure that they are in their classrooms when they are supposed to be, that they are teaching when they are supposed to be, that they are not leaving the kids alone somewhere or not showing up for yard duty—all those nuts and bolts things were hard for me at first (N105).

Charles tells about his experience with teachers at the beginning of his career:

The difficult part, aside from having to learn so much my first year about everything, was working with adults—it was a difficult thing, although I am much more experienced with it now, and I do have strategies now that I didn't have then. It's still a challenge dealing with adult personalities, dealing with people that can be totally inflexible at times (V108).

Principals learned to cope with the demands of managing teachers in different ways. Norman found it easier once he realized:

...it has to do with something a wise old administrator said—you don't compete with a teacher. You are no longer the teacher of the classroom.

You are a teacher of teachers of the school—but not the teacher or commander of the classroom. I think when he said that it made a whole lot of sense....instead of trying to tell teachers how to teach, it really was trying to teach teachers how to be teachers and they in turn translated that in their classroom as teachers of students (V107).

Barbara described her own strategizing to get things done by teachers after having experienced non-compliance:

Sometimes I am a little hesitant. I see something that needs to be done; so then there is the plan of how to get it done. You know how there are some things that you can—just like your classroom—you can leave the kids or the teachers to think they thought of them (N105).

For some principals, being the boss and being direct took some time to master.

Charles found this difficult at the beginning of his career due to his peer relationship with the teachers before becoming a principal. He again reported that it was also an ongoing challenge. It is possible that the issue of being direct and directive is also related to personality type and leadership style of individual principals.

Bill tells of his own incredulity at being the ‘boss’:

I think for me personally, the biggest surprise and maybe one of the things that caught me off guard most often, it’s crazy but it’s just being referred to as the ‘boss’ and just the whole sense of it—‘you’re the boss’ or just for no reason it comes up—someone reminds me that I’m the boss—you know or reminds themselves—I personally come from a place where I think—I mean it’s not too humble to say you think you’re humble but I

don't see myself as being any different than them. I just have a different part to play (N101).

To the new principal who is trying to meet the demands of the site and the district office, not knowing who is who or the nitty-gritty of getting things done can be a real obstacle if not an outright hazard. Being new to the district added to the learning curve substantially as noted by Mary, Bill, Cindy, and Larry.

Mary stressed,

The biggest challenge was the fact that I was new to the district, it was a much larger district than I had ever worked in before. The management is very structured and very linear, and the sheer size of the district was much, much bigger than I had ever experienced before. So, becoming acquainted with the procedures was difficult (N104).

A major factor in her situation was also the fact that she began her job at the new district one week before the start of school. Thus Mary said that she never felt caught up during that first year. She describes the situation as follows: "...I was seriously playing catch up just to get on track and that was really pretty huge and it lasted for a while (N104)." The stress on the principal new to the district is increased by the fact that she or he does not have the security of tenure as a teacher in the district. Mary commented on the support that she received when her supervisor gave her feedback on specific situations that she encountered. While Sylvia expressed frustration at feeling that she had not met her supervisor's expectations, she also commented on not understanding her supervisor's directives, which contributed to her sense of failure and lack of confidence in conveying information to her staff (N103).

All principals are greatly affected by the current accountability movement. As districts are pressed to show growth in student outcomes, the principal is charged with a new set of tasks. Larger districts, such as the ones included in the sample in this study, tackle the problems of curriculum development and program adoptions at the district level in order to ensure some standardization in the district. Principals in these districts have been charged with increased formalized monitoring of results and instructional practices. This means more frequent testing of students and increased collection of data and analysis by principals and teachers. Due to the larger district sizes, procedures for monitoring are specified rather than left up to each principal. The principal's ability to follow such instructions and meet the expectations of her supervisors is dependent often on rapport with the supervisors and personal ability based in field knowledge to interpret such requirements. Though all principals acknowledged the requirements of meeting API targets, new principals seemed more involved with instructional issues at different levels.

The necessity of having good relationships with teachers might become evident sooner than can be accomplished. New principals also discovered that relationships between principals and teachers require a special balance of cordiality and professionalism. While rapport is important, the relationship is tempered by the fact that the principal is in a supervisory role in relation to the teachers. Charles discovered the disadvantages of being too friendly with the staff.

Sarah noted her realization that she did not need to tell the teachers everything:

I believe that teachers need to know as much as possible, but I need to temper that and not say more than they need to know. That is probably

what I want to work on the most here because I have really good relationships with teachers (N102).

One principal may experience extreme negativity in the form of teacher attacks or non-compliance as in the case of Sylvia, while another wishes to maintain positive relationships that she already has established, as in the case of Sarah (N103, N102). Teacher attacks even by a small group of teachers can be a source of immense stress for the new principal. Learning how to handle teachers under such circumstances is a major contour of the learning curve. Sylvia reported the new issue at her school:

There is one new issue that emerged this year....Out of the thirty-two teachers, there are three to five individuals who use the union –I feel like they attack me, that’s the new issue. I feel like they attack me in a way that is unprofessional and disrespectful (N103).

Her body language and tone of voice indicated her turmoil and distress over the situation in general. She explained how she handled it and how she reflected on the situation. She expressed her sense of aloneness as she related these experiences.

In the face of teachers’ non-compliance, defiance, and attacks, principals must decide on a course of action. One of these is to stand their ground on decisions that do not meet with teachers’ approval. It is possible that veteran principals have learned strategies to arrive at the decisions in a way that prevents such overt negative reactions from teachers. One such strategy is learned early, as Marisol recognized one of her early mistakes was to not consult teachers before making a decision (N106).

Although she only had four years of classroom teaching experience, Sarah had been the vice principal for seven years at the same site and interim principal for several

months before officially being hired as the principal. A challenge she noted was to maintain good relationships with teachers. She described how she found a strategy to handle conflicts between parents and teachers in a way that demonstrated her consistency and fairness to parents and her support for teachers. She took this approach more frequently as she learned to stay calm when an irate parent came to see her. Her strategy was to uphold board policy, which stated that teacher and parent must first try to resolve the conflict. It is more than likely that Sarah's seven years at the site as a vice principal gave her a chance to build relationships of trust with the teachers. Having been an administrator at the site was more helpful than having been a teacher at the same site since it posed less of a transition in roles (V108, V113, N102).

Another aspect of negative rapport was the development of feelings of paranoia with regard to the new principal. Marisol reported her biggest challenge at the start of her job was dealing with teachers who did not want to be at the school. She explained that she counseled five of her teachers to consider other careers or to go to other sites. In her words:

The staff are scared of me...because so many people left. My coach told me don't get rid of more than five and I think maybe seven left...The rumor is that they are scared of me and they don't know—they say how did she do that? How did she get rid of her?...I am not glad about it, I feel kind of sad...but the more I write these letters of reprimand, it's like the more I get charged—that's so bad, but it's like they are not getting it (N106).



As Marisol related these incidences, she showed no sense of diffidence or remorse. She seemed self-confident about her actions and she felt they were in the best interest of the school and the students. She also made references to her coach throughout the interview. In the same district, Jill mentioned how she had learned the importance of communicating policies and procedures more clearly when student placements became an issue at her site.

The comments expressed by these principals portray the life of a principal during the first year. From the first struggles of managing the workday and calendar to realizing all the decisions that must be made, principals quickly begin to realize the far reaching and unanticipated boundaries of their new job. Surprised and even shocked by their discoveries, they begin their journeys of internal adjustments. Realizations about what to do and what not to do accumulate with each new day on the job.

## Veteran Codes

Table 2. Veteran Codes

Category	Dimensions	Topics
<b>D. ADAPTATION</b>		
	<b>D1. Change in demographics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>English language learners</i></li> <li>b. <i>Increased drug use</i></li> <li>c. <i>Increase in single parent homes</i></li> <li>d. <i>New school site</i></li> </ul>
	<b>D2. Change in district demands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Management styles</i></li> <li>b. <i>Accountability</i></li> <li>c. <i>Meeting AYP and API</i></li> <li>d. <i>New programs</i></li> <li>e. <i>Formalized monitoring</i></li> <li>f. <i>Teacher contract constraints</i></li> <li>g. <i>Budget constraints</i></li> </ul>
	<b>D3. Professional engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Sense of fulfillment</i></li> <li>b. <i>Projects</i></li> <li>c. <i>Retirement</i></li> </ul>

The veteran principals were all from the same district. One was starting his tenth year; all the others had been principals for fifteen to thirty years. After veteran responses had been analyzed for their experiences as novices, they were analyzed and coded using the following guiding questions:

- 1) What are still challenges and what kinds of mistakes do they still make?
- 2) What are the new issues?
- 3) How do they define success?
- 4) What essentials about the job would they tell a new principal?

The demeanor of the veteran principals, instead of projecting urgency, projected a sense of integration, and their responses reflected a holistic sense of the job. All veteran principals attested to the uniqueness of the situations that they face each year, concluding that no two years are the same. The major category that emerged for the veteran principals was **Adaptation**. The three dimensions of **Adaptation** as experienced by veterans were: 1) **Change in demographics**, 2) **Change in district demands**, and 3) **Professional engagement**. These dimensions and their sub-dimensions are discussed below.

### **Adaptation**

The veteran principals that were interviewed clearly enjoyed their day to day work at the school site although they referred to the various changes in the job caused by statewide accountability reform, changing demographics of the school communities, and the change in district requirements. As they did the job year after year, their own professional engagement also changed and their ability to adapt captured the reality of their work life.

**Change in demographics** A major change to which veteran principals had to adapt is the **Change in demographics**. Whether the change in demographics of the school community was a result of the principal moving to a *New school site* or as result of the change in neighborhoods through the years, principals' work was impacted by it. As the state saw a rise in *English language learners*, so did the need for different types of curriculum development, programs, and their administration. Another larger societal change included the *Increased drug usage* and an increase in *Single parent families*, the effects of which are seen in the diminished ability of children to learn as well as the

increase in student disciplinary infractions (V108, V109, V112). All three of these changes directly impacted the work of principals. References were also made to the difference in the job then and now due to the changes in demands made by district office, the next dimension of this category.

**Change in district demands** The **Change in district demands** was felt by veteran principals in the difference in *Management styles* as well as new *Accountability* issues raised by the district (V107, V111, V108,V109). During their long tenure as principals in the same district, principals naturally saw several changes in district managers. They noted that management styles had shifted away from a collaborative approach. The change in focus in district management demands was seen as a result of *Accountability* reform. All principals voiced concern about *Meeting Annual Yearly Progress and Academic Performance Index*, the state and new federal mandates to increase academic growth. Particular program implementations reflected district's focus on reading instruction. While each site varied in the innovation, all sites were required to implement supplemental reading instruction represented as *New programs*. The district provided general training for the new programs, but it was up to individual principals to implement *New programs* by integrating them into their existing reading program, which varied from site to site.

*Regular compliance items* like the Coordinated Compliance Review and Special Ed audits proved to be more burdensome since they increased paperwork and left less time to be in classrooms for the purposes of *Formalized monitoring* required in relation to *Accountability* (V108, V109). The difficulty of terminating incompetent teachers is a long-standing problem for principals who must abide by teacher union agreements. Not

having the power to hold teachers accountable due to *Teacher contract constraints* was even more frustrating in the context of the new accountability requirements (V107, V111). On the other hand, *Budget constraints* were seen to be a recurrent event and did not seem to present much concern (V107). Their mention of the importance of not spending money on one-time items that the community could not regularly sustain showed the veteran principal's consistent focus on the contextual particulars of their particular school site (V109, V107, V112).

**Professional engagement** Veteran principals maintained an edge in their work in different ways. They frequently defined their success on the job as the day-to-day or even weekly events involving students, parents, and staff that provided a *Sense of fulfillment* (V107, V109, V111, V112, V108). Some principals found renewal in relation to their work through *Projects* that provided community involvement such as working with business partners and starting new programs in the district, such as Javelin fitness seemed to renew their vitality on the job (V112, V107, V111). Two of the veterans were close to *Retirement* and voiced their ambivalence as well as eagerness to leave (V107, V111).

### **Summary of Veteran Codes**

The veteran principals' category, **Adaptation**, reflected the veteran principals' experience with the changing and recurring themes of school administration. The three dimensions in this category reflected the areas of change that required principals' flexibility. First was the dimension of **Change in demographics**, which impacted their work due to the increase in *English language learners* along with the *Increased drug use* and *the Increase in single parent homes*. The second dimension, **Change in district**

**demands**, included the topics of *Management styles, Accountability, Meeting AYP and API, New programs, Formalized monitoring, Teacher contract constraints* , and *Budget constraints*. The last dimension, **Professional engagement**, reflected the issues of maintaining motivation and focus on the job. The topics for this dimensions were *Sense of fulfillment, Projects, and Retirement*.

In face of these recurring changes, veterans demonstrated their ability to adapt to the changing demands and to find strategies for maintaining professional engagement in order to sustain their performance over time. These adaptations, however, did result in added work, and stress for principals. It was noted that their adaptability was a major factor in their longevity in the district.

### **Overview of Novices and Veterans**

The novice and veteran codes depicted the salient concerns for principals at the beginning of their career and after being on the job for ten or more years. An examination of the data reveals a stark difference between the two groups of principals. The novices' first year was spent in getting acquainted with what was what and who was who in the district as well as the site. Novices responded to the challenges of workload by trying out different ways to schedule their workday. Although sorting, prioritizing and delegating were attempted, they proved to be difficult and ineffective since principals still did not know the relative importance of various tasks. One significant hurdle for novices was the coming to terms with negative teacher behaviors. Overall, the novices' sense of the job appeared to be fragmented, as they felt bombarded by demands from teachers and district office. The novices' focus was on *how to do*.

In contrast to the novices, the veteran principals with their years of experience in site management faced the daily demands of the job in an integrated manner. The issues that occupied the novices no longer were a part of the veterans' daily work life. Veterans, having been through several cycles of the school year and paper-flow, knew what to expect and could plan their work more effectively. Instead of having to expend their energy on learning the rudiments of *how to do* the job, the veterans focused on adjusting to the new expectations from the district office, the ever changing *what*. They also remarked how the current complexity of the job compared to when they began their careers. The more relevant issue for veterans was how to maintain professional engagement and focus since they were used to the daily routine of principal work. The veteran principals' focus was on getting the new requests met with the use of their know-how.

### **Interpretation of Data with the Dreyfus and Greenfield Models**

This section presents the novice and veteran data and codes interpreted through the two theoretical models used in this study. Characteristics of principals and how they fit the various levels of the Dreyfus model are discussed first, followed by a comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of novice and veteran principals in relation to the dimensions of principal work defined in the Greenfield model. Categories are boldfaced and underlined, dimensions of a category are boldfaced only, and topics are italicized. When a category or dimension is indicated, all topics contained in it are included. Tables 3 and 4 provide summaries of the analyses using the two models.

### Dreyfus Model Analysis

The different levels of the Dreyfus model reflect changes in three different aspects of the learner's performance: 1) a movement from reliance on abstract rules to use of past concrete experience as paradigms; 2) a change in the learners' perception of the demand situation, in which the situation is seen less and less as a compilation of equally relevant bits, and more and more as a complete whole in which only certain parts are relevant; and 3) a passage from detached observer to involved performer where the performer no longer stands outside the situation but is engaged in the situation (Benner, 1984).

The novice principal codes reflected characteristics described for the first two levels of the Dreyfus model. Table 3 summarizes the characteristics of each level in the Dreyfus Model of Learning and the salient criteria met by respondents as evinced in the novice codes.



Table 3. Principals as Learners: Novice and Veteran Codes Interpreted with the Dreyfus Model of Learning

<p><b>Novice (N):</b> First stage/level in the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition. Novice is in process of identifying the different factors and terms of the new work context. This stage is characterized by the novice's complete reliance on externally supplied rules and procedures. When presented with a task or situation, the novice must follow explicit instruction or direction that does not require prior knowledge of the context. The instructions at this stage could be followed by almost anyone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Relies on book knowledge, manuals, personal experience and guidance from others</b> (Codes: Ag, B4-a, Ca, Cb, Cc, Cf, D1-d, D2-d)</li> <li>○ <b>In process of recognizing factors involved in principal work</b> (Codes: Aa, Ab, Ac, Ah, B1-d, B3-a, Ca)</li> </ul> <p><i>N101, N102, N103, N104, N105, N106, N107, V107, V111, V112</i></p>
<p><b>Advanced Beginner (AB):</b> Second stage/level in the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition. The advanced beginner has had a chance to try out the rules learned on the job and is getting to know the context of work. At this stage, the learner's book knowledge interacts with work experiences. The Advanced Beginner learns by trial and error and learning depends on the learner's unique way understanding work experiences as they occur. At this stage the learner still relies on external prompts and may refer to rules and procedures, but continues to reflect, check and predict new experiences to broaden his understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Beginning to learn from mistakes</b></li> <li>○ <b>Supplies more of own sense-making for learning from experience</b> (Codes: B2-a, B2-e, B3-b, B3-c, B3-d, B4, D1-a)</li> </ul> <p><i>N102, N104, N106, N107, V107, V109, V112</i></p>
<p><b>Competent Performer (CP):</b> Third stage/level in the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition. The CF has had enough experience to internalize routine rules and procedures. The CF is familiar with the context and may be overwhelmed by the amount of data or information that presents itself since it is now visible. The CP still needs a plan to operate, but now it is a plan made by the learner. The CP must interpret and decide what is important; failure or success depends on choices made by the CP. At this stage to not take action is also an action selected by the CP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Routine rules and procedures have been internalized</b></li> <li>○ <b>Makes own plan and chooses focus</b></li> <li>○ <b>Takes responsibility for what he/she does and does not do</b></li> <li>○ <b>Conveys sense of knowing what is at stake</b> (Codes: D1, D2)</li> </ul> <p><i>V107, V108, V109, V110, V111, V112, V113</i></p>
<p><b>Proficient Performer (PP):</b> Fourth stage/level in the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition. The PP is performing in a mode beyond analytical rationality. The mass of experience allows the PP to process new situations more holistically and to consider actions to address them in a more intuitive manner. The learner's perspective that is the result of varied experiences allows them to have their own stance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Mass of experience allows holistic and intuitive processing of problems and solutions (D)</b></li> <li>○ <b>Conveys a stance (D)</b></li> </ul> <p><i>V107, V109, V110, V111, V113</i></p>
<p><b>Expert (E):</b> Fifth of the five stages of the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition. The E does not have to think about what to do, how to do it, or when to do it but simply does what works. Even if it fails in a given circumstance, the E is not baffled due to abundant experience. The E understands that there are no guarantees, even though there are calculated probabilities that have been incorporated unconsciously into their intuitive decisions (Dreyfus, 1986).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Insufficient data</b></p>

A discussion of the results shown in Table 3 follows.

**Novice** All of the principals, with the exception of one (V109), exhibited one or more of the characteristics of the Novice Level during their first year. The learner at the Novice Level is in the process of identifying the different terms and factors of the new work context. Data suggested that new principals were still in the process of discovering the various dimensions of their job. The codes that especially show the Novices' sense of discovery regarding the different aspects of the job are *Surprise at the amount of work, Surprise at the extent of responsibilities, Mistakes of omission, Thinking of yourself as the boss, Shock at teacher behavior, and Who is who.*

The learner at the Novice Level relies on external rules to accomplish tasks. All principals in the novice group performed at the Novice Level during their first year because they *Needed to check procedures* in some form. External rule sources used to accomplish tasks and make decisions included book and course knowledge, guidance from supervisors and experts, procedure and policy manuals, and personal experience from other arenas. *Feedback* from supervisors played a significant role at the Novice Level since principals relied on it to evaluate their own performance. Understanding directives was also crucial for the novices since they relied on them to do their jobs, thereby *Meeting their supervisor's expectations.*

The *Need to check procedures* contributed to Novices' time management issues since many decisions needed to be made, and checking took time. The category of **Time Management** may be interpreted as either a cause or an effect of principals' not knowing the various factors, procedures, or consequences of their actions. Some topics of **Time Management**, such as *Work hours* and *Surprise at the amount of work*, were experienced by principals when they first confronted the job and others were enduring issues into their

second and third years. The duration of time for the concerns reflected in the topics varied from principal to principal.

Principals at the Novice Level learned to understand the factors involved in their work through mistakes, shock, surprise and realizations. The novice principals' perception of issues functioned in a two-fold manner. First, by virtue of their identifying an issue as a surprise or difficulty, the newness of it to them was demonstrated. Secondly, once the issue was perceived and identified, they created the opportunity to respond to the problem with external rules or with a solution that was internally generated based on their understanding of the variables in the new work environment. As long as they relied on external sources, principals were functioning in the Novice Level. When confronted with problems, they relied on experience from other arenas and guidance from superiors, peers, or manuals. In the absence of finding an exact procedure, they relied on their own common sense for the situation. At the beginning of their second year, a few principals showed readiness to learn from experience.

The veteran category, **Adaptation**, reflects the constant need for veterans to accommodate various changes in their work throughout the years. Veterans' mastery and assimilation of new elements in the work, however, was quite different from that of the novices who were learning everything all at once. The veterans were learning a new content while novices were engaged in creating an understanding of their new work. When veteran principals moved to a *New school site* they experienced the issues of the Novice Level if the new site had *New programs*. They had to attend in-services for the new program.

**Competent Performers** All veteran principals who were interviewed demonstrated the characteristics of performance at this level. The performance of **Competent Performers** is marked by familiarity with work and a sense of integration. The way that veterans perceived issues reflected their particular choice of focus rather than their issue with trying to figure out how something worked or not knowing how to proceed due to their uncertainty. This was especially evident in the way that each conveyed a sense of his or her own style and stance on the different aspects of the job with which each was completely familiar. At the **Competent Performer** Level, the learner is aware of all the elements in the job and chooses a focus, selecting and prioritizing elements of work according to his or her goal. Another mark at this level is the ability of the learner to sustain his or her performance, which shows stabilization of understanding the work. The fact that the veterans have been retained in the district for ten or more years is an indicator that they have reached a **Competent Performance** level in this model by virtue of their efficiency and effectiveness in dealing with the factors of the work that are deemed important by the district.

**Proficient Performer** The defining characteristic that separates this stage from that of the Competent Performer is that the learner has a mass of experience from which he or she draws solutions. Although it is more difficult to determine when a principal has achieved this level because the indicators that have been emphasized in the design of this study were aimed at competence and not expertise, a few of the veteran principals reflected characteristics of being **Proficient Performers**. The salient criteria used for this determination is mass of experience and the respondents' global viewpoint in the way they responded to questions. Their sense of ease as well as knowledge of intricacy

involved in their work was reflected in the quality of their responses. The veteran category of **Adaptation** reflects the range of elements in principal work that veterans respond to by selecting a particular focus. Competence in principals' work might show itself in longevity in the profession while proficiency and expertise would require other determinants. It is also possible that principals reach different levels of performance in the different dimensions of principal work, which will be further discussed in the following section.

**Expert** The data in this study were insufficient to ascertain performance at the Expert level.

#### Comparison of the Novices and Veterans via Greenfield Model

In his model for the work of school administration, Greenfield (1995) posits five dimensions that constitute the demand environment for the work of principals. The codes derived for the two principal groups represent the concerns of the principals at different stages of their careers. Although all five of these demand environments are present for each principal, the changing concerns of principals at different stages was found to vary. The following discussion examines novice and veteran data in light of the five dimensions of this model. Table 4 summarizes the dimensions and codes as discussed below.

Table 4. Novice and Veteran Codes on the Greenfield Model

Greenfield Dimensions for Principal Work	Novices	Veterans
<p><b>Moral Dimension:</b> The role demands require the administrator to make judgments regarding school programs and policies in the best interest of all children and teachers in an environment of competing and often conflicting interests. Due to the complexity of this dimension, various stakeholders apply often competing standards of goodness and values.</p>	<p><i>B4-c Stand your ground</i> <i>Ce Higher salaries</i></p>	<p><b>D1 Changes in demographics</b> <b>D3 Professional engagement</b></p>
<p><b>Social/Interpersonal Dimension:</b> Principals accomplish most of their day-to-day work through face-to-face interpersonal interactions. Principals work directly and through other people to influence, coordinate, and monitor their efforts as well as to develop and implement programs to accomplish school goals. The ability to use influence and build trust in order to persuade others to accomplish tasks is associated with this dimension.</p>	<p><b>B1 Credibility</b> <b>B2 Rapport</b> <i>Ca Knowing who is who</i> <i>Cf Feedback</i></p>	<p><b>D1-d New school site</b></p>
<p><b>Managerial Dimension:</b> Developing and implementing effective organizational routines are the central role demands of this dimension. Situations of urgency that require immediate action and decisions are characteristic of this dimension also which includes the smooth and safe running of the school. Two criterions that are associated with this dimension are efficiency and compliance.</p>	<p><b>A Time Management</b> <b>B1 Credibility</b> <b>B3 Managing adults</b> <b>B4 Making decisions</b></p>	<p><i>D2-e Formalized monitoring</i> <i>D2-f Teacher contract constraints</i> <i>D2-g Budget constraints</i></p>
<p><b>Instructional Dimension:</b> Instructional role demands include activities, problems, and processes associated with the core activities of teaching and learning. These activities include technical and substantive matters related to the content and objectives of the school's curriculum, the processes of teaching and learning, the organization of and climate for instruction, and the supervision and evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's instructional programs and processes and of the teaching and learning efforts of students and teachers. A central criterion associated with this dimension is effectiveness as measured by accomplishment of school goals.</p>	<p><i>B1-e Elementary instruction and curriculum</i> <i>B1-f Handling younger children</i> <i>Cg Accountability</i></p>	<p><i>D1-a English language learners</i> <i>D1-b Increased drug use</i> <i>D1-c Increase in single parent homes</i> <i>D2-b Accountability</i> <i>D2-c Meeting AYP and API</i></p>
<p><b>Political Dimension:</b> Political dimension for the school principal includes the greater context of the school such as the district and even city but more importantly the micro-political level involving internal politics of the organization. Understanding and being responsive to the political dimension is critical in that the school represents a negotiated social order. In this dimension, realities are multiple, as they are constituted by individuals' subjective understandings. Activities of this dimension include ongoing efforts by teachers and administrators to influence others through the exercise of formal and informal power.</p>	<p><i>Ca Knowing who is who</i> <i>Cc Meeting their director's expectations</i> <i>Cd Support from their director</i> <i>Cf Feedback</i></p>	<p><i>D2-a Management style</i></p>

A discussion of the results shown in Table 4 follows.

**Managerial Dimension** The smooth and safe running of the school is the concern of this dimension. Two criteria that are associated with this dimension are efficiency and compliance. This dimension of work presented the area of greatest difficulty for the novices. The Novice Codes, **Time Management** and **Managing adults** both show novices' weaknesses due to their lack of job experience. Additionally, the lack of knowledge about *Procedures* and *Who is who* in the district office also cut down on efficiency in accomplishing tasks at the site. The Managerial Dimension shows the area of greatest concern for the novices.

Veteran principals' concerns in this area were confined to *Teacher contract constraint*, *Budget constraints* and *Formalized monitoring* which was an added task for Accountability reform. The Managerial Dimension presented most challenges for the novices who were learning how to get things done.

**Social/Interpersonal Dimension** Principals accomplish most of their daily work through face-to-face interactions. Principals work directly and through other people to influence, coordinate, and monitor school efforts as well as to develop and implement programs to accomplish school goals. The ability to use influence and build trust in order to persuade others to accomplish tasks is associated with this dimension. As shown in the previous chapter, a large area of concern for novices is the process of establishing leadership, which includes developing rapport, establishing credibility, and managing adults. This dimension is of great significance to the novices who are developing **Rapport** and **Credibility** with teachers. The social/interpersonal styles of novices also are factors in their retention and so play a critical role in their success. *Support from*

*supervisor* may also be influenced by the novices' social-interpersonal style with the supervisor.

Veterans have already established styles and reputations. While a particular principal's style may not be preferred by some, their overall success may be reflected in their job retention over the years. The veterans must exercise their skills in this dimension all through their careers, especially with changing managers at the district level and parents in the school neighborhood. For veterans at a *New school site*, the social interpersonal dimension plays an enhanced role since they must establish trust with new staff members.

The Social/interpersonal Dimension is a critical area for novice principals as they learn to deal with conflicting demands of various stakeholders. It plays an especially important role in learning to manage adults. The skills required in building rapport and credibility, and in being appropriately directive fall into this dimensions.

**Instructional Dimension** Instructional role demands include activities, problems, and processes associated with the core activities of teaching and learning. These activities include technical and substantive matters related to the content and objectives of the school curriculum, the processes of teaching and learning, the organization of and climate for instruction. Also included are the supervision and evaluation of the school's instructional programs and the teaching and learning efforts of students and teachers. A central criterion associated with this dimension is effectiveness as measured by accomplishment of school goals. Thus, the code of *Accountability* for both veteran and novice principals falls in this dimension since it includes all concerns related to improvement of instruction and student outcomes. While novices made



references to the concerns related to accountability, it is probable that their involvement with issues in the Managerial Dimension, which was new to them, left less time for the Instructional Dimension than they would have liked. Also, the requirements of Accountability, such as *Formalized monitoring* and *Meeting AYP and API* did not require special accommodation since new principals were beginning their careers with these requirements. Veterans, on the other hand, experienced the new demands as additions to their existing workload. Principals new to *Elementary curriculum and instruction* noticed their need to familiarize themselves with elementary curriculum and instruction.

The Instructional Dimension was an area of concern for both novices and veterans, but in different ways. While all principals faced the tasks of compliance, required paperwork, and monitoring to show results, the novice group began their careers with this as the focus while the veterans were in the process of adjusting to the new requirements. It is also possible that novices, more recently out of the classrooms felt more directly involved with issues of classroom practice. The current wave of accountability reform makes this dimension especially relevant to the work of principals.

**Political Dimension** The Political Dimension for the school principal includes the greater context of the school in the district and even the community but more importantly the micro-political level involving internal politics of the organization. Understanding and being responsive to the Political Dimension is critical in that the school represents a negotiated social order. In this dimension, realities are multiple, as they are constituted by individuals' subjective understandings. Activities of this dimension include ongoing efforts by teachers and administrators to influence others through the exercise of formal and informal power.

This dimension is a critical area for novices on several levels. At the site level, novices faced the special challenges of learning the political dynamics of their sites, which influenced various aspects of their dealings with **Teachers**. At the district level, novices need for *Support from their supervisors* represented their relatively minimal involvement with district politics. Veterans with their knowledge of and experience in the district, were more aware of both district and site expectations for their roles.

Although veteran principals also must manage the micro-politics of their sites, they are better prepared to manage situations than are novices who might have a tendency to overreact or act too quickly. The Political Dimension continues to hold relevance for both groups, though the micro politics may present special hazards for the novice who does not have the strategies of the veteran to manage situations that arise.

**Moral Dimension** Principals are required to make hundreds of judgments each day in the large and small decisions they make. Many of these decisions are about school programs and policies that serve the best interest of all children and teachers in an environment of competing and often conflicting interests. The veterans' concern with the changing demographics requires them to exercise their best moral judgments as they serve diverse clientele in their school communities under the mandates of *Accountability*. Veteran principals acknowledged their need to maintain a moral focus in decisions concerning budgets and services as the school communities changed over the years (V107, V112). The Moral Dimension may be more significant for the veteran principals who are no longer focused on learning the rudiments of their job.

The Moral Dimension is operative for novices, as they rely on their personal sense of right and wrong as rules to guide their work due to a lack of sufficient work

experience. In other words, faced with the need to make a decision and uncertainty about a policy or procedure, they refer to their sense of what is right (N101). Finally, both novices and veterans must take moral responsibility for their motivations in doing the work of administrators and therefore, the codes of *Higher salaries* for novices and *Retirement* for veterans is included in this dimension because both groups must be alert to their motivations in their work as they make decisions that affect those entrusted to them. The Moral Dimension is important for both novices and veterans but in different ways.

### Summary

This chapter began with a discussion of the novice categories, **Time Management**, **Teachers**, and **District Office**. The salient issue for novice principals when they first confronted their jobs was reflected in the category of **Time Management**. The topics of this category addressed the principals' issues about organizing their work and time in order to meet the diverse demands made on them. **Teachers**, the largest and most complex category with four dimensions and eighteen topics addressed the processes of establishing authority and leadership at the site. The four dimensions of this category were: 1) **Credibility**, 2) **Rapport**, 3) **Managing adults**, and 4) **Making decisions**. The third category, **District Office**, addressed the importance to novices of knowing the personnel and procedures of the district office as well as receiving feedback from their supervisors.

Next, The Portrait of Principal's First Year depicted the issues represented in the novice categories in a descriptive narrative incorporating principals' testimonies. Section three, Veteran Codes presented the category, **Adaptation**. Veteran principals faced the challenges of adapting to the changes in three areas, which formed the three dimensions

of the category: **Changes in demographics, Changes in district demands, and Professional engagement.**

The general comparison of the novice and veteran categories revealed that the major difference between the concerns of the novices and veterans was the amount of time and energy spent by novices in learning how things worked. The veteran principals, on the other hand, focused on meeting the changing demands of district office as well as the changing school community. Their experience allowed them to incorporate strategies learned over time for implementing new programs and managing teacher personnel which posed hurdles for the new principals as seen in the issues addressed in **Teachers**. By the end of the first year or sooner, Novices had begun to learn from experience through mistakes made about how to implement changes, communicate decisions, and manage teachers.

The Dreyfus analysis revealed that all new principals demonstrated characteristics of the **Novice Level** during the first year. Principals began to learn from experience by the end of their first year and in their second and third years, exhibiting traits of the **Advanced Beginner Level**. Veteran principals met the criteria for **Competent Performer Level**. **Competent** performance was defined as a sustainable level of performance in which the principal is efficient and effective enough to retain employment and accomplish the goals of the site. The last level of this model, **Expert**, was difficult to ascertain due to insufficient data.

Finally, the Greenfield analysis showed that the dimensions of work critical for novices in the order of urgency are: Managerial, Social/Interpersonal, Political, Instructional, and Moral. The dimensions that were found to be critical for veterans in

the order of urgency are: Instructional, Moral, Political, and Social interpersonal. These indications viewed in light of the Dreyfus model, reveal the learning curve for principal work.

CHAPTER V  
FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Summary**

The purpose of this exploratory study was to develop categories of work meaningful to elementary school principals and to see if patterns that emerged were significant at the beginning of their career and after ten or more years on the job. A total of 15 public elementary school principals, including one pilot, were interviewed. Using grounded theory, the interview data was analyzed and coded for topics that represented the principals' concerns in their work; through further analysis, these topics were grouped together to define dimensions and categories. The resulting codes were interpreted according to the Dreyfus model of learning to identify the principals' levels of performance as learners. The Greenfield model was, then, used to identify the areas of principal work that presented the greatest challenges for novices and veteran principals when they first began their careers and after ten or more years on the job.

Findings of this study are presented in two parts; those that confirm previous research and those that add to the literature. Their implications are discussed and recommendations based on these are made by the stage in career development. The chapter ends with suggestions for further research and overall conclusions.

## Findings of the Study

### Findings that validate previous studies

**Finding #1:** Results of this study revealed that new principals in their first and second years of practice continue to experience challenges and difficulties noted in earlier studies. The greatest challenges for novice principals in their first and second years on the job were in the following areas:

- 1) Time management, role definition
- 2) Developing rapport, establishing credibility, and managing adults
- 3) Feedback and support from district office
- 4) Training and support with district procedures

For veterans, the current focus in educational reform presented the areas to which they were required to adapt, such as Accountability. Other concerns for veterans such as changes in district personnel and demographics were enduring throughout their careers and reflected the nature of the principal work as discussed earlier. They also learned information about new programs that they needed to implement; when moved to a new site, they used strategies previously learned for developing rapport and establishing credibility.

Role clarity had been identified as an area of difficulty for new principals in a number of studies (Daresh 1986; Barton, 1998; Gorious, 1999; Gussner, 1974; Hurley, 1989; Mannon, 1991; Mascaro, 1973; O'Brien, 1988; Oliver, 1992). Data suggest role clarity continues to present difficulties for new principals. Role expectation was cited by Greenfield (1977b) as a determinant of positive socialization outcomes for principals; principals' role expectation indicated lack of preparation for the realities of the job

encountered by them (Duke et al., 1984). All topics in the novice codes that indicated a discovery or element of surprise by principals regarding their work on the new job relate in some manner to the concepts of role clarity and role expectations.

Other concerns of novices as identified in the Novice Codes also confirm earlier findings. Time as a unifying concept was identified by Mascaro (1973); principals' preoccupation with sorting and prioritizing were identified as key activities in the first two stages of the Parkay and Hall (1992) model of principal socialization; and the critical role that social interpersonal skills play in principals' work has been noted (Daresh & Playko, 1992; Wolcott, 1984; Greenfield, 1987; Greenfield, 1995). The added hurdle of being new to the district reflects the urgency of organizational socialization over professional socialization (Hart, 1993). The importance of and lack of feedback were concerns voiced by novice principals (Barton, 1998; Gorious, 1999; Gussner, 1974; Hurley, 1989; Mannon, 1991; Mascaro, 1973; O'Brien, 1988; Oliver, 1992). In summary, the Novice Codes reflected many concerns and experiences of principals that have been identified in previous research, which adds to the validity of prior results.

The veteran codes reflected the elements of the job environment that have been described by Greenfield (1995) in his model of administrative work. Greenfield stated that the work of administrators is shaped by the three unique characteristics of schools as organizations: the moral character of schools, the highly educated and permanent workforce, and regular and unpredictable threats to stability. These very factors are reflected in the topics of the Veteran Codes principals. For example, the topic, *Teacher contract constraints* within which principals must operate represents the factor of the permanent workforce; change in demographics include the external factors that impinge



on the work of principals; the moral character of schools points to the importance of maintaining focus and professional engagement which is an issue for veteran principals.

Finally, the category of **Adaptation** refers to the flexibility that principals must exercise in responding to the changing demands of their work, which are subject to the orders of several stakeholders (Hart, 1993; Greenfield, 1995). In conclusion, the veteran codes are also supported by the literature.

#### Findings that add to previous studies

**Finding #2:** The performance and behaviors of principals in their first two years indicated that they function as learners at Novice and Advanced Beginner Levels of the Dreyfus model. Veteran principals have mastered routine tasks and may revert to the first two stages of learning when faced with new programs or new sites.

The Dreyfus model of learning yields a new perspective on the observed performance and behaviors of novice principals. Although the mistakes, difficulties and surprises noted in the Novice Codes and Veteran Codes are established in the literature the view of them from a perspective of learning is new. This perspective generates an understanding of principals' behaviors and performance in the first three years with specificity to their needs as learners.

As learners at the Novice Level, principals must rely on external rules and procedures. Using analytical processes to sort information and make decisions causes fragmentation in task perception and this takes time. Doing routine tasks takes more time when you are in the process of learning how things work. At the same time, sorting and prioritizing are also difficult to do in the early years on the job, precisely because one does not know what is more important, which compounds the time issue.

Some principals were at the Advanced Beginner Level towards the end of their first year and by the start of the second year. This level is defined by the learner's initial incorporation of experiences on the job. The issues with teachers covered a broad range of topics related to developing rapport, establishing credibility, and managing adults. These related concerns showed how novice principals quickly began to learn from mistakes they made and from their observations of teacher behaviors. The importance of social-interpersonal skills and abilities in the processes of communication and listening played an important role in managing people and developing rapport and credibility (Greenfield, 1987; 1995; Duke, 1986).

Veteran principals with ten or more years perform at the Competent Performer Level and Proficient levels. At these levels, the particular set of factors that are chosen as a focus are more an issue since the routine operation of a site has been mastered and does not require additional energy and time from the principal. They have shown they can manage the routine operations of the site to a level deemed satisfactory by the three main stakeholders: district office, teachers, and parents.

**Finding #3:** The greatest area of need for principals in their first two years is likely to be in the areas of managerial tasks and social-interpersonal competence. Veteran principals' ongoing challenge is to maintain focus and vitality in face of the shifting demands placed upon them by the district office and changing demographics.

While the debate on the significance of principals' work as manager or leader continues, results of this study indicated that the novice principals' preoccupations with the managerial dimension can overshadow the demands of the other dimensions in the first year or two on the job. The importance of interpersonal competence and social

adeptness to the work of principals has been well documented (Greenfield, 1987; 1990; 1995; Daresh & Playko, 1992; Dyer, 2001; Hogan et al., 1994). While this dimension is always vital in principal work for principals at all stages of their careers, the results of this study demonstrate its special significance in skills needed to establish leadership. As with time management issues, the Novices' and Advanced Beginners' greater concern with these two dimensions may be an effect or cause of the difficulties and challenges they experience.

Greenfield (1995) asserted that the pace, content, focus, and specific activities of administrative work are largely a product of the demand environment's interaction with the perspectives, abilities, skills, values, and motives of the administrator (p. 63). As Greenfield posited, all dimensions of the work are always present, though emphases on dimensions are subject to change. The work of school administration is complex and the dimensions identified as distinct by Greenfield's model require skills and actions that overlap.

In summary, data suggested that the managerial and social-interpersonal dimensions of principal work as defined by Greenfield (1995) represented the learning curve for principals in their first two years. The dimension of principal work most significant for veteran's concerns was the instructional dimension, reflecting the current focus on accountability.

The findings of the study as discussed above are:

1. Topics of concern to novice principals show that new principals continue to experience difficulties in the same areas as identified in previous research: time management, role definition, developing rapport, establishing

credibility, and managing adults; feedback and support from district office; training and support with district procedures. Topics of concern for veterans reflected previous findings about the nature of principal work.

2. The performance and behaviors of principals in their first two years indicate that they are functioning as learners at the Novice and Advanced Beginner Levels of the Dreyfus model. They must rely on external rules and procedures and are just beginning to make sense of their experiences. Veteran principals have mastered routine tasks and may have to revert to the first two stages of learning when faced with changes in school site or programs.
3. The Managerial and Social-interpersonal dimensions of administrative work as defined by Greenfield (1995) hold the greatest challenge for novice principals; for veterans the various dimensions of administrative work may pose a greater challenge in relation to the principal's personal orientation and style and the focus of the new demands placed on principals by larger forces such as the district or community.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The three findings discussed above raised the following questions:

- 1) What do the persistent behaviors and experiences of new principals indicate about the nature of principal work and the preparation of administrators for principal work?
- 2) How can role expectations and role clarity regarding principal work be improved to enable appropriate anticipations about the work?

- 3) What types of formal training and skills do administrators need to cope with the managerial aspects of the job?
- 4) What types of training and skills do administrators need to handle the social interpersonal demands of the job?
- 5) What steps can aspiring principals take themselves to minimize difficulties of the first and second years?
- 6) What types of supports do learners at the Novice Level require to progress optimally in learning the job?
- 7) What types of support do learners at the Advanced Beginner Level require to progress optimally in learning the job?
- 8) What are the implications for those in charge of hiring and supervising?

The remainder of this chapter presents a discussion of implications of findings.

The recommendations that follow are aimed at ideal situations, which rarely occur all of the time in educational practice. Nonetheless, opportunities do present themselves and the practitioner who knows what there is to be done, can make use of these opportunities optimally.

As a result of this study, four phases of principals' career are identified as critical for principals as learners: pre-service; first year on the job; second and third years; and subsequent years. Each of these phases corresponds approximately to the learner levels of the Dreyfus model, though the exact duration of each level is not predictable. The implications for each of these phases are discussed followed by the recommendations.

## Pre-service

Results of this study indicated that new principals' expectations about their work do not allow them to adequately anticipate the demands of the job with relation to workload and range of responsibilities. Required coursework for credentialing, district orientations and written job descriptions have been identified as sources of formal socialization (Duke et al., 1984) and as such influence the role expectations that new principals bring to the job. Greenfield (1985) concluded that certification requirements were not sufficient to prepare candidates for administrative appointment.

Although a large amount of principal work must be learned through on-the-job experiences, anticipating the volume and types of actual and specific tasks to be encountered can ease the challenges of the first year. Veteran principals stressed the importance of acquiring job knowledge by working in a variety of positions in schools prior to becoming a principal (V109, V113). As the job of principals continues to become more complex and demanding, minimizing the surprises and shocks of when new principals first confront their work can help to minimize the stress of having to learn so many things at once.

**Recommendation #1:** Administrative candidates who desire to pursue careers as principals and those who are in charge of training and hiring principals can ensure that previous experiences leading up to the principalship are adequate to allow them to address the demands of their new job.

**Recommendation #2:** Individual school sites can keep a list of specific responsibilities and task in relation to the day-to-day operations of the school site; these can then be kept or revised as needed by the new principal.

Observations of administrators' career pattern show a prevalence of irregularities in the paths leading up to the principalship (Magel, 1992; Morford, 2001; Small, 1994). Administrators who aspire to be principals must recognize the arduous and encompassing nature of the enterprise. Since prior socialization experiences as students and teachers may not give adequate role expectations, pre-service programs and school districts should provide information about the actual responsibilities of the principal role. List of specific job duties at each school site, since these vary slightly according to school traditions and cultures, will help eliminate some of the mistakes of omission.

It is also advisable that principals gather information about expectations that a particular site staff and parents have for their principal through informal and formal surveys and socials. Last but not least, principal candidates need to know that the new job will involve long hours and a rapid flow of tasks and events.

#### First year on the job

Studies continue to demonstrate that the most powerful learning for principal work occurs through on-the-job experiences (Peterson, 1987; Mannon, 1991; Oliver, 1992; Daresh, 1990; 1995). Daresh and Playko (1992) stressed the need for an intermediate step, such as formation, to help new administrators get ready for the challenges of the principalship. Learning through experience in the absence of proper feedback and reflection, however, can also be "mis-educative" (Daresh & Plako, 1992, p. 44). Data suggested that the first year is markedly different and principals begin at the Novice Level, though they may progress to the Advance Beginner Level at different rates. Principals at the Novice Level will benefit from 'rules of thumb' as well as clear directives to organize (chunk) tasks and prioritize their work. If these ideas are offered in

early courses on administration, the knowledge is not likely to surface quickly enough to be of use to principals who are beginning practice. It is likely that most people bring lessons learned from other arena of life to bear upon their work in the absence of actual work experience. In addition to the personal wisdom that each individual brings to the job, rules of thumb that take into account district culture and priorities can be given to novices by their supervisors for common situations encountered in administrative work.

**Recommendation #3:** New principals will benefit from guides and calendars that outline requirements and upcoming events in the district, to enable them to plan, organize, and prioritize their tasks in order to better manage their time.

**Recommendation #4:** New principals, especially those who are new to the district, will benefit from working with an experienced principal partner as mentor; the mentor can provide reminders of due dates and give hands-on help for routine managerial procedures as well as provide feedback for guided reflection as needed by the novice.

**Recommendation #5:** Visiting model sites or being shown model systems for organization of tasks will help novices in finding a system that works for them.

Once the initial shock of confronting the job, which will occur at different rates for different individuals, has been overcome, and as principals advance through the Novice Level to the Advanced Beginner Level during the first and second years, workshops on required district paperwork and the management of routine operations can help them to become more efficient managers. Workshops that focus on specific tasks that must be accomplished such as the process of making a categorical budget or conducting textbook inventory will serve new principals well since time spent in the in-service will not be construed as time away from their work.



Data suggested that a major concern for new principals is the management of teachers. Skills that are encompassed in principals' work with teachers are listening and communication skills, a knowledge of interpersonal styles, and some general insights about motivations and personality styles. Workshops and in-services on social interpersonal styles and strategies will add to a principal's repertoire at any stage and level of practice.

#### Years two and three on the job

How long principals will remain at the Advanced Beginner Level is dependent on individual abilities, skills, motivations, and values as well as learning outcomes at the Advanced Beginner Level. Principals at the Advanced Beginner Levels, usually in their second and third years, will benefit greatly from feedback and guided reflection on their job experiences.

**Recommendation #6:** It is critical for principals in their second and third years to receive feedback and have opportunities to dialogue with other experienced principals and mentor principals who can facilitate reflection on their work experiences.

**Recommendation #7:** Workshops for specific tasks such as budgets, textbook inventory, and other tasks can be organized and provided as needed and requested by novices.

Although the ideas of reflective practice and mentoring are hardly new, their adequate and consistent application remains a challenge. Theorists such as Schön (1991), Hart and Bredeson (1996), Daresh and Playko (1992) offer models to supply the critical components of reflection and feedback. Thinking about the cause and effect relationships of events in administrative work may seem at times to be diametrically and diabolically

opposed to efficiency and practicality. It is the contention of this researcher that thoughtful reflection can actually expedite subsequent decision making. The above theorists support the need for critical reflection on practice.

Workshops that focus on specific tasks that must be accomplished such as the process of developing a categorical budget or conducting textbook inventory will serve new principals well since time spent in the in-service will not be construed as time away from their work. When principals spend time away from the site and receive immediately applicable information to complete their routine tasks, the use of their time is maximized.

#### Four or more years on the job

By the fourth year on the job, principals have mastered routine tasks of management, and may benefit greatly by working with novices as mentors.

**Recommendation #8:** Assign experienced principals as mentors to new principals.

The mentor-novice relationship can be a mutually instructive one. It can help veterans by giving them a chance to consolidate their own learning. Novices will benefit greatly from a mentor who engages with them in dialogue and can facilitate reflection on their job experience.

This concludes the recommendations based on the findings and their implications.

## **Suggestions for Further Research**

The following suggestions are proposed with regard to investigations that can build upon and extend the findings of the present study:

- 1) Conduct a study into the learning needs of principals and vice principals at the first three levels in the Dreyfus model.
- 2) Conduct a study that examines the performance and behaviors of “expert by reputation” principals to see how their behaviors and actions can be used to define “Proficient” and “Expert” levels on the Dreyfus model.
- 3) Conduct a longitudinal study over three years with a control group with guided reflection and one without to determine learning outcomes in the presence of guided reflection and absence of it.
- 4) Conduct a study that focuses on the effects of mentoring on socialization outcomes for vice principals and principals.
- 5) Conduct a study on the development of instructional leadership practices by principals.

## **Conclusions**

The job knowledge of principals is learned through experience, with little or no formal help. The types of experiences that principals have and the way in which they come to understand them provides a framework for interpreting subsequent experiences on the job. Principals begin their careers at different stages of development, develop within their careers at different rates, and may operate on more than one stage simultaneously (Parkay & Hall, 1992), yet they all go through the stages of Novice, Advanced Beginner to become practitioners as Competent Performers. The testaments of

the 15 principals in this study and their interpretation with the Dreyfus model revealed that the experiences of principals during the first three years are indicative of how they learn the job.

While the work of principals may indeed be that of leadership, the findings of this study indicated that first and second year principals must focus on managerial and social-interpersonal dimensions. New principals arrive at the job eager to do their best and to provide positive learning experiences for the students whom they serve. Yet, all too often the first months or years can be harrowing, even bewildering to the administrator who does not arrive at the job with role expectations that are more than those gleaned in passing the principal's office as a student or teacher.

It is hoped that the results of this study will aid those who are in any way involved with training, hiring, supporting, supervising, and evaluating school principals. It is even more important that principals themselves think about their own job knowledge development and how their current work is contributing to various work capacities in themselves.

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APPENDIX A: LEARNING CURVE FOR PRINCIPAL WORK: INTERPRETATION  
OF NOVICE AND VETERAN CODES ON THE DREYFUS AND  
GREENFIELD MODELS

					<b>Expert</b>
<u>D3-a</u> <u>D3-b</u> <u>D3-c</u>					<b>Proficient Performer</b>
<u>D3-a</u> <u>D3-b</u> <u>D3-c</u>		<u>D1-b</u> <u>D1-c</u> <u>D2-b</u> <u>D2-c</u>	<u>D2-e</u> <u>D2-f</u> <u>D2-g</u>	<u>D2-a</u>	<b>Competent Performer</b>
<i>B4-c</i>	<i>B1</i> <i>B2-a</i> <i>B2-e</i>	<u>D1-a</u>	<i>Ab B3-c</i> <i>Ac B3-d</i> <i>Ae B3-b</i> <i>Ag B4</i> <i>Ai</i>	<i>B3-d</i>	<b>Advanced Beginner</b>
<i>Ce</i>	<i>B1</i> <i>B2-a</i> <i>B2-b</i> <i>B2-c</i> <i>B2-d</i> <i>Ca</i> <i>Cd</i> <i>Cf</i> <u>D1-d</u>	<i>B1-e</i> <i>B1-f</i> <i>Cg</i> <u>D2-d</u>	<i>Aa B1 Ca</i> <i>Ab B3 Cb</i> <i>Ac</i> <i>Ad</i> <i>Ae</i> <i>Af</i> <i>Ag</i> <i>Ah</i> <i>Ai</i>	<i>Cc</i> <i>Cd</i>	<b>Novice</b>
<b>Moral</b>	<b>Social Interpersonal</b>	<b>Instructional</b>	<b>Managerial</b>	<b>Political</b>	

*Novice Codes\* - Summary of Novice Codes – Table 1, p. 60*

*Veteran Codes\* - Summary of Veteran Codes – Table 2, p. 87*

## APPENDIX B: PRINCIPALS' DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

( ) = non-credentialed positions      All at elementary level unless otherwise indicated,  
S = secondary

### Novices

DIST	Code names	# year as principal in 2003-04	# years classroom teaching experience	Other positions in education	# yrs as VP	# years at this school site	# years in the district	Highest degree	Under-graduate major
A	Bill/N101	2	7	1	.2-E	1	3	M.A.	Philosophy
B	Sarah/N102	1	4	1	7	8	11	M.A.	Music/Voice
A	Sylvia/N103	2	Summer school (2)	(2)	1	1	5	M.A.	Education
A	Mary/N104	3	12	(2)	4-E/M	3	3	B.A.	Psychology
A	Barbara/N105	2	6	6	1	3		M.A.	English
B	Marisol/N106	2	12	2	7	2	10	M.A.	Sociology
B	Jill/N107	2	13-S	1	3-S	2	18	M.S.	Biology
A	Gina-Pilot	2	17	9	1.5	2	4	M.A.	Education

### Veterans

DIST	Code names	# years starting as principal in 2003-04	# years classroom teaching experience	Other positions in education	# yrs as VP	# years at this school site	Highest degree	Under-graduate major
A	Charles/V108	16	12	2	1	8	M.A.	Zoology
A	Norman/V107	29	5	2	1	7	M.A.	Elementary Ed.
A	Carlos/V111	30	4	2	0	4	B.A.	Elementary Ed.
A	Larry/V110	17	12	2	3	1	M.A.	History
A	Cindy/V109	16	12	3	7	6	M.A.	English
A	Tom/V112	10	5	5	1	3	M.A.	Psychology
A	Mike/V113	18	8	3	2	6	M.A.	Social Science

## APPENDIX C: SAMPLE MEMO

MEMOS ABOUT NOVICE RESPONSES

9-15-03

I have read through the interview several times, highlighted and annotated the interviews. Then I went in again fresh on the computer and bulleted the “events” mentioned by the novices. As I read their responses, I asked myself:

- 1) What are the problems that principals are describing?
- 2) What surprised them about the job?
- 3) What do they indicate they do not know?
- 4) What is their strategy for solving problems or meeting the demands of the job?
- 5) How do they approach the instructional improvement arena?
- 6) What are the issues related to teachers?
- 7) What are the issues related to the District office?
- 8) What are their sources of feedback?
- 9) What is their understanding of the job for themselves?
- 10) How do they manage a positive affect/ attitude towards their work?
- 11) What are significant factors as mentioned by them in their work performance?

I came up with the following labels for the significant events I noticed in the responses:

1. Time management-

*The issue of meeting deadlines, prioritizing, finding a way of organizing the work day, checking procedures, having to do discipline investigations, answering emails, being away from campus and losing continuity all pointed to some aspect of time management being an issue in the earliest stages of the job.. Mentioned by N101 & N103. Sylvia mentioned the difficulty specially of going from traditional to year round calendar where she had no break or slow down time to catch up and get prepared for the next year. Principals indicated the time*

## APPENDIX C continued

*management did improve as the year went on and they learned to delegate or decide that every discipline case did not need to be investigated so fully. Bill mentioned several times that everything took so long because he did not know the answers so he had to make sure until finally he decided to just “fly by the seat of his pants”. I farmed that responsibility out to my secretary this year (N104)*

- 2. Managing teachers:** *N101, N102, N105, N103 mentioned some aspect of managing teachers to ensure that they were doing their job adequately. Two of the principals mentioned this as the area of surprise as they had not had prior experience in managing teachers and did not anticipate how teachers could behave, since they themselves were strong teachers. Negative behaviors from teachers mentioned ranged from some who attacked the principal rudely, to criticism, to not tending the students to not teaching properly and lastly to not complying with requests the first time but having to be reminded. Sarah mentioned her good relationship with the teachers, but then she also had been a vp at the same site for a number of years. The principals who were citing it as a problem had not had much experience in supervising teachers, i.e. lacked vp experience and also one principal (Sylvia) had not really taught her own classroom but had held teaching summer school jobs before she became an administrator. Bill’s comments about his trusting the teachers and leaving them alone the first year were giving away to his saying that he wanted to know “more about what was going on” and that he wanted to convey that he could step in any time and say how it is going to be.*

*The issue here is of managing adults who were not behaving professionally or who were not delivering quality instruction for which the novice principal had little anticipation—especially if they had been model teachers and worked mainly in curriculum leadership prior to becoming a principal*

- 3. Understanding teachers’ needs / supporting teachers – Responses from N102, N103, N104** – *another issue that emerged is principals were trying to understand how to support teachers as when Sarah explained that her board policy stipulated that the first contact from parents must be made with teachers and how she upheld this thus reflecting her strong support of teachers. Teachers also felt supported when there was positive feedback from parents about the school or principal in general (N104) Mary mentions with regard to teachers that “there is a lot of massaging that has to be done” implying the round about way that some issue may need to be approached with teachers. Sylvia on the other hand commented that she did not understand why the teachers were always around even on their off-track time. The range of these comments qualitatively seems to reflect the principals’ personal understanding of the classroom experience as a teacher.*

## APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT SEARCH LETTER

Shobhana Rishi  
505 Broderick Ave.  
Modesto, CA 95350

Dr. John Borba  
Department of Advanced Studies  
California State University, Stanislaus  
801 Monte Vista Ave.  
Turlock, CA 95382

June 30, 2003

Dear John:

I am currently preparing to gather data for my dissertation focusing on how principals experienced learning their jobs. I am seeking 6 principal participants who have been working as elementary school principals for 1, 2, 3, and 6+ years.

I am seeking your assistance in identifying principals who might be willing to participate in this study. Participants will be notified of the general intent of the study and asked to reflect on their on-the-job experiences. They will be interviewed once with a follow-up interview as needed by phone or in person. In addition they will be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire.

The benefits to them would be the insights and self understanding gained from such reflective inquiry. The results of the study will add to our understanding of how principals learn to do their work and how they can be supported to achieve their potential as school leaders.

I will be phoning you within the next week for names of potential participants.

Your help is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Shobhana Rishi

## APPENDIX E: PRINCIPAL INVITATION

Date:

To:

From: Shobhana Rishi

Re: Study on principals

Dear

I would like to invite you to take part in my doctoral study on the work of principals. I am seeking participants who are in their 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the principalship. You were referred to me by Dr. John Borba as a possible participant.

The purpose of the study is to understand the work of principals from principals' point of view. Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary and would involve filling out a brief questionnaire and an interview for about 1-1.5 hours. If you wish to participate, I can schedule the interview at your convenience and email the interview questions in advance to give you a chance to think about them. I believe that you will find this opportunity for reflection quite useful and enjoyable.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your consideration of this invitation and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Shobhana

## APPENDIX F: INFORMED CONSENT

**Title of Project: Two Perspectives on Understanding the Work of Principals**

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this doctoral research study through the University of the Pacific. The study focuses on how principals perceive their work and the results of this study will be used to develop a better understanding of the work of principals. My hope is that your participation in this study will provide you an opportunity to reflect on your own work experiences in a way that will be of use to you. Your participation in this project is purely voluntary and would involve the following:

- 1) Completion and return of the enclosed questionnaire.
- 2) An initial interview lasting 1-1.5 hours to be audio taped and a brief follow-up phone interview.
- 3) Verification of transcribed interview text for accuracy.

I would like to begin gathering data for the study as soon as possible and will phone you within the next few days to arrange a time and place for the interview. Once we have set a time and place for the interview, I will mail or email you the questions that will be used in the interview to allow you time for reflection. In the meantime, would you please complete and return the questionnaire to me in the enclosed stamped self-addressed envelope.

All data from interviews, questionnaire and our meetings will be kept strictly confidential. Your questionnaire is coded with a pseudonym that will also be assigned to your interview tape to assure confidentiality. I will send you the transcribed interview for your review as soon as it is completed. All data such as questionnaires, interview tapes and transcripts will be destroyed 3 years after completion of study.

There are no risks involved in participating, other than the anxiety that many people experience from being interviewed. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at (209) 572-1850 or (209) 605-5185. You may also reach Dr. Fred Muskal, at the Benerd School of Education at the University of the Pacific at (209) 946-2580. If you have any questions about research using human subjects, please contact the Office of Research and Graduate Studies at (209) 946-7356.

Thank you again for assisting me in this study. I look forward to working with you.

Yours sincerely,

Shobhana Rishi

.....

I agree to participate in the present study as described to me by the researcher. I understand that my participation is strictly voluntary and that I may discontinue at any time. I also understand that I may keep a copy of this form.

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What were the most salient or challenging parts of the job at the beginning or early part of your career? When do you think you mastered them? Which ones remain?
2. Describe a mistake you made during your first two years that you have corrected. What was the most difficult part of the job when you started and how has it changed?
3. What new issues have emerged this year?
4. What would you like to see happen this year and how do you intend to implement your plans?
5. How do you define success as a principal? Has your definition changed over the course of your career? How?
6. How do you know you have learned something new on the job?

### Additions:

- What aspects of the job were complete surprises to you?
- If you were to tell new principals 2-3 things about the job that they probably don't know, what would they be?
- How do you find out what needs "fixing" at the school?



APPENDIX H: PRINCIPALS' DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

**Demographic Questionnaire**

Participant: N108
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**To Principal Participant:** Please complete or correct any information that is not correct. Return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed stamped self-addressed envelope or bring with you to the interview. Thank you.

Number of students in: School \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_

During the next school year, you will be in your \_\_\_\_\_ year as a principal.

**PRELIMINARY ADMINISTRATIVE CREDENTIAL:**

Place/Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_

TIER 2

Place/Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Most advanced degree: \_\_\_\_\_ Undergraduate major: \_\_\_\_\_

<u>POSITIONS HELD IN EDUCATION</u>	<u>YEAR STARTED – ENDED</u>	<u>NAME OF DISTRICT</u> <u>/STATE IF</u> <u>OTHER THAN</u> <u>CALIFORNIA</u>
------------------------------------	-----------------------------	---

Elementary School Principal	_____ - NOW	_____
_____	_____ - _____	_____
_____	_____ - _____	_____
_____	_____ - _____	_____
_____	_____ - _____	_____
_____	_____ - _____	_____
_____	_____ - _____	_____

APPENDIX H continued

Please list any other experiences, professional or personal, that you feel significantly influenced your work behavior.

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**Please use back of this form if more space is needed for positions held in education.**

The demeanor of the veteran principals, instead of projecting urgency, projected a sense of integration, and their responses reflected a holistic sense of the job. All veteran principals attested to the uniqueness of the situations that they face each year, concluding that no two years are the same. The major category that emerged for the veteran principals was **Adaptation**. The three dimensions of **Adaptation** as experienced by veterans were: 1) **Change in demographics**, 2) **Change in district demands**, and 3) **Professional engagement**. These dimensions and their sub-dimensions are discussed below.

### Adaptation

The veteran principals that were interviewed clearly enjoyed their day to day work at the school site although they referred to the various changes in the job caused by statewide accountability reform, changing demographics of the school communities, and the change in district requirements. As they did the job year after year, their own professional engagement also changed and their ability to adapt captured the reality of their work life.

**Change in demographics** A major change to which veteran principals had to adapt is the **Change in demographics**. Whether the change in demographics of the school community was a result of the principal moving to a *New school site* or as result of the change in neighborhoods through the years, principals' work was impacted by it. As the state saw a rise in *English language learners*, so did the need for different types of curriculum development, programs, and their administration. Another larger societal change included the *Increased drug usage* and an increase in *Single parent families*, the effects of which are seen in the diminished ability of children to learn as well as the