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PRINCIPAL BEHAVIOURS DURING SCHOOL EMERGENCIES

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PRINCIPAL BEHAVIOURS DURING SCHOOL EMERGENCIES

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by

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Abstract

School emergencies are thankfully rare, but there is no escaping the reality that they do take place. Schools have a duty to ensure that students are safe. School boards, principals and teachers all play a role in helping reduce the number of school emergencies, but, as research has found, they also play a role in helping guide and lead during threatening situations that are unforeseeable, infrequent and unavoidable. This study looks at school emergencies through the lenses of school board emergency plans and of those who actually experience school emergencies head on – the school principal. This study used two methods of inquiry. The first method involved a two-part literature review. Academic works pertaining to school emergency preparedness and training were first analyzed. Second, emergency plans from eight Ontario school boards were analyzed. The second method of inquiry involved twenty semi-structured interviews with retired and current principals and probed how they viewed emergencies and how they felt their role changed when an emergency took place in their school. Overall, 152 unique emergencies incidents were documented from school board emergency plans and from the recorded interviews of the principals. Often, the experiences of principals did not coincide with official school board protocols. The gap in planning presents unique challenges that resonate with how principals are trained and prepared for emergencies and with how they must gather personal expertise in order to effectively deal with situations for which their school board may not have planned.

Keywords: emergency preparedness, principal behaviour, school boards, school emergencies

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Chapter 1

Problem and approach to inquiry

An average morning in a suburban school; students are in class, teachers are doing what they should be doing, the phones and email are generally quiet, and the principal is settling down to daily work. Nothing is out of the ordinary until a secretary runs into the office and says that a teacher just saw someone enter the school with what looked to be a shotgun. What is the principal to do?

Emergencies can be expected in any school, although armed intruders are thankfully rare. Yet whatever the emergency, staff, students and parents will look to the principal for leadership – for appropriate action and guidance. But how do principals know what to do? School boards have emergency policies, and some principals will have attended emergency planning and training sessions. Board policies and other kinds of written protocols establish formal role expectations for principal behaviours in emergencies. Principals are expected to have an understanding of these formal expectations, but must still decide on how to respond appropriately to any given situation. In doing so they will be aware of non-formal expectations held by – and perhaps voiced by – co-workers and others. Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie and Hurwitz (1984) sum up this search for role using a quotation from Wolcott (1973): "principals are bombarded with notions of what they are and ought to be, but are given few guidelines about how" (p. 188). Principals can also be expected to hold personal expectations for their own behaviour.

Research Problem

The primary research interest of this study was principals' understandings of what constitutes appropriate behaviour during school emergencies. The research questions addressed were as follows:

1. What are school emergencies? More specifically, what kinds of situations are recognized as constituting school emergencies in official and academic literature, and what kinds of situations do principals identify as school emergencies? Current academic literature suggests emergencies are usually characterized as being foreseeable or unforeseeable sets of events that occur infrequently, are abnormal or unique, disrupt normal functions, require substantial amounts of time, energy and effort to resolve, result in damaged or lost resources, involve the assistance of outside resources for resolution, and negatively affect the safety of those involved (Chirichello & Richmond, 2007; Kano & Bourque, 2007; Roher & Warner, 2006). This understanding is discussed further in Chapter 2 as are understandings communicated in the official policies of selected Ontario school boards in Chapter 3 and those communicated by principals during the interviews that are reported in Chapter 4.

2. What qualifies as a more or less severe school emergency? The characteristics of emergencies as sketched above imply that they will typically be disruptive and damaging, will consume considerable time, effort and resources, and be a threat to safety and security. But are all school emergencies necessarily like this? The literature documenting and discussing the work of principals portrays their daily round as being primarily concerned with performing routine tasks and resolving relatively well structured problems (Allison & Allison, 1991; Allison, Morfitt & Allison, 1996;

Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995) which, as characterized by Macmillan and Meyer (2002), mainly involve a mix of instruction, monitoring, communication and management. This suggests that when asked about school emergencies encountered during their careers, principals may identify some situations which would not satisfy the more severe characteristics stressed in the emergency planning literature. If so, how do such less severe school emergencies differ from others? According to some emergency planning literature, severe situations are viewed as catastrophic events such as nuclear explosions, plane crashes and swarms of killer bees (Dorman, 2003; Kano & Bourque, 2007). But such catastrophic events are, thankfully, very rare and thus not likely to have been experienced by most principals or their colleagues and, as such, when asked, principals may not identify such events as emergencies. If so, what do principals recognize as severe school emergencies?

3. How are school principals expected to behave in school emergencies? My investigation of this research question considered both formal and theoretically derived expectations, Formal expectations were investigated through a review of pertinent academic literature and an analysis of selected Ontario school boards' emergency response policies and protocols provided on web sites. Theoretically based explanations concentrated on the relative influence of nomothetic and ideographic expectations in everyday and emergency situations using data collected during semi-structured interviews with ten retired and ten currently employed school principals.

Significance

Concern over preparedness for emergencies has increased dramatically following high profile cases such as Columbine and September 11th (Kano & Bourque, 2007). In May 2007, the United States' Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a review of the emergency preparedness of America's school districts. The report found that while most school districts have plans in place to guide how schools should deal with severe emergencies such as terrorist threats, hurricanes and flu pandemics, those plans often failed to detail appropriate behaviours for key role incumbents, such as principals. This is contrary to recommendations in the planning literature (Boin & Hart, 2003; Kano, Ramirez, Ybarra, Frias & Bourque, 2007), which typically encourage the development of detailed role and responsibility statements for first responders. This discrepancy suggests that while there may be many formal expectations for principal behaviour in other contexts, stated expectations for emergencies may lack desirable specificity to help guide principal behaviour. If so, then principals will presumably find themselves relying more on self and local knowledge when responding to emergencies. Presumably, some kinds of emergencies will be best managed by relying on specific plans and protocols informed by specialist knowledge, while others can be sensibly handled by principals drawing on their professional, personal knowledge, tempered by local advice. This study provides an initial exploration of these issues, informed by the experiences and reflections of principals who have "been there".

Current concerns over school safety enhances the timeliness of this study. Media reports imply school violence, and thus related emergencies, is escalating, particularly in high schools (Gidney, 1999; Trump, 2000). Yet it is difficult to obtain reliable

comparative data, and the daily rigors of life usually do not allow the public or the media time to fully analyze news stories and form an informed opinion. "The public...forms its perceptions from the media who like any other business, markets what will sell...[and] what sells is 'bad news'" (Dolmage, 1996, p. 190).

Yet there can be no doubt of the strong perception that violence in schools is increasing and that this carries with it a public expectation for action (Hope, 1999, p. 181). But how might school violence be sensibly addressed? Events such as the Columbine tragedy and Taber, Alberta encourage the development of crisis and other emergency plans but, while indispensable, such plans will likely provide little guidance for principals faced with less severe instances of school violence, such as schoolyard tussles and verbal bullying. And while there are also policies, protocols and programs addressing bullying and such, principals must still decide on the applicability of the normative expectations they provide to the particular circumstances and context of emergencies that arise in their schools, which some may believe are less severe than those elsewhere. Carew (1999), for example, found that all ten of the elementary school principals she interviewed expressed concern about increases in school violence, but had not yet experienced violent incidents in their schools. By surveying the range of formal expectations for principal behaviours in emergencies, and investigating how principals viewed and made use of these and other expectations, this study sought to make practical contributions to the literature and the profession by exploring the relative importance of existing normative expectations in the work of school principals.

Theoretical Framework

In addition to applicable literature addressing principal problem processing,

(Allison, 1996; Allison & Allison, 1993; Leithwood, 1990a), role theory and, more

specifically, the Getzels and Guba (1957) social systems model was used to develop the

conceptual framework that guided this study.

Role theory views individual behaviours as being influenced by, even dependent

upon, interactions between actors' understandings of normative expectations in the

applicable socio-cultural context on one hand, and by their own personalities on the other

(Lewin, 1936; Owens & Valesky, 2007, p. 138). Lewin (1936) created a heuristic to

capture this that describes role behaviour (B) as the interaction between an incumbent's

role (R) and personality (P) as follows: $B = f(R \times P)$. In 1957 Jacob Getzels and Egon

Guba built on this representation in an attempt to develop a theory that would be "capable

of generating both hypotheses for guiding research and principles for guiding practice"

(Getzels & Guba, 1957, p. 423). At the heart of their work was the schematic

representation shown in Figure 1.1, which is widely known as the Getzels and Guba

model. Within this conceptual schema, principal behaviour is viewed as being influenced

by both official expectations embodied in the nomothetic dimension, and personal aspects

encompassed by the complementary ideographic dimension, and interactions between the

two.

Figure 1.1

Adapted Version of Getzels and Guba Model

Nomothetic Contribution

Institutional Role Expectations

Social System ⟶ Behaviour

Personal Needs and Dispositions

Ideographic Contribution
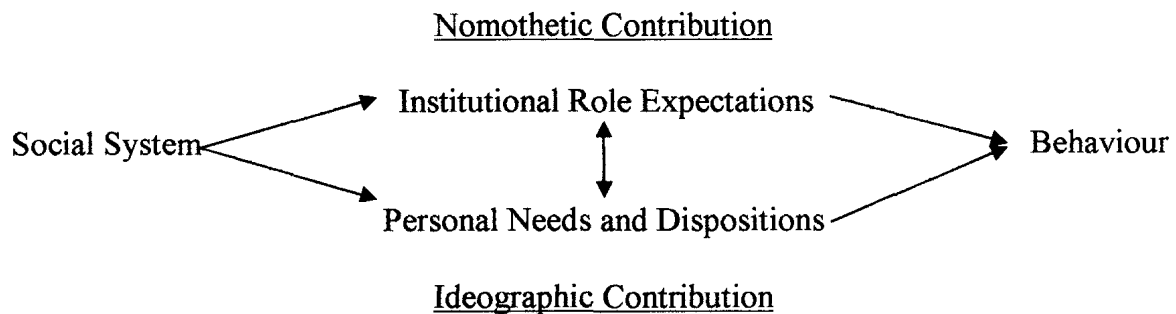
Adapted information obtained from Owens and Valesky, 2007, p. 136

The nomothetic (formal organizational) dimension contains the set of formal expectations for a specific role in the institution in which the role is located. The second dimension, called the ideographic (personal) dimension, attempts to identify elements of the personality of a role incumbent by identifying constituent concepts . Thus, as shown in Figure 1.1 the nomothetic dimension views Roles as constituent elements of Institutions, with each Role being composed of sets of specific Expectations. The parallel ideographic dimension identifies three matched analytical elements, namely Individual members of Institutions, each with a distinct Personality, which is viewed in the language of the original model as embodying specific Needs and Dispositions. In subsequent conceptual iterations, the Personality aspects of the model have been expanded to include goals, perceptions, interpretations, and knowledge (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Getzels, Lipham, & Campbell, 1968, p. 56).

Nomothetic contribution

According to Getzels and Guba (1957) and Getzels, Lipham, and Campbell (1968), formal institutions have five characteristics that help in carrying out specific functions. The first is that institutions are purposive. As such, a school's purpose is to teach, educate and prepare responsible citizens. The second is that they are peopled. In order for schools to achieve their prescribed goal of educating students, they are staffed and operated by humans. The third characteristic concerns institutional structure. In order for schools to pursue their purposes the people populating the organization are required to perform specific roles. Consequently, institutions are normative because the defined roles establish normative expectations for the behaviour of the role incumbents (Getzels & Guba, 1957, p. 425). Finally, institutions are sanction bearing. There are consequences within a school if the norms are violated.

While all the above characteristics are important in the working life of organizations such as schools, it is the prescription of roles that officially defines the normative expectations for role incumbents (Getzels & Guba, 1957, p. 426). In formal organizations such as public elementary and secondary schools, official expectations for the behaviour of role incumbents such as teachers and principals are stated in official documents. In Ontario, for example, the *Education Act* and its accompanying Regulations specify legal duties for principals, teachers, pupils and others, with additional expectations being contained in nested or otherwise related authoritative documents. Thus Section 6 of Regulation 298 as authorized by the Ontario *Education Act* provides for mandatory performance of emergency drills for schools and Section 11 states additional formal role expectations for principals in their capacities as both teachers and

administrative officials. Individual School Board policy documents provide expectations specific to a particular Board.

Ideographic contribution

The relationship between an individual's needs, stresses, goals and values can be in conflict and interfere with institutional goals (Getzels & Guba, 1954, 1955; Getzels, Lipham & Campbell, 1968; Wolverton, Gmelch & Wolverton, 2000). As Getzels and Guba (1957) pointed out, roles are filled by flesh and blood individuals, no two of whom are quite alike. Teachers are often quick to recognize these differences between administrators during staff room discussions. Terms such as "void of personality," "by the book," "open to ideas," "not a paper pusher" and "full of personality" were used during the interviews of this study. These and similar phrases illustrate how individuals bring their particular form and style to common institutional roles, filling each role with self, as it were.

School administrators' tasks are usually expressed in terms of institutional inventories such as "enforcing the rules and regulations promulgated by the board of education, preparing the school budget, supervising the teaching personnel, speaking to community groups..." (Getzels, Lipham & Campbell 1968, p. 229). Being concerned solely with the institutional role and other such lists do not touch upon an administrator's attitudes, traits or experiences. As such, the role incumbent is viewed merely as an "actor" devoid of personal characteristics. Organizations are nonetheless led by living, breathing people who have feelings, families and pressures. The challenge for observers of educational administration is to appreciate relationships between the nomothetic and the ideographic dimensions of social behaviour. In the case of this study, a number of

questions arise from the balance between the two dimensions. In particular, when faced with emergencies, do principals tend to behave based primarily upon the nomothetic expectations given in emergency documents and policies they have studied or created, or do they behave primarily in accord with their own ideographic qualities? Furthermore, how might this balance shift with regard to: a) different types of emergencies; b) a principals past experiences with similar emergencies; and c) their overall experience? These questions were probed in this study by asking principals to indicate the extent to which their response to emergencies would likely be influenced by formal role expectation (nomothetic considerations) or their personality (ideographic considerations).

Hoy and Miskel (2008, p. 26) expanded on Getzels and Guba's original model to specifically recognize the importance of individual knowledge, goals, beliefs, and cognition within the ideographic dimension. Cognition is an important component of this expansion because it explicitly recognizes that role incumbents, such as principals, engage in forms of cognitive processing when deciding how to respond to a particular situation, such as an emergency. This study was not specifically concerned with how principals think in emergency situations, but was informed by findings from previous research into how principals and other role incumbents appear to reason about problems they encounter in their work (Allison 1996, Leithwood, 1990b). A particularly pertinent finding concerns the influence of experience in recognizing and responding to problem situations.

The literature on expertise (e.g. Allison, 1996; Chi, Glaser, & Farr, 1988), and related studies of principal problem solving (e.g. Allison & Allison, 1993; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995) show how sustained, on-the-job experience can transform what was

once regarded as a difficult problem into a more or less routine task. As discussed by Johnson (1988), experts in a specific task domain consistently make more accurate and better judgments than novices (p. 210). Making decisions under uncertainty is also a characteristic of experts.

As expressed by Ohde and Murphy (1993), the general principle is that experts perform and pattern their thinking differently from novices. The acquisition of domain-specific knowledge appears as the main common and important difference between experts and novices (Allison, 1996; Chi, Glaser, & Farr, 1988; Ohde & Murphy, 1993). Accordingly, it is reasonable to expect more experienced principals to be more prepared and possibly proficient in handling school emergencies. On this basis, principals who have had previous experiences with particular kinds of school emergencies may view repeat occurrences of such situations as more routine than would their less experienced colleagues. In this respect, Chirichello and Richmond (2007) found that experienced principals are typically more aware of when to delegate responsibilities and are typically able to recognize what situations can be allowed to unfold with little intervention, and what situations require immediate attention (p. 111). To recover the introductory scenario, a principal with substantial experience in schools where weapons are not uncommon may well be able to draw on a practised repertoire of responses when confronted with the news of a possible armed intruder, whereas a principal with no experience in dealing with weapon incidents may have difficulty in deciding how to act, even though he or she had recently reviewed pertinent board policy documents.

Moreover, given variations in school contexts and conditions, principals whose experiences are primarily derived from certain kinds of situations may well hold differing

conceptions of what constitutes a school emergency, as well as the relative severity of particular kinds of emergencies. Principals who have worked primarily in rural, suburban or urban schools, for example, may well have been exposed to different kinds and ranges of school emergencies which, in turn, would be expected to give them greater confidence and surety when responding to the kinds of emergencies with which they were familiar, but not, perhaps, school emergencies with which they had had relatively little experience. Such considerations point to the importance of exploring the kinds of situations experienced principals identify as emergencies and how these may differ according to experience and current contexts.

As discussed above, current theory shows that principals' responses to emergency situations will be influenced by previous experiences with similar situations. But how might experience-in-role influence the relative salience of formal role expectations and personality consideration when responding to emergencies? Will greater experience encourage principals to rely more on formal expectations or their personal expertise? In his original discussion, Getzels (1958, p. 158) suggested the behaviour of an on-duty army private would be dominated by the nomothetic (Role) dimension of the model, whereas the behaviour of an artist would be dominated by the ideographic (Personality) dimension. Observations by others (e.g. Keegan, 1987; Zohar, 2002) suggest similar variations may be associated with leader behaviour during emergencies, with the relative contributions of Role and Personality being magnified or diminished depending on prior experience of the situation and the judged severity of the emergency. Even so, no previous investigations of this question could be located in the literature and this appeared as a particularly interesting line of inquiry in this study.

Method

The study engaged in two main lines of inquiry, a structured literature review and a series of interviews with principals.

My initial investigation of the literature found previous studies that had looked at the importance of leadership in times of crisis (e.g. Burns, 1978; Keegan, 1987) and a substantial number of studies and "how to" articles concerned with emergency planning (e.g. Elston, 2005; Hull, 2000; Roher & Warner, 2006; Stewart 1997), but relatively little research specifically addressing the actual behaviour of principals during school emergencies. Most articles in professional magazines look solely at the legal obligations and responsibilities of principals in formulating emergency plans, and fail to consider how principals actually behave during an emergency (Elston, 2005; Joong & Ridler, 2005; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2004). To explore the literature more thoroughly, a structured review was undertaken to canvass formal expectations for behaviour and problem solving by principals in emergencies

The literature review had four main foci. The first was on the formulation, development and implementation of emergency legislation in the Province of Ontario, with specific reference to school safety. The second focus was on academic literature discussing risk management in school districts. The third focus was on studies pertaining to principal behaviour during emergencies. Lastly, the fourth focus was on emergency plans and protocols of eight Ontario school boards as provided on their web pages. Chapter 2 reports findings concerning the first three foci, the review of school board policies appearing in Chapter 3.

To investigate the principal's experiences with and understandings of school emergencies, 20 principals were interviewed, 10 of whom were recently retired and ten of whom were employed by an Ontario public school board. An initial group of six retired principals were recruited from Limited Duties Instructors at the UWO Faculty of Education. The remaining four retired participants contacted the researcher directly after hearing about the study. The number of participants for the interviews was decided upon in discussion with my committee members and it was deemed that 20 principals would be an appropriate sample size. Initially, I had planned to recruit twenty retired principals, but attempts to recruit this number were unsuccessful. I had decided to recruit retired principals on the grounds they would have considerable experience and would be likely to speak candidly, without inhibitions that might constrain responses from current principals.

When it proved impossible to recruit the planned complement of 20 retired principals, I sought to augment the ten who had agreed to participate with an additional ten principals from amongst the ranks of those currently employed. In retrospect, interviewing equal numbers of retired and current principals strengthened the study in several ways. Current principals, for example, were able to draw on more up-to-date training experiences. Further, the current principals expanded the range of role experience among the interviewees. As shown in greater detail in Table 4.1, all of the ten retired principals had acquired ten or more years of experience, two having more than 20 years in role. Five of the ten current principals also had ten or more years of experience, but the other five had gained between five and ten years of experience. In sum, a quarter of the principals interviewed had between 5 and 10 years of experience in role, while

almost half (45%) had between 15 and 20 years of experience, with two having more than 20 years experience. Figure 1.2 below charts years of experience for all interviewees showing the overlapping experience for current and retired principals. Considered another way, the most experienced principals interviewed were appointed to the role in the mid 1980s, the least experienced in 2005 with most having administered schools from the late 1980s to the late 1990s.

Figure 1.2
Range of experience in role for Current and Retired interviewees

															R5						
															R4						
			C4							R1					R3				R8		
		C1	C2	C3		C5	C6	C7		R2					C8		C9	C10	R7	R9	R10
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	19	2	2	22
								0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		0	1	

Years

Appendix I contains the interview schedule. Interviewees were asked a series of seven questions augmented with various supplementary probes when considered appropriate. A major aim during the interview was to gain a better understanding of the kinds of situations school principals viewed as emergencies and those that the interviewees had experienced. In total, descriptions of 152 principal-identified emergencies were collected during the interviews. Further details regarding the interviews are provided in Chapter 4.

Key terms

1. Emergency and Emergency Preparedness.

One purpose of this thesis was to establish a clearer and more concise understanding of what qualifies as a school emergency. In many contributions to the

literature, the term emergency is linked to a response action or procedure, rather than a specific set of events. As such, Roher and Warner (2006) consider an emergency "as a situation that can be handled by the established response system of the police or fire department through normal procedures, such as a chemical spill, bomb scare, or a stabbing incident in a school" (p. 30). While this and similar definitions help uncover what types of events can be considered emergencies, Roher and Warner also go further to suggest that a crisis is "an abnormal and unique event with a potential to have serious impact on institutional operation. Examples of a crisis include an extended power outage, a major storm or a multiple shooting incident" (p. 31). Other contributors to the literature use the terms crisis, emergency and disaster interchangeably. Kano (2006) for example defines an emergency as "a sudden unforeseen crisis (usually involving danger) that requires immediate action" (p. 3). Kano also distinguishes a disaster from an emergency by using Noji's (2000) definition as follows: "...any community emergency that seriously affects people's lives and property and exceeds the capacity of the community to respond effectively to the emergency" (p. 148). According to Petersen and Straub (1992), a crisis is "an event that is extraordinary and therefore cannot be predicted" (p. 3).

In the 2007 GAO study on US school district preparedness, an emergency was considered to be a natural or human-made disaster. Emergency preparedness is regarded as a state and local responsibility, implying that each school district may have its own definition of emergency. A common theme throughout the GAO report was the preparedness of school districts to emergencies originating from both inside and outside the district.

It is important to point out that "emergency preparedness" is the common term used to describe emergency and disaster events by the government and school boards in Ontario. This is a blanket statement which subsumes three terms (emergency, crisis and disaster). While this may seem confusing due to the broad view of emergency being adopted in this study, Canadian literature on crisis/emergency management differs from that in the U.S. For example, in some U.S. school districts, it is common procedure to practice earthquake, tornado and hurricane drills, while in Ontario the threat of those types of events is extremely low, with tornado disasters typically being rehearsed only in areas that are prone to their occurrence.

2. Social System.

The definition of social system was adopted from Getzels and Guba's work (1957, p. 424).

> We conceive of the social system as involving two major classes of phenomena, which are at once conceptually independent and phenomenally interactive. There are, first, the institutions with certain roles and expectations that will fulfill the goals of the system. Second, inhabiting the system are the individuals with certain personalities and need-dispositions, whose interactions comprise what we call "social behaviour.

In their usage and as employed in this study, a school, school board or an individual classroom can be considered a social system because each possess two distinct, yet interactive considerations – institutional and individual which define the nomothetic and ideographic dimensions respectively.

3. Behaviour.

Throughout this study the term behaviour is understood as referring to the actions of principals and other individuals. The conceptual framework adopted for this study

views the behaviour of role incumbents as being largely influenced by interactions between formal role expectations and individual characteristics.

4. Policy and Protocol.

Allison (1976) defined policy as "an important and useful philosophically-based statement of intent that provides major guidelines for the attainment of goals through future discretionary action" (p. 14). A protocol is defined as a set of policy-based guidelines, procedures or rules which provide directions to school personnel regarding particular situations. The terms protocols and procedures are used interchangeably throughout the study. As such a policy is understood as providing guidelines or a conceptual map that informs individuals about more specific regulations, protocols and rules should be in place regarding specific areas of action. Emergency management policies are created and updated as problems are identified.

Summary

This chapter sought to provide an outline of how the research problems addressed in this study were approached. Specific attention was given to role theory and expertise and their contributions to principal behaviour during school emergencies. The next chapter reports first on the legislative frameworks applying to emergency preparedness and he role of school principal in Ontario and then academic treatments of emergency preparedness.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This review of literature is divided into two sections. The first considers official

role expectations for principals in Ontario law and policy that are pertinent to preparing

for and responding to school emergencies, with particular attention to school violence.

The second reviews the body of risk management literature associated with previous

studies of school district and principal preparedness.

Official Expectations

Overarching nomothetic expectations for the role of Ontario school principals are

stated in various official documents. The *Education Act* (1990) and its accompanying

Regulations specify a range of fundamental legal duties. Section 265(1) of the *Act* lists

14 duties, of which the following are most directly applicable to school emergencies:

(a) to maintain proper order and discipline in the school,

(b) to develop co-operation and co-ordination of effort among the members of the

staff of the school,

(j) to give assiduous attention to the health and comfort of the pupils, to the

cleanliness, temperature and ventilation of the school, to the care of all teaching

materials and other school property, and to the condition and appearance of the

school building and grounds,

(k) to report promptly to the board and the medical officer of health when the

principal has reason to suspect the existence of any communicable disease in the

school, and of the unsanitary condition of any part of the school building or the

school grounds, ...

(m) subject to an appeal to the board, to refuse to admit to the school or

classroom a person whose presence in the school or classroom would in the

principal's judgment be detrimental to the physical or mental well-being of the

pupils ... .

These statutory expectations are supplemented by an additional set of duties laid out in

Section 11 of Regulation 298 (*Operation of schools—General*, 1990), of which the

following have a bearing on preparedness for school emergencies:

(3)(e) provide for the supervision of pupils during the period of time during the

school day when the school building and playgrounds are open to pupils,

(3)(f) provide for the supervision of and the conducting of any school activity

authorized by the board, ...

Additional role expectations for principals are stated in other Regulations authorized by

the *Education Act*, none of which have direct bearing on expectations for behaviour in

emergencies. One particularly pertinent, although indirect, provision is contained in

Regulation 388/97 under the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act* (1997). This document,

more commonly known as the *Ontario Fire Code*, provides that "in schools attended by

children, total evacuation fire drills shall be held three times in each of the fall and spring

school terms" (2.3.3.2. (1)(b)). Specific responsibility for this requirement is typically

assigned to school principals in board policy documents which, as discussed and

illustrated in the next chapter, also specify additional role expectations for principals in

preparing for and responding to school emergencies.

Sabrina's law is an anaphylaxis policy introduced in 2005. The law is named

after 13 year old Sabrina Shannon who died in September 2003 after suffering an

anaphylactic attack in an Ontario high school. The law was created to ensure that school

boards have anaphylaxis policies in place, to reduce the exposure of students to potential

fatal allergens and to train staff in the use of epipen injectors. Paragraphs 4 – 6 in

Section 2(2) require principals to prepare individual plans for each pupil with an

anaphylactic allergy, inform parents and pupils of this, and maintain appropriate records

(*Sabrina's Law*, 2003).

Additional formal role expectations for principals are also included in

professional documents such as the *Foundations of Professional Practice* promulgated by

the Ontario College of Teachers (2006) and in Ministry of Education policy documents.

Safe school policies

Part XIII of the *Education Act* (1990) is devoted to Behaviour, Discipline and

Safety and, as such, addresses activities that could trigger school emergencies. Section

308 in this Part lists student activities for which principals can suspend pupils, including

threats to inflict bodily harm, possessing alcohol or illegal drugs, vandalism, and

bullying. Section 310 lists additional activities for which principals must suspend pupils

prior to conducting an inquiry to decide whether or not to recommend expulsion to the

school board: these include possessing or using a weapon, committing a serious physical

assault, and committing a robbery. Related provisions in this Part and the accompanying

Regulation 472/07 detail a host of expectations for how and when principals are required

to properly exercise this authority, most of which are concerned with honouring

principles of procedural justice and ensuring proper record keeping and notification of

involved parties. While these nomothetic role expectations are pertinent to how Ontario

principals are expected to behave when dealing with school emergencies associated with

the listed activities, they are nonetheless peripheral to the main interests in this study,

which focus on how principals respond to actual emergencies. Even so, Part XIII of the

Act was enacted—and recently amended—in response to escalating public and political

concerns over increased school violence and, as such, the following brief review of

events preceding the enactment of Part XIII appears appropriate.

School emergencies associated with school violence are by no means a new

concern. Perhaps the earliest reported school incident in North America took place in

Newburgh, New York in 1891. Five males were injured when 70 year old James Foster

fired a shotgun in a playground. In May of 1927, "the Bath Disaster," occurred in Bath,

Michigan. That attack remains the deadliest school disaster in North American history,

with 45 people killed and 58 injured as a result of explosions at an elementary school.

An internet search on the history of school emergencies tends to highlight the

occurrences of school shootings far more than any other type of emergency. The first

reported Canadian school shooting in modern times took place on May 28, 1975 in

Brampton, Ontario, when a student gunman killed a teacher and a student, wounding 13

others before he took his own life.

While such extreme forms of school emergencies remain nonetheless rare, there

has been growing concern over school violence over the past three decades or so.

According to Gidney's review of recent Ontario education policy, "with the exception of

the quality debate, no other educational issue received such extensive press coverage,

invited so many blaring headlines, or provoked the amount of concern among trustees

and teacher federations as this did" (1999, p. 181). In 1990 the Liberal Government led

by Premier David Peterson established the Safe Schools Task Force to "take a hard look

at the troublesome issue of violence in Ontario schools" (Auty, 1994b, p.1.) The task

force produced various reports and resource documents containing roles expectations for

principals, including a report entitled *Safe Schools* (Auty, 1994) and *A Safe Schools Idea*

Book for Students (Auty, 1994). Successor New Democratic Party and Conservative

Party governments undertook various initiatives aimed at reducing or eliminating school

violence, including the NDP's *Violence Free Schools Policy.*

Janet Ecker, the Minister of Education in the re-elected Conservative

government, announced a new initiative in the summer of 2000 to address violence in

schools. In addition to introducing Bill 81, the short title of which was the *Safe Schools*

Act which amended the *Education Act* by enacting the new Part XIII, the centerpiece of

this initiative was a *Code of Conduct for Ontario Schools*. This had been promised

during the election campaign in a pamphlet entitled *Blueprint: Mike Harris' Plan to Keep*

Ontario on the Right Track which stated "schools should be safe havens for our children,

not hunting grounds for drug dealers and gang leaders". This pamphlet also pledged a

"zero-tolerance policy for bad behaviour, expelling from regular classrooms the students

responsible for the worst kind of behaviour" (Conservative Party of Ontario, 1999, p. 41).

Ecker later commented regarding the *Safe Schools Act* that "teachers can't teach and

students can't learn if they fear for their safety" noticing that in "too many classrooms

across the province this is the case" (Ecker, 2000, p. 2).

While the code of conduct introduced by Ecker was recently modified to

incorporate amendments to Part XIII introduced by the passage of Bill 121 (Education

Amendment Act (Progressive Discipline and School Safety), 2007)[1], the purposes and

main provisions of the code remain as originally conceived. The purposes are as follows

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, ¶17; also *Education Act* §301(2)):

1. To ensure that all members of the school community, especially people in positions of authority, are treated with respect and dignity.
2. To promote responsible citizenship by encouraging appropriate participation in the civic life of the school community.
3. To maintain an environment where conflict and difference can be addressed in a manner characterized by respect and civility.
4. To encourage the use of non-violent means to resolve conflict.
5. To promote the safety of people in the schools.
6. To discourage the use of alcohol and illegal drugs.

The goal of promoting respect, civility, and responsible citizenship is to be pursued by all

members of the school community by following12 behavioural expectations, which

include "treat one another with dignity and respect at all times, and especially when there

is disagreement;" "show proper care and regard for school property and the property of

others;" "take appropriate measures to help those in need;" and "seek assistance from a

member of the school staff, if necessary, to resolve conflict peacefully" (Ontario Ministry

of Education, 2007a, ¶18). Other expectations, in essence, prohibit acts of violence, with

specific prohibitions against possessing weapons, engaging "in hate propaganda and

other forms of behaviour motivated by hate or bias" and "vandalism that causes extensive

damage to school property or to property located on the premises of the school" (Ontario

Ministry of Education, 2007a, ¶19).

In accord with the authority granted in Section 301(1) of the *Education Act*, the

code of conduct is to govern "the behaviour of all persons in schools", including teachers

and principals as well as pupils and visitors. The code nonetheless contains several

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[1] A full account of the required changes and the events leading to their introduction is provided in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 145 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b)

specific expectations for principals, including a requirement to demonstrate "care for the school community and a commitment to academic excellence in a safe teaching and learning environment;" and to communicate "regularly and meaningfully with all members of their school community" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, ¶20). School boards are required to have and update their own locally developed codes of conduct to augment the provincial code. Boards may also require schools to develop codes of conduct tailored expressly for their schools. These codes must set out clearly what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behaviour for all members of the elementary or secondary school community (e.g., parents, students, staff, visitors, volunteers). Principals are also required to "develop a communications plan that outlines how these standards will be made clear to everyone, including parents whose first language is a language other than English or French" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, ¶14).

In conjunction with the introduction of the *Safe Schools Act*, the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Safety and Security jointly released *A Provincial Model for local police/school board protocol* in December 2000 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Each school board and the local police service were responsible for drafting their own protocols by September 2001 to ensure a stronger partnership between police departments and school boards. The police and school board protocol is expected to define appropriate responses to incidents on school property and to better define the responsibilities of schools and police during emergency situations. It is also designed to encourage, enable and maintain positive relationships between principals and other school officials and police officers (York Region District School Board, 2006). Protocols developed by boards such as the York Region and York Catholic District School Boards

(2006) and the Upper Grand and Wellington Catholic District School Board (2001) address specific situations in which a police response is required. Occurrences such as bomb threats, verbal or written threats, possession of weapons and violent situations require mandatory police involvement. Due to the introduction of these protocols the school board emergency plans reviewed in Chapter 3 all included sections which discuss the appropriate communication methods with police and when police involvement is necessary.

In sum, Part XIII of the *Education Act* together with the provincial, school board and, if in place, school codes of conduct specify additional expectations for Ontario principals. For the most part, these set standards for behaviour and authorize disciplinary penalties for infringements, rather than establishing procedures for responding to the emergencies that could be associated with pupils or others engaging in prohibited activities. Even so, these additional nomothetic standards emphasize the expectation that principals are to ensure that schools are safe places and participants are to be protected against harm, thus endorsing the general expectation that principals will act appropriately in emergency situations. Indeed, there is clearly an implicit role expectation that principals need to be prepared to respond to situations that threaten school security and staff and student safety.

Risk Management

All school boards in Ontario are covered by a common insurance provider, the Ontario School Boards' Insurance Exchange (OSBIE), created in 1987. OSBIE provides insurance coverage to school boards for cases such as general liability, property, boiler, machinery (manufacturing), employee crime and fleet automobile losses. A key

component of their mandate is assisting school boards in managing and evaluating risk.

In this respect, OSBIE provides updates and direction to school boards to help in limiting

liability cases. This is partially accomplished through RMAs (Risk Management

Advisories) which are issued on a quarterly basis in OSBIE's ORACLE newsletter and

on an on-going "need to" basis when required. The RMAs can be consulted online at

http://www.osbie.on.ca/risk-management/advisories/.

RMAs range in severity and scope. For example, an Environmental Issues RMA

(OSBIE, 2008) summarized Statutes, Regulations and by-laws pertinent to handling

dangerous materials such as gasoline, pesticides and asbestos in schools. Table 2.1 offers

a list of recent RMAs concerning school related emergencies.

Table 2.1
Risk management advisories and the issues covered within the advisory
Topics and issues addressed in recent Risk Management Advisories

RMA Title	Issues addressed
Bomb Threats	School Evacuation
Fire Aid Providers – Administration of Medication	Risk Management Tips
Glass Breakage Injuries/Glass Installation and Replacement	What is Safety Glass? Wired Glass can cause Horrible Injuries Installation & Replacement/Improvement Risk Management Issues to Consider Wire Glass: Wire is for Fire, not for Strength The Properties of Glass
Playground Standards	Facts & Figures Inspections Donated Equipment Ground cover Risk Management Strategies
Playground Safety – Winter Use Advisory	Playground Safety programs and minimum requirements
School Trips Abroad	Risk Management Tips OSBIE Recommended Form

Adapted from information obtained from:
http://www.osbie.on.ca/risk-management/advisories/

Research findings

As illustrated by the OSBIE advisories, the management of risk has become an important task for school administrators and school boards. In an earlier age, school officials were primarily concerned with reducing injuries caused by such things as defective sports equipment, class trips and science equipment (Bieber, 1991; Edwards, 1993; Roher, 1997). In today's society increased attention is given to emergency procedures, especially with regard to threats from outside intruders (Wojcik, 2006), suicides (Joe & Bryant, 2007), classroom safety and environmental disasters (OSBIE, 2008). Many risks addressed in recent risk management literature are not human-caused, but rather are environmental or accidental. Even with the strongest planning in the world, risk is constantly present and emergencies will occur (Elston, 2005).

Risk management authors typically stress five broad concerns for school principals, as follows: (a) student and staff safety is paramount; (b) accurate and timely communication with staff, students, parents, school board officials, law enforcement and other agencies is crucial; (c) professional knowledge of safety procedures is required; (d) problem-solving and resolution of the situation are expected; and (e) mitigation strategies and proactive planning can reduce a school's vulnerability to damage (Boin & McConnell, 2007; Choi & Brower, 2006; Elston, 2005, Ketterer, Price & McFadden, 2007).

United States studies assessing school preparedness for terrorism and, more recently, for disaster preparedness have been reported by Kano and Bourque (2007), Kano (2006), Phinney (2004), and Trump (2000). Trump (2000) conducted a survey of

658 school security officers and found crisis planning and training for situations such as terrorism should be a required training item for all schools throughout the United States.

Phinney's (2004) survey assigned a grade to the 20 largest school districts in the United States based upon their emergency planning, drills and emergency communication. Five researchers interviewed administrators and emergency management professionals in these districts and obtained copies of emergency plans and drill records. The interviews, plans and records were then used to assign a grade based upon standards established by the U.S. Department of Education. These standards included identifying and involving stakeholders and developing methods for communicating with staff, students, families and conducting monthly drills. Three school districts received the highest grade – "best," seven were rated as "good," seven as "needs improvement" and two received a "failing" grade (one district could not be categorized). The study concluded that most school districts did not conduct enough drills, had poor communication with parents regarding emergency procedures, and lacked detailed plans. The report did not provide any recommendation regarding role expectations for principals, but concluded that school boards needed to better equip themselves for school emergencies through funding opportunities, practice and policy formulation.

Using questionnaire data collected from 2,137 school district superintendents (Graham, Shirm, Liggin, Aitken & Dick, 2006) found that most school districts have written plans in place for prevention (57%) and response (87%) to mass-casualty events (terrorist incidents, bombing, shooting or biological organism release). The study also found that school districts were typically unprepared for the care of students with special needs during emergencies, and for coordinating with local agencies such as Emergency

Management Services. Preparedness varied with the location of districts with urban

districts generally being better prepared for mass-causality events than rural ones. This

study was similar to that of Phinney (2004) in that it concluded that school boards needed

to become better prepared, rather than focus on preparedness.

Dorman (2003), in her PhD thesis, looked at preparedness of 86 school districts in

New York and Pennsylvania. She discovered large planning gaps between rural, urban

and suburban districts. Dorman created a checklist tool to evaluate school emergency

plans, looked at the number of situations planned for and compared provisions to

standard protocols. A simplified version of this checklist was used in the review of

Ontario school board plans reported in the next chapter.

Dorman developed her checklist from literature pertaining to specific incidents

likely to occur in schools and general preparedness guidelines as offered by experts (38-

39). The standard protocols included operating procedures, training agendas for drills,

and descriptions of administrative and staff roles. Dorman reviewed protocols, policies

and incidents contained in school board plans and then assigned a composite score to

each board by using the formula:

(Number of agreements on occurrence and non-occurrence)
Number of observations

Overall, she found that urban, suburban and rural schools tended to plan for different

types of emergencies; that training and debriefing sessions are associated with higher

confidence in handling a crisis; and, lastly, that school district officials and staff have

varying views about what should be included in emergency plans.

Finally, Kano and Bourque (2007) surveyed California school districts to assess the frequency with which principals had experienced 25 predetermined emergency situations. The authors did not provide an explanation of how or why the 25 hazards included on their questionnaire were chosen. Respondents were asked to indicate if they had experienced each of the 25 situations in (a) the previous three years, (b) more than three years, or (c) never. A total of 157 questionnaires were analyzed.

Table 2.2 summarizes overall results; angry parents being the most frequently occurring of the 25 situations, an airplane crash the least frequently occurring. Violence-related hazards were the most frequently reported human caused emergencies, with student fights, neighbourhood crime, violence involving students and/or staff, weapons on campus and gang activity, together with the less than clearly explained "angry parents" incident, being reported as having been experienced at least once by more than 60 percent of schools responding to the survey. Secondary schools were more likely (p. < .05) to report incidents involving bomb threats, neighbourhood crime, fires, strangers on campus, terrorist threats and weapons incidents. Experiences with power outages, earthquakes or hazardous materials did not vary with school level (elementary, junior high or secondary).

Table 2.2
Emergencies reported by California schools (N=157)

Rank	Emergency	% within last 3 yrs	% over 3 yrs ago	% never experienced
1	Angry parents	90	3	6
2	Animals/insects on campus	90	3	6
3	Power failure	78	12	8
4	Neighbourhood crime	68	12	18
5	Strangers on campus	64	10	22
6	Violence involving students/staff	64	12	20
7	Weapons on campus	64	10	23
8	High winds/storms	62	8	28
9	Gang activity	62	8	30
10	Extreme heat	42	6	50
11	Neighbourhood fire	38	28	30
12	Earthquake	35	30	34
13	Major motor-vehicle accident	35	20	42
14	Bomb/bomb threats	22	15	58
15	School fire	20	15	60
16	Flood	15	12	68
17	Icy conditions	15	12	70
18	Extreme cold	12	8	76
19	Chemical/hazmat release	6	10	82
20	Civil disorder	5	7	84
21	Terrorist activity/threat	5	5	88
22	Epidemic	4	3	90
23	Bioterrorism	1	2	95
24	School shooting	1	8	88
25	Airplane crash	0	2	92

Adapted from Kano & Bourque (2007) Figure 1. Percentages estimated from graphical data display. Percentages do not sum to 100 because of missing data.

Around half of the schools reported experiencing a lockdown (51%) or evacuation (48%) during the preceding three years. A third of schools (33.1%) reported suffering physical damage over the previous three years, a quarter (25.5%) reported experiencing physical health problems, 15% mental health problems, while 9% reported a death of a student or staff member associated with an emergency. Even so, 22.3 percent of the respondents said their schools had not experienced "any negative effects of an emergency or disaster between 2002 and 2005" (p. 210).

Kano and Burke (2007) reported that the 157 schools responding to their survey over represented the proportions of rural and suburban schools in California, suggesting that the incidence of violence-related emergencies may have been higher in the state as a whole. Whether or not the reported frequencies for specific incidents mirror events in Ontario cannot be know, but it appears reasonable to assume a rough proportionality of the relative incidences reported in Table 2.2. That is to say, it seems reasonable to assume that those incidents reported as occurring most and least frequently in Californian schools could be expected to occur more and less frequently in Ontario schools. The relative frequency of earthquake emergencies is an obvious exception, with such school related emergencies occurring much less frequently in Ontario. The incidence of other geographically related events, such a high winds and extreme cold, may also be expected vary more across jurisdictions.

Modelling relative risk

In a discussion of emergency preparedness in school, The Canada Safety Council (2007) draws on a risk assessment tool originally developed by Emergency Management Ontario, as reproduced in Table 2.3.[2]

Table 2.3
Risk assessment tool from Emergency Management Ontario

Rank	Frequency	Severity
1 (Low)	No history in past 15 years	Negligible impact
2	Five to 15 years since last incident	Limited (injuries minor and or localized)
3	One incident in past five years	Substantial (widespread injuries, temporary disruption of services)
4 (high)	Multiple or recurring incidents in past 5 years	High (fatalities, severe disruption of services)

Adapted from information obtained from http://www.safety-council.org/info/community/school-EP.html

[2] The CSC source did not provide a bibliographic reference for this assessment tool and the original Emergency Management Ontario source could not be located.

The accompanying discussion used natural events as examples, noting that while snow storms are frequent in Ontario, they are usually of low severity, while earthquakes or tornados occur less frequently, but may be more severe. Even so, this chart tends to highlight concerns associated with parallel variations in frequency and severity.

Table 2.4 juxtaposes the frequency and severity dimensions from the Emergency Management Ontario assessment tool in an attempt to create a more flexible matrix and it also incorporates the 25 hazards used by Kano and Bourque (2007) according to the relative frequency of reported incidence. The frequencies of occurrence found by Kano and Bourque were used to classify their 25 emergencies into those that were found to be frequently encountered (> 60 % occurrence), infrequently encountered (10 – 59% occurrence) and very infrequently encountered (< 10% occurrence). Emergencies located on the right side of the matrix in Table 2.4 are considered more severe because of potential disruption and threats to life and safety. Class 6 emergencies located in the bottom right corner are the most extreme emergencies as they are by far the most severe, but also very infrequent. As such, it would seem reasonable to expect that almost all principals would never have to respond to a Class 6 situation. In contrast, the Kano and Bourque findings suggest that most principals could reasonably expect to encounter one or more Class 1 or 2 emergencies during their careers. Interesting, the Class 5 cell in the risk matrix is an empty set, implying very infrequently encountered emergencies are likely to be more rather than less severe.

Table 2.4

Frequency and severity matrix using Kano and Bourque's hazard inventory

	Less-Severe	More Severe
	1	**2**
Frequently Encountered (Kano & Bourque > 60%)	Angry parents Animals/insects on campus Power failure Neighbourhood crime High winds/storms Icy conditions	Strangers on campus Violence involving students/ staff Weapons on campus Bomb threats
	3	**4**
Infrequently Encountered (Kano & Bourque 10 – 59%)	Animals/insects on campus Extreme heat Neighbourhood fire Major motor-vehicle Accident Flood Extreme cold Civil disorder	Earthquake Tornado Bomb / bomb threats School fire
	5	**6**
Very infrequently encountered (Kano & Bourque <10%)		Chemical/hazmat release Terrorist activity/threat Epidemic Bioterrorism School shooting Airplane crash

Table 2.4 suggests that principals and other first responders will likely have to

rely on advance planning and drills to prepare for Class 6 emergencies. In contrast, it

appears reasonable to expect all but the least experienced principals will likely have had

to respond to Class 1 situations, and possibly some Class 2 situations. Indeed, expecting

principals to be prepared for angry parents, plant breakdowns, weather-related

occurrences (especially in areas prone to winter storms) and violence amongst students is

surely realistic. As such, it would also appear reasonable to expect more experienced

principals to have developed some practice-driven expertise in at least Class 1

emergencies. It remains to be seen whether or not the Class 1 and 2 situations derived

from Kano and Bourque's study are indeed emergencies that concern Ontario principals and whether they may recognize other kinds of emergencies.

Summary

This chapter has sought to provide an overview of nomothetic role expectations for Ontario principals embedded in legal and other official documents and literature pertaining to school emergency preparedness Studies have shown that the extent of school board planning varies from board to board. The situation in selected Ontario public school boards is explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

School Board Emergency Plans

School boards typically develop emergency plans which include expectations for

the behaviour of principals and others. Following a brief review of literature addressing

the development of such plans, this chapter reviews emergency plans from eight selected

Ontario school boards.

Formulation of Plans

Three broad approaches to the development and formulation of plans are

discussed in the literature: school-based, community-based and mixed model (Brock,

Sandoval & Lewis, 2001; Johnson, 2000).

Under the school based approach, school officials trained in emergency planning

formulate emergency plans on a site-by-site basis, with the resulting plans typically

specifying clearly defined expectations for specific roles (Brock, Sandoval & Lewis,

2001; Kline, Schonfeld & Lichtenstein, 1995;). This method is considered better suited

for schools located in remote communities, but Dorman (2003) cautions that resource

discrepancies among US school districts results in undesirable differences in the scope

and adequacy of school based plans. Further, Johnson (2000) and Trump (1998) claim a

community-based approach to emergency planning can be advantageous. In this

approach, emergency agencies and other community groups are consulted when

formulating plans. Johnson and Trump argue the fostering of relationships and

coordination with outside agencies promoted by this approach provides stronger support

and quicker action when a crisis does occur. But, as Johnson (2000 p.42) has noted,

school organizations are quite territorial in nature and often tend to turn away outside help when it is offered. Community-based approaches are also in their infancy and, in the view of Johnson at least, tend to be uncoordinated when responding to attacks, such as in the case of Columbine (p. 42).

On balance, the current literature favours a mixed model approach to emergency planning, in which school administration and staff, community members, and other agencies collaboratively work on developing policies and procedures in response plans because this has the potential to maximize a school's ability to deal with a crisis (Dwyer & Osher, 2000; Johnson, 2000). Emergency plans developed under this approach often include crisis teams with multi-agency representation that assemble within the school to implement the plans

Ontario's *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* (Ontario, 2006) does not specify specific responsibilities for school boards, although, as noted in the previous chapter, the *Provincial model for local police/school board protocol* developed by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Safety and Security (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003) encourages mixed-model planning for school emergencies that require police involvement.

Method

To form an appreciation of the form and extent of emergency planning by Ontario school boards, emergency response plans from eight school boards in Ontario were analyzed using a checklist tool adapted from Dorman (2003). Emergency plans were evaluated and assessed in two ways. First, a protocol score was assigned based on the

content of the protocols included in the plans, including procedures for communications with parents, students and other agencies, as well as requirements for emergency drills and planning. Following Dorman the maximum possible protocol score was 25. The second assigned score, called the incident score, was derived by counting the number of specific incidents for which response protocols were provided in a school board's plans as presented on the board's website. Incident scores for the eight sets of plans considered ranged from a low of 2 to a high of 18. To facilitate comparisons, the protocol and incident scores for each board were summed to obtain a single summary score which will be referred to as the overall emergency planning checklist score. These scores were calculated solely to structure and guide my review of the plans considered and are not intended to be used for any other purpose. The scoring checklist used to generate the data from which the scores were calculated is contained in Appendix II A review of the overall scores is presented in the discussion section of this chapter.

Selection of school boards

The school boards selected for this study were drawn from the population of English Public Boards in Ontario (N=31). Each of these boards was first classified as either being an urban, rural or hybrid board. Urban school boards were defined by those containing two or more large census metropolitan areas. Rural boards were those serving a single census metropolitan area spread over a large number of rural counties. Hybrid boards were defined as those containing a large census metropolitan area, surrounding suburban areas, smaller cities and rural counties.

It was anticipated that most of the principals who would be interviewed in this study would be employed or would have been previously employed by the Thames

Valley District School Board and thus it was desirable to review that board's emergency

plans. The Thames Valley board was classified as a hybrid board, and to allow for richer

comparisons, four additional hybrid boards were selected: Lambton Kent District School

Board, Limestone District School Board, Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board,

and the Simcoe County District School Board. The remaining public school boards in

Ontario (N=26) were treated as a single sample frame. Each was assigned a unique

number and then three numbers were then chosen from the random number table

obtained over the World Wide Web (University of Connecticut, 2008). A brief profile of

the selected school boards is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Profiles of school boards selected for reviews of emergency plans

Board Type	Name	Enrolment	Number of Schools	
			Elementary	Secondary
	Thames Valley	79 000	154	30
	Kawartha Pine Ridge	35 491	82	16
Hybrid	Lambton Kent	27 000	53	13
	Simcoe County	50 000	91	16
	Limestone	22 000	55	11
Urban	Halton	50 000	78	17
	Near North	11 000	44	8
Rural	Avon Maitland	19 000	44	10

Enrolment and school statistics obtained from the eight board websites

Each school board's emergency plans were obtained by downloading appropriate

documents from the board's websites during the months of June, July and October 2008.

The documents downloaded were located by following links on the website index pages

for each board. Pages located were then reviewed to locate pertinent policy and procedure

documents. A description of how the policies for each specific board were accessed is

included in the following summaries. The obvious limitation to relying on documents located on publicly accessible websites is that not all of a board's emergency plans may be accessible from such a source. Initially, I had anticipated that relatively few plans would be available on board's websites and, if this had been the case, I had planned to request paper copies directly from the boards. It became apparent, however, that most of the web sites visited provided access to what appeared to be a full range of emergency response plans. It is nonetheless conceivable that at least some boards have not posted some emergency response plans on their web site, and thus some pertinent documents were not captured by the method adopted. Even so, if boards have indeed decided to keep some emergency plans confidential, it is unlikely copies could have been obtained by other means. Moreover, the purpose of surveying board's emergency plans was to gain an informed understanding of the form and scope of such plans with particular reference to stated role expectations for principals, rather than to conduct a thorough evaluative comparison. As such, it was decided that relying on web access to planning documents was acceptable and appropriate.

Hybrid boards

Thames Valley District School Board

The Thames Valley District School Board serves the City of London and the surrounding counties of Middlesex, Elgin and Oxford, as well as students from Oneida, Chippewa and Muncee First Nations. The board had 154 elementary and 30 secondary schools serving roughly 79,000 students in 2008/2009. Approximately 30 percent of the student population receives transportation to 90 percent of the schools within the board.

Due to the hybrid geographical location of the board, emergency policies and protocol

must address the varying needs of urban, suburban and rural schools. The emergency

documents for the TVDSB were located on the board's website (www.tvdsb.on.ca) by

following the links "Board," "Policies, Procedures and Independent Procedures." The

board has over 100 policies on the website, with emergency procedure documents located

under either the Emergency Procedures, Health and Safety or Safe Schools sections.

Overall, TVDSB scored 27 on the emergency planning checklist.

Emergency management protocols. The protocols for TVDSB contain very clear

directions for principals, but allow some flexibility for the administrator in charge. Many

of the protocols begin with "the principal shall…". This choice of language provides for

relatively little discretion for principals when choosing appropriate paths in the decision-

making and problem-solving processes during an emergency. Even so, other portions of

the emergency plans are more directive, stating that a principal "must" perform certain

specified actions, further constraining discretion.

The plans stipulate who is in charge of a school in particular situations. During a

bomb threat, for example, the principal is in charge. Searches are to be conducted by

classroom teachers, following a specific school-wide announcement by the principal. If a

bomb or suspicious package is found, police are to take over. This same type of

command change is required when other types of weapons are found in a school, with the

police assuming charge.

Communication amongst agencies and staff, regional offices and students is also

stressed in the protocols. School bus operators were included in outside agencies that

need to be contacted when a situation does arise.

Specific incidents. Thames Valley's emergency plans take a twofold approach. The first is an overarching plan that all schools within the board are required to follow in all emergencies. These plans are provided for every school in the board, meaning that each school will receive a copy of the same general plan. Each school is then expected to adapt board policies to the local school site. This leads to the second approach which takes the form of mixed-model emergency planning with site specific plans created by the principal in cooperation with school safety groups and school councils.

The board has specific plans in place for the following incidents: bomb threats, including suspicious packages, inclement weather, tornadoes, plant breakdown, pandemic – influenza, evacuations, incidents of violence, industrial emergencies, including dangerous chemicals and vehicular chemical spills, fires, and weapons. A focus on inclement weather and tornadoes was particularly evident in Thames Valley's plans. Principals are instructed to observe local weather conditions and communicate with staff and students about impending storm concerns. Individual schools are also expected to develop site specific policies including locations for relocation and evacuation during tornadoes and chemical spills.

Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board

The Kawartha Pine Ridge District School board (hereafter KPR) serves the communities of the Kawarthas in the North, Peterborough, Lindsay, Lakefield, Kawartha Lakes, Hastings County to the east and to the border of the City of Oshawa in the west. The Board had 82 elementary schools and 16 secondary schools enrolling 35,491 students in the 2007-2008 school year. The overall emergency response plan is contained in two different sections of the board's website. The main guiding policy is found in the

Approved policies section, while specific emergency response plans are contained in the administrative regulations section. I accessed these documents from the board's website (www.kprschools.ca) by following links to "Boardroom" and "Policies."

Emergency Preparedness policy ES 2.1 was prepared by the Educational Services School Operations section of the board on April 27, 2000. In accordance with Allison's (1979) definition, the policy statement of the board is one page in length and serves as an acknowledgement of the severity of emergencies and the importance of the overall safety and welfare of students during such times.

Emergency management protocols. The emergency plans of KPR appear to be school specific rather than school board based. The plans tend to be more reactionary than proactive, yet they do contain portions which look at ways to prevent incidents. In terms of the protocol checklist, 15 out of the possible 25 elements were identified in the documents reviewed. KPR is especially strong in certain planning areas often neglected by school boards, including specific planning for students moving between the yard and school. These situations present some unique challenges for supervision and responsibility, but school board plans tend to focus on situations that will occur when students are situated in classrooms. KPR places a focus on what to do when an emergency arises while students are moving between the schoolyard to classrooms. This preparation suggests that incidents may have arisen in the past that have required classification and development of policy.

KPR provides a unique approach to the creation of emergency plans among those reviewed. Although similar to Thames Valley in some respects, KPR's plans are more detailed and directive. Principals are expected to create a school committee to develop

and specific plans for their school (p. 3-5). The Board provides emergency templates and accompanying flowcharts to help schools create the required emergency plans for themselves. Examples of school level flowcharts are provided on KPR website. Flowcharts are to be modified by principals and school safety teams depending on the severity of an incident. The flowcharts appear to provide clear and logical connections for communication among administrators, teachers, superintendents, EMS and other external agencies, and are differentiated by three different kinds of emergency defined as follows: Level 1 is "an event that occurs outside of school or School Board authority but affects the school population"; Level 2 is an event that occurs at the school; and a Level 3 emergency is an event "that occurs off-site, usually on a school trip, but within the authority or control of the school" (p.2). This classification indicates who has prime responsibility over a situation. A Level 2 emergency, for example calls for the school to deal with the situation while receiving assistance from the board or other agencies. This is a useful distinction for an administrator when dealing with an emergency and determining appropriate intervention from outside sources.

Roles and responsibilities of emergency team members are less well defined, but this allows for flexibility in school planning. Another strong aspect of the protocol section of the plans is that ongoing training and training dates (i.e. fire and lock-down drills) are scheduled, as are procedures for staff and student departures during evacuations

Specific incidents. This section of the emergency document provided plans for ten different incidents that are classified using the three levels as follows: Level 1,

chemical spill; Level 2, bomb threat, fire, shooting, rabid animal, intruder, helicopter[3],

and violence; Level 3, school trip accident.

Limestone District School Board

The Limestone DSB (hereafter Limestone) serves the communities of Central

Frontenac, Addington Highlands, North Frontenac, South Frontenac, Loyalist and Stone

Mills, as well the Town of Greater Napanee, the Islands and Kingston. The board

operates 55 elementary schools and 11 secondary schools serving nearly 22,000 students.

Limestone's emergency plan documents define an emergency as "a situation or

occurrence of a serious nature, developing suddenly and unexpectedly, and demanding

immediate action," (p. 4). The board also explicitly states that "the principal or site

administrator is the best individual to immediately respond to an emergency" (p. 4).

Emergency management protocols. Limestone's emergency protocols were

primarily contained in three documents. The first document, entitled *Safe Environments*

(Administrative Procedure 140), addresses medical emergencies and first aid protocols.

The second document, *Community Threat Assessment Protocol*, is primarily concerned

with human emergencies and reporting high risk behaviour reporting. The third

document is a *Health Issues Handbook* that details protocols to deal with asthma,

anaphylaxis, blood and bodily fluids, diabetes, medically fragile students, HIV, AIDS,

Hepatitis B and C, and seizures. Overall, the board scored a 17 on the protocol checklist.

First Aid training is a particularly strong section which clearly states the following

four standards: a) that twenty percent of school staff members shall be trained in first aid;

b) all principals and vice principals be certified in first aid; c) at least one staff member

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[3] KPR is located near Trenton military base and training activities involving helicopters may concern
school playgrounds.

per floor is trained; and d) in secondary schools, the physical and health education, technical studies and science departments must have one member trained in first aid.

Limestone also makes available an administrative procedure that specifies the role of the school principal (Administrative Procedure 475). The procedure is divided into four sections. The first section highlights reporting relationships among principals and superintendents, staff members, students, parents and other community members. The second section addresses the primary responsibilities of a school principal under the *Education Act* and Regulations. In this section, Part XIII of the *Education Act* is used to establish expectations for the principal regarding student safety. Principals are designated to be in charge of creating school safety plans because of the principal's duty to ensure safety of students and staff under the *Education Act* and Regulation 298. The third section looks at leadership in the school and system. This section does not provide a clear understanding of how to provide leadership as such, concentrating on areas of specific responsibility for principals such as student welfare, personnel management and community relations. Finally, section four briefly discusses principal performance appraisals.

Specific incidents. I located plans for the following seven emergency situations: influenza pandemic, bomb threats, possession of a weapon, fires, assault on or by staff, homicidal and suicidal behaviour, and internet, verbal or written threats to kill or injure. Protocols for these specific incidents are contained in a rather concise document entitled *Community Threat Assessment Protocol*. This document is an example of community-planning, being a collaborative effort with an assortment of agencies including EMS, Family and Children's Services and youth services to help understand and recognize high

risk behaviours, help facilitate communication between agencies, and document suspected cases of high risk behaviours. The effort has yielded an impressive proactive approach that teachers, school workers and administrators can utilize when dealing with a possibly dangerous student or when a violent situation develops.

Perhaps surprisingly, the Limestone website did not contain information pertaining to natural hazards. An extensive search of the website yielded no protocols for inclement weather, bus cancellations or snow storms. Despite a lack of explicit policy and procedures on such incidents, a link was given to the Tri-Board Student Transportation Services website which provides inclement weather information for parents of students in the board as needed.

Lambton Kent District School Board

The Lambton Kent DSB (hereafter Lambton Kent) serves the communities of Sarnia, Chatham and the surrounding areas. The board operates 66 elementary and secondary schools serving more than 27,000 students. The emergency procedures documents examined in this analysis were located by accessing the board's website (www.lkdsb.net) and following the links ""Board-Info" – "Policies & Regulations."

According to the board's Regulation R-AD-108-05, an emergency is "a situation requiring evacuation or closure of schools, or change in transportation in situation (sic) where students might be at risk, including but not limited to breakdown of heating system, fire, flood, tornado, inclement weather, bomb threats, explosives, and chemical spills"

Emergency management protocols. The board's policies and regulations website is organized into four columns (policy title, policy number, policy, and regulation).

Separate files allow for a reasonably comprehensive understanding of board policy and

related regulation and other protocols similar to Allison's (1976) distinction between

policy and procedure. For example, the emergency preparedness policy is very specific

in its philosophical direction.

> It is the policy of Lambton Kent District School Board to maintain an emergency
> preparedness plan. Emergency situations require replanning, preparation, prompt
> response, clear communication and coordination. Appropriate action must be
> initiated with confidence that safety of students and personnel will be of the
> highest degree possible. The development of a high level of awareness of security
> and safety is important for all members of the school community. (p.1)

The accompanying regulation identifies specific content for school plans. Each

principal is required to develop a comprehensive school plan that will address the

following concerns: awareness, alternative accommodation, communication with parents,

safety of students and staff, and security of premises. While the incorporation of these

key items is crucial in the development of a coherent emergency manual, there is no

mention of how much information and direction should be included in school plans, nor

is any direction provided for collaboration with outside agencies, although plans are

required to address each school's uniqueness and how school personnel will "act in

concert with the system" (p.1). Due to the lack of protocol details Lambton scored only 5

out of 25 on the emergency management checklist.

Specific incidents. The board has standard protocols for the following three

emergency situations: bomb threats, inclement weather and tragic events response (an

event involving death, injury or community disaster). Given the Lambton Kent's

organizational approach, more extensive and detailed plans are presumably to be found at

each school, but no attempt was made to identify and analyze any such plans. Because of

the lack of online material on the board's web site, Lambton Kent received an overall emergency preparedness score of eight, which was the lowest assigned.

Simcoe County District School Board

The Simcoe County District School Board (hereafter Simcoe) serves the communities of Barrie, Alliston, Bradford, Collingwood, Midland, Innisfil, and Orillia. As of December 2008, the board operated 91 elementary and 16 secondary schools with a total student enrolment of over 50,000 students. The emergency procedure documents examined were located by accessing the board's website (www.scdsb.on.ca) and following the links "Board Highlights" – "Procedures."

Emergency management protocols. The emergency plans found on Simcoe's website were less comprehensive than others, receiving a score of only 7 out of 25 on the protocol checklist. The website did contain numerous policies organized under four broad sections: general, management, personnel and program. Yet despite this broad range of policies, I was unable to locate policy statements dealing with emergency or crisis situations. Despite this, the procedures section of the web site contained various crisis-oriented protocols. The Procedures section is divided into six sections: administration, business services, director's office, employee services, facility services, and school services. The protocols established in the section entitled *Administration of Medication and Medical Emergency Response in School Settings* identify and discuss necessary forms to be filled out for a student who has a life-threatening medical condition, thus providing clear guidance for keeping school records. This section also includes a protocol for planning school activities and field trips for students with life

threatening conditions, a provision that was not contained in any other board's emergency planning documents.

Specific incidents. Established procedures were located for the following emergency incidents: student and visitor injuries, medical incidents, and communicable diseases. The website did provide an emergency information contact telephone number which gave access to automated messages concerning emergency situations and issues that may arise in the schools. There was also an *Emergency Information Hotline* webpage that mentioned "countless initiatives and activities in place to help ensure our schools and education facilities are first and foremost safe..." The Simcoe web site also contained a communicable disease procedure that had been developed in partnership with the local health unit. A list of potential communicable diseases has been given to schools in the board and principals are required to report cases of a suspected infectious diseases to the health unit. Other school boards studied did not provide a comprehensive list of communicable diseases, nor did they specify whether principals had the same obligation to report such cases to health units.

It was unclear from the information located on the Simcoe website whether individual schools are expected to develop their own plans for emergencies, although this appeared a reasonable assumption given the information summarized above. A telephone call was placed to Simcoe's main switchboard number in January 2009 to pursue this possibility. I was assured that individual schools do, in fact, have local emergency plans, but the extent and range of such plans remains unknown.

Rural School Boards

Near North District School Board

The emergency procedures documents examined in this analysis was located by

accessing the board's website (www.nearnorthschools.ca) and following the links "About

us" – "Administrative Guidelines" – "A-Z Administrative Guidelines" – "Health and

Safety: Emergency Response Plan." Near North's emergency plan is referred to as an

ERP (Emergency Response Plan). The document provides clear distinctions between

three kinds of emergencies: human-caused disasters, accidents, and natural disasters.

The ERP is divided into three main sections: (a) preparation and planning, (b) managing

an emergency and, (c) post-emergency care.

Emergency management protocols. Near North's ERP contains a number of

protocols for administrators, teachers and others to observe during an emergency. The

protocol checklist found that 18 of a possible 25 elements were contained in the ERP.

In particular, the communication protocols of the ERP received particularly high scores,

especially procedures for communicating with staff, students and other agencies during

emergencies. The document clearly acknowledges the desirability of providing

flexibility to principals by stating that an administrator "must at all times have the

flexibility to meet emergency situations, and must be free to use his or her best judgment

as the situation may dictate" (p. 2). The document also states,

> the principal or Supervisor is directed to exercise common sense and rely on the
> ERP to manage any emergency. Flexibility, cooperation, common sense, and
> trust will assist in making decisions. The ERP is a guide and must incorporate all
> pertinent legislation; MET, Board Policies and the local police service/School
> Board Protocols. (p.3)

The ERP recognizes that emergency events typically involve far too many

variables to set out a step-by-step instruction manual for each incident. In the section

entitled Managing an Emergency, the document provides suggestions on how a principal

should exhibit his or her leadership:

> Leadership is essential in managing any type of emergency. The principal or Supervisor will take control of the scene. The confidence of the staff, students, parents and community is foremost and leadership and a communication protocol are essential to maintain order. Various responsibilities have been delegated and must be shared with all staff and stakeholders. (p.3)

and

> Communication is essential during an emergency and is the responsibility of the principal or Supervisor. A communication plan or protocol is necessary and must be developed. This will alleviate a number of problems and will inspire confidence in the school/office and its leadership. (p.3)

The third section of the ERP considers post-emergency response. This section

also directs attention to updating annual checklists concerned with evacuation mapping,

contact numbers, visitor protocol, roles and responsibilities of the Command Centre,

evacuation planning for physically challenged students, first aid trained staff members,

audit of building resources, communication protocol, media statements and floor plans.

Throughout the document there are explicit bolded statements that clearly define

role expectations for principals. For example, section 9.1 of the Fire Safety Plan states,

the principal/supervisor... "is in charge of the overall (sic) for the school emergency

organization and is responsible for the following..." (p. 28). In this particular section, 15

different responsibilities are listed including the execution of six fire drills through the

school year, delegation of specific responsibilities to supervisory staff, and steps to be

taken to reduce the number of fire hazards within the building.

Within that same section of the fire plan, we find the following: "the principal or

Supervisor is in direct charge of the building and responsible for the following in the

event of a fire..." This statement is followed by a list of six key items including

communication with the fire department and supervision of evacuations.

Specific incidents. The number of specific incidents planned for by Near North is

greater than for any of the other school boards examined. The ERP contains protocols to

deal with the following 19 specific incidents: bomb threats, suspicious mail or parcels,

violent incidents (incl. persons with weapons, assault, terrorist activities, hostage taking),

emergency evacuation plan (incl. in-building and out-of-building evacuations and

evacuations of physically challenged students); lock downs, injuries, suicide/loss of life

(incl. threatened suicide, attempted suicide, loss of life) environmental hazards, fire

safety plan, interruption of utilities, severe weather (incl. thunderstorms, tornadoes,

winter storms, floods and earthquakes); missing children (incl. runners and abduction),

and encounters with dangerous animals.

Within each of the response plans is a detailed description of what the emergency

may look, sound or smell like, with the intent of assisting individuals in deciding whether

a particular situation constitutes an emergency. For example in section A.2 – Dealing

with Suspicious mail or parcels, subsection 2.1 discusses the appearance of a suspicious

letter or parcel.

> Suspicious items may display distorted handwriting or the name and address may
> be prepared with some home-made labels or cut-and-paste lettering. Suspicious
> items may have protruding wires, aluminum foil, oil, or grease stains on the
> wrapping and can emit a particular odour and have excessive amounts of postage
> using low denominations.

A major component of the ERP is its emphasis on violent incidents, with specific

attention accorded to persons with weapons, assaults on staff or students and assaults by

students or staff. This section is particularly noteworthy in that current literature

indicates that rural school boards are less likely to prepare for incidents of violence than any other school boards (Dorman, 2003; Johnson, 2000).

Avon Maitland

Avon Maitland District School Board [Avon Maitland] is a rural board that serves the Perth and Huron counties in Southwestern Ontario. The board is located along the shores of Lake Huron and covers some of the "most productive agricultural land in Canada" (AMDSB, 2008). In the 2008/2009 school year, the board operated 44 elementary schools and 10 secondary schools with an enrolment of over 19,000 students. I accessed the board's emergency documents from the website (www.yourschools.ca) by following links "About Us," "Board Documents" and "Policies and Procedures."

Emergency management protocols. Avon Maitland's emergency protocols were quite comprehensive, with 17 out of 25 elements covered on the checklist. The section dealing with communication with staff, student, parents and other agencies is well developed. The plan calls for the principal to post emergency response cards in certain locations around the school, containing specific directions on what to do in the event of a specific emergency. Cards are to include responses for severe weather concerns, lockdowns, fires, bomb threats, intruders and evacuations.

Other notable protocol elements include use of an "emergency response bag" to contain maps of the school, gas and water shutoff locations, student lists and contact information for each student. This consolidation of important information in a single transportable source appears to be a noteworthy innovation that was not encountered in any of the other emergency plans reviewed.

Nomothetic expectations for principals are very evident in Avon Maitland's emergency plans with the phrases "every principal shall... or must... or is expected to..." (p.2-4) occurring frequently.

Specific incidents. Avon Maitland's preparation for specific incidents is substantial. Overall, plans were in place for the following 14 events: employee accidents, student injuries (including co-op placements), bomb threats, fires, inclement weather, tornadoes, violent acts (including physical, emotional and sexual abuse), environmental/hazmat, weapons, intruders and deaths. The school board has prepared a generalized plan for school emergencies, and it is the principal's responsibility to maintain a binder containing hard copies of the board's administrative procedures along with locally developed school plans (p. 1)

Urban school board

Halton Region District School Board

Halton Region District School Board (Halton) serves the municipalities of Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville. The board had a total student enrolment of over 50,000 across 78 elementary schools and 17 secondary schools in 2008/2009. Geographically the board serves relatively distinct urban and suburban municipalities, rather than a mix of urban and rural. The emergency policies and procedures examined were found on the board's website (http://www.hdsb.ca/) by following the links "Boardroom and Trustees," "Board Policies and By-Laws" and "Board Operational Policies."

Emergency management protocols. Similar to other boards studied, Halton had a set of well developed policies concerning communication, support and accountability. The school board scored 15 out of 25 on the protocol checklist. Rather than a single broad policy statement that provided a foundation for emergency procedures as found in some other boards, Halton web site presents a number of different documents dealing with specific situations such as first aid, risk management, school bus accidents, Hep B, HIV, managing violent and aggressive behaviour, safety and health working with special needs students and inclement weather. The plans contained in those documents are a mix of proactive and reactionary policies, with those dealing with risk management tending to be more proactive. Protocols are in place for school trips that involved open water – canoe usage, ice skating – helmet concerns, and off-site sports activities.

Halton's accountability methods were impressive, providing comprehensive procedures on how to deal with violent events. As discovered during the interviews conducted in this study, school administrators may become confused as to what types of forms to fill out for specific incidents. Halton has simplified this process by providing a list which links incidents to response paths.

Halton's web site also presents information on what a principal should do following an assault of a student or staff member. The re-entry plans indicate that a principal plays a vital role during the return of a staff member or student following a violent incident. The principal has the responsibility for communicating about violent behaviour of students to parents and staff (p.8) because staff are "expected" to undergo training to learn how to "deal effectively and proactively with students demonstrating violent behaviour" (p. 8).

Specific incidents. Halton's emergency preparedness for incidents is similar to other boards in that it planned for events such as fires, violence and intruders, but somewhat unusual in addressing issues such as Hepatitis B and HIV, which were not included in the emergency plans of the other boards studied. Halton's protocols also address issues concerning violent behaviour by students with behavioural disabilities and school bus accidents at greater lengths than seen in other board plans. Overall, Halton has protocols for accidents, fires, weather conditions, violent and aggressive behaviour, including physical and sexual assault, hate-motivated violence, robbery and extortion, vandalism causing extensive damage, possession of a weapon, threats to cause serious physical harm.

Discussion

The policy guidelines in the documents reviewed typically addressed operating procedures, security plans, staff training, communication logs, descriptions of administrative and staff roles as well as duties checklists and review procedures, all of which is generally consistent with findings from research reported by Roher and Warner (2007) and Trump (1998). As such the school boards studied could be considered to have reasonably adequate plans in place, although there was considerable variation across boards. Following Dorman (2003), a protocol score was assigned to the emergency plans found on the web sites of the eight school boards studied (see Appendix II) and an incident score was calculated by simply counting each specific situation for which there was a response protocol. Table 3.2 summarizes results for the eight boards considered.

Table 3.2
Overall preparedness scores for selected school boards

District School Board	Protocol Score	Incident Score	Overall Score
Near North	18	18	36
Thames Valley	15	12	27
Avon Maitland	17	10	27
Kawartha Pine Ridge	15	9	24
Halton	15	9	24
Limestone District	17	6	23
Lambton Kent	5	6	11
Simcoe County	7	2	9

Dorman's (2003) protocol checklist recognizes 25 possible elements that can be addressed in school boards' emergency plans. For the eight Ontario boards considered, protocol scores ranged from a low of 5 to a high of 18. The five most common protocol elements addressed in the plans reviewed were team member roles and responsibilities, communication with staff, evacuation procedures, and communication with law enforcement and regional offices.

An inventory of the potential hazards addressed in the selected school boards' emergency plans is contained in Table 3.3. The potential hazard list is adapted from Kano and Bourque's (2007) study of emergencies in California schools as discussed earlier, classified into increasing levels of severity as previously considered in Table 2.2. There were four potential hazards addressed by all school boards (except for Simcoe), namely violence involving students and staff, weapons on campus, school fires and school shootings. Weather related emergencies and bomb threats were covered by five out of the eight boards. There were two hazards that were not included in the Kano and Bourque list, Near North's hostage situation and the unspecified helicopter hazard included in KPR's plans.

None of the eight boards had response protocols for 7 of the 25 hazards in Kano

and Bourque's inventory. All except one of these hazards were situations that would

originate off school premises and only involve schools indirectly, such as car accidents,

civil disorder, and neighbourhood fires. The single school-based hazard not considered

in the plans reviewed was that of "angry parents", which was the most frequently, yet

enigmatic reported emergency in the Californian schools studied by Kano and Bourque

(2007, p. 209). This brings into question the severity of angry parents as school

emergencies. Unfortunately, Kano and Bourque do not provide an explanation or

examples of what they considered to be angry parents. One could imagine an irate parent

refusing to leave a school as constituting an emergency, or perhaps an aggressive parent

preventing the sale of junk food in the school cafeteria. Even so, such situations would

be accommodated under other types of hazard, such as strangers of campus or violence

involving staff or students.

Table 3.3 implies that some school boards are better prepared than others in terms

of planning for specific hazards, but the findings summarized may be misleading. While

a school board may have a relatively less comprehensive system-wide plan, this does not

mean that the schools within the board are necessarily safer or better prepared.

Moreover, a limitation of the analysis undertaken here is the reliance on web-accessible

materials. Some school boards may not have placed all of their emergency documents on

the internet for various reasons, and thus more comprehensive plans may exist which

were not able to be accessed. Furthermore, elements included in the emergency plans of

some boards may well be addressed in other policies and procedures in other boards.

Table 3.3

Planning for potential hazards in eight Ontario school boards

Hazards*	Near North	Thames Valley	Avon Maitland	KPR	Halton	Lambton Kent	Limestone	Simcoe
Class 1								
Angry parents								
Animals/Insects on campus	√			√				
Power Failure	√	√						
Neighbourhood crime								
High winds /storms	√		√		√	√		
Icy conditions	√	√	√		√	√		
Class 2								
Strangers on campus	√			√				
Violence i/v students/staff	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Weapons on campus	√	√	√	√	√		√	
Gang activity								
Class 3								
Extreme heat	√	√	√		√			
Neighbourhood fire								
Major vehicle accident								
Flood	√	√	√		√			
Extreme cold	√	√	√		√			
Civil disorder								
Class 4								
Earthquake	√							
Bomb/bomb threats	√	√	√	√		√	√	
School fire	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Class 6								
Chemical/ hazmat release	√	√		√				
Terrorist activity /threat	√							
Epidemic	√	√					√	√
Bioterrorism								
School shooting	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Airplane crash								
Unclassified								
Hostage	√							
Helicopters				√				
Total	18	2	10	9	9	6	6	2

* Adapted from Kano and Bourque (2007) and grouped according to Table 2.2 above.

This may be particularly so in Ontario, where Part XIII of the *Education Act* identifies a wide range of student behaviours eligible for disciplinary actions, as discussed in the previous chapter. In addition other intervention programs addressing sexual violence, violence prevention (safe schools) at-risk youths, dropout prevention (student success), and teacher professional development may all have an impact on the safety of a school (Government of Ontario, 2008). The Halton DSB is an example of a board that considers violent incidents as severe emergencies because their response plans specifically discuss the impacts of violent behaviours on students and staff. Once again, this may be partly due to previous experiences with armed intruders or students with weapons at school and principals needing to act as a result. The Near North school board does not provide a discussion of violent behaviours or any of the policies that they have in place to deal with violent behaviours.

While much of the discussion thus far has focussed on the range of the incidents and protocols available in the researched plans, one element of the plans was common throughout the documents – role expectations. The role expectations included in the boards' plans generally followed common themes. One theme that emerged was that the principal is expected to be in control and at the centre of all emergency responses. The importance of communicating with superintendents, EMS, parents, the media and other stakeholders during an emergency was discussed in six of the eight emergency plans. The remaining two boards did not have a communication protocol available online. Further, the principal was consistently portrayed as the leader during an emergency and is, therefore, expected to play a crucial role in being able to act and respond when needed. Thus, in many of the incident-response protocols, the principal is mentioned as

leading the response with phrases such as "the principal must ensure the safety of students and staff during a code red lockdown procedure".

This leads to the second theme. Every plan that was examined provided some sort of directions or suggestions to a principal. Most sections of emergency plans started out in similar ways such as "it is recommended that principals should..." or "a principal must..." In the Near North DSB, certain sections of the plan suggest that discretion and decision-making is a key role of the school principal (p. 2). While the directions given do provide bearings in guiding behaviours during an emergency, the expectations found in the documents were nonetheless generally vague, ambiguous and lacking a tight focus. In the Simcoe DSB, for example, the *Safe and Caring Schools Procedure* A7635 discusses the principal's role in suspending students: "The principal will also contact the police consistent with the Police and School Response Protocol if the infraction the pupil is suspected of committing requires such contact. When in doubt, the principal will consult with his or her superintendent" (p.7). This quotation contains a number of clauses that may cause uncertainty or indecisiveness on behalf of the principal because he or she must review the Police/School Protocol and then decide whether her or his superintendent would likely agree with the interpretation reached.

Such lack of specificity may be a purposeful action on the part of boards. Those drafting response plans will be aware that the nature and development of emergency situations can be partially anticipated but all situations are ultimately unique and therefore require the kind of leadership which cannot be prescribed in a binder (Near North, 2003, p.1). Striking an appropriate balance in this regard is clearly problematical,

especially when variation in the experience, and thus implied expertise, of principals is considered.

Summary

All of the school boards studied in this chapter had various forms of emergency plans in place, but there was substantial variation. With the sole exception of Simcoe, incidents such as violence, weapons and weather were covered by all boards.

Every school board plan examined discussed the formation of emergency response teams. Dorman (2003) notes that a centralized team "has the advantage of being efficient because training is provided to a specialized core group. In addition, stability and control of the crisis situation is maximized with only a few people being involved" (p. 27). Having the site administrator play the lead role during an emergency along with a select few teachers who may have been trained in first aid or emergency response will help in responding to an emergency.

Role expectations for principals were included in all of the plans studied. Principals were generally required to take the lead in responding to emergency situations and to communicate with board officials, the school body, parents and other community agencies.

Chapter 4

The Interviews

The data gathered in the second stage of this study were based upon a semi-structured interview schedule of five questions as shown in Appendix I. This chapter explains the nature of the interviews and respondents, and discusses their responses.

Data collection

After approval by the Faculty of Education's Ethical Review Committee (Appendix III), a pilot study (N=4) was conducted to examine the face validity of a set of draft interview questions. Feedback from the volunteers prompted rewording of several questions, the final form of the interview schedule being as shown in Appendix I. Potential interviewees were contacted by either the thesis supervisor (Dr. Derek Allison) or by email. Letters of information (Appendix IV) explaining the nature of the research, requesting an interview and providing information regarding confidentiality were emailed or handed to prospective interviewees. I initially intended to interview 20 retired principals because I wanted to have a minimum experience requirement of 10 years in the principal position. Unfortunately, I found the task of locating 20 retired principals willing to participate impossible and consequently decided to include current principals. To keep my data sources similar and for comparison purposes, ten retired principals and ten active principals were recruited. Interviews took place at the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario or at locations selected by the interviewees. Table 4.1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the interviewees.

Table 4.1
Demographic profile of interview participants

Gender	Current		Retired		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	6	60	7	70	13	65
Female	4	40	3	30	7	35
Admin experience						
0-4	0	0	0	0	0	0
5-9	5	50	0	0	5	25
10-14	2	20	2	20	4	20
15-20	3	30	6	60	9	45
21-25	0	0	2	20	2	10
School Type						
Elementary	3	30	4	40	7	35
Secondary	7	70	6	60	13	65
Totals	10	100	10	100	20	100

Slightly over a third (35%) of the interviewees were female. This is below the Canadian percentage of 47 percent (Statistics Canada, 2005). Secondary school principals represented a majority (65%) of interviewees. This was a deliberate choice because of an assumption that secondary school principals will likely experience a greater number of emergencies.

Interview Schedule

Table 4.2 shows the five interview questions, which were designed to gauge principals' understandings of school emergencies and, in the case of the final question, investigate the relative influence of official and personal role expectations on behaviour.

Table 4.2
Interview questions

1. What kinds of situations do you consider to qualify as school emergencies?

2. Could you please describe a time when you had to deal with an emergency situation.

3. What was the most serious emergency you had to deal with during your career?

4. In your opinion what would you consider to be a relatively minor school emergency (a level D emergency)? What would you consider to be an extreme emergency (a level A)? What would you consider to be in the B-C range?

5. How does your daily role differ from the role that you occupy during an emergency?

In addition to the five questions shown, the full interview schedule (Appendix I) included several follow-up questions intended to probe for additional information that may not have been elicited in responses to the main questions. These probes were only used if and when need. This approach allowed interviewees to respond at length about issues which the researcher may not have anticipated (Slavin, 1992, p. 69). In many cases the interviews moved in directions that were extremely candid and helped in providing insights into school emergencies. Interviews lasted from forty-five to ninety minutes, with the average being approximately one hour. All interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed, resulting in a total of over 200 pages of transcript.

Analysis of data

The treatment of data involved two main approaches. First, the transcribed interviews were read and re-read to identify, classify and count responses. Various descriptive data displays were then constructed to summarize emergent findings, which are discussed in the following section. The second approach sought to investigate the relative influence of nomothetic and ideographic influences on anticipated responses to

school emergencies using t tests on data collected from interviewee's responses to the

final interview questions, the criterion for statistical significance being set at $p <.05$.

Results

All 20 interviewees responded to all interview questions during one sitting, and

all questions were answered with varying degrees of depth. No question was missed or

unanswered by any of the interviewees. Throughout this report current principals are

designated as CP (1-10), retired principals as RP (1-10). The identifying numbers are

ranked according to years of experience, so that the lower code number corresponds to

greater years of experience. Table 4.3 links key demographic aspects of each participant

to their code number using this numbering convention.

The bulk of the principals (65%) interviewed had accumulated between ten and

twenty years of administrative experience, including years spent in a vice-principal

position, two interviewees having gained more than twenty-one years of experience.

Earlier, Figure 1.2 presented a graphical display of the interviewee's years of

administrative experience, showing the overlap between current and retired principals.

Some of the more experienced principals had retired five years prior to the interview,

some interviewees had been appointed to the principalship in the mid 1980s, most in the

1990s, and a few in the early 21st Century. As such, the experience tapped in the

interviews spanned a substantial period of time over which there has been growing public

and professional concern regarding student safety and school emergencies.

Table 4.3

Code numbers and demographic aspects of participants

Code number	Years of experience	Gender	Level
CP.1	19	Male	Secondary
CP.2	18	Female	Secondary
CP.3	15	Female	Secondary
CP.4	11	Female	Secondary
CP.5	10	Male	Elementary
CP.6	9	Male	Secondary
CP.7	7	Male	Secondary
CP.8	6.5	Male	Elementary
CP.9	6	Female	Elementary
CP.10	5	Male	Secondary
RP.1	22	Male	Elementary
RP.2	21	Male	Secondary
RP.3	20	Male	Elementary
RP.4	20	Female	Elementary
RP.5	20	Male	Secondary
RP.6	15	Male	Secondary
RP.7	15	Male	Secondary
RP.8	15	Male	Secondary
RP.9	12	Female	Elementary
RP.10	11	Female	Secondary

Interview Question 1: What kinds of situations do you consider to qualify as school emergencies?

Interview question one asked respondents to identify situations that would qualify as school emergencies. This initial question was not intended to elicit detailed accounts of specific emergencies, but to gain an initial understanding of the kinds of situations respondents viewed as emergencies. Most responses to this question were quite broad, with five respondents providing multiple responses. For example, CP.1 said, "in my experience a student who was injured at school for whatever reason usually requires a 911 call – to be safe." This was considered a multiple response because it included a

reference to safety of a student, but also made reference to outside help. In total 25 discrete situations were identified in the responses to this first question.

The most frequently identified characteristic of a school emergency, cited by eight principals (five current and three retired), was a situation that threatened the safety of a person in the school or the integrity of the building itself. The next most frequently cited characteristics identified situations which disrupt the routine of the school in a negative way or would require outside responders to help alleviate the situation. Two responders (CP.8 and RP.9) described an emergency as a situation that takes place infrequently and may or may not be foreseeable, while the remaining two respondents (RP.4 and RP.8) noted that an emergency was something that had been planned for and rehearsed by staff and students on a regular basis. Table 4.4 shows the distribution of responses across the five characteristics identified. Overall, 16 (80%) of the respondents described a school emergency as a situation which threatened school safety, disrupted routines and/or required an outside response.

As shown in Table 4.4, half of the current principals (CP.1, CP.2, CP.5, CP.9, CP.10) described emergencies as a situation that threatens school or personal safety. No current principals described emergencies as events that were rehearsed or planned. One reason for the large percentage of individuals describing an emergency in similar terms may stem from how school boards officially define an emergency. Overall, current principals typically spoke at greater length and gave more specific and detailed answers to this question. Current principals were also more likely to quote specific school board policy when discussing emergencies. For example, CP.9 discussed the current priority accorded to safe school initiatives as helping to provide a better understanding of the

impact of violence on school safety. According to RP.9 and CP.4 this change in thinking

is associated with the passage of the *Safe Schools Act* and promoted by frequent

references to the newly legislated requirements by Superintendents at principal meetings.

Characteristic	All		Current principals		Retired principals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Threatens school or personal safety	8	32	5	42	3	23
Disrupts school routine	6	24	3	25	3	23
Outside response required	5	20	2	17	3	23
Infrequency	2	8	1	8	1	8
Rehearsed	2	8	0	0	2	15
Foreseeable	2	8	1	8	1	8
Total	25	100	12	100	13	100

Table 4.4
Characteristics of school emergencies
from interview question 1

Retired principals generally provided briefer responses to this question with little

explanation. This could be due to a relative lack of formal emergency response planning

during their careers or distance from the events. According to RP. 9, in her experience,

as mentioned above, the passage of the *Safe Schools Act* resulted in an increase in

discussions of emergency planning at superintendent and principal meetings, which

would have occurred after some of the retired participants had left their work.

Gender and school level were not obviously associated with either the length or

content of responses to this first question. There were no evident patterns in how men

versus women appeared to understand an emergency, nor any observable difference

between secondary or elementary school principals.

The characteristics of emergencies that were provided by the respondents

paralleled those established by previous academic research. Roher and Warner (2006)

characterized emergencies, crises and disasters as situations that are abnormal and unique

that have the potential to have serious impacts on operations and suffering to people and

require response systems such as the police or fire department (p. 30-31). Further, the

emergencies recognized by Kano and Bourque (2007) also parallel the characteristics that

were established by the respondents. With the exception of angry parents, the

emergencies that were examined by Kano and Bourque characteristically required outside

assistance, had potential for human injury or loss of life, and disrupted the overall

operation of a school. School board plans generally fit these characteristics as well.

Since the boards had varying documents, the emergencies for which plans were made

paralleled the elements of emergencies that had been discussed by the principals. Some

of the boards especially stressed the rehearsal characteristic of emergencies cited by some

respondents, which was not discussed in Roher and Warner, nor Kano and Bourque.

Interview Question 2: Could you please describe a time when you had to deal with an
emergency situation?

All of the respondents took a few moments to digest this question. At times,

principals would be recounting the story of an emergency and then remember another

example and provide that as well. The retired principals, in particular, tended to provide

multiple responses. In total, respondents identified 28 specific examples of emergencies

they had dealt with. Their responses were analyzed along two key themes: frequency and

type of situation, following classification of Kano and Bourque's emergencies (Class 1-6

emergencies) as presented earlier and reproduced in Table 4.5 below. Capsule summaries

of their responses are summarized in Table 4.6. These lists provide insights into some of

the emergencies that the interviewees had experienced during their career.

Table 4.5
Frequency and severity matrix using Kano and Bourque's hazard inventory

	Less-Severe	More Severe
	1	**2**
Frequently Encountered (Kano & Bourque > 60%)	Fighting Angry parents Injuries/medical emergencies Teacher/student confrontation	Fighting
	3	**4**
Infrequently Encountered (Kano & Bourque 10 – 59%)	Bus cancellation on exam day (weather) Inclement weather Power failures	Intruders
	5	**6**
Very infrequently encountered (Kano & Bourque <10%)		

Overwhelmingly, 85 percent of the emergencies were human related and

predominately categorized as Class 1 events. These events include student fighting

(35%), concerns with parents (25%), student injuries (15%), intruders (5%) and

teacher/student conflicts (5%). Following Kano and Bourque's (2007) categorization, the

emergencies discussed in this question were generally considered less severe in nature

and were experienced on a fairly frequent basis. While most of the emergencies were

deemed to be either a Class 1 or 3 event, fighting and intruders presented a much more difficult challenge in categorizing because Kano and Bourque, in their analysis of California school emergencies did not include fighting in their list of incidents, and these situations, fighting and intruders can range in severity.

Variations in the severity of fighting situations presented a number of concerns for the interview respondents. A common school yard fight might reasonably be considered a Class 1 event, and responses from some principals implicitly viewed fights as such, but large scale gang confrontations may involve hundreds of individuals, and as such, may easily be considered a Class 2 or 4 event, due to the sheer size, infrequency and volatile nature of gang fights. Intruders present similar concerns and variations, depending on actual scenarios. An intruder may simply be a person who is lost and looking for the office or an armed individual seeking revenge.

Actual student fights identified during the interviews ranged from small, one-on-one events to large scale gang-related incidents. Parental concerns included angry parents at council meetings, and parents irate with teachers. Student injuries occurred in gym class, hallways and within classrooms.

A probing question regarding the frequency of emergencies was posed and many of the principals suggested that the three most frequently cited responses, which amounted to 75 percent of those reported, were experienced on a weekly, and sometimes on a daily basis depending on the type and location of the school.

Table 4.6
Specific emergencies experienced by principals

Situation	Example	Frequency	
		Current	Retired
Angry parent	1. "Parents are not happy when they feel there child is not receiving enough attention from a teacher – and they direct that displeasure to me." (CP.9, p.94) 2. "A day wouldn't be a day without a concerned parent. Sometimes it was the same parent calling again and again." (RP.10, p. 224) 3. "Our school has a strong parent council. Certain parents have become frustrated with a few teachers." (CP.8, p.81)	3	2
Fight	1. "Fights happen a lot. Depending on what school you are at, fights may occur at any moment. Kids always have something to argue about. (CP.2, p. 6) 2. "A fight between two students involves many variables. Depending on whom the students are, half the school may be out to watch" (CP.1, p. 3). 2. "By the end of my career, guns started to become a threat when fights took place." (RP.7, p.180).	4	5
Injury or medical emergency	"Many days students will come with a fairly serious injury from gym classes. Teachers play a role in reducing the threats." (CP.6, p. 61)	3	2
Intruder	"Intruders present many safety concerns. Are they here to hurt? Who are they looking for? Do they have a weapon? (CP.4, p.31)	0	2
Teacher /student confrontation	"Sometimes students and teachers don't get along and it gets to the point where I need to get involved – that's when I know it's serious." (CP.10, p.101)	1	0
Power failure	"Many times during storms or winter the power would go out. It took time just trying to get the kids and teachers under control, let alone find out why the power was out." (RP.4, p. 145).	1	2
Weather (incl. bus cancellation)	1. "Bus cancellations and other environmental conditions always concerned me. (RP.8, p. 194) 2. "Every principal has a different tolerance level. What to me is a general emergency may not be the same to another." (CP.3, p. 18)	2	1
Totals		14	14
Overall Total		28	

The emergencies identified most frequently by secondary school principals were student fights (N=7, 54%). Only one elementary principal (RP.9) mentioned student fighting as an emergency situation. In contrast, the most frequently identified emergencies among the elementary school principals involved angry parents (N=4, 57%). Only one secondary principal (RP.10) identified concerns with parents in response to this question. Elementary principals also listed injuries (RP. 3) and a plant breakdown (RP.4) as their most commonly experienced emergencies.

Differences emerged between the responses from retired and current principals. While both groups frequently identified fighting, parents, weather, and injuries, each group had a member that provided a response that was not considered by the other group. For instance, CP.10 identified a teacher/student conflict, while no retired principal mentioned teacher/student conflicts as an experienced emergency. Further, RP.4 declared plant breakdowns to be a commonly experienced emergency, but no other principals mentioned this. Retired principals cited fights (50%) more frequently than did current principals (30%). This may be to the greater accumulated experience of retired principals proving more opportunities for them to have witnessed and dealt with a greater volume of fights compared to the current principal group which included some who were relatively new in the principal position. A second explanation suggests that these fighting events stood out in the retired principal's minds much more than the current principals.

Question #3 What was the most serious emergency you had to deal with during your career?

Responses to the question were lengthy and generally very detailed. Respondents appeared to enjoy answering this question because it allowed them to think back over their careers and reminiscence about important events. Retired principals appeared quicker to answer this question than current principals. Retired principals tended to talk about multiple incidents, even after being prompted to identify their most serious emergency. When multiple responses were forthcoming, the first situation described was selected for analysis unless a subsequent situation clearly qualified as a more serious emergency in the content of the classifications presented in Tables 2.4 and Table 4.7 provides the classifications of the most serious emergencies. Capsule summaries of participant's accounts of their most serious emergency are given in Tables 4.8.

Responses to this question provided some notable differences between the current and retired principals. Table 4.9 highlights the responses by the current and retired principals. Sixty percent of the current principals suggested that injuries and parent associated emergencies were the most serious situations dealt with their careers, whereas retired principals cited fires as their most serious emergency, with injuries and bomb threats tied for the second most serious kind of emergency.

Table 4.7
Frequency and severity matrix using Kano and Bourque's hazard inventory

	Less-Severe	More Severe
Frequently Encountered (Kano & Bourque > 60%)	1	2 Drunk parent Angry parent Fight
Infrequently Encountered (Kano & Bourque 10 – 59%)	3	4 Bomb threat Shooting Threat of shooting Medical or Injury Fire Fight
Very infrequently encountered (Kano & Bourque <10%)	5	6 Other *

*Includes evacuation and lockdown as mentioned during a multiple response

Table 4.8

Most serious emergencies reported by principals

Principal	Event description	Type & Class
CP.1	Fight with 300-500 students watching and cheering. "The hair on the back of my neck stood up."	Fight 4
CP.2	Bomb making materials were found in a student's home.	Bomb threat 4
CP.3	Received a threat that a Columbine type attack would take place at the school. "Many of the staff and students stayed home that day."	Threat of shooting 4
CP.4	Administrator shot by a pellet gun and the shooter shot into a crowd of students at lunch hour.	Shooting (weapon) 4
CP.5	Drunk parent refused to leave the school after being told to leave	Parent 2
CP.6	Student suffered an anaphylactic reaction and went into convulsions.	Medical or Injury 4
CP.7	Student had a finger pulled off when fooling around with others on a set of stairs.	Medical or Injury 4
CP.8	A parent who did not have custody of a child aggressively tried to gain access to the child	Parent 2
CP.9	A teacher was threatened that they would be physically assaulted by a parent.	Parent 2
CP.10	A student attempted suicide in the school.	Medical or injury 4
RP.1	A parent drove a pickup truck into the school yard looking for a child.	Parent 4
RP.2	A large fire occurred in the school. Smoke filled the hallways and students needed to evacuate the school much faster than a normal drill.	Fire 4
RP.3	Student had a medical disability and became non-breathing, pulseless.	Medical or injury 4

Table 4.8 con't
Most serious emergencies reported by principals

Principal	Event description	Type & Class
RP.4	"It was a hat trick day." First there was a fire drill, second a (cougar sighting and third a fire in the vicinity of the school).	Other * 6
RP.5	Students were drinking at the back of a school and became confrontational when the beer was confiscated	Drunk Students 4
RP.6	A fire took place in the school and students were sent home for the remainder of the day.	Fire 4
RP.7	A student sent a bomb threat to school. The student had been caught downloading bomb making instructions.	Bomb threat 4
RP.8	A bomb threat was received at the school and the information was spread by teachers.	Bomb threat 4
RP.9	A kettle caused a desk to catch on fire. Students needed to be evacuated.	Fire 4
RP.10	A teacher suffered burns after a chemistry experiment spilt onto his hands.	Medical or injury 4

* Items in brackets include lockdown as mentioned during a multiple response.

Table 4.9

Frequency of most serious emergencies by type and principal status

Class and Type	Principals		
	Current	Retired	Total
Injury/Medical	3	2	5
Concerns with Parents	3	1	4
Fire	0	3	3
Bomb threats	1	2	3
Fight	1	0	1
Threat of Shooting	1	0	1
Shooting (pellet gun)	1	0	1
Drunk Students	0	1	1
Other	0	1	1
Total	10	10	20

One pattern that emerges from this collection of emergencies is an inverse relationship between the most frequently noted emergencies from the two groups. Current principals identified parents as a major source of serious school emergencies (tied with injuries), yet only one retired principal cited parents as the source of the most serious emergency during his career, and in that situation it was the pickup truck being driven around the playground that was the real cause for concern.

Parents emerged as a frequent source of school emergencies that were identified by current and retired principals in responses to Question 2. Most importantly was the number of elementary principals that identified parents. All three of the current principals cited parents, while one of the four retired principals discussed parents. RP.1 was also the only retired principal to identify parents as the most serious emergency in responses to this question. This suggests that retired principals may have dealt with parental concerns so frequently that such problems had become more of a routine matter for them and, as such, they discounted parent associated incidents as a source of major

emergencies. Alternatively, parental culture has changed. Parents have become more involved and demanding in recent times, with a corresponding increase in confrontations between parents and school personnel.

Among retired principals, fires were cited as the most serious emergency, yet no current principal identified fires or a similar plant-based incident as the most serious emergency encountered during their career. This lack of identification may be due to the proactive steps that schools are using to reduce the risk of fire in classrooms and to the physical plant, through ongoing Workplace Hazardous Material Information System (WHMIS) training for school employees. Secondly, fires are categorized as a Class 3 event, which suggests that the infrequent nature of fires means that not all principals will have dealt with the event.

Interview Question 4

In your opinion what would you consider to be a relatively minor school emergency (a level D emergency)? What would you consider to be an extreme emergency (a level A)? What would you consider to be in the B-C range?

This question sought to explore respondents' views as to the range of possible school emergencies. The placement of this question in the questioning sequence was designed to build on and go beyond the most serious emergency respondents had experienced, as probed in the preceding question. Six of the respondents asked for clarification regarding the seriousness of the emergencies that would be listed. There were some questions concerning whether the emergencies being listed were possible emergencies that could potentially take place in a school or situations that had actually been experienced. Such questions were answered to ensure participants understood the

focus was on potential emergencies, and this expectation was clarified when respondents appeared to be basing their responses in personal experience. Overall, respondents provided 80 emergency situations, as summarized in Table 4.10.

By asking respondents to classify the severity of possible emergencies rather than those actually experienced, this question allowed participants to reflect on the relative "severity of some of the stuff we've been through" (RP.8, p. 187). According to RP.8, principals tend not to think about the relative severity of emergencies because when an emergency occurs, they evaluate the situation and respond. Many of the interviewees took considerable time in responding to this question. Respondents found that choosing the most severe and minor emergencies to be relatively easy, but the determination of the B and C emergencies to be difficult. Principals were encouraged to "think aloud" to help gather a fuller understanding of how and why they were appraising the relative severity of the situations.

As shown in Table 4.10, incidents involving weapons (N=11), bombs (N=3), serious medical situations or deaths (N=7) dominated the Level A (most severe) emergencies identified. Perhaps surprisingly, 3 of the respondents said they had experienced the Level A emergency she or he identified in response to this question. While the great majority of principals had not had to deal with the Level A emergency they identified, they frequently mentioned school board in-service sessions where senior administrators or guest speakers drilled the severity of weapons incidents and bombings into their heads.

Table 4.10

More and less severe school emergencies identified by principals

| Principal | More Severe ←————————————————————————→ Less Severe | | | |
	A	B	C	D
RP.1	Intruder with weapon	Angry belligerent parents	Fire/bomb threats	Epidemics
RP.2	Weapons in school	Pandemic in community	Fight with large numbers of students	Water breakdown
RP.3	Gun man in school	Estranged, drunken parent in school	Fight in hallways	Thunder/lightning at dismissal
RP.4	Medical/threat to person(s)	Potential weather issue	Potential of harm to individuals	Group Fight/Disagreement
RP.5	Violence with potential of weapons	Abuse cases – physical/sexual	Bomb threats	Student/Parents vs. Teacher confrontation
RP.6	Death threat – gun related	Fire – not false alarm	Threat of large fight – 200+ students	Individual emergency – e.g. seizure or injury
RP.7	Bombs, firearms	Fire	School violence	Utilities absent (water, hydro)
RP.8	Weapons	Bomb threat	Fight	Weather concerns
RP.9	Life threatening incident e.g. Fire, anaphylaxis reaction	Teacher breakdown and inability to perform professionally	Community person enters the school and must be removed	Student/student violent aggressive behaviour
RP.10	Suicide in school	Major injury to staff/student	Staff vs student confrontation	Racial tensions
CP.1	Intruder – shooter	Impaired – overdose, unconscious, unknown substance	Fight – depends on number of people	False Fire Alarm
CP.2	Death in school	Bomb threat/fire	Large fight on school property	Plant breakdown
CP.3	Violent incident – with weapon(s) /hostage taking	Sudden death of a student/staff member	Physical plant	Weather related school closure
CP.4	Guns/weapons/bomb	Fire in school	Assault/threatening in school	External emergency
CP.5	Intruder with weapon	Fire in school	Injury to student	Belligerent Parent
CP.6	Fatal injury – staff or student	Intruder in building	Staff student injury	Minor injury
CP.7	Severe injury /building evacuation	Larger scale fight – gang related	Student/staff altercation	Student fight
CP.8	Fatality	Fire	Weather	Minor bus accident
CP.9	Terrorism	Evacuation	Drunk parent	Weather related
CP.10	Shooting	Fire	Fake bomb	Suicide

Many of the mid-range B-D emergencies were situations respondents had experienced in their schools. The level B emergencies cited were often similar to the situations identified in response to interview question 3, which had asked for them to identify the most serious emergency with which they had dealt with.

The 80 situations shown in Table 4.10 were classified into the incidents used in the Kano and Bourque study plus "Student Fights", which were not explicitly recognized in their list of emergencies. Table 4.11shows the frequency of the severity levels for each of these incidents identified by interview respondents. Weather was the most noted D level emergency with four responses, two from retired and two from current principals. School fights and plant breakdowns were tied for the next most frequently cited level D emergency (3 responses). For C level emergencies, school fights were the most common responses identified nine times. Current and retired principals both ranked fighting at the top of the C level lists. Fire and bomb threats were the next most frequent response, followed by school injuries. School fires were the most frequently cited B level emergency (7 responses). Intoxicated and angry parents and student injuries were next most commonly cited emergencies. Finally, weapons were the most common A level emergency, followed by intruders with weapons and deaths. Overall, there was a clear consensus that school fighting was the most frequently cited emergency according to the school principals. In total, 75 percent of the respondents (15 principals) mentioned that school fighting was an emergency in at least one the four levels. Weapons, injuries and fires were the next most frequently cited emergencies.

Table 4.11
Comparative frequencies of more and less severe emergencies

Incidents Classified by K&B categories	Interview Levels			
	A (most severe)	B	C	D (least severe)
Weapons	8	0	0	0
Injury	4	2	3	2
Death	4	1	0	1
Intruder	3	1	1	0
Terrorism	1	0	0	0
Fire	0	5	0	0
Fight	0	2	10	3
Fire/bomb threat	0	2	3	1
Parent	0	2	1	2
Weather	0	1	1	4
Epidemic /Pandemic	0	1	0	1
Plant breakdown	0	0	1	3
Other:		3		3

Note: School Violence and Staff versus student confrontation are included in the Fight section. Life threatening situation is included in the death section
Other includes level B emergencies: abuse, teacher breakdown, evacuation and level D emergencies: external emergency, racial tension and bus accident

No notable difference emerged between the responses of retired and current principals. The Level A emergencies identified by both groups were similar in focus. Nineteen of the retired and current principals considered weapons, injuries, deaths and intruders to be extreme emergencies. One current principal suggested that terrorism was an extreme concern. The distribution between the types of emergencies was also similar across the two groups. A slight difference existed between the number of principals who cited weapons as their most extreme emergency. Three current principals cited weapon concerns while five retired principals felt that weapons were the most extreme emergency.

Once again, elementary principals were more likely to include parent concerns as an emergency that they considered to be somewhat severe. Five of the seven elementary principals were concerned with parents entering the school to various degrees.

An attempt was made to classify the emergencies identified in response to this question using the frequency and severity matrix originally presented in 2.4, but it proved difficult to unambiguously assign some emergencies to a specific Class because of uncertainties concerning relative frequency of the incidents In consequence some emergencies are placed in multiple Classes in Table 4.12. As discussed earlier in this chapter, fighting is a particularly difficult incident to classify because of possible variations in severity, and this has consequently been classified as a possible Class 1, 2 or 4 emergency

The relatively large number of cited emergencies assigned to Class 6 reflects the infrequency of the "worst-case" scenarios identified by respondents as Level A emergencies. In general, the more infrequent a disruptive event, the more serious it was likely to be perceived to be.

Table 4.12
Frequency and severity matrix using Kano and Bourque's hazard inventory

	Less-Severe	More Severe
Frequently Encountered (Kano & Bourque > 60%)	**1** Minor Fight Parent Weather Plant breakdown Injury	**2** Injury Fire Bomb threat Fight
Infrequently Encountered (Kano & Bourque 10 – 59%)	**3**	**4** Severe Fight Injury Weapons Intruder Fire Weather
Very infrequently encountered (Kano & Bourque <10%)	**5**	**6** Death Terrorism Teacher breakdown Evacuation Abuse External emergency Racial tension Bus accident Epidemic/Pandemic

Question 5 – How does your daily role differ from the role that you occupy during an emergency?

The last and final question asked participants to identify where they thought their daily role and emergency role would fall along the adapted Getzels-Guba model as shown in Figure 4.1. The original model was adapted by including the numeric scale underneath the graphic as shown. Each interviewee was asked to indicate the relative

influence of nomothetic (Formal) and ideographic (Personality) contributions to his or

her daily role behaviour by placing an "x" along the number line, and was then asked to

place a "y" to indicate the anticipated relative contributions of Role and Personality

factors on their role behaviour during a school emergency. The numbers selected by

respondents became what will be called their Getzels-Guba role score, or just "role

score", in the following discussion. The lower this score, the greater the estimated

contribution of nomothetic influences on respondents' anticipated role behaviour; the

higher the score, the greater the estimated contribution of ideographic influences on

anticipated role behaviour.

Figure 4.1

Adapted Version of Getzels and Guba Model
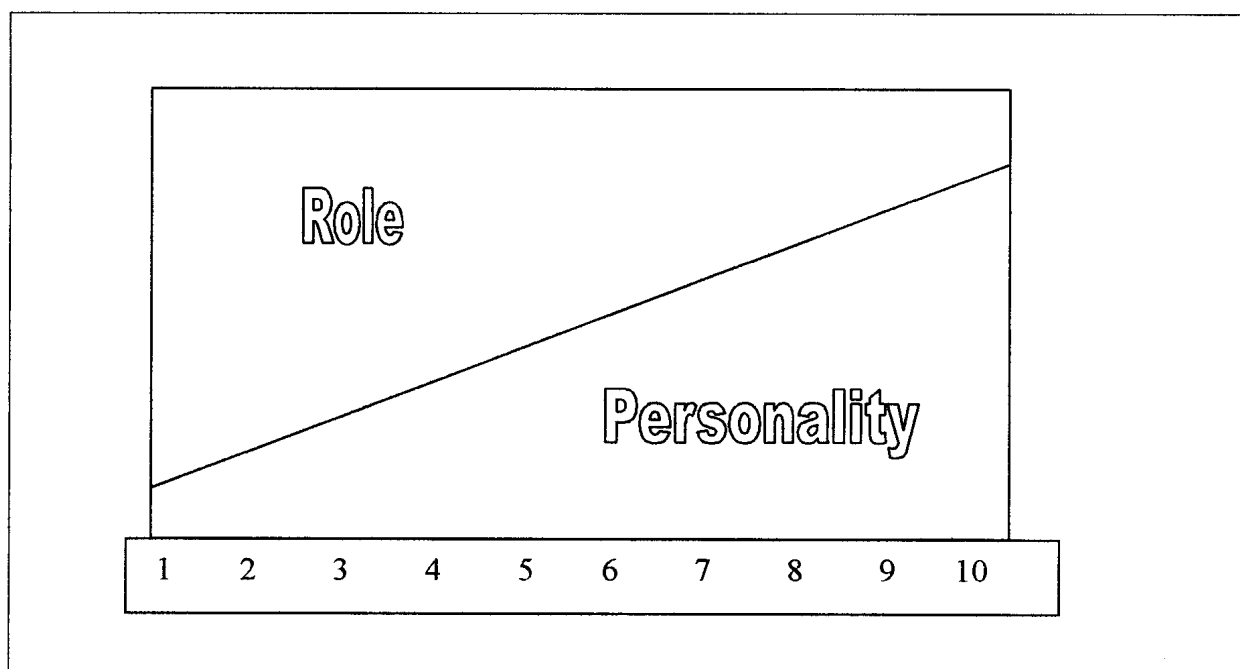
Figure 4.2 plots the Getzels-Guba role scores for current and retired principals for

both response conditions, that is for their anticipated daily role performance (upper panel)

and their anticipated role performance in an emergency situation (lower panel). Retired principals had notably higher scores than current principals under both response conditions, but there was a more compact distribution of scores for retired principals for daily role performance, whereas this was the case for current principals for emergency situations. Two-sample t-tests found the role score differences between current and retired principals to be statistically significant for both the daily ($t(18)=2.29, p = 0.034$) and emergency ($t(18)=2.96, p = 0.008$) role conditions. Overall, retired principals indicated their daily and emergency role behaviour would be more strongly influenced by personality factors than did the current principals. Additional two-sample t-tests found no significant differences for gender or school level for daily or emergency role scores.

Comparison of the upper and lower panels of Figure 4.2 shows a downward shift between daily and emergency conditions for both groups of principals. Direct comparisons of respondent scores using paired t-tests found these shifts to be statistically significant for current ($t(9)=5.34, p=0.0004$) but not for retired ($t (9)=1.948, p=0.083$) principals. Whereas the current principals considered their daily role performance would be influenced by a mix of nomothetic and ideographic influences, in an emergency they indicated their behaviour would be more strongly influenced by nomothetic aspects, whereas the retired principals indicated their behaviour in both daily and emergency situations would be influenced by a mix of nomothetic and ideographic factors.

Figure 4.2

Box plots of Daily and Emergency scores for current and retired principals

Daily role condition

Emergency role condition
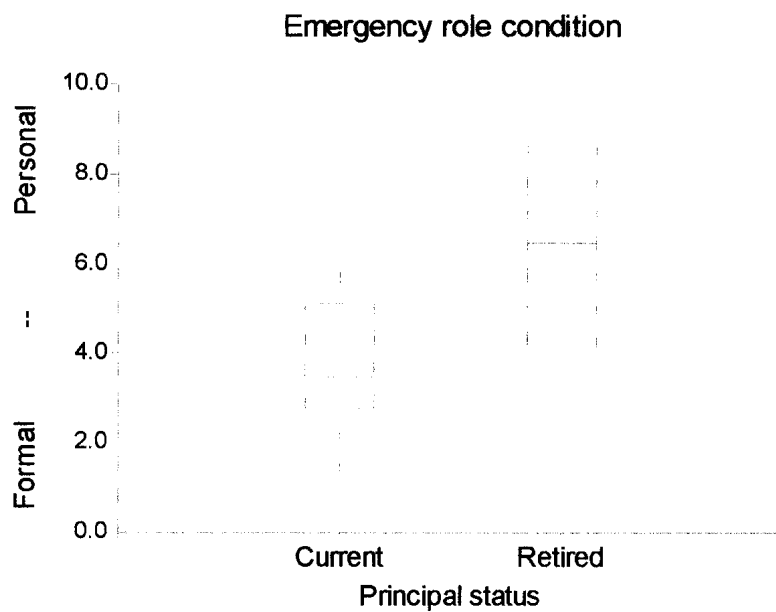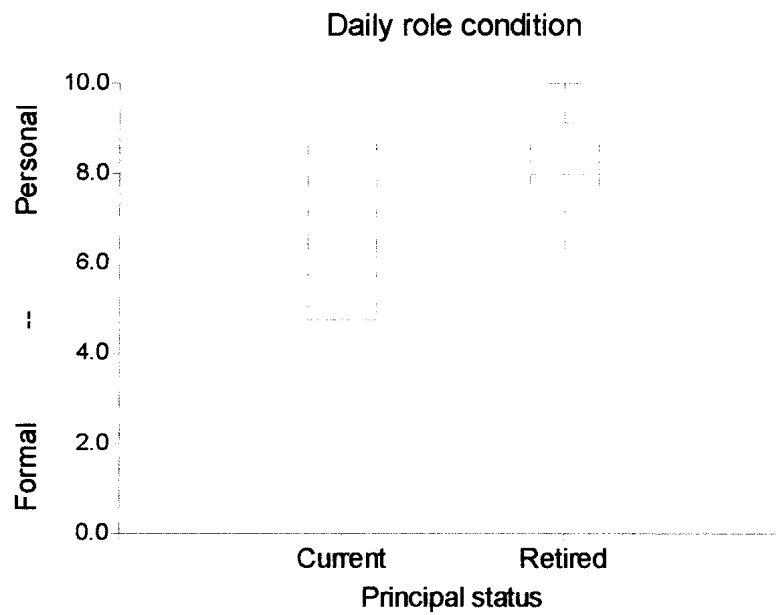
In short, current principals appeared more likely to be guided by formal role expectations—guidelines, protocols, checklists and the like—in emergencies than in everyday, quotidian, situations, where they considered their behaviour would likely be guided by both formal and personal considerations.

But to what extent might these differences be associated with administrative experience rather than whether a participant was retired or not? Retired principals had amassed more years of administrative experience (M= 17.1, SD=3.95) than their currently serving colleagues (M=10.7, SD=5.06), but as charted earlier in Figure 1.2, some currently serving principals had acquired more years of experience than some retired principals. Figure 4.3 plots role scores for estimated daily and emergency role behaviours against years of administrative experience. Both plots show a positive correlation between role scores and experience with the relative contribution of personality aspects increasing with greater experience. This relationship was found to be reasonably strong (r.=0.65) and statistically significant beyond the .01 level for the daily role responses, but weaker (r.=0.40) and not statistically significant for the emergency role condition. These patterns appear consistent with the findings from the expertise literature as discussed earlier, which show that experience-in-role allows incumbents to view what novices typically regard as difficult challenges as more routine tasks (Allison & Allison, 1991; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995). In essence, frequent performance brings greater familiarity and allows task performance to become more routine.

In the context of the Getzels-Guba model, role performance would thus be expected to be more strongly influenced by ideographic contributions such as personal knowledge and understanding, rather than nomothetic factors, such as official job descriptions, rules and procedures. This appears to provide a reasonable, theory-grounded explanation for the robust positive correlation between role scores and experience for daily but not emergency role performance, the everyday work of principals allowing opportunities for them to become more proficient over time, whereas

there will be more restricted opportunities to practice the work to be accomplished in emergencies.

Even so, when the two scatter plots are compared, the overall downward shift in the role scores between the two response conditions is clearly evident. Earlier, the magnitude of this shift was found to be statistically significant for current but not retired principals. To investigate the contributions of experience in this relationship, years of experience was partitioned at the mean (13.8) to divide respondents in low (N=9) and high (N=11) experience groups. Paired t-tests on the role scores for members of the two experience groups found statistically significant downward shifts for both more and less experienced principals.

The mean daily role score for the less experienced principals was 6.0 (SD=1.73) as compared to a mean score of 3.89 (SD=1.83) for the emergency response condition (t(8)=4.00, p.=0.001). The mean role scores for the more experienced principals were higher than their less experienced colleagues for both the daily role condition (M=8.32, SD=1.31) and the emergency response condition (M=6.05, SD= 2.40), but the downward shift was also significant (t(10)=2.56, p.=0.02).

Figure 4.3
Scatter plots of role scores for Daily and Emergency behaviours
by years of administrative experience

Daily role condition

r.= 0.647, p.= 0.002

Emergency role condition

r.= 0.394, p.= 0.085
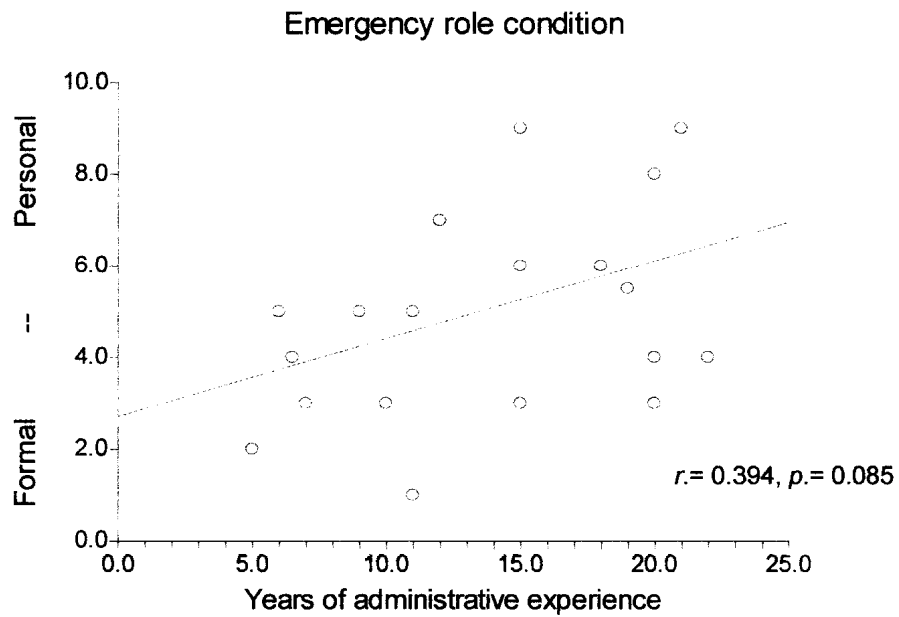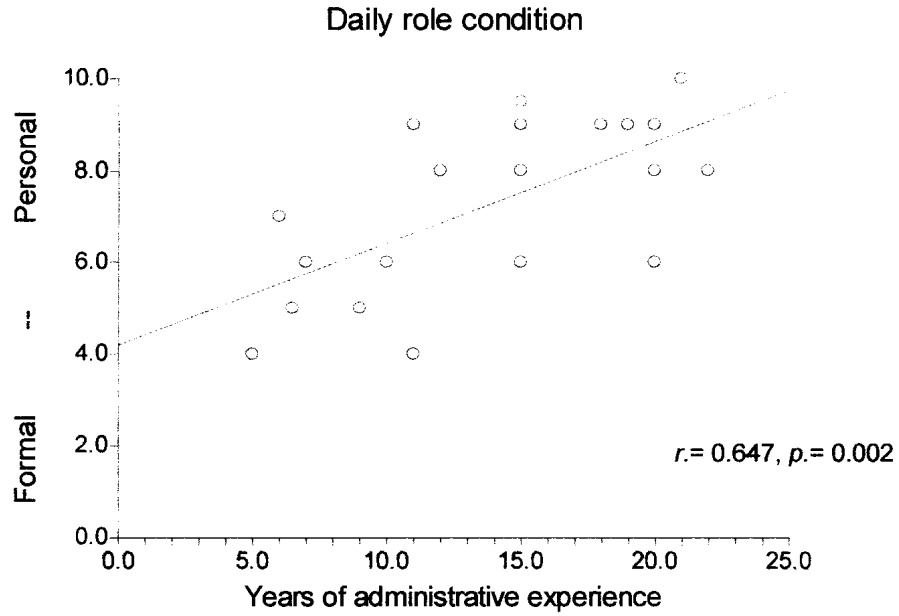
Dashed line is Least Squares regression line

These results imply the findings emerging from the previous analysis of role score differences between current and retired principals masked the more powerful effect of experience on how both groups of principals responded to the role score interview question. Rather than the shift from ideographic to nomothetic role influences in emergency situations being characteristic of only currently employed principals, this analysis shows such a shift being common to more as well as less experienced principals, although the relative magnitude is less marked in the more experienced group. The box plots displayed in Figure 4.4 show the increased influence of ideographic expectations for more experienced principals in both daily and emergency situations, and also the shift toward greater nomothetic influences in emergencies in both experience groups.

During the course of the interviews all but three Principals (CP. 6, RP.4, RP.8) noted that their anticipated behaviour during emergencies shifted toward the "formal" (i.e. nomothetic) portion of the spectrum. These three Principals recalled that during an emergency they tended to focus on their "gut" instincts rather than opening up a binder on a shelf. CP.6 suggested that during an emergency, an administrator's behaviour should not change, but remain constant throughout every type of situation.

Figure 4.4

Box plots of Daily and Emergency role scores for less and more experienced principals

Daily role condition

Emergency role condition
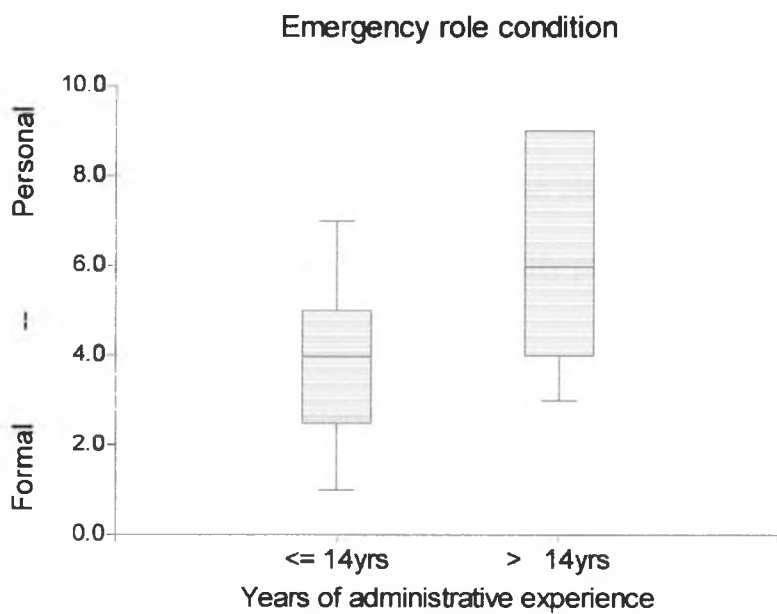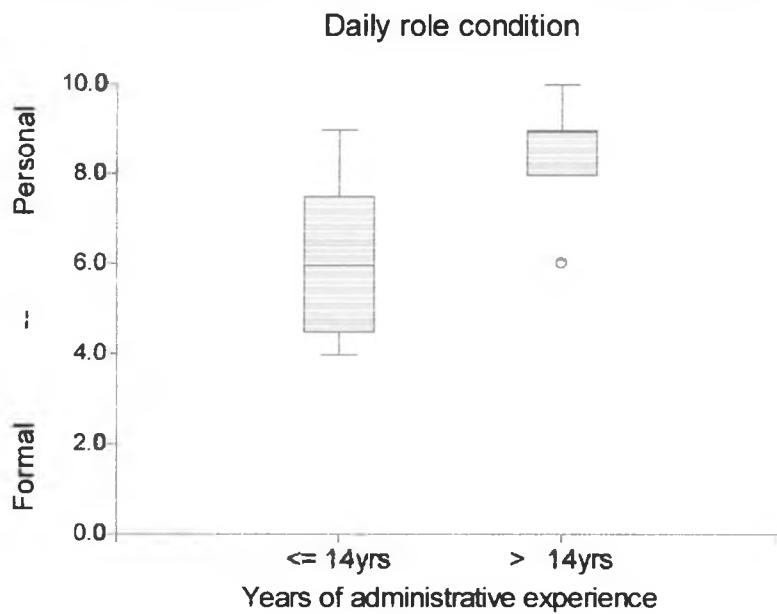
Summary

This chapter looked at the results of the interview portion of this study. In total

152 different emergency situations were identified by the 10 current and 10 retired

principals in responses to the interview questions. Generally, principals were very candid

with their remarks as they discussed school emergencies which included weapons,

fighting, intruders, weather concerns and angry parents. Throughout the analysis, Kano

and Bourque's (2007) list of emergency incidents and the frequency and severity matrix

developed in Chapter 2 was used to classify the emergencies identified in the interviews.

Some emergencies proved difficult to classify because of potential variations range in

severity and scope. Fighting was a common example of an emergency situation which

could be relatively minor in the case of some school yard tussles, but could be a

considerably more severe emergency involving large groups of combatants which

suggests that this type of emergency is contextual. Secondary principals tended to

identify school fighting and violent incidents more than elementary principals.

Elementary principals were much more likely to identify parents as a major concern in

their schools, rather than violence.

Analyses of responses to the interview question probing possible shifts in role

expectation during emergencies showed that generally principals anticipated their

behaviour would be influenced more by formal expectations than personality aspects

during emergency situations, but that the relative influence of formal and personality

aspects was related to years of experience. Greater experience in role was associated

with relatively less anticipated influence from formal role expectations in both daily and

emergency situations, but the relative anticipated influence of formal expectation

nonetheless increased in emergencies. In other words, more experienced principals

tended to rely more on their personal understandings of the principal's role, but

nonetheless anticipated they would rely more on formal expectations in emergencies.

There was some evidence that this pattern would be amplified by the ways in which

experience also contributed to how principals judged the relative severity of at least some

emergency situations. Overall, two key trends have emerged from this chapter. The first

is that emergencies which occur on a frequent basis are generally viewed as less severe,

while emergencies which may occur once or twice over a career are deemed to be more

severe.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusions

This study sought to investigate the nature of school emergencies and probe

influences on principal behaviour when faced with a school emergency. The nature of

school emergencies was investigated through reviews of the academic literature and

selected Ontario school board emergency response policies, and through interviews with

retired and current principals. Influences on principals' role behaviour were explored

through an application of the Getzels-Guba model. The review presented in this chapter

builds initially on the three research questions adopted to direct the inquiry and then

moves to discuss implications for future research and training.

Research Questions

What is a school emergency?

This first research question was intended to provide a better understanding of

what principals considered an emergency, but it had the unintended but extremely

relevant and fascinating outcome of principals identifying over 152 scenarios that they

considered as emergency situations.

As contained in the academic literature, school emergencies are characterized as

foreseeable or unforeseeable sets of events that occur infrequently, are abnormal or

unique, disrupt normal functions, require substantial amounts of time, energy and effort

to resolve, result in damaged or lost resources, involve the assistance of outside resources

for resolution, and negatively affect the safety of those involved (Chirichello &

Richmond, 2007; Kano & Bourque, 2007; Roher & Warner, 2006). Further, the types of

emergencies that are being characterized by the above understanding can be divided

into human, accidental and environmentally related events (OSBIE, 2008, Roher & Warner, 2006).

The review of school board documents revealed similar perspectives on emergency understanding. Most of the boards studied provided a policy statement regarding their definition of an emergency. For example, Kawartha Pine Ridge acknowledged the severity of emergencies and the importance of the overall safety and welfare of students during such times. Limestone DSB considered an emergency as "a situation or occurrence of a serious nature, developing suddenly and unexpectedly, and demanding immediate action," (p. 4). Lambton Kent described an emergency as "a situation requiring evacuation or closure of schools, or change in transportation in situation (sic) where students might be at risk, including but not limited to breakdown of heating system, fire, flood, tornado, inclement weather, bomb threats, explosives, and chemical spills." There was no indication as to whether the length or development of a policy resulted in a greater number of emergencies being planned for. These are policy statements and not a guide for the types of situations being planned. Both Limestone and Lambton Kent had specific emergency policy definitions, yet each ranked near the bottom of the list in regards to the actual number of situations planned for (six each).

An argument can be made that through amalgamation school boards have had a difficult task in creating single policies that can be applied to all the schools within a board. Due to the unique situations and circumstances at local schools, an overarching policy on a specific emergency may not be feasible and in these cases a local site based policy may be created to take the place of the non-applicable board policy. The larger the school board, the increasing difficulty that it potentially is faced with in regards to

emergency planning and this was observed through the variation between boards in the study.

Boards have also implemented policies to deal with situations that have taken place previously in their board. Halton DSB had a strong anti-violence policy and that potentially is due to their experience with weapons in their schools. Near North may have experienced hostage situations within their board and that is why they have developed a hostage plan when no other school board has done the same.

As summarized in Table 4.2, principals generally viewed emergencies as revolving around five common themes, namely incidents which: a) threatened school or personal safety; b) disrupted school routines; c) required outside responses and/or support from specialized agencies; d) occurred infrequently; and/or e) involved a rehearsed response.

As noted above, the academic literature, official school board documents and school principals generally viewed emergencies in similar fashions. Yet, specific incident scores for boards ranged greatly. Near North had response plans for the greatest number of specific emergencies (N=18), Simcoe the least (N=2). There was substantial overlap between the emergency scenarios provided by the principals and what was included in school board planning documents, but only in the case of the more extreme emergencies such as weapons and shootings. Few plans dealt with fighting and angry parents, two common incidents as reported by the principals. This gap between what is considered an emergency will present difficulties, especially for less experienced principals when they must confront a situation without having an official plan of how to respond.

As mentioned briefly earlier, an unexpected outcome of this research question was the gathering of typical school emergencies as discussed by the principals. Actual specific emergencies involved fighting, angry and confrontational parents, student and sometimes staff injuries (ranging from asthmatic attacks to amputated fingers) and other miscellaneous events, such as school closures due to weather-related events and physical plant breakdowns. Some of these situations were mentioned by multiple principals, but are not included in the school board documents, which begs the question as to why are these events not included in school board planning documents? If principals feel that they are emergencies, why don't the school boards recognise these as emergencies? This concern leads to the next research question as to what qualifies as a more or less severe emergency according to the literature, school boards and principals.

What qualifies as a more or less severe school emergency?

An important outcome of this study was the sheer number of emergency situations that were collected from the interviewees. The collection was one of the key findings of this research question.

The academic literature provided a framework for the analysis of this research question. Kano and Bourque's (2007) work on school emergencies in California and Emergency Management Ontario's (no date given) assessment tool of risk were both utilized heavily for analysis purposes.

Much of the literature focussed on the severity of violence in schools. I was unable to find a study that addressed less-severe emergencies such as minor medical emergencies. Risk management literature focussed heavily on the importance of

planning for lockdowns (Brunner, 2006; Trump, 2000) and avoiding or being trained in areas which may be of potential risk (OSBIE, 2008).

An attempt was made to rank the 25 hazards used by Kano and Bourque (2007) by overlaying the frequency and severity dimensions from Emergency Management Ontario. Table 2.4 incorporated both items. Emergencies located on the right side of the matrix are considered more severe because of potential disruption and threats to life and safety. Class 6 emergencies located in the bottom right corner are the most extreme emergencies because they are by far the most severe, but also occur very infrequently. As such, it would seem reasonable to expect that almost all principals would never have to respond to a Class 6 situation. In contrast, the Kano and Bourque findings suggest that most principals could reasonably expect to encounter one or more Class 1 or 2 emergencies during their careers.

School board planning included many of the most severe emergencies that could occur at a school. These types of emergencies would be found along the right side of Table 2.4. Such emergencies while rare, present serious concerns for student and staff safety. Incidents involving weapons, shootings and death were common situations covered in planning documents. These types of situations should have accompanying plans for action because they are considered in the academic literature to be incredibly important and severe. As a result, school board planning documents contain emergencies which are the most severe, while not including situations which occur more frequently.

Two interview questions attempted to draw out specific examples of severe and less severe emergencies. The results of these questions were somewhat surprising, in that certain situations that were considered to be severe emergencies according to the

principals were not planned for by school boards. An example of this gap between principal and school board emergency perceptions lies in the general concern for angry and confrontational parents. Three current and one retired principal identified angry parents as the most severe situation that they had experienced and this was the second most frequently cited emergency after medical injury emergencies. Angry parents were also identified as a frequently experienced emergency in the Kano and Bourque data. Even so, none of the school boards studied had a plan in place to deal with such incidents.

A possible explanation for the lack of school board specific plans is that local schools may have plans in place, which are not as easily accessed over the internet. Local school policies take into account local circumstances and contingencies rather than system concerns. School circumstances such as school level will affect how plans are created. The age of students involved, such as for school fights and for parental concerns are all local matters. As discussed earlier, elementary principals were more concerned with angry parents than were secondary principals. Violent incidents are much more likely to occur in high schools as identified by the principals in the study.

This presents an interesting theoretical and practical issue. As hypothesized in Chapter 1, current emergency planning literature tends to focus on school emergencies that involve life-threatening incidents such as nuclear explosions, plane crashes and swarms of killer bees (Dorman, 2003; Kano & Bourque, 2007) rather than injuries and angry parents. This leads to the importance of principal expertise. A principal may acquire enough on-the-job experience with parents and injuries to transform what was once regarded as a difficult problem into a more or less routine task (Allison & Allison,

1993; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995). This notion appears to be somewhat true when an analysis of status and experience is conducted. The three current principals who indicated that parents were their most serious concern had 10 years and less experience as a principal. This suggests that with more years of experience, a principal be less likely to regard angry parents as an emergency. This finding should not be taken as a general statement because a situation involving a parent may very well become a severe emergency even with practice.

This leads to an important concern that has developed over the course of the study when classifying emergencies using the adopted Kano and Bourque matrix. Many of the situations that were identified as emergencies can vary in severity depending on circumstance and contingencies. "Fighting" emerged as a frequently encountered example for such situations where the basic label can be applied to scenarios ranging from an elementary student pulling the hair of another to a large scale brawl involving students from several schools. Fighting with additional weapons is somewhat of an obvious escalator that can make a fight situation much more severe, but using a baseball glove in an elementary school fight is different than using a bat. The potential for harm generally could be criteria to differentiate the severity of an emergency at the school level.

How are school principals expected to behave in school emergencies?

The conceptual framework adopted for exploring this question was adapted from the Getzels and Guba model (Figure 1.1) which views role behaviour as a product of interactions between nomothetic (formal) expectations and ideographic (personal) expectations. The two methodologies used in the study addressed and contrasted the

formal and personal expectations required for behaviour. The analysis of school board documents provided the formal expectations and the interviews presented the more personal expectations of behaviour.

Researchers such as Getzels and Guba (1957) Getzels, Lipham, and Campbell (1968), Hoy and Miskel (2008) and Lewin (1936) have sought to address the relationship between the formal institution's role requirements and those of an individual's needs, goals and values. In formal organizations such as public elementary and secondary schools, official expectations for the behaviour of role incumbents, such as teachers and principals, are stated in official documents such as in the *Education Act* and its accompanying Regulations and in the policy documents of individual school boards.

While the institutional role requirements are prevalent in schools, principals need to interpret and understand the rules and regulations and act within their context. However, the relationship among an individual's needs, stresses, goals and values can be in conflict and interfere with institutional goals (Getzels & Guba, 1957; Getzels, Lipham & Campbell, 1968; Wolverton, Gmelch & Wolverton, 2000).

School board documents were concerned with providing appropriate directions to principals and staff to respond in emergency situations. An example of direction could include: "principals are expected to immediately signal a code red upon receiving information of an armed intruder." This description is fairly clear and purposeful, however, it does not provide any further details about what to do if the armed intruder is found in the principal's office. The documents were prescriptive in nature, but overall, I found that they did allow for some contextual flexibility and adaptation. This finding was confirmed after interviewing the twenty principals.

The principals who were interviewed were asked to rank themselves along an adapted version of the Getzels and Guba model (Figure 4.2). Two sets of data were retrieved from their responses. The first set indicated where principals view their role expectations during a typical school day. The principals generally viewed themselves as influenced more by their own personality and needs than by formal institutional role requirements. The second set of data revealed that during an emergency situation, the interviewees anticipated their role behaviour would be more strongly influenced by formal role expectations such as school board policies.

An unintended, but yet important finding suggests that administrative experience influenced where principals ranked themselves along the formal – personality expectations spectrum for both daily and emergency situations. More extensive experience was associated with a greater anticipated influence of personality on daily role expectations ($r = 0.65, p = 0.002$): the more experienced a principal the greater the estimated influence of his or her personal knowledge, dispositions and understandings on his or her projected everyday role performance. A weaker and statistically non-significant correlation was found for emergency situations, together with an overall shift toward a greater estimated influence of formal influences on role expectations ($r = 0.394$, $p = 0.081$). Generally, all principals anticipated they would be more strongly influenced by formal role expectations during emergencies, with less experienced principals tending to anticipate being more strongly influenced by formal expectations than their more experienced colleagues.

A difference emerged between how principals appear to understand school emergencies and how they are presented in the academic literature and school board

policies. The academic literature and the school board documents were quite prescriptive in how they defined emergencies. Principals, on the other hand, sometimes considered emergencies to be essentially disruptive events that interfered with the smooth operation of the school. This contrast is not only pertinent in the interpretation of the interview results, but also points to potentially important differences between how principals understand their work and how it is represented in school board policies. One immediate set of practical implications concern the content of training sessions and professional workshops for principals.

Implications for theory

A component of this study utilized the Getzels and Guba model and an adapted model to address principal behaviour during daily activities and during an emergency situation. As summarized earlier, the principals typically indicated that during a normal school day, their behaviour would likely be influenced more by their personality than by institutional role requirements, but that they anticipated a heavier influence of institutional requirements during emergencies (emergency plans). This model was useful for comparing the behaviour of retired and current principals. Two points arise from the use of this model. The first point is that possible imprecision in the data collection may have taken place through the creation of a new model which may have confused some principals. The second and more interesting point is how principals may come to understand and interpret the circumstances of their daily role from their emergency role and in particular: how does the influence of personal expectations increase with experience? The theoretical framework of the study suggests that a greater influence of

personal expectations is a result of learned expertise, but a related, parallel explanation is that principals do not see formal expectations as being as pertinent for everyday principaling as they do for emergencies.

I propose that a new model that captures the simplicity of the Getzels and Guba model be created that allows for variables such as expertise to be incorporated into the model. I suggest moving beyond the model after noticing that principals with similar years of experience may have extremely different levels of emergency understanding. A principal with 20 years of experience who has dealt with numerous lock downs and weapon threats may consider these situations to be much more routine than a principal with 20 years of experience but who has never seen a gun in their school.

A focus of this study has been on what comes with experience in the world of a principal. The internalization of school board policies comes with experience, however, the internalization is contextual. For example, most principals suggested that their behaviour during daily situations is more personality driven, which suggests that daily institutional roles are more internalized than emergency roles. Since some school boards have not necessarily planned for all types of emergencies, this should not mean that a principal is unprepared for such a situation. Local schools experience major situations throughout time and even though a principal may be new to the school and missed out on dealing with that major situation, school secretaries, other administrative staff and teachers may remain in the school who have that experience of undergoing such an incident and may be able to pass on their knowledge to the principal. This type of knowledge is invaluable to a principal arriving at a new school.

Implications for Future Research

The search for formal expectations through the survey of school board policies resulted in a number of unplanned inconsistencies, such as the number of protocols actually found online. This points to the need for a more focussed and detailed study of board plans. A study similar to Dorman's (2003) or Phinney's (2004) may be beneficial in reviewing the documents that principals actually use.

A focus for future research should be put on either analyzing policies from more school boards in the Province or on selecting more principals to interview. The defined focus will provide a greater analysis into school board planning and on the behaviour of principals. Further limitations of the study revolve around the uneven distribution of elementary and secondary schools, which includes the contextual nature of emergencies that would occur at different school levels (i.e. fighting) and lastly, the differences among female and male principals. Since this study looked mainly at the differences and similarities between current and retired principals, a greater analysis of gender and school levels should be conducted to determine if any differences exist between how principals view and respond to emergencies. Leadership studies into gender differences could benefit from this type of research.

School board comparisons can be extended to include Catholic boards and boards outside of Ontario, Canada and the United States. Analysis of school board documents can also be improved by requesting boards to submit actual documents rather than searching online and potentially finding incomplete documents such as those found in this study.

Moreover, a future study could involve interviewing school board superintendents and teachers and asking them what they feel a principal should behave like during an emergency. Selection of interviewees could be based upon experience with emergencies and direct observation of principals.

While this study has looked at predominately at school emergencies, further studies that look at proactive steps that school boards are undertaking to limit, intervene in and resolve emergencies would be important. Intervention strategies to help teach and foster non-violent conflict resolution skills are popular amongst school boards in attempts to limit the number of violent acts within schools. Anti-violence and anti-bullying groups such as the Fourth R (2009) and Mike Neuts (Waterhouse, no date) (just to name a few) are trying to implement instructional activities such as creating positive achievement standards where violence is not the norm, providing opportunities for new experiences, rewarding accomplishments, portraying positive adult role models, and increased emphasis on healthy relationships to help in developing non-violent behaviour patterns (Fourth R)

One of the surprising findings from the interviews was the lack of overlap between the specific emergencies for which boards plan and those identified by principals. This needs to be investigated further, perhaps through a modified Kano and Bourque questionnaire survey, although other studies focussing on how principals learn to handle emergencies would also be most helpful.

Implications for Practice

Through the analysis of school board emergency plans and principal interviews,

four themes emerge that could influence practice. The first and potentially most

important is how principals are trained for emergencies. Are principals trained on Class

6 emergencies? Are they trained on situations which occur so infrequently that training

on more frequent and potential severe emergencies is going overlooked? Principals are

concerned about fighting, angry parents and weapons in schools and if they are not

receiving adequate preparation for such events, the outcomes could be very tragic. A

helpful training exercise would be to help principals classify and respond to emergencies

using a general approach. This approach would provide a step-by-step response plan that

could be readily available and perhaps easy to memorize that would incorporate

communication, delegation and action much like how lock down procedures have

become internalized a general emergency response could be similar.

The second theme is the importance of school emergency teams. Most of the

board plans reviewed mentioned the importance of school emergency teams and what

roles should be part of such teams. These roles must have clear responsibilities and those

incumbents must be familiar with that role and know the various protocols associated

with emergencies. Having these roles in place will allow for better communication and

effective oversight during emergency incidents.

The third theme is the development of emergency plans. Dorman (2003)

concluded school districts that incorporated collaborative methods of planning involving

the community were more likely to have comprehensive plans than districts that used

other methods. Collaborative community development allows for police, fire and

ambulance officials to have an opportunity to plan in concert with the principal, emergency teams and other school officials to create a comprehensive and coordinated emergency plan, therefore influencing the ability of responders to effectively deal with emergency situations.

Finally, the fourth theme is the importance of emergency drills and practice. School boards in Ontario are required to conduct fire and lock down drills throughout the year. Regular practice allows for officials to evaluate the effectiveness of evacuation procedures in the hopes of making evacuations quicker and organized. Lock down and fire drills also provide students and staff the opportunity to practice, observe and become more knowledgeable of what to do in case the events were to actually take place.

Summary

This chapter has provided a discussion, summary and implications for further training and research. Academic literature, school boards and principals view emergencies in a similar fashion, but they range when addressing the severity of emergencies. Principals discussed emergencies and concerns that are not found in the literature nor board documents. School boards vary in the number of events planned for and in their prescriptive nomothetic requirements. Principal experiences with emergencies varied. What was considered a severe or less severe emergency to one principal may not be to another principal. Different experiences and expertise are developed with school location and level, which translates into surety with responses to emergencies.

Overall, principals are faced with difficult challenges when responding to an emergency situation. This study has collected over 120 emergency scenarios that principals are concerned with. School boards have a duty to cover some of these events in order to effectively respond to an emergency situation. As indicated earlier, principals are concerned with disruptive events which sometimes may not be fully established emergencies according to the academic literature and board policy, they are nonetheless important to recognize and respond to.

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Appendix I

Interview Schedule

1. What kinds of situations do you consider to qualify as school emergencies?

✓ Are these policies or experiences
✓ Could you give some examples from your experiences?
✓ How would your definition be different if you were in the elementary/secondary panel?
✓ What is the likelihood of these emergencies happening in your opinion? Have they ever occurred?

> 2. Could you please describe a time when you had to deal with an emergency situation.

> 3. What was the most serious emergency you had to deal with during your career?

Further Possible Probes:

- ✓ Was the event prepared for?
  - o Plans, drills, foreseen
- ✓ Did you rely on the formal sources (e.g. policies) for the expectations of what to do in that situation? How did you do that?
- ✓ Do you feel that your personality helped you out in the situation or were you simply following protocol?
  - o Clarification on personality: interpretation of events, decision-making, delegation, any other unique trait you bring to an event
- ✓ In retrospect do you think you were able to meet the expectations:
  - o Previously set in place by policy expectations
  - o Of others?
  - o Of yourself?
- ✓ What did you learn from this experience?
  - o If it did happen again would you be able to deal with the situation much more easily?
  - o How quickly did you learn during this situation?

> 4. In your opinion what would you consider to be a relatively minor school emergency (a level D emergency)? What would you consider to be an extreme emergency (a level A)? What would you consider to be in the B-C range?
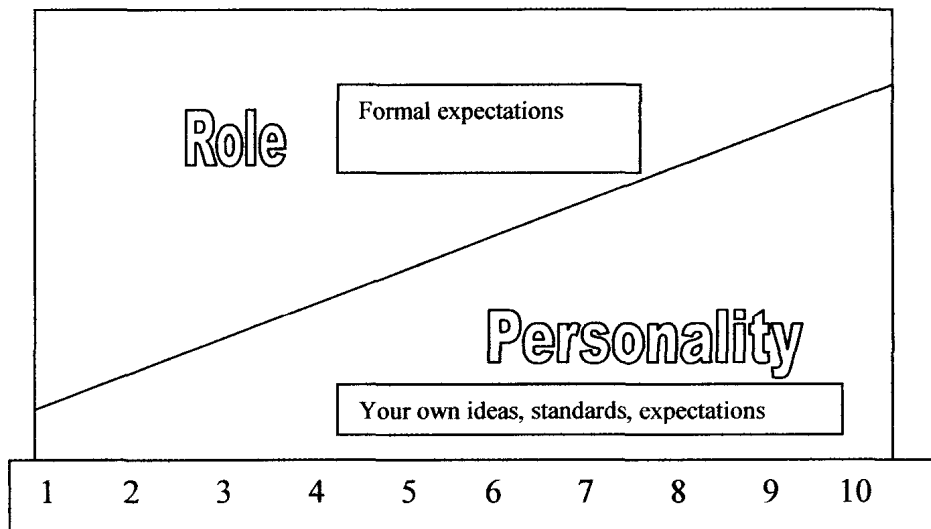
D: _____

C: _____

B: _____

A: _____

- Further Possible Probes:

- Is this scale from an official policy?
- What types of qualities impact on your decision to rank events?
- Why did you rank these emergencies the way that you did?
- How would these be different if you were in charge of an elementary/secondary school?
- Of these varying degrees of emergency, can any of them become routine?
- Would you consider yourself an expert at dealing with emergencies? Insofar as that you've dealt with similar or identical emergencies on a couple of occasions?
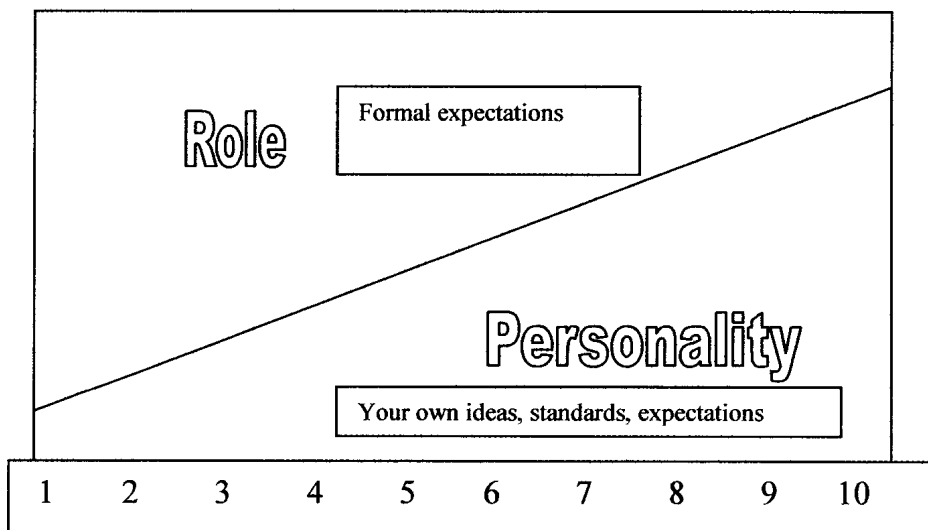
5a.
- This is a model that suggests that how a person behaves in a job is a mixture of formal role expectations and personality.
- At one end of the spectrum we'd find a job which would follow specific role expectations on a daily basis. On the other end of the spectrum we would find a job in which personality would be a determinant of how you behaved at work.
- I'd like to first run an example of how the model works.
- If we were to look at a soldier's behaviour, where do you think on the spectrum that behaviour could be found?
- I'd like for you to mark an X (red pen) on the spectrum where it could be found
- Now, where would a free lance artist's behaviour found on the spectrum?
- I'd like for you to mark a Y (blue pen) on the spectrum where it could be found

Role   Formal expectations

Personality

Your own ideas, standards, expectations

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

5b. Using the same role/personality spectrum I would like for you to:

Mark an X (red pen) on the spectrum where you would think that on a daily basis your behaviour could be found? Would it be closer to formal roles, more on the personality side or a mix?

I'd like you to now mark a Y (blue pen) on the spectrum where you think your behaviour during an emergency may be found.

Role

Formal expectations

Personality

Your own ideas, standards, expectations

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Appendix II

Plan Review Checklist

Board Name:

Emergency Management Protocols

_____ Team member roles are identified
_____ Team member responsibilities are outlined
_____ Approach to communicating with police is discussed
_____ Approach to communicating with school board officials is discussed
_____ Approach to communicating with staff is discussed
_____ Approach to communicating with students is discussed
_____ Approach to communicating with parents is discussed
_____ Approach to communicating with outside agencies is discussed
_____ Location of important information is labelled
_____ Location of supplies is listed
_____ Command centre availability and location is discussed
_____ First Aid Kit requirements
_____ Evacuation procedures are discussed
_____ Evacuation procedures of students with disabilities is discussed
_____ Evacuation checklist and evaluation by principals
_____ Media plans are in place
_____ Release plans for students to parents or caregivers
_____ Dates for practice or training scheduled on routine basis
_____ Support for teachers following crisis is discussed
_____ Support for students following crisis is discussed
_____ Relationship with Police/Board protocol
_____ Fire drill dates set
_____ Security of building provisions
_____ Shutdown procedures
_____ Activities to acknowledge and those who helped are listed

_____ /25

Incident score

Incident Name	√	Incident Name	√