

The Evolving Role of Educational Administrators

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Abstract

The paper examines the role of in-school administrators as their jobs shift to accommodate organizational changes in education. With the changes, administrators have had additional responsibilities and expectations placed on them, and these have distanced administrators from involvement in classrooms. The meta-analysis of the research identified the shifts in responsibilities and expectations for administrators since 1980 when the effective schools movement identified the principal as the "instructional leader". We re-examined several sources of data collected since 1999 in Nova Scotia. The analysis of these data determined that shifts identified in the literature are experienced in the field. Recommendations for research are presented.

The Evolving Role of Educational Administrators

Since 1980, significant changes have occurred not only in our understanding of instruction, but also in the structures governing how this instruction happens. School boards have been reduced in number or eliminated; private partnerships have built new and often larger facilities to consolidate student populations (Lee, et al. 2000); and school advisory councils have been created and/or given more power (Macmillan & Sherman, 1999). These initiatives have politically and structurally altered the educational context in which in-school administrators work and have reshaped, whether by design or by default, the leadership that they provide. In the 1980s, the effective schools movement placed emphasis on instructional leadership through which the administrator participated in curriculum development, in the implementation of new instructional strategies and in teacher supervision for professional development (Bryne, 1978). The manner in which these duties were carried out, however, often appeared to be quite bureaucratic (Campbell, Fleming, Newell & Bennion, 1987).

Arguably, instructional leadership is a key component of what in-school administrators do (Leithwood, 1992). However, with the changes to education and its organization, administrators have had additional responsibilities and expectations placed on them, which have had the effect of increasing the managerial function and of removing administrators from an intimate, ongoing involvement with classrooms (see, for example, Brown, 1990). Three examples of the changes in responsibilities and expectations are: first, with government cuts to education, administrators now attempt to supplement operating budgets through grant writing; second, administrators are often engaged in negotiation with third party stakeholders, including service agencies, community leaders and business partners; and third, administrators have redefined the economic, social and cultural roles and responsibilities of their schools vis-à-vis the communities served (Macmillan, 2001).

In our research with experienced, new and aspiring administrators (Macmillan, Orr & Sherman 2000; Meyer, 1998; Macmillan, 1998, 2001a; Sherman, 2000a, 2000b), we have found that the skills and knowledge of new administrators acquired during preparation is not entirely complementary with their position. Traditional administrators' preparation programs tend to focus on the generalized, operational protocols and less on understanding how protocols are derived. Further, differentiation among competing protocols appears only with experience on the job. For this reason, some pre-service and in-service administrators may have difficulty adapting such protocols to a given situation in a particular context (Barnett, 2001; Macmillan, 1998). Although school districts prepare pools of candidates for administrative positions, we must have a better, more coherent understanding of the demands of the principalship to help us to design and deliver effective leadership programs.

Changing role of the principal

Traditionally, job descriptions for principals focussed on the administrative facets of the job, with the principal depicted as a school manager. In 1937, Luther Glick proposed a list of expectations for principals using the acronym POSDCoRB (planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting). By 1955, the American Association of School Administrators added stimulating staff and evaluating staff to the list (Sergiovanni, 1995). Other

lists of competencies often include such items as communication skills, curriculum knowledge, group processes and leadership behaviours. The vision of this type of schooling is bureaucratic with the in-school administration being all knowing (Allison, 1983; Lipham, 1981), situational and based on an externally perceived preconception of the role (Newell, 1978). The demands on many in-school administrators have caused them to focus more on the managerial function and on tasks not directly associated with instructional leadership (Gronn, 1983; Martin & Willower, 1981).

In the early 1980s with the advent of the effective schools movement, the conception of the principal's role shifted to instructional leadership, something which many studies claimed was achievable (Leithwood, 1988). In-school administrators were exhorted to lead teachers in instructional improvement through direct hands-on approaches, but as Greenfield (1982) pointed out "that traditional conceptions of the principal as instructional leader increasingly conflict with pressures to be 'production manager'" (p. 16). Leithwood and Montgomery (1986) suggested that principals had only indirect impact on student learning. The direct impact that principals had was in working directly with teachers and by changing the instructional environment, thus indirectly affecting student achievement. This shift caused researchers to examine issues associated with developing ownership and increasing commitment among teachers, a position reinforced with the increasing realization that instructional leadership is only one aspect of the principal's work (Bryce, 1983; Rallis & Highsmith, 1986). Hallinger and Heck (1996) conclude that the critical factor influencing the improvement of student achievement is principals working through and with others to improve the internal processes of schools.

With more frequency, the lists of responsibilities and duties used the language of outcomes, where principals were asked to think about what they were doing in terms of what they wanted to achieve. The shift in focus for in-school administrators was on becoming leaders of the whole school, and supporting the intellectual and emotional work of teachers (Hargreaves, et al., 2001). Sergiovanni (1995) suggested that principals had to avoid thinking only about what works and instead had to begin thinking about how to improve student learning.

Today we are attempting to move away from accepting a behaviorist view of managerial and administrative work focusing on clearly defined, positivistic sets of generic strategies. We are redefining the principalship by exploring intellectual and emotional leadership as a means to flatten hierarchies, to empower teachers and to build collaborative cultures (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991; Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves, et al., 2001), and thus creating effective learning organizations (Leithwood & Louis, 1998) through school communities based on principles and values (Covey, 1992; Lambert, 1998; Speck, 1999). With this as a focus, emphasis in the research has been on the creation of a professional knowledge base for principals (Donmoyer, Imber & Scheurich, 1995), on helping principals become change agents (Fullan, 1982, 1992; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998) and on encouraging principals to act as leaders in all aspects of the school, including in areas of instruction (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1997; Senge et al., 2000). This expansion of the role has broadened the initial definition of instructional leadership to include leadership inside and outside of the school into the communities it serves.

While researchers have been examining how in-school administrators can improve student learning, the society in which principals operate has changed and these changes have influenced the principalship. We need to consider context because some would argue that the scale of these changes are unprecedented (Fukuyama, 1999). While urban centres are growing and family structures change, rural locations maintain strong traditional views about the principalship and the role of the school. Principals struggle to push new ideas with staff and community while providing a more familiar face of the principalship at a time when many people feel distanced from their schools (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). Some might argue that the institution of school councils by various governments attempts to facilitate the development of closer, more familiar contacts between schools and communities. But in recent studies of school councils effectiveness in Canada (e.g., Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999) and of the research (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998), principals are struggling to determine how to introduce parental involvement in the school while redefining how this involvement will change their own work (Macmillan, 1997).

From this brief analysis of the literature, we get a sense that the administrator's role as understood is inadequate to describe its reality. This paper attempts to answer two questions: 1) What do educational administrators see as important to their role?; and 2) On what are administrators now spending their time?

The Data

We need to examine how the shifts identified in the literature are manifested in schools. The following discussion is based on the re-examination of four recent data sets from Nova Scotia used to study various aspects of the principalship. The studies explored such themes as the emerging role of administrators, women in administration, the support needed by pre-service and in-service administrators, and community-school relationships. The data have been re-analysed using a comparative, thematic approach to determine whether the shifts identified in the literature reflect those experienced in the field.

Study One

The data were collected through a survey distributed to 609 participants in leadership training modules put on by the Nova Scotia Educational Leadership Consortium (NSELC). We had 204 surveys returned for a 33.5% response rate. The questions were based on an earlier study completed by the National Association of Secondary School principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals asking "Is there a shortage of qualified candidates in the principalship?". The participants had completed at least one of the seven NSELC modules within the previous five years and had been or were waiting to be appointed to administrative positions.

Study Two

The data were collected from a series of 13 interviews of current school administrators from three Nova Scotia school boards during May-August 2000. We extracted sections of transcribed interviews that focused directly on instructional leadership and on the principal's

role. The interview questions were open ended, and were inspired by protocols and procedures designed by Denzin (1989) and Seidman (1991).

Study Three

In this study 21 female school administrators were interviewed about leadership issues in rural Nova Scotia. The women were administrators in a number of elementary and secondary schools in one school district. The interviews took place in these women's schools and were completed in May 1999. The interviews were informal, and based on a series of questions designed to promote conversation about administrative issues.

Study Four

The data were collected in 2001 for the first part of case study that focused on the school as a catalyst for community development. Interviews with three principals and an examination of the archival materials identified the leadership practices of the school administration vis-à-vis its community.

Findings

Study One

This survey of administrators and aspiring administrators asked participants questions ranging from why people apply, what discourages them from applying, and what is and ought to be considered by school boards when hiring administrators. One question asked participants to rank from 1 to 5, the seven items that are reasons why people are encouraged to consider administration. The survey results confirm that people are seeking administrative positions for reasons other than the challenge of the job (Table One). While people thought that the ability to control one's schedule is strong was a key motivator, the responses indicate a belief that people apply because of a general commitment to improve education and the ability to make a difference.

Table One: Reasons for applying to become administrators

What encourages people to apply	Mean
To control one's schedule	1.29
To improve community-school relationship	1.59
A general commitment to improve education	2.05
The ability to make a difference	2.18
Salary/compensation	2.47
The challenge of the job	2.52
To introduce a change	2.81

The analysis for the question asking participants to rate why people might not consider entering administration provide interesting insight. The following is a summarizes the findings:

- Overall, the greatest discouragement for those who might, but eventually do not consider administration is that the job is generally too stressful.
- Only teachers rated inequitable hiring practices higher than the stress level.

- Teachers rated inequitable hiring practices as the greatest discouragement with a mean score of 1.43 and administrators rate it as the third greatest discouragement with a mean score of 2.83

These data suggest that hiring practices need to be open and that strategies to reduce the stress experienced by administrators are needed.

Another question asked participants to identify characteristics considered by school boards when hiring new administrators. The participants were asked to rank a list of 11 administrative competencies and characteristics with (1) being most valued. The means of the responses for each item were used to re-rank the items.

The respondents felt that different characteristics should be emphasized when new administrators were selected. While status in the community, communication skills, good interpersonal skills, organizational abilities and a degree in educational administration were seen as competencies presently used as key discriminators among candidates (Table Two), those surveyed believed that school boards should place only a slightly higher value on curriculum knowledge, relegating a person's status in the community to a lower level (Table Three). They did feel that a candidate's credibility as a teacher ought to have a higher value. Survey participants suggested that less emphasis should be placed on completion of a degree in Educational Administration or on whether the candidate was a disciplinarian.

The difference in focus between what is believed to be valued and what respondents believe should be valued highlights instruction in the administrative role. Curriculum knowledge, a person's experience in leading others and a candidate's credibility as a teacher will positively influence the ability of that person to act as an instructional leader, but how one influences the internal processes of the school is more important (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). An administrator viewed as a good teacher may have more credibility with teachers than one who relies on status within the community to implement changes.

Table Two: What is considered by school boards when hiring administrators

What is considered	Mean
Status in the community	3.15
Communication skills	3.25
Good interpersonal skills	3.41
Organizational ability	3.50
A degree in Ed. administration	3.52
Curriculum knowledge	3.78
Completion of the NSEL modules	4.32
Experience in leading others	4.34
Status in the profession	4.35
Disciplinarian	4.57
Credibility as a teacher	4.94

Table Three: What ought to be considered by school boards when hiring administrators

What ought to be considered	Mean
Good interpersonal skills	2.45
Communication skills	2.78
Organizational ability	3.08
Curriculum knowledge	3.54
Status in the community	3.58
Experience in leading others	4.25
Credibility as a teacher	4.47
Status in the profession	4.64
A degree in Ed. administration	4.78
Disciplinarian	4.85
Completion of the NSEL modules	5.45

The largest difference between what was believed to be considered in hiring practices and what ought to be considered was with regard to the need for a degree in Educational Administration. While participants ranked this qualification fifth (mean of 3.52) in what they believe is considered, they believe it ought to be ranked ninth (mean of 4.78). Given that participants suggest a greater need for knowledge in curriculum areas, courses in educational administration must work to connect more purposely communication and organizational skills with the work of instructional leaders, including the supervision of instruction.

Study Two

This next section highlights one of the findings of the prioritized list of competencies cited above that administrators are expected to possess. Generally, the interview from this study responses support the view that other competencies than curriculum knowledge, and possibly by inference, instructional leadership are more important. The data reported here could be interpreted to mean that principals, as school leaders, are perceived more as policy managers than instructional leaders.

The following excerpt indicates two fascinating views of instructional leadership. While respondent indicates the necessity for a principal to have an awareness of current instructional trends, his comments suggest that the administrator is the first person to get out of touch with the trends, partly due to his/her responsibility to act as a manager of policies.

You should definitely be an instruction leader. You must be current and must stay on top of what's happening in educational change. Now, by the same token, there's nobody who gets out of touch any faster than a vice principal or principal if you don't keep up. The teachers are the ones who know. You're there to introduce new policies new guidelines from the department of education and new programs into the curriculum...

For this individual, the administrator has become a de facto facilitator, or perhaps a messenger of policy or legislation produced by the school district or by the government. Further, this individual perceived administrators as facilitators of professional development for teachers, rather than being personally involved in such learning experiences.

Child centered [learning]...How do we introduce the staff? I can bring somebody in; better still, I arranged it to take all the staff for two days out to another school... Over two days, each teacher went in and studied and watched and observed. They mentored one another... Modeling really worked.

This administrator demonstrated instructional leadership by literally leading the staff to professional development but not doing it himself.

Curriculum study of does not seem to be a priority for some principals. While aware of curricular directions and mandated objectives, they leave the responsibility for the introduction of changes to the classroom teacher at the elementary level and to Department Heads at the secondary level. According to one principal, the work day is too consumed with other items for principals to be intimately involved with classroom instruction.

You figure that you can spend time on developing this, or developing that, as part of bringing a school forward in curriculum... Administration is a day full of interruptions, you don't control the agenda ... we have a lot of interruptions and, often times, it's [only] at the end of the day, the evening or the non-school hours that you can work on curriculum.

For the administrators in this study, the principal's responsibility is to make time available for professional development aimed at expanding the curriculum knowledge base of teachers, and is often removed from direct involvement in classroom instruction.

There's a tremendous demand upon our teachers to change their approach to teaching, ...that kind of a turmoil creates serious stress within the staff... We try to do our very best to, to lighten that burden for our staff by giving them a high degree of preparedness, by in-servicing them, by having our department heads work with staff so that they feel comfortable with changes, and by freeing up our staff to go to in-services that are, that are related to these kinds of changes.

When asked about supervision of instruction, respondents often saw supervision of staff as a managerial function. They reduced personnel management to issues of fairness and "due process" and focussed only on the act of supervision, but not the purpose. Teacher supervision was done when necessary, and then only because, as one principal said, supervision was a necessary evil.

I guess, is sort of a summative supervision - as a place for new teachers or for teachers that you may be concerned about. But I don't think it has value for me in going in to your class room and writing you up formally. My approach to supervision, is that I do that when it has to be done. We have to do a certain percentage each year [of Staff] by that mandate or by the board. My approach is actually peer visits. I really strongly encourage peer visits because they weigh in at something that is structured. ...

This individual also stated that a principal can serve the supervisory role more successfully if the principal is visible – walking throughout the school, making short visits into the classrooms and perhaps having the staff feel that the principal has the pulse of the school.

Being around, out and around seeing bits and pieces of everyone's day;- like the general walk through - and popping in here and popping there- short visits. As far as knowing what's going on - is a part of the supervision.

Other respondents saw a potential conflict when supervising some experienced teachers and implied that a clearly defined process of supervision procedures helped to calm potential ill feelings of the process.

The introduction of new programs into the curriculum is a challenge. The majority of interviewees saw inclusion as prototypical of the introduction of new programs where teachers carry the burden of implementation and the principals help them along where possible. One administrator shared his concerns for the almost insurmountable challenge of the current inclusion policies. He indicated that there has not been sufficient resources and training or perhaps concern for all school constituents to deal properly with inclusion. His response was typical.

We're having problems with inclusion...the problem is that there's been no support put in there for the classroom teacher. So what we have is a situation where we have lots of kids in classes that need a tremendous amount of support, need modifications to the program that requires tremendous amount of teacher time. We have a lot of classes where eight or ten kids [per class] have required some form of modification in our building. It's virtually impossible. We're asking teachers to put inclusion in place and to work with it when the support is not there for them. We don't have enough people to carry on an inclusion policy as much as we would love to.

The language here suggests that the administrator is removed from being involved in helping teachers deal with issues. No mention is given of solutions sought or action taken.

Inclusion typifies many new mandated curricular initiatives. Administrators said they deal with the political fallout of any curricular change, a responsibility gaining in importance (Bolman & Deal, 1994). Due to the time required, this change detracts from extensive involvement in instructional supervision, leaving the responsibility for instructional innovation to teachers. This shift of role toward the managerial function from instructional leadership suggests the reason for curriculum knowledge falling towards the middle of the list of competencies in Table Three. To accommodate this new reality, administrators appear to have refocused their efforts away from educational issues to tasks that are more managerial (Wallace & Hoyle, 2001).

Study Three

As we saw above, the role of administrator is increasing in complexity and is shifting away from instructional leadership as direct involvement in classrooms to instructional leadership as the provision a positive instructional environment. When the focus shifts to female administrators, the rural economy/society in Nova Scotia causes further differences in administrative roles that need to be emphasized. Feminist researchers (Hicks, 1996; Young, 1990) argue that females have been marginalized in the re/reproduction of knowledge through identification with alternative styles of management. Identified female administrative strategies and orientations are quite different from the traditional masculine model which includes the valuing of task orientation, objectivity,

independence, and aggression. The elements of leadership that most consistently inform a female administrative style include an emphasis on establishing relationships with others to build community, on their role as instructional leader, on the significance that marginality plays in their daily work life, and finally, on their on-going struggle to balance the demands of public and private worlds. In interviews with twenty-one female administrators in rural Nova Scotia, these elements were confirmed. What caused females, and males attempting to change what is perceived to be the typical male principal role, to "stand out", is the rural location of many schools in Nova Scotia.

A difficulty arises not in the identification of difference, but in the recognition, legitimization and implementation of these preferred modes of leadership within current school leadership practice. This is true for both females and males. Successful administration typically has depended upon females adopting traditional "men in skirts" leadership styles (Shakeshaft, 1989) or else risk marginalization. Recent work has argued that successful leadership should be broadened to include alternative management styles that allow for the perspectives and experiences of women and men who are attempting to focus beyond the managerial side of the principalship.

According to Valla (1989), fewer men are choosing teaching careers with increases in both real numbers and the percentage of women possibly translating into more women seeking and gaining administrative appointments. However, in rural settings, the women interviewed stated that if all things are equal, a man is considered a better choice for an administrative position than a woman. It is possible that these perceptions are, in the words of Barbara Gill (1995), an indication of a pervasive, long-established culture that says, "This is not a job for women" (p.59).

Mary, the principal of a large school, has worked with two different vice-principals since becoming principal. Her fellow administrators have both been men and prior to her own appointment, all her administrators were men. She expresses the difference in style of leadership in this way:

Women have a distinct style, at least the women that I have meet with seem to focus on priorities different than those of men. At principal meetings the males talk about problems specific to their own school ¼ "I need two more computers" ¼ "I need a repair done in the tech room", things that are not of interest to the rest of us. The women are concerned about more holistic issues and the way they affect the children. The women talk about the students more and I think we are better communicators. We are interested in providing instructional leadership and what goes on in the classrooms keeps coming up in conversations. The men need to get away from the idea of their school as a private kingdom and be more willing to discuss issues that concern all of us.

The women described ways in which they exhibited a different leadership style from most men and the ideas of effectiveness for a female depended upon this altered approach. An in-depth look at the difference in leadership styles reveals that men and women vary in the areas of leadership and management, work environment, communication style, decision making, and conflict resolution. The women noted differences that they felt were exemplified in the school district's principals' meetings of 32 men and 7 women. The ways men handled challenges at these meetings were watched carefully by the women. The talk at each meeting was male dominated, resulting in feelings of marginalization by the women who offered a different

administrative voice. Although the women principals stated they felt they could speak at the meeting, few of them ever did. They felt detached from discussions leading to decisions and felt their input was neither necessary nor pursued. Meetings are dominated by a top-down style of organization and respondents lamented the inability of their leadership to move towards a more group-oriented process.

When asked to describe characteristics and competencies that were different for women and men administrators, the women identified female traits as including nurturing personalities and a focus on providing staff opportunities. They stressed a move away from hierarchies to the creation of a sense of community. Words like maternal, mothering, comforting, compassionate, and empathetic were used to describe a community closeness, and nurturing was a recurrent theme. One woman stated, "Our power is in our nurturing". While much of the discussion with these women surrounded issues of power, this was the only time that a woman used the word power. Instead, words like influence, credibility, or authority, were used to describe the way these women felt they could change situations. They felt the best way to effect change was through the development of caring relationships. These women point out clearly that their administration, at least, reinforces what was found in Study One. Their focus was on the factors that help to create a sound instructional environment, such as communication, organization and interpersonal skills.

Study Four

The community in Study Four had been seriously affected by the collapse of the fisheries in Nova Scotia, such that out-migration threatens the viability of the school. The three principals interviewed had acted as an administrative team and used the school as a catalyst for refocusing the community on new areas for economic development.

John was the principal. Both schools [an elementary and a secondary school] were connected then; we were a family. I was a vice-principal and Jane was a vice-principal. When we sat down and looked at our goals and what our needs were, the lack of technology in the area and in the school was our number one priority, to try to do something.

The first principal saw technology as a possible answer to the economic problems, because technology would not be geographically restricted by market and resources as the fisheries had been. Early on, he instituted a school advisory council the year (1996) that the legislation mandated such councils, unlike other schools which took longer. The council created the forum for the school and community to begin to examine the role of the school as a catalyst for development, even though this focus appeared to be nebulous rather than clear at the outset. When John saw opportunities for funded initiatives which built on his and others' vision, he drew on the council for expertise because several members were also community leaders.

The first stages of the vision for technology involved the principal canvassing the local fisheries plant owners for funds, and they committed \$10,000 as seed money to set up a laptop computer laboratory accessible to both students and the community. Students developed their technological expertise and became a core of trained individuals bidding on external contracts.

The computers ... thing was initially school based but we got another CAP [Computer Access Project] site hooked out of the elementary school site. The town became very interested in technology because it saw it as an economic development tool and through the CAP sites, 14 students were hired for summer projects, most of them in digitizing [museum] collections and digitizing web sites. We have developed a real expertise in that in the community and the towns use that. They have hired some of their staff from the students who have been in these programs and then that staff has put together proposals like the licensed practical nursing program, the first one done online in the province, and that operates here out of the post office.

This was but one of several projects that included the Network of Innovative Schools, a partnership with Sable Gas to create interdisciplinary units, the Junior High School Network in Nova Scotia and the Blue School Program associated with the Canadian Wildlife Federation. The two schools have a combined student population of under 400 students.

When the principal was transferred out of the community, the two vice-principals became principals of the two schools. They had a common idea of the role of the school.

It is a place that is community, not student, not just educationally centered, although certainly education is the focus and that is why it is there but that it is not just for kids. What I like to see is for the building to be used all the time and what I would like to see most of all is, I would like to see parents out there all day, not just after school.

Schools, then, could provide the opportunity for instigating development. By seeking out initiatives to maintain the community and the student population, or at least to prepare students better for work or higher education, these administrators reconceptualized their roles to include leadership within the community as a means to maintain and support the community, and ultimately the school. For these individuals, the latter responsibilities were an essential part of what they did within the school. As with Study One, curriculum knowledge became secondary to other responsibilities perceived necessary to the maintenance of a positive instructional environment.

Conclusions

We started with two questions as a frame for this paper. Each are discussed separately below.

1) What do educational administrators see as important to their role?

Administrators told us that curriculum and instruction are not at the top of their list of priorities. Study One showed that curriculum knowledge is fourth on the list of competencies that principals ought to have while the other three studies reinforced this by suggesting that administrators are not concentrating on curricular issues. In Study Two, the managerial function is taking precedence. In one area, supervision of instruction, personnel management and contractual issues are the focus rather than professional development. Study Three shows that as women gain more prominence in educational leadership positions, the focus of the principalship

will likely shift to a more holistic view with an emphasis on communication and community. These trends suggest that to expect an educational administrator to focus solely on instructional issues is not realistic.

2) On what are administrators now spending their time?

Other areas than curriculum are consuming administrators' time. These include crisis intervention, resource management, accountability (e.g. reports and other paperwork), and responsibilities vis-à-vis the community previously the mandate of the school district or other agencies (e.g., social services, economic agencies and law enforcement). Study Three suggests that administrators are taking a managerial approach to their positions, leaving instructional leadership as conceived in the early 1980s to others, but predominantly to teachers. Study Four highlights that for various economic and social reasons, schools can no longer isolate themselves from their communities. Along with the mandated responsibilities of the principal, the role is increasingly becoming one of community leader with responsibilities not just confined to the needs of the school but extending to the needs of its communities.

Implications

Instructional leadership as conceived in the early 1980s requires that principals be intimately involved with instruction (Greenfield, 1987). Based on what we have seen in Nova Scotia and the literature, we suggest that instructional leadership needs to reflect the realities of the role and to be reconceptualized as a multi-dimensional role in which the administrator fosters an environment promoting the improvement of instruction through non-managerial approaches.

Recommendations for further study

- 1) We need to have a detailed analysis of what administrators are doing on a day-to-day basis to fulfill their mandated responsibilities. Our studies indicate that some principals are evading some responsibilities as a result of competing pressures such as the increased involvement of outside agencies.
- 2) We do not have a clear understanding of the impact of the amalgamation of school districts on principal's work. Because central office personnel are physically and psychologically removed, this ought to influence what principals can do and the support that they and their schools receive.
- 3) Administrator preparation programs need to be examined to determine if they are reflecting the changes in educational policy and school governance. This is important given the number of administrators set to retire in the next few years [see for example, the Nova Scotia Department of Education (2000) statistics of eligible retirees in education].

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