

AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PRACTICES
USED BY MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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(ABSTRACT)

This paper is an analysis of the interview questions and practices of seven middle school principals from a large suburban city in southeastern Virginia. Data were collected from actual audio taped teacher interviews conducted by the principals and from a postteacher interview questionnaire sent via E-mail from the researcher to each principal. This qualitative research was undertaken to serve as a benchmark for present practices used in the city and to determine if training in personnel selection is necessary for principals.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics devised by the researcher and her dissertation committee members. Frequencies were used to present quantitative data. While all interview questions were labeled according to both content and category, the mean for interrater reliability was computed for category only and was found to be 0.94 overall, which was deemed acceptable by the researcher.

Major study findings indicated that principals do use some components of a structured interview but lack the training to fully utilize this as a selection method. Most principals indicated that they had never received any formal training on conducting either a structured or unstructured interview. Demographic characteristics (i.e., experience as

principal, age, race, and gender) showed no differences in types of questions asked or practices used. Interview questions were coded and grouped according to the following six categories: factual knowledge, cognitive ability, role play, problem-solving, synthesis, and professional opinion. Of the 844 questions asked by all principals, 365 (43%) were coded as factual knowledge and almost none required role play or synthesis. There was great variation in the time spent in each interview, ranging from 8 to 40 minutes. Analysis did not show significant differences in the questions asked of those hired compared to those not hired. Results of this study suggest that the school system needs to provide training to principals and evaluate their skills on an on-going basis to be sure that the best employees are being selected by principals.