

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter five contains a summary, conclusions, and discussion along with recommendations for future research and practice.

Summary

This study was conducted to identify and describe the personnel responsibilities and preparation of either the person delegated primary responsibility for the personnel function or the superintendent in school divisions with 5,000 students or less in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study also sought to determine which responsibilities were performed, shared, or delegated, and if so, to whom.

In the responding school districts someone performed certain personnel functions in the district in order for the goals and objectives to be met. Also, there was a lack of uniformity, among school districts, as to what were considered essential responsibilities for the effective operation of the personnel department. The personnel functions used in this study are planning, recruitment, selection, induction, appraisal, development, compensation, justice, continuity, and information.

The population used in the study consisted of twenty superintendents, twenty assistant superintendents, eleven personnel directors, one director of finance, four directors of instruction, and four persons with multiple titles. School divisions with student populations of greater than 5,000 students were excluded from the study because in larger school divisions the personnel function tends to be more specialized and are performed by a person with a specific job title related to personnel.

In small school divisions within Virginia with 5,000 students or less, the superintendent was more often responsible for the personnel function. The study shows

the assistant superintendent or director of personnel were frequently designated as the person with primary responsibility for the personnel function. Other people in the division who either performed, shared, or were delegated the responsibility for certain job responsibilities held one of the following titles: principal, clerk or secretary, administrator, administrative support person (director of finance, business manager, or administrative assistant), director of instruction, multiple titles (persons holding multiple titles), or some other position not falling within one of the previous job classifications.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this study come from the research questions. Research question one asked for the profile of the superintendent or the person with the primary responsibility for the personnel responsibilities in school divisions of 5,000 students or less. The results are:

1. The typical respondent either held the position of superintendent or assistant superintendent. He was a white male, average age of 52, with at least a master's degree. He has held his current position an average of seven years and has been employed in the field of personnel management for at least 13 years. He holds a Virginia license in teaching and administration and received his personnel training on the job and by attending state conferences, academies, and workshops.

The second research question asked who performed what job responsibilities in school divisions of 5,000 students or less. The results are:

2. Fourteen responsibilities were identified as being performed by 40 percent or more of the respondents who were primarily superintendents (33.3%), assistant superintendents (33.3%), and personnel directors (18.3%). The 14 responsibilities identified were preparing personnel information for the board

(58%), supervising the handling of EEOC complaints (53%), posting job openings (51%), providing data as requested by the superintendent and board (47%), reviewing instructional applications (46%), developing job descriptions (46%), screening substitute teacher (45%), administering procedures for internal promotions and transfers (45%), administering guidelines for reduction-in-force (44%), conducting recruitment activities (42%), reviewing support staff applications (41%), reviewing and mediating employee grievances (41%), overseeing contracts (40%), and reviewing administrative applications (40%).

A sub-question under who performs what personnel responsibilities is what level of responsibility does technology play in handling these duties? The results are:

a. Technology use is the highest in the planning and compensation areas where developing the personnel budget, developing salary schedules, and administering the staff payroll operations are performed. Technology in small divisions primarily focuses on duties involving numbers.

The second sub-question under who performs what personnel responsibilities is what extent the responsibility will increase, decrease, or remain the same over the next three to five years?

b. Most of the respondents indicated no increase in job responsibilities in the next three to five years. The job responsibilities identified as anticipating an increase were staffing, budgeting, recruiting, selecting and inducting employees, posting jobs, background checks, application review, substitute list, benefit information, job descriptions, staff evaluation and development, salary schedules, job analyses, record keeping, data

collecting, reporting and dissemination. Respondents anticipated an increase in forecasting staffing needs, budgeting, recruiting, selecting, and inducting new employees. They also foresee the increased demand for information about salaries by duties, costs, and benefits for all staff members.

The third research question deals with the relationship between the size of the school division and who performs the job responsibilities. The results are:

3. In school divisions with 1,000 students or less, superintendents were responsible for the job responsibilities, assistant superintendents in school divisions with 1,001 students or more but equal to or less than 2,950 students, and personnel directors in the school divisions with 2,951 students or more but equal to or less than 5,000 students. As divisions get larger in size, the need for specialization increases thus the requirement for a personnel director.

The fourth research question ask what is the relationship between wealth of the school division and who performs the job responsibilities. The results are:

3. In poor divisions, with the composite index equal to or less than .3157, superintendents and assistant superintendents performed a larger percentage of the job responsibilities. In middle wealth school divisions, with the composite index equal to or greater than .3158 but equal to or less than .3975, superintendents performed the job responsibilities. In wealthy school divisions, with the composite index equal to or greater than .3976 but equal to or less than .8000, superintendents, assistant superintendents, and administrative support persons were

responsible for the job responsibilities.

Discussion

The results of the study suggest that the person with primary responsibility for the personnel function should have training in each of the ten areas of the personnel function. The highest request for additional training were in the areas of planning appraisal, recruitment, and justice. In the area of recruitment for small divisions it is frequently more difficult to attract candidates because of location and the availability of resources. Therefore, there is a need to improve recruitment strategies and techniques to obtain the best candidates.

Superintendents being considered for employment should have an understanding of specific job responsibilities related to staffing, promotion and transfer procedures, contract management, application review, salary schedules, grievances, discipline procedures, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) complaints, employee leave, and reduction-in-force.

If a person is employed without training in the specific job responsibilities indicated above, then school boards and superintendents must make available professional development that enable the person to become successful in the position. The results of the study support the finding that professional development may vary and is dependent upon the position of the individual and the designated area of the job responsibility.

The information obtained in the study suggests that school divisions in Virginia need to devote more resources and training to technology. The areas of planning, selection, and information should have higher technology use. These three areas include job responsibilities that can be handled more efficiently through the use of technology. Examples include student enrollment projections, staff forecasting, reviewing and screening applications, completing federal, state, and local reports, and maintaining personnel records. The use of computers, for such tasks as teleconferencing, recruitment,

faxes, e-mail, and the internet all provide means by which the performance of the job responsibilities can be simplified. Staffing patterns and changes could more easily be aligned with division needs through the use of the computer database. A division wishing to develop or update job descriptions would find numerous websites and legal references on the internet related to essential functions. This would support efforts in addressing procedures, for example, in handling (EEOC) complaints. Technology should play a major role in the performance of the personnel function, especially in small divisions where resources and training is often limited. Superintendents, school boards, and the Virginia Department of Education could conclude from the data that the low use of technology and the little expected change indicates a need for a greater awareness of technology usage to improve current practices. School divisions must strive to increase the use of technology, not only in teaching students, but also in training administrators on how to work smarter and more efficiently.

It is important to note that the researcher is careful not to draw major conclusions with some of the data. An example is drawing conclusions about the relationship of the size of a school division and who performs the job responsibilities. In small divisions, equal to or less than 1,000 students, there were only five respondents and all were superintendents. There were five other divisions in the survey population that did not respond. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude that only superintendents have the primary responsibility for the personnel function without the missing data.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings in this study have implications for other research in understanding the job responsibilities of the personnel function. Further investigation is needed as to why only 37 percent or fewer of the respondents foresee an increase in job responsibilities over the next three to five years.

This study may be replicated in small districts outside of Virginia that hold different expectations for the personnel function. A further study may be conducted to

determine the relationship between division wealth and the quality of service provided by the person responsible for the function.

This study identified a number of persons who were either directly responsible for the performance of the job responsibility or shared the responsibility. A separate study may explore the effectiveness of those persons with formal personnel training and those with minimal on-the-job training. This information would have implications for whether the position of personnel administrator should be a licensed position.

Finally, a study may be conducted to determine at what point a division's size would dictate the employment of a personnel director. This information would assist school divisions experiencing growth in the planning process.

Recommendations for Practice

The intent of this study was to identify and describe the personnel responsibilities and preparation of the person designated with primary responsibility for the personnel function. The identification of the 53 essential job responsibilities and who is performing what has implications for training requirements for the person responsible for the personnel function. The study further identifies what duties are primary responsibilities in comparable school divisions of size and wealth. Individuals can use the information for determining the essential responsibilities critical to the success of a school division's personnel function. Administrators in small school divisions, who have been assigned the task of carrying out the personnel function, will gain a greater understanding of what job responsibilities, essential training requirements, and minimal education requirements are necessary for the performance the personnel function in small school divisions in Virginia. Finally, the Virginia Association of School Personnel Administrators and the American Association of School Personnel Administrators will gain from the contribution of knowledge and understanding in the field through the addition of this literature, which will be presented for publication in their journals and newsletters.