

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RELATED FINDINGS,
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE,
AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Following a summary of the study, conclusions and related findings, discussions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research are presented for each variable.

Summary

A random sample of 400 principals representing the 27,000 members of the National Association of Elementary School Principals was sent the Survey of Time-Management Practices (TMP) to determine if there was a relationship between the frequency of use of certain time-management practices and

- ◆ principals' work management styles,
- ◆ the degree of flexibility in using the work management styles,
- ◆ the school type (public vs. private),
- ◆ the school level (elementary vs. middle),
- ◆ the complexity of the school,
- ◆ the years of experience,
- ◆ gender, and
- ◆ the amount of training in the area of time-management.

A careful review of the related literature and studies took place between November 1995 and December 1997. Validation of the TMP Survey instrument took place between March 1997 and January 1998. The surveys were distributed in March 1998, and 304 surveys (76%) were returned by July 1998.

Multiple regression and correlation analyses were conducted between July 1998 and October 1998.

Conclusions and Related Findings; Discussion; Implications for Practice; and Recommendations for Future Research for each Variable

When following the traditional format for chapter 5 where conclusions, discussion, implications and recommendations were separate sections, the narrative read choppy and disconnected for six variables. Therefore, the next sections contain the conclusions and related findings, discussions, implications for practice and recommendations for future research for each variable in this study.

Work Management Styles, Work Management Style Most Like Them, and Flexibility

The next sections give the conclusions and related findings, discussion, implications for practice, and recommendations on the five work management styles, the work management style most like them and flexibility.

Conclusions and Related Findings

Principals used all five work management styles. Sixty-one percent clearly indicated that the Hopper style of managing the job of being a school principal was the

style *most* like them.

Discussion

Hoppers are people who handle several tasks simultaneously as they literally hop from one thing to another, often not completing tasks because of constant interruptions. Principals in this study indicated that they did not intentionally just move from task to task, but rather the nature of the job required them to respond to the teachers, parents, students, and others very often, and, thus, they frequently could not complete a task that had begun. As far as the overall results are concerned, the present study confirms the picture of administrative work found by Mintzberg (1980), Kmetz and Willower (1982), and other investigators using structured observation methodology, even though this study was done through using a self-reporting survey. This picture includes a high volume of work completed at an unrelenting pace, variety, brevity, fragmentation of tasks, and preferences for oral communication and live action.

School principals in this study still operate in more of a reactionary mode as a Hopper rather than the step-by-step logical procedures of a Perfectionist Plus. Similarly, as mentioned in Kmetz & Willower (1982), principals in this study also appeared to prefer the oral rather than written communication. For example, 64.5% of the principals indicated that they “often or very often” prefer to summarize major points at the end of meetings, while 26.6% “rarely or never” distributed written copies of minutes of those same meetings. Also, 79.3% of the principals took “tours” or walked through their buildings “at least twice a day to over five times a day,” but 47.4% indicated that they

“rarely or never” set aside time to complete written paperwork, and 47.7% “rarely or never” set aside time to review paperwork with their secretary. These two examples show that principals have a preference for oral rather than written communication.

An assumption was that school principals exhibited characteristics of one of the five work management styles and perhaps used certain time-management practices that could be identified with that one work management style. It was found that this assumption was not true. Principals reported that they exhibited characteristics of all five work management styles to some degree, the concept of flexibility evolved. They did not differ very much on their use of the five styles. Flexibility was measured by looking at the variation between the ratings of 1 (never) to 5 (very often) on Question one where principals indicated how frequently they used each of the five work management styles. An average standard deviation of 1.22 indicated that they were flexible in using all of the five work management styles in their work. This would seem a healthy idea for principals, since the pace of the job requires such flexibility. Some principals could not even identify with one style over another when asked to select the one style that was *most like them* on Question two of the TMP Survey. Forty-one principals (13%) did not answer that particular question, perhaps because it was difficult to select one over another.

The eight principals who were used to validate the five paragraphs commented early on how easy it was to relate to several of the work management paragraphs and that it was difficult to relate to just one style as the paragraphs were written. Perhaps it was best stated by Respondent 164 who wrote, “Management style varies from day to day

depending on situations.” Thus, the concept of flexibility in using the five work management styles was crucial in this study. Because of this revelation, Question one (see Appendix A) was changed. Rather than have principals select only one work management style, they were asked to rate how frequently they used several work management styles.

Implications for Practice

From the findings, it can be implied that principals remain flexible in their use of the five work management styles. Rather than trying to force fit a *preferred* management style, principals must be open to how the work day unfolds and must be able to use the work management style needed for the circumstances of that day or that moment within the day. Since it was indicated that most days required the Hopper Style of managing, principals should not get upset with themselves and feel guilty when a day requires them to hop from task to task. It would be beneficial for principals to accept that this type of day is more the norm than not.

A second implication regarding the flexibility in using the five work management styles relates to aspiring principals. Aspiring principals can expect many work days to be at an unrelenting pace where they will be hopping from task to task. If this kind of work management style frustrates them, then perhaps they should *not* go into the principalship or they should pay careful attention as to the use of the Hopper Style.

This “go with the flow, be flexible” philosophy implies that when school principals operate in this manner, they are in Covey, Merrill, and Merrill’s (1994) First Generation of time managers, unless school principals consciously recognize that they are experiencing a

Hopper day and *choose* to use the Hopper style of managing their day. Then, principals have moved to Covey, Merrill, and Merrill's Third Generation of time managers where they are clarifying values and setting priorities. If, however, principals are engaged in an activity that they deem as important in their lives as they hop from task to task, then they are operating in Covey, Merrill, and Merrill's Fourth Generation where the emphasis is on life leadership rather than time management.

A third implication regarding the manner in which principals are required to hop from task to task relates to the superiors of principals. Their superiors should understand that the pace of a school demands that principals operate in this manner. They should not expect a principal always to be available when they call or drop by to see them unexpectedly. They should reserve their judgements about principals and be more understanding when school principals seem preoccupied with the business of running a school.

Recommendations for Future Research

Respondents in the study ranked the use of the five work management styles in the same order that they appeared on the actual survey itself. Because of the length of the paragraphs and the fact that principals tend to scan material, it is not clear if respondents read to the end of all five paragraphs or not. Therefore, it is recommended that the five work management paragraphs be randomly placed on subsequent surveys to prevent respondents who do not read thoroughly from selecting the first paragraphs just because they were first on the page.

The eight principals who validated the five work management paragraphs recommended that the “names” of the work management styles not be used anywhere on the survey because some of the names are offensive. This suggestion was used and the names of the work management styles were not used on the actual survey. For example, if the actual name of Perfectionist Plus had been used on the survey, some principals would not have selected it. Some principals do not like the stigma that goes with being called a perfectionist and would not have chosen that work management style for that reason, even though they may exhibit some Perfectionist Plus characteristics.

It is also recommended that further study be conducted on the frequency of use of the five work management styles by individual principals and under what conditions they use the five work management styles. Perhaps it would be useful to principals to know how often they are a Hopper, Perfectionist Plus, Allergic to Detail, Fence Sitter, or Cliff Hanger. Perhaps their superiors would also want to know the dominant work management style of their principals and how flexible they are or are not in using the appropriate work management style for the circumstances of the day. This information could also be useful in the selection process of aspiring administrators.

Since flexibility was an integral part of this study, it is recommended that future researchers examine the concept of flexibility in aspiring administrators and compare their flexibility with that of current administrators to see if this concept could predict successful future administrators. Other measures of flexibility need to be developed because of the uncertainty of the adequacy of the standard deviation measure in this study.

Work Management Styles and Principal's Gender, School Type, School Level

The next section contains conclusions regarding the five work management styles (Hopper, Perfectionist Plus, Allergic to Details, Fence Sitter, Cliff Hanger), males and females, public school and private school principals, and elementary and middle school principals.

Conclusions and Discussion

There were no significant differences in the work management styles of males and females, public school and private school principals, or elementary and middle school principals.

The middle school principals in this study do not necessarily represent middle school principals in the United States. Ninety-three percent of the school principals that took the Survey of Time-Management Practices (TMP) for School Administrators reflect schools with elementary grades in them less than or equal to grade 8. At the beginning of this study, elementary principals were the target respondents. Thus, a random sample of the membership of the National Association of *Elementary* School Principals (NAESP) was taken. However, as the surveys were returned, it became obvious that members of this organization represented eighteen different variations of grade groupings including 25.3% who were middle school principals housing grades 6 - 8. It was at that time that the data were disaggregated as elementary and middle to determine if significant differences existed. There were none. The conclusions in this study mostly reflect the total sample.

The Hopper was clearly the most used work management style by gender, school

type (public vs. private) and school level (elementary vs. middle) in this study (see Appendix K). Perhaps this is due to the unrelenting pace of a principal's job that was found in several studies (Kmetz & Willower, 1982; Mintzberg, 1980; Weldy, 1974). Principals in all three categories acknowledged that they literally hopped from one task to another. Many wrote that it was not because they *preferred* this style necessarily, but because the job demanded this style of managing. Campbell and Williamson (1991) in their study of 258 high school principals concluded that principals do not have sufficient time to provide the quality leadership expected of them by the multitude of constituents they serve. The results of this study support Campbell and Williamson's (1991) conclusion with the fact that the job requires principals to be Hoppers, which takes up the time that they would ordinarily have to provide quality leadership.

Recommendations for Future Research

To represent a more accurate picture of the similarities and differences between elementary and middle school principals' use of time-management practices, it is recommended that a random sample of The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) be surveyed and compared with the results of this study. An over sampling of middle school principals should be considered so that a sufficient number of middle school principals will be included in the study. The results of this study may not be generalized to high school principals.

School Complexity

The next sections give the conclusions and related findings, discussion,

implications for practice, and recommendations for future research on school complexity.

Conclusions

The significant correlation of .16 ($p \leq .05$) between school complexity and time-management allows one to conclude that the school principals of more complex schools (large school enrollment, several specialty programs, more IEP's and 504 Plans, percentage on free and reduced-priced lunch, number of observations and summative evaluations, number of staff requiring extra paperwork, and the number of support personnel) used time-management practices more frequently than school principals of less complex schools. The more complex the school, the more frequently time-management practices are used by the school principal.

Discussion

Items that were used in this study to measure school complexity went through a validation process. Determining the complexity of a school was a difficult undertaking due to the fact that what makes one school more or less complex than another depends largely on many variables. The challenge was to make each measure of complexity equal in the minds of the readers, and that is almost impossible. Each school has its own unique variables that makes it complex. All school principals have their own strengths and weaknesses that they bring to the job. There are so many variables that could affect the complexity of a school that this concept should be investigated further.

Implications for Practice

Since school principals in this study who had more complex schools used time-

management practices more frequently, it would appear that the more time-management practices school principals know, the better they can manage complex schools.

Superintendents could use this fact to justify assigning more organized principals to more complex schools.

Recommendations for Future Research

The competence of the principal, secretary, and other staff working within a school may also have an impact on the time-management practices a principal uses in a complex school. This study did not assess the competence of the staff, only the number of support personnel available to the principal. A future research project could assess the work management styles of leadership teams in schools and determine which kinds of management styles compliment each other. Perhaps principals could benefit from knowing which work management styles compliment their own. If, for example, a principal recognized that they were an Allergic to Detail style most of the time, then perhaps an assistant principal that was a Perfectionist Plus, who paid attention to details would compliment that principal's style. Superintendents could perhaps use this information to select complimentary teams of administrators to work within a school setting.

Six Categories of Time-Management Practices

The next sections give the conclusions and related findings, discussion, implications for practice, and recommendations for the six categories of time-management practices. Using the mean time-management (TMP) scores of the principals, these categories were ranked in the following order from top to bottom: (1) managing meetings ($\underline{M} = 3.94$, $\underline{SD} = .54$), (2) establishing priorities ($\underline{M} = 3.92$, $\underline{SD} = .81$), (3) delegating practices ($\underline{M} = 3.71$, $\underline{SD} = .68$), (4) handling interruptions ($\underline{M} = 3.19$, $\underline{SD} = .63$), (5) scheduling contacts ($\underline{M} = 3.08$, $\underline{SD} = .61$), and (6) managing paperwork ($\underline{M} = 3.05$, $\underline{SD} = .57$).

Principals, generally, are still allowing events in the operation of a school to control them. This implication was also found by Kmetz & Willower in 1982 when they concluded that “events ordinarily controlled principals rather than the other way around” (p.77). This implication was evident in each category of time management and is discussed in paragraphs that follow.

Practices for Managing Meetings

School principals were surveyed on eight time-management practices that related to managing meetings.

Conclusions and related findings. Principals in this study recognized the value of using the practices for managing meetings. Principals used all of the practices for managing meetings. In Appendix Q, over 80% of the principals reported that the purpose of the meetings was known prior to the start, that general time limits were set for

meetings, and meetings started and ended on time. Principals were unclear as to whether distributing minutes was useful. Their answers were distributed about equally across response categories. Four pockets of data support this conclusion. Eighteen percent of them reported that they “never” distribute minutes, whereas 26% reported that they “sometimes” distributed them, 20.1% reported that they “often” distributed them, and 21.7% reported that they distributed minutes of meetings “very often”.

Implications for practice. Principals should continue to use basic time-management practices for managing meetings since meetings consume so much of principals’ time. That meetings consume large amounts of principals’ time was supported in Kmetz & Willower’s (1982) study, when the principals in their study averaged 8.4 scheduled meetings per week. These meetings tended to be long, averaging 34.6 minutes, and they consumed 10.3 % of the principals’ time.

Recommendations for future research. Kmetz & Willower (1982) studied the number of meetings, total time spent in the meetings, and the mean percent of time spent on that activity. This present study surveyed selected practices of managing meetings. The next step would be to investigate the quality of the interactions during the meetings between principals and their constituents; then examine methods that could possibly improve those interactions.

Practices for Establishing Priorities

Principals were surveyed on eight practices for establishing priorities within their schools. These eight practices did not exhaust the area of establishing priorities but did

represent significant areas uncovered in the literature review.

Conclusions and discussion. Principals recognized the value in establishing priorities and sharing high priorities with appropriate personnel in their schools. They used all of the practices for establishing priorities. Even though it has been established that principals hop from task to task, their use of the practices that establish priorities show that they are hopping to tasks that are high priorities for the school. However, time-management experts differ on how frequently priorities should be established. This difference is understandable in light of the data in this study which indicated that principals also did not agree on how frequently these priorities should be established. There are large numbers of principals who establish priorities *weekly* (24.3 %), large numbers who establish them *monthly* (28.9 %), and large numbers who establish priorities *annually* (22.4%). Thirty-four percent of the school principals discuss high priority tasks with the school leadership team *weekly*, while thirty-nine percent discuss them *monthly*. However, there is no way to determine whether sharing and discussing priorities monthly, weekly, or annually is more effective due to the way data were collected in this study.

According to many time-management gurus (Mayer, 1995; Schlenger, & Roesch, 1989; Shipman, Martin, McKay, & Anastasi, 1987; Winston, 1983), maintaining a “To-Do” list daily, where priorities can be analyzed at the beginning and ending of each day, is recommended. However, Covey, Merrill, and Merrill (1994) recommend that “To-Do” lists be maintained *weekly*, which would keep principals focused on high-priority tasks for the week and prevent them from writing and rewriting smaller tasks each day. The actual

writing and rewriting of tasks is time consuming. Covey, Merrill, and Merrill's method also allows principals to analyze tasks daily, but not necessarily rewrite them. They also recommend that principals align their daily tasks with the goals they have for their life and the top priorities for a particular week. Covey, Merrill, and Merrill (1994) say that principals should decide on high priority tasks for the week and create a "To-Do" list that links daily activities with the high priorities.

School level and grade level priorities are linked by principals. This is the only conclusion that could be drawn from the way Questions 57 and 58 were written. Principals also linked daily activities to school priorities. Even though a significant number of principals (over 80%) indicated that school priorities were linked to district priorities and grade level priorities were linked to school priorities, it is not clear how they are linked.

Recommendations for future research. It is recommended that Questions 57, 58, and 61 be rewritten to elicit *how* and in what form priorities in a school are linked. Future researchers could also investigate techniques that help principals establish priorities in their schools. It is further recommended that future researchers investigate whether it is more effective for principals to discuss and share priorities daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually. To know which kind of items should be communicated daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually would also be beneficial to building administrators. It would add to the understanding of how this type of communication maintains vision and focus for the organization.

Practices for Delegating

Principals were surveyed on four delegation practices. This number of practices in no way exhausts the concept of delegating. This was not a sufficient number of questions to adequately address the topic and draw reliable conclusions about the delegation practices of principals.

Conclusions and discussion. Principals used three of the four delegation practices in this study. Thirty-eight percent of the principals clearly indicated that they “rarely or never” used a Tickler File or some system that monitored delegations. Twenty percent indicated that they used a Tickler File sometimes while twenty-two percent indicated that it was used often. The omission of this practice may be a cause for principals being perceived as Cliff Hangers, people who wait until the last minute. If they do not have a system to monitor whether delegated tasks are being done or not, then they become vulnerable to the habits of the person to whom the task has been delegated. Since it is very likely that some staff members may wait until the last minute to complete the task or not even complete it at all, principals may often be left to complete the task themselves.

Recommendations for future research. The delegation practices of school principals should be investigated further. Future researchers could investigate various methods of follow-up for delegations. Or they could conduct a study that compares

delegating and empowering, which would help clear up these two concepts for principals.

Practices for Handling Interruptions

Four questions within this category addressed the how to handle interruptions; however, several other questions in other categories of the TMP Survey (scheduling contacts: Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, & Q20) also related to handling interruptions and were used in drawing conclusions about this category.

Conclusions and discussion. Principals differ on how to handle interruptions by walk-ins to their offices. The controversy about having an open-door policy versus a closed-door policy still exists, and a large number of principals could benefit from learning how to be flexible with an open-door policy.

The controversy continues as to whether closing the door to do administrative paperwork during the work day decreases staff morale which may have a negative impact on school climate, as implied by several responder comments. Studying this phenomenon would certainly answer many needed questions about when to keep principals office doors opened or closed. This study only touched on the topic.

School principals agree on the value of touring and walking around their buildings as a practice to handle routine questions by teachers and students which could become an interruption later, if the tour did not occur on a routine basis.

As reported in the section that analyzed Responder Comments, there is a significant correlation of .124 ($p \leq .05$) between training in time management and handling interruptions. This means that the more training principals receive in time

management, the more frequently they will use the practices for handling interruptions.

Implications for practice. The fact that principals are often interrupted by walk-ins means that they either choose not to use common practices of other professionals because they think they won't work or because they are unaware of the practices to use. The implication is that principals do not have a procedure in place to handle walk-ins. Perhaps they feel that they should always be available to walk-ins. A practice that would help principals handle interruptions of most walk-ins is to plan to be available during those peak times that teachers need to see the principal, usually 20 - 30 minutes prior to students coming into the school or 20 minutes just after students have departed for the day. Giving more time than that usually extends the work day beyond what is healthy for the principal.

An even more effective practice is for the principal to walk around the building when students are not in the building and see each teacher each day on a regular basis. Sixty-two percent of the principals in this study reported that they toured or walked around their buildings three or more times per day, including 30% who reported that they toured over five times a day. This is consistent with the principals in Kmetz & Willower's (1982) study who averaged six tours per day. This practice of touring communicates to the teachers and students that they can expect to see the principal personally each day, and thus they will save most of their brief comments and questions for that time.

Principals who do not schedule time for touring spend much of their time doing what Respondent # 61 wrote: " Getting to school early before students and faculty, and staying late, I get a lot done during school vacations and summer." Respondent 364 also

confirms that principals spend a lot of extra time when she wrote, “I arrive at school by 6 a.m.. I work by myself until 7 a.m. before staff start showing up. I try to keep my door open unless I get swamped -- then I close it.” However, principals whose faculty and parents know when to access them use their time differently as indicated in what Respondent 204 wrote: “ Staff know they can access me at any time for emergencies but, are very experienced/empowered and do so rarely . I do work long hours but, usually on extra things or program development, grants and committees.” This principal’s comments show that time can be spent working on local committees and in writing grants once they get their own faculty trained in how, when, and for what issues to access them. Once teachers and students are in their classrooms, then principals can plan to be available for walk-in parents, generally around the ringing of the first or last bell when they are either dropping off or picking up their child. Many questions and concerns can be handled briefly and do not require a sit-down conference or meeting. When teachers or parents begin to discuss serious issues that require more than a brief conversation, principals should not hesitate to tell them to make an appointment to discuss the serious matter further. Planning for routine walk-ins by parents or regular building tours by the principal should be a part of the scheduled day. This visibility everyday is a good practice that cuts down on expected and frequent interruptions of the principal’s day.

For the central office personnel who visit schools, they should respect the “rhythm” of the school day by staying away from those peak times when principals are touring the building and meeting with parents. Their telephone calls to the schools should

not be done near the opening or closing times because of the pace that occurs at that time. Central office personnel and superiors of principals should respect the time of the principals as they would expect the principal to respect their time by calling ahead and setting up a mutual time to meet.

For the 32% of the principals in this study who reported that parents, students, teachers, and others walk into their offices, and can “very often” make direct eye contact with them at their desk, Anton (1993) suggests that principals use their secretary to buffer excessive unproductive contacts by arranging their desk in such a way that people who walk into their school’s main office cannot make direct eye contact with principals at their desk working. This eye contact seems to be an invitation to interrupt the work of the principal. Many of the questions can be answered by the secretary. If the secretary is allowed to handle routine tasks, principals will then have more time to handle more important tasks. Principals then have the choice to greet visitors when they can, rather than feel that they personally must greet every visitor that walks into the school’s main office.

Recommendations for future research. On Question 39 of the TMP Survey, principals were asked, “How much unencumbered time is *scheduled* daily whereby no visitors or phone calls are accepted except for emergencies?” The choices were “over 1 hour”, “46-60 minutes”, “21-45 minutes”, “15-20 minutes”, and “less than 20 minutes”. In future questions, the option of “none” should be included to allow for those who actually spend no time in this activity. This suggestion was written on the actual survey beside the

question by several responders and was included in one responder's written comments as well.

A second recommendation for future research would be to investigate the impact that having eye contact with the building administrators can have or not have on walk-in visitors to the office and to the completion of administrative paperwork on the part of the principal.

Practices for Scheduling Contacts

Contacts in this study are defined as face-to-face conferences, telephone conversations, electronic mail responses, and touring which is walking around the building to informally meet with teachers, students and other persons within the school.

Conclusions and related findings. There are numbers of principals who indicate a need for training in how to schedule face-to-face conferences, when to handle telephone conversations, and utilizing their secretaries in making contacts more efficient. This is indicated in Appendix Q where forty-one principals, for example, indicated that they "rarely or never" have their secretaries screen telephone calls. A second example is where fifty-six principals reported that their secretaries "rarely or never" protect them from walk-ins. Principals reported that they used six of the ten practices for scheduling contacts with a mean score above three (sometimes or very often). ..Respondent 349 even wrote, "...We are instructed [by superiors] to make our own appointments and speak directly to parents...". Making appointments is a basic skill on the secretary profile and should be done by the secretary (see Appendix C). It appears from the findings of this study that

principals seem to “go with the flow” or allow themselves to “hop” with events that can be controlled, as well as those that cannot. Therefore, no matter what the pace of the day brings, some principals are not using basic scheduling practices that could help put some controls on their time.

A second conclusion is that principals are not using one of the electronic devices mentioned in this study that could be very helpful to them and save time for all involved when working with their working or disabled parents. Of the electronic devices (conference calling, computers, dictaphone, email) examined, conference calling and dictaphones were used the least in the study. Eighty-four percent reported that they “never” used a dictaphone. Sixty-six percent of the principals indicated that they “rarely or never” used conference calling (see Appendix Q). Once a rapport has been established with a parent, especially a working parent, conference calling could be helpful to school principals when handling conferences with students and/or teachers. It provides a quick method of having everyone needed for an important issue present at the conference and in a timely fashion. It also allows ill parents or disabled parents to be an active respondent in many conversations held.

Because over 60% of the principals reported that they “rarely” set aside a daily time for returning telephone calls and email messages, it can be concluded that principals are possibly reacting to all events as they happen. Over 55% of them also reported that they “rarely” set general time limits for their contacts such as conferences, meetings, and phone conversations. This conclusion is also supported by the 34.2% of the principals who

reported that less than 15 minutes a day was set aside for administrative paperwork to be completed during work hours. Similarly, in Kmetz & Willower's study (1982), the mean duration of principal's desk work sessions was under 10 minutes.

Recommendations for future research. Even though the principals reported mean scores above 3 (sometimes or very often) on six of the ten scheduling contact practices, several related findings support the following recommendations: 1) In maintaining control of the time within a work day, principals must set *general* time limits for conferences, telephone conversations and other contacts with teachers, parents, and students keeping in mind those situations that require an exception. Fifty-five percent of the principals reported that they "rarely or never" did this. 2) For most telephone calls, it is recommended that principals designate a minimum of two times per day to return calls. They should train their secretaries to know when exceptions should be made and secretaries must inform the principal of these exceptions. Sixty-one percent of the principals reported that they "rarely or never" designated a time for return calls.

Secretaries can also be trained to retrieve vital information on individual cases for the principal prior to their returning the call.

Practices for Managing Paperwork

There were twelve questions in the category of managing paperwork.

Conclusions, and summary of related findings. Kmetz and Willower (1982) found that principals in their study spent on average a little over 8 hours (522 minutes) per week or 18% of their time on desk work. What is not mentioned in Kmetz and Willower is

at what time of the day is this desk work being done. Principals in this study were not asked how much time was actually spent on desk work, but were asked if time was provided for this purpose during regular work hours. Three respondents wrote comments that they completed desk work before and after work hours. Much of the principals' response to this issue is due to their personal philosophy of whether to keep an open or closed door. Of the 58 comments that were written in this study, nine of them were written about the open door policy and how they believe that leaving the door open improves communication. Most of those comments are actually against closing the door at all. For example, respondent 32 wrote, "My open door policy does keep some work from being done ASAP, but school climate is much improved through an open door policy in my opinion". Respondent 140 believes ".....an open door policy allows for better communication with parents and teachers".

Implications for practice. These comments demonstrate that principals have bought into the idea that it is wrong to close their door during the day to do their desk work. When asked on the survey, "How much unencumbered time is scheduled daily whereby no visitors or phone calls are accepted except for emergencies?", the mean score of 1.71 in Appendix N indicated that they scheduled less than 20 minutes a day as unencumbered time for themselves. The time could actually be less than that, but there was no way for the principals to indicate that on this particular question. Kmetz and Willower (1982) also found that the mean duration of principals' desk work sessions was under 10 minutes. Principals are still not giving themselves sufficient time within their day to do

their desk work.

Recommendations for future research. Rovtar (1994) recommends to principals, “Do not hesitate to cloister [themselves] for an hour or two each day. Tell [their] staff and [their] fellow administrators that [they] will not accept phone calls or other interruptions unless it is an emergency. [Principals] should shut the door to their offices and get to work” (p.47).

Covey, Merrill, and Merrill (1994) recommended that as principals look at their week,

that they not try to schedule every moment of every day, but try to schedule time zones of interchangeable blocks of time which are set aside for specific important activities, give [themselves] the same consideration that [they] would give anybody else. (p.90)

Drucker (1993) calls this same concept “chunks of time”. Thirty-four percent of the principals in this study reported that they put aside “less than 15 minutes” daily as a block of time to complete administrative paperwork. This amount could also be less, since there was no way for principals to indicate less than 15 minutes on this particular question.

Respondent 76 reports that “....paperwork, discipline, have increased my work load all day with 3 - 4 night meetings per week have increased to 16-18 hour days - my weekends are becoming an extension of the work week”.

Use of Secretary

There were several practices across categories that addressed the relationship

between the school principal and the school secretary. Even though some were mentioned earlier in the study, they are explained together in the following sections.

Conclusions and discussion. A significant number of school principals use their secretaries effectively, while a significant number do not. Forty-seven percent of the principals in this study reported that they “rarely or never” are able to set aside a part of the day to review paperwork (mail, bills, etc.) with their secretary. Perhaps the reason secretaries are not used effectively is because of the limited skills they possess, or perhaps, because some principals may not set high expectations for their secretaries. Some may even think that school secretaries are not paid at a level to expect such tasks as those mentioned in this study.

Implications for practice. The fact that 39.8% of the principals reported that their phone messages are not written down on one sheet or form implies that secretaries are using several pieces of paper to write down phone messages for principals. Since only 10% of the principals reviewed their mail with their secretaries, it implies that 90% of the principals reviewed their mail alone. These facts also imply that principals could use assistance in how to better utilize school secretaries.

Recommendations for future research. It is recommended that principals allow their secretaries to perform secretarial tasks. Winston (1983) reminds principals that one of the main responsibilities of a secretary is to sort mail and prioritize it by putting the most important mail on top for the principal. School principals in this study reported that they rarely have their secretary do this necessary task. These authors (Mayer 1995; Shipman,

Martin, McKay, & Anastasi, 1987; Winston, 1983), suggested setting aside a mutually agreeable mail time which would increase the elementary principal's efficiency.

To improve the efficiency of principals using the telephone, it is recommended that they have their phone messages written down on *one* sheet or form and located in *one* place that can be retrieved for future reference. This one sheet can then be placed inside the principals day-planner or phone log. Maintaining a phone log within day-planners can be helpful to principals when the need arises to type chronologies about contact with certain students, parents or employees. It is also recommended that a brief one or two sentence summary of each phone conversation be written on the phone message when principals complete the call. This way there are no misinterpretations about what each call was about when retrieved in the future.

Another major responsibility of a secretary is to maintain principals' appointments. Thirty-five percent of the principals reported that their secretaries "never to rarely" did this while even smaller pockets of them reported that they "sometimes" (26.3%), "often" (21.7), and "very often" (11.2%) had their secretaries make appointments for them. It is recommended that, in general, school secretaries make appointments for principals. Mayer (1995) recommended that secretaries and principals "...use a pencil to schedule appointments because half of all appointments that are scheduled will be rescheduled or postponed. By using a pencil, it can be erased rather than scratched out" (p.410). He also recommended that principals and secretaries not try to maintain multiple calendars. Mayer (1995) reminded principals that "people who keep more than one calendar, eventually will

experience scheduling problems” (p.44). Computerized calendars would solve the problem of multiple calendars because principals and their secretaries could both schedule appointments using the same calendar on a network. School districts that have electronic mail have a calendaring system that allows people within the district to review the calendar of those with whom they need appointments and schedule appointments with them.

Because of the importance of the relationship between principals and secretaries, more research should be done to help principals utilize their secretaries more effectively. It would be interesting to see if the principals have the same perceptions of the secretaries job as do their secretaries. If secretaries are allowed to handle secretarial tasks, principals will then have more time to handle more tasks related to the principalship.

Years of Experience

The next section contains conclusions, discussion, implications for practice and recommendations for future research regarding the number of years of experience reported by the principals on the survey.

Conclusions and Discussion

The school principals in this study were a veteran group with 68.4% having eleven years of experience or more. It was an interesting fact that the number of years of experience did not effect the practices used by the principals. One would assume that the more years of experience principals have, the more time-management practices they would use. However, findings from this study indicate that that assumption was not true.

Implications for Practice

The implication regarding years of experience is that ages of principals are not related to the frequency of use of the time-management practices used by them.

Recommendations for Future Research

It was assumed that the membership of the National Association of *Elementary* School Principals (NAESP) was made up of elementary principals. Therefore, Question 6 was designed to determine the number of years of experience that principals had as *elementary* assistant principals and *elementary* principals. This assumption was not true. Thus, the data collected were not reliable since many of the principals were not elementary principals and could not answer that question. It was assumed however, that those principals who answered that question had been elementary assistant principals and elementary principals as written in the question. It is recommended that the pilot group used in future studies reflect the membership of the organization. This way problems like this would not have surfaced too late to be corrected in the final study.

Training in Time Management

This next section contains conclusions, discussions, implications for practice and recommendations for future research regarding the number of hours of training in time management principals have reported.

Conclusions and Discussion

Because Question seven (see Appendix A) was designed to determine an *estimation* of the number of hours of training in time management, the responses are, at best, just guesses. Eighty-one percent of the principals have had less than 20 hours of training while most of them (68%) have had less than nine hours of training in time management. Time management is a topic in which researchers (Campbell & Williamson, 1991; Weldy, 1974) report principals need more training. This fact is supported by the findings of this study where a significant correlation of .21 ($p \leq .01$, $N = 285$) existed between time-management practices and the amount of training principals reported.

Implications for Practice

The implication is that principals continue to need more training in time-management practices.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is recommended that this question be reworded to get a better determination of the number of hours principals have been trained in time management. Perhaps using the number of credit bearing hours from a university, or inservice points from school districts would give better account for training in time management.

It is also recommended that future researchers examine the quality of the training received in time management and its relationship to principals' use of time.

Summary

Principals in this group could benefit from using more of the recommended practices for managing their time at work which would allow them "to allocate attention to valued pursuits while handling the continuous action demands of administration", as Kmetz & Willower (1982) suggests "is the key concern for practitioners" (p.77). This study was an attempt to do just that; to study those time-management practices in six categories that address the continuous action of the nature of the job of school principals, determine to what extent principals used these practices and make some recommendations for future research which would help them manage their time more efficiently.