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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, PREPARATION OF THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL FOR THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL: AN EXAMINATION OF REAL TASKS AS COMPARED TO THE PERCEIVED IDEAL TASKS, by APRIL C. MADDEN, was prepared under the direction of the candidates Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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ABSTRACT

PREPARATION OF THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL FOR THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL: AN EXAMINATION OF REAL TASKS AS COMPARED TO THE PERCEIVED IDEAL TASKS

by

April Chastang Madden

Principals most commonly ascend from the pool of those who are assistant principals, but it is unclear whether assistant principals are prepared to assume such a pivotal leadership role. This study seeks to compare the extent of on the job training provided to the assistant principals by examining ideal as compared to actual task performance in six competency areas associated with the job of principal. The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the perceived ideal professional tasks assistant principals should perform prior to becoming a principal?
2. Which tasks are performed by assistant principals?
3. Do these performed tasks prepare assistant principals for principalships?

Utilizing Survey Monkey, a survey was e-mailed to principals with 1-3 years of experience in the State of

Georgia. Descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlations, and t-tests were used for data analysis. As for research question 1, this study revealed that the tasks that ranked the highest among the study participants regarding perceived ideal tasks that assistant principals should perform prior to becoming principal were the competencies falling under the categories of Instructional Leader, Leadership in Staff Personnel, and Management of Schools. For question 2, the competency tasks associated with the job of the principal ranked with mean values falling as: first, management of school, second leadership of staff personnel, third oversee pupil personnel, fourth serve as instructional leader, fifth foster community relations and sixth develop and organize student activities. Regarding research question 3, The Pearson Correlation along with t-tests of subscales showed that there are significant relationships between the ideal and actual tasks performed by assistant principal. The Pearson Correlation highlighted that the only nonsignificant correlation between ideal and actual competency tasks was found in the area of Leadership in Staff Personnel. In conclusion, this study indicated that assistant principals are not adequately prepared to transition to the role of principal.

PREPARATION OF THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL FOR THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL: AN EXAMINATION OF REAL TASKS AS COMPARED TO THE PERCEIVED IDEAL TASKS

by
April C. Madden

A Dissertation

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in
Educational Policy Studies
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in
the College of Education
Georgia State University

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Atlanta, GA
2008

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The shortage of qualified candidates to fill public school principalship positions has recently received national attention. Currently, the aging cadre of principals is a great concern because it is predicted that almost 60% of serving principals are eligible for retirement (Goodson, 2000). Bloom and Krovetz (2001) identified the shortage of principals as one factor that leads to assistant principals' being moved into the role of principal before they are fully prepared. Because of this rapid transition to principal, assistant principals are serving for relatively short periods of time and are typically assigned to a very narrow range of responsibilities, typically discipline or student activities, while being given little or no experience in the other realms of leadership, such as curriculum or budget. A report by the Institute for Educational Leadership (2000) also addressed the problem of principal shortages. The report detailed a survey of superintendents who had filled at least one

principal position in the previous year. These superintendents were asked if there was a surplus, shortage, or the right number of qualified candidates for the principal positions they needed to fill. Fifty percent reported a shortage of qualified candidates. The Institute for Educational Leadership suggested that this rush to fill vacancies by promoting assistant principals is one reason these administrators receive little or no experience or preparation to help them become school leaders.

The position of assistant principal has been perceived as a means to accomplish two important organizational purposes: to facilitate the effective administration of the school and to provide training opportunities for future school principals (Goodson, 2000). The preparation of future principals is a vital aspect for maintaining the momentum of providing viable school leadership. The assistant principal is a necessary and critical position in the educational organization, and the assistant principalship is the primary training ground for the principalship. The role of principal is one that involves people who are not only focused on teaching and learning, but who are also future oriented, responsive to the changing educational climate, and able to use the symbolic and cultural aspects of schools to promote a culture of excellence (Gurr, 2000).

Recent research indicates that the assistant principal position does not provide the appropriate training or preparation for assistant principals to become principals (Fields, 2002; Goodson, 2000; Mertz, 2000). Consequently, a number of competencies must be developed that are paramount to the training of assistant principals. They must be competent in all aspects of school management, including school finance; school law; educational and psychological management; staff supervision and education; and effective communication with students, parents, and the community (Goodson). It is important that assistant principals understand the requirements of the principalship and complete preparation programs that qualify them for success in the role. The supposition of the present study is that to improve the preparation of assistant principals for the principalship, research must be conducted to provide data to be used for advocating changes in academic preparation, field-based learning, and personal and professional formation.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of a scarcity of persons adequately prepared to assume administrative roles, particularly with regard to assistant principals' assuming principalships, is reaching a critical stage as increasing pupil enrollment and

principal retirements compound the shortage. In recent years, few qualified candidates have interviewed for administrative positions. Consequently, promising individuals who have very limited experience have been chosen for the positions (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001). Bloom and Krovetz address the problem of assistant principals' lack of preparation by asserting that "in these days of principal shortages, we have found that many assistant principals and resource teachers are moving into principalships after serving for relatively short periods of time in these preparatory roles" (p. 12).

To assist with the preparation of new administrators, most academic leadership programs are designed to meet the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) for accreditation that promote the development of key performance skills. Hence, the educational development of new administrators is guided as they prepare for the assistant principalship; however, the experiential component of preparation for the principalship is not well defined. The problem of the experiential component's not being adequately defined is the result of a lack of research on assistant principals.

Research by Fields (2002) concerning professional development and new administrators found that

> the role of assistant principal is one of the least researched and discussed topics in professional journals and books on educational leadership. The ambiguity of the role allows for the ineffective use of this position and makes it a particularly difficult role to fulfill. (pp. 2-3)

Principals most commonly ascend from the pool of those who are assistant principals, but it is unclear whether assistant principals are prepared to assume such a pivotal leadership role. Koru (1993) asserted that "during the time a future principal spends as an assistant principal, he or she is engaged in activities that offer little preparation for the kind of leadership expected of principals" (p. 71). The question of the preparatory role of the assistant principal is further purported by Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson (1995), who held that

> the nature of the assistant principalship and the skills required to be successful as an [assistant principal] are oriented much more toward management than toward leadership, a condition that does not promote the development of visionary leadership in its occupants. (p. 158)

This present research addresses the problem of a lack of research on the preparation of assistant principals by investigating the tasks performed by the assistant principal, compared to ideal tasks that need to be

performed by the assistant principal in readiness for principalship.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the role of assistant principal in the public secondary schools in the state of Georgia prepares one to serve as a principal.

Research Questions/Hypothesis

Research Questions

Those committed to the improvement of educational administration as a profession seek new ways to enhance the success of aspiring school leaders and to improve the means through which they are prepared for their professional work. Previous research indicates that the assistant principalship may not be the most productive ground for future principals (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Goodson, 2000). This inquiry is designed to add to this body of literature and to provide further knowledge that may offer suggestions for improving the preparation of assistant principals. The questions are purposefully designed to examine the experiential component of preparation from the perspectives of principals of secondary schools. The principals in the study were asked to complete a survey on the real and ideal tasks of assistant principals in six task areas: management

of school, leadership in staff personnel, community relations, instructional leadership, student activities, and pupil personnel. The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the perceived ideal professional tasks assistant principals should perform prior to becoming a principal?
2. What tasks are performed by assistant principals?
3. Do the tasks performed prepare assistant principals for principalship?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis was used to test the theory that assistant principals are not being adequately prepared for principalships and will answer the third research question. It is predicted that assistant principals are not being prepared for principalships. The hypothesis is as follows:

> There will be a significant difference between perceived ideal tasks that should be performed by assistant principals and the tasks actually performed by assistant principals.

Significance of Study

Currently, the aging cadre of principals is a great concern because it is predicted that almost 60% of serving principals are eligible for retirement (Goodson, 2000). The increased need for principals necessitates the focus on

assistant principals and on-the-job training because the administrative career path for principals usually begins in the assistant principal position.

This study is significant because little research has been conducted on assistant principals and their preparation for principalships. Researchers have found that very little thought has been directed toward preparation of assistant principals for the role of principal (Marshall, 1992). Because the professional development and growth of an assistant principal must not be taken for granted, in this study I investigated whether the tasks performed as an assistant principal prepare one for a principalship. The information in this study will be beneficial to principals taking on their first professional assignments because they must find ways to connect and integrate their professional knowledge and experience. Principals moving to new assignments must carefully assess what attitudes and behaviors to take with them and what dynamics and unique challenges face them at the new school. Principals or other supervisors who work directly with the assistant principals will benefit from the results of this study, which will identify the type of support and encouragement assistant principals require. The tasks investigated in the present study coincide with NAESP (2001) standards, which include the

ability to balance management and leadership roles (management of school), set high expectations and standards (leadership in staff personnel), actively engage the community (community relations), demand content and instruction that ensure student achievement (instructional leadership), create a culture of adult learning (student activities), and use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools (pupil personnel).

Finally, this study is important because it contains information that can be used by organizations that focus on principal training as they reformulate the characteristics of school leaders, which are that they must be able to appreciate diverse perspectives, understand the big picture, gather and use data for planning, motivate themselves and others, facilitate group efforts, solve problems, and accomplish goals (Bradshaw, 2000).

Conceptual Framework

The guiding framework for the present study was leadership theory, specifically transformational leadership theory, as presented by Daft (1999). It is theorized that principals need to possess qualities of leadership and that assistant principals perform solely as managers. Holmes (2001) reported that leadership is about persuasion, motivation, and finely judged delegation, whereas

management is more about orders, mandates, and instructions. The leader focuses on change and innovation, while the manager engages in very little change but manages what is present and leaves things much as they found them when they depart. Golanda (1991) reported that most assistant principals are assigned duties categorized as management rather than as leadership, and the role of assistant principal is very limited in scope regarding responsibilities normally associated with leadership.

There are several theories of leadership that can be applied to the educational setting. For example, De Neuville (1998) conveyed two types of leadership theories:

> the great man/great woman theory that involves believing that people in power influence major events; and the trait theory, which states that characteristics of leaders include all manner of physical, personality and cognitive factors, including height, intelligence and communication skills. (p. 3)

According to Golanda (1991), leadership traits are necessary for an assistant principal to move successfully into the principalship. Thus, for this study, the tasks performed by assistant principals were examined within a leadership framework based on Daft's (1999) ideal skills of a transformational leader being able to develop followers into leaders, elevate followers' needs to a higher level,

inspire followers to work for the good of the group, and articulate the vision of the organization in a manner that inspires others.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although the position of assistant principal is often viewed as an important step to the principalship, the majority of the educational literature about the assistant principalship leans toward the premise that the position does not provide a smooth transition into the role of principal (Denmark & Davis, 2000; Hartzell, 1993). Instead, the traditional socialization process promotes the assistant principal as the school's operation manager. He or she works in the shadow of the principal and is associated with maintaining order and stability (Goodson, 2000).

The assistant principalship is an important factor in the career paths of administrators (Fields, 2002; Goodson, 2000; Mertz, 2000). This position is regarded as a significant entry point into the field of administration. The assistant principal needs experiences that allow for the development and refinement of the skills and behaviors necessary for successful succession and socialization into the position of principal (Marshall, 1992). This presents a clear discrepancy because most assistant principal duties

are tedious and custodial in nature (Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, & Donaldson, 2002). In view of this contradiction, it is unclear whether the assistant principal position actually provides an individual with opportunities for leadership development that are crucial to the role of principal.

This literature review is organized into the following subcategories: role of the assistant principal, role of the principal, leadership versus management, leadership theories, preparation for principalship, and summary.

The Role of Assistant Principal

In the first nationwide study of assistant principalships, the National Association of Elementary School Principals in 1923 surveyed 1,270 assistant principals and described characteristics of this group. Duties included disciplinary and attendance matters. Recent studies note the importance of the assistant principal in the school system with regard to curriculum, staff development, and instructional leadership (Glanz, 1994). A 1992 study of 164 New York City assistant principals showed that actual duties ranked in order included: student discipline, lunch duty, school scheduling, ordering text-books, parental conferences, assemblies, administrative duties, articulation, evaluation of teachers, student attendance, emergency

arrangements, instructional media services, counseling pupils, school clubs, assisting PTA, formulating goals, staff development, faculty meetings, teacher training, instructional leadership, public relations, curriculum development, innovations and research, school budgeting, and teacher selection (Glanz).

Student discipline, student activities, and student attendance are still viewed as the three major duties of assistant principals (Simpson, 2000). Simpson also reported that many assistant principals feel frustrated by serving only as disciplinarians. In addition to listing typical duties of assistant principals, Ryan (1998) suggested the need for greater clarity regarding the specific duties associated with such roles; thereby, increasing the assistant principal's significance and involvement in instructional and curricular issues.

Celikten (2001) reports further on the instructional leadership role of school assistant principals. Research regarding the roles and responsibilities of an assistant principal demonstrates the difficulty in creating a standard list of duties because of the vast differences in school contexts. When directly asked about their duties, assistant principals tend to respond with a list that includes discipline, attendance, and supervision of student

activities. It is also noted that assigned tasks include those the principal does not want to do, which may or may not be delegated depending on the willingness of the principal to do so. Celikten (2001) listed five major responsibilities typically reported: disciplining students, distributing textbooks, supervising the cafeteria, assigning lockers, and attending student activities.

Celikten (2001) noted that while instructional leadership may be defined in different ways, most include behaviors or actions with the intention of developing a productive working environment for teachers and a desirable condition for children. These tasks are part of the responsibility of the assistant principal. A common definition of instructional leadership includes observation and evaluation of teachers as well as curriculum development, which are also duties of the assistant principal. The instructional leader or assistant principal must be visible, solve problems, initiate community awareness, provide staff support, communicate a vision, optimize school resources, provide teacher in-service, develop the school schedule, and promote a positive school climate.

The principal almost exclusively determines the duties and responsibilities of the assistant principal (Golanda, 1991). Therefore, the future of a person who serves in the

position of assistant principal and who aspires to the principalship is dependent upon the motivation and abilities of the principal with whom he or she works. Thus, Golanda suggested that it is best when the leadership of the school is a well-defined team effort between the principal and assistant principal.

Hausman et al. (2002) reported that the literature shows a trend in the importance of the role of the assistant principal. In a review of data from 125 assistant principals in Maine, results showed gender differences with regard to time spent on certain tasks. Women spent more time on instructional leadership, professional development, personnel management, and public relations compared to men. Thus, female assistant principals were more visible and involved in tasks associated with programs than male assistant principals.

McAdams and Lambie (2003) reported findings of their national survey of school assistant principals and principals, conducted to examine trends related to aggression and the educational processes. Findings showed that school staff at all grade levels can expect to be involved in reactive and proactive student aggression incidents. Few have formal instruction in ways to deal with youth aggression. This problem implies that school

personnel including the assistant principal must become aware of tools which are essential to the role of principal, such as relationship building, stimulus control instruction, cognitive restructuring, self-control and social skills instruction, positive reinforcement, logical consequences, problem solving, moral education, and family involvement (McAdams & Lambie).

Foley (2001) further noted that principals reported the need for additional training in these areas as well, indicating that they did not receive it as assistant principals. Findings from 13 school principals showed that they reported needing professional development in areas of conflict resolution and development of school community partnerships.

Early studies on the assistant principal were conducted in 1923 by the Department of Elementary School Principal's Committee on Educational Progress (National Association of Elementary Principals, 2001). Although none of the duties and responsibilities were clearly defined, the study indicated that classroom teaching, administration, and supervision were major responsibilities and duties of the assistant principal.

Austin and Brown (1970) conducted a normative study of the secondary assistant principalship in 1965-1966 that

consisted of information gathered from 1,127 assistant principals and 1,207 principals from 50 states. Austin and Brown classified roles and responsibilities of an assistant principal into six broad categories: (a) school management, (b) staff personnel, (c) community relations, (d) student activities, (e) curriculum and instruction, and (f) pupil personnel items. When asked to report the most important administrative tasks they performed, the assistant principals listed the following: 83% of the assistant principals indicated that discipline was the most important duty that they performed, 76% selected student attendance, 72% selected creating the master schedule, 69% selected school policies, 67% selected curriculum development, 64% selected teacher evaluation, 62% selected new teacher orientation and school guidance, and 55% selected the special procedures for the opening and closing out of school.

Koru (1993) reported in his study that the assistant principal has a threefold job: that of crisis manager, custodian, and visionary. The study uncovered that the assistant principals had very limited access to opportunities in the area of instructional leadership. Most times, they were assigned the task of conflict resolution between staff members, between faculty and students, and between

parents and teachers. Because of its lack of involvement in various leadership activities, Koru concluded that the position of assistant principal is not an adequate training ground for the principalship.

Mertz (2000) expanded on the duties and responsibilities of the assistant principal by stating that the duties of the position are largely assigned by the principal and these duties have increased in the last 50 years. The author also pointed out that what should be taken into account when assigning duties and responsibilities are the assistant principal's intentions, values, motives, expertise, needs, and capabilities as well as the managerial needs of the organization.

Glanz (1994) reported on a study conducted among New York City School assistant principals who were surveyed about their attitudes toward their duties and responsibilities. Questions asked of the participants were as follows:

1. What are your current responsibilities as an AP?
2. In your view, what duties should APs be performing?
3. What aspects of your job give you the greatest satisfaction?

According to the results of the study, over 90% of assistant principals surveyed feel they should be more involved in "professional and fulfilling" responsibilities. Ninety-one percent of the respondents stressed the importance of the assistant principal position but complained that they rarely engaged in professional activities, such as instructional supervision, program development, and evaluation procedures.

Glanz (1994) also reported that studies demonstrate that the duties and responsibilities of assistant principals are different from those of principals and that the assistant principalship does not provide appropriate training for becoming a principal. Mertz (2000) listed the various daily, applied responsibilities of assistant principals as follows:

> discipline, parking, athletics, lockers, dances, plays and other school events, open houses, new teacher support, intern supervision, graduation, liaison to other organizations or agencies, cafeteria duty, hall monitoring, state reporting records, special projects (e.g., accreditation, school improvement plans), going to meetings outside the building. (p. 6)

In the study of assistant principals, Mertz reported that of all duties assigned to them, discipline consumed most of their time each day and was one task that was addressed almost daily. Discipline duties included dealing with

students' being sent to them by teachers or others, meeting with parents, holding disciplinary hearings, and monitoring disciplinary decisions.

Role of the Principal

In the early twentieth century, as single-room schoolhouses expanded to multiple grade classrooms, the need for someone to manage the daily operations grew. The role was initially filled by the classroom teacher who, in addition to her classroom teaching responsibilities, took on the responsibility of managing the school. The schools continued to grow, which led to principal teachers who eventually stopped teaching to assume the role of principal. Management of the school was the primary role of the principal. The principal, as manager, was responsible for financial operations, maintenance of the school building, student scheduling, personnel, public relations, school policy regarding discipline, coordination of the instructional program, and other overall school matters. The role did include some aspects of curriculum and instruction, but during this time, their main responsibility was school management. As the nation entered the twenty-first century, accountability demands grew, which was key in the principal's role shifting from school manager to the school reform leader. The expectation for the principal to serve

as instructional leader also moved to the forefront of responsibilities (Jenlink, 2000).

Principals are still expected to perform the traditional responsibilities, but also to serve as a leader who improves both the delivery of instruction and student achievement. Principals are given the specific charge to lead, to exert formal authority over the school (Fields, 2002; Goodson, 2000; Gurr, 2000; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Mertz, 2000). However, voluntary action by teachers and others directed toward the important goals new leaders hope to pursue depends on new leaders' abilities to secure the validation, support, and affirmation of the group as a whole. This affirmation emerges from group processes that are complex, interactive, and diffuse. At the same time, principals must adhere to district norms and policies, pursuing goals and objectives set out by their superiors. Murphy (1998) emphasized that the principal’s leadership skills should include a strong knowledge base in the areas of instruction and curriculum. Du Four’s (1999) view of the principalship included the following responsibilities:

1. Using shared values and vision to lead, as oppose to rules and procedures
2. Utilizing shared decision-making and empowerment as a way to promote action from the teachers

3. Ensuring good decision-making by the staff through information, training, and parameters
4. Focusing on results
5. Formulating the right questions instead of imposing solutions (Help Wanted section).

Principals have a pivotal role in shaping the vision of others in the school. According to Bennis (2000), the very best leaders seem to embody and marry the visionary capacity with the management capacity to execute. They are expected to draw the starting line for others, urging them to take the first step, supporting and encouraging as they renew and challenge themselves. These leaders empower their teachers by providing them with the means to get things done. The principal role includes growing leaders. According to Bennis and Townsend (1995), "Leader growers are able to earn the trust and respect of their followers by helping others to develop in their careers. Leader growers manage themselves, inspire others, and forge the future" (p.153).

Societal demands are high for principals. Murphy (1998) reported that principals are expected to be "an organizational architect, social architect, educator, and moral agent" (p. 16). They are held accountable for determining the success of any reforms while effectively servicing the needs of a more diverse population of students. Schools increasingly have to address society's social ills;

hence, the principalship may also be described as an instrument for social justice. Thompson and Crampton (2004) and Dantley (2002) reported that principals face a challenge when attempting to fight for social justice with caring and unconventional leadership strategies. Dantley stated that principals are expected to deal with what exists in the school instead of leading the school toward what could exist.

Interactions with the parents and the community are a daily requirement of principals. They work with parents in regards to discipline issues of students, academic failures, and general parental concerns. Principals are members of school councils and must interact with parents and community members who also serve on the council. They also interact with parent/teacher organizations and booster clubs (Seyfarth, 1999).

Thody (1998) pointed out that the principal must have professional development to improve skills. It was also noted that principals need to share responsibility with others to ensure effective leadership. Principal empowerment includes the expansion of responsibilities delegated to principals and the empowering by principals of others to take on some of these responsibilities.

Tirozzi (2001) reported that leadership of school principals is considered within the context of current problems. Leadership for today's and tomorrow's schools requires collective skills. Principals must be instructional leaders. As instructional leaders, the principals become the leaders of the leaders and their responsibilities involve encouraging and developing instructional leadership in teachers. Bamburg and Andrews (1990) grouped instructional leader behaviors as:

1. A resource provider that: (a) marshals personnel and resources to achieve a school's mission and goals, and (b) is knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction.
2. An instructional resource that: (a) sets expectations for continual improvement of instructional program and actively engages in staff development, and (b) encourages the use of different instructional strategies.
3. An effective communicator that: (a) models commitment to the school goals, (b) articulates a vision of instructional goals and the means for integrating instructional planning and goal attainment, and (c) sets and adheres to clear performance standards for instruction and teacher behavior.
4. A visible presence that visits classrooms, attends departmental or grade-level meetings, is accessible to discuss matters dealing with instruction, and is an active participant in staff development. (pp. 17-19)

The tasks involved in school leadership are extensive and include academic and business needs for success. The principal must be competent in business activities as well

as instructional leadership. While principals do not need law degrees, they are expected to be knowledgeable of school law that is directly related to their professional responsibilities. Greater clarity of the role for principals is needed along with a greater understanding of how tasks are to be delegated or shared. Group decision-making is included in the role of the principal (Glasman, 1995; Pashiardis, 1993; Stewart, 1998; Thody, 1998).

Other duties for today's principal include high-stakes testing, staff requirements, resources allocation, and understanding changing adolescents. Aside from demographics changing, adolescents are changing as well. Experience changes the brain, and today's student has different needs than he or she did 30 years ago (Tirozzi, 2001), which leads to another responsibility that the principal has, that of school safety. Facilities and equipment must be in good working order, supervision of students is required, and school discipline problems must be addressed. Principals continue to be responsible for the management of their schools despite the shift in the role over the past two decades.

Management versus Leadership

With so many if not all of the duties and responsibilities of the assistant principal being assigned by the

principal, the role of assistant principal is often relegated more to duties of management than duties of leadership. Denmark and Davis (2000) described management as "to bring about [or] to accomplish" and leadership as "influence, guide, and action" (p. 7). Often the assistant principal is relegated to the role of manager or bringing tasks about to accomplishment, and the principal is bestowed the role of leader for influencing, guiding, or initiating action. Denmark and Davis concluded that if the principal places more emphasis on managing, the likelihood of the assistant principal's learning to be a leader is diminished.

Principals face leadership versus management issues with managers as transactors and leaders as transformers (Daft, 1999; De Neuville, 1998; Golanda, 1991). The leader initiates the development of a vision, and the management controls, arranges, and institutes it properly. Managers concern themselves with the procurement, coordination, and distribution of human and material resources needed by an organization; facilitating the work of an organization by ensuring what is done is in accord with the organization's rules and regulations (The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2000).

An example of such assignments is described by Erlandson (1994), who points out that many high school assistant principals are involved with tasks such as computer scheduling (management), but never involved with budget, teacher evaluation, or matters of curriculum and instruction (leadership). Erlandson listed the following domains as being leadership-related and not typically included under assistant principals' duties and responsibilities: leadership, information collection, problem analysis, judgment, organizational oversight, implementation, delegation, instruction and the learning environment, curriculum design, student guidance and development, staff development, measurement and evaluation, and resource allocation.

Holmes (2001) described leadership as being about persuasion, motivation, and finely judged delegation, whereas management is more about orders, mandates, and instructions. Holmes believed that leaders need excellent communication skills. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that these communication skills must be developed at the assistant principal level in preparation for principalship, where they are expected to already possess these skills.

The key point in differentiating between leaders and managers is the idea that employees willingly follow leaders because they want to, not because they have to. Leaders may not possess the formal power to reward or sanction performance. However, employees give the leader power by complying with what he or she requests. On the other hand, managers may have to rely on formal authority to get employees to accomplish goals (Holmes, 2001). In essence, the leader focuses on change and innovation, while the manager engages in very little change but manages what is present and leaves things much as he or she found them when he or she departs.

According to Holmes (2001), the central theme of the comparison is that those who find themselves supervising people in an organization should be both good managers and good leaders. Research shows that administrators must be able to develop and implement sound policies, procedures, and practices. They must also be able to lead and shape the school's culture with the creation and communication of a vision and the ability to inspire others to follow this vision.

Golanda (1991) reported that because most assistant principals are assigned duties categorized as management rather than as leadership, any role they attempt to assume

that is more leadership in nature would, in most instances, become of secondary importance. Golanda believed that the role of assistant principal is very limited in scope regarding responsibilities normally associated with leadership. Hogue (1999) also wrote that the assistant principal is not involved in leadership behaviors because the principal, not the assistant principal, is the key individual to initiate and be involved in school reform.

Leadership Theories

There are several models or theories of leadership that can be applied to the educational setting. De Neuville (1998) conveyed two types of leadership theories. One is the great man/great woman theory that involves believing that people in power influence major events. The second theory, the trait theory, expands further on the great man/great woman theory. It says that characteristics of leaders include all manner of physical, personality, and cognitive traits, including height, intelligence, and communication skills. According to Golanda (1991), these are among the traits necessary for an assistant principal to move successfully into principalship. When assistant principals exhibit these traits and are readily recognized by their superiors, their level of job satisfaction is

raised, as they see this as a big step in becoming a principal.

In addition to leadership theories involving traits, De Neuville (1998) discussed behaviorist theories of leadership. From research quoted by the author, team management style was deemed as preferable. This would support educational research reported by Golanda that a team approach to the principal-assistant principal duties are the most beneficial.

Lashway (2002) discussed three major leadership models, which are as follows:

1. hierarchical (using rules, policies, and directives to govern from the top down)
2. transformational (using moral authority to create commitment to shared ideals)
3. facilitative (using teamwork to create participation in collective decision-making).

Lashway stressed that each of these models offers a useful perspective of leadership, and each has advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, a multidimensional approach might be the most effective for school leaders.

Liontos (1993) discussed instructional leadership as encompassing hierarchies and top-down leadership. In this form of leadership, the leader is supposed to know the best

form of instruction which leads him or her to monitor students' and teachers' work closely.

On the other hand, transformation leadership is an alternative type of school leadership. This type of leadership is relevant to the current climate of school education that is characterized by change (Gurr, 2000). Gurr described five dimensions of transformational leadership related to schools:

1. Technical leadership that involves sound management techniques
2. Human leadership that involves harnessing social and interpersonal potential
3. Educational leadership, whereas the principal demonstrates expert knowledge about education and schooling
4. Symbolic leadership that involves an emphasis on and modeling of important goals and behaviors
5. Cultural leadership in which the principal helps define, strengthen, and articulate enduring values, beliefs, and cultural strands that give the school its identity over time. (p. 5)

According to Denmark and Davis (2000), intellectual stimulation is a key element of transformational leadership. Through intellectual stimulation, school leaders can focus on their abilities to challenge old organizational methods and replace them with new and improved methods. Liontos (1993) reported the goals of transformational leadership as being that which helps staff develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture,

fosters teacher development, and helps teachers solve problems more effectively.

Barnett, McCormick, and Conners (2001) addressed the needs of today's principal and assessed findings related to transformational leadership in schools. Findings showed that transformational leadership behaviors of individual concern were associated with outcomes of satisfaction, extra effort and perception of leader effectiveness. Transformational leadership behaviors of vision and inspiration had negative associations with student learning culture. Thus, Barnett et al. concluded that this leadership style is more complex than anticipated.

Gurr (2000) examined another leadership model, moral leadership. This approach utilizes problem solving as the core method of increasing knowledge, and the educational leader is seen as the person who promotes this approach.

Wallace, Sweat, and Acker-Hocevar (1999) described a learning organization approach in which a team of people work together to increase their capacity to create a desired future in the educational environment. The authors described learning as a creative process through which we recreate ourselves, extend our capacity to create, and become part of the generative process of life. According to Wallace et al., the challenge for modern educational

leaders is to build schools in which continuous organizational learning occurs and systems-thinking creates a path to mental models that enable individuals and organizations to develop new ways of perceiving and recreating themselves and their surroundings.

Malone, Sharp, and Thompson (2000) pointed out that regardless of what leadership model is used in schools, there are some fundamental concepts that all models have in common. The effectiveness of the leader must result in a shared vision of an uplifting and enabling future, thereby enlisting others in the vision and appealing to their values, interests, hopes, and dreams.

Preparation for the Principalship

Golanda (1991) describes the way schools prepare an assistant principal for the job of principal as the osmosis theory, which expects that mere experience within the atmosphere of a school and occasional observation of leadership behavior will result, over time, in the acquisition of the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for such a leadership position. Schools give assistant principals certain assigned tasks without allowing them to practice and learn the more complex leadership behaviors and skills.

According to a study commissioned by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (1998), there is a growing shortage of qualified applicants to fill vacancies in the principalship. Also, approximately three-fourths of the school districts surveyed did not have any training programs in place to prepare prospective candidates from among the districts' teaching ranks.

Assistant Principals' Perception of Principalship

Mertz (2000) reported on a study consisting of in-depth interviews with assistant principals in various educational settings. While some of the assistant principals said they would likely end their career in this position, all of them said that they presently aspired or had previously aspired to the position of principal. One respondent expressed his feelings that anyone would want to be a principal because there is so much that must be accomplished. This feeling directly reflected other findings reported by Mertz in which the assistant principals viewed themselves as part of a leadership team but knew their limits and knew that the principal was the one really in charge.

Mertz (2001) reported study findings that the principal was viewed as the head authority. The majority of assistant principals in this study perceived the principal

as the ultimate authority in the traditional hierarchical, bureaucratic organizational sense. Another phrase used to describe the role of principal was "the supreme authority in the context and accorded all the rights and privileges devolving on such authority, even if perceived less than worthy of such accord" (p. 4). The respondents noted how the principal assigns duties, frames and determines what will be attended to, and has priority in all aspects of leadership. In relation to themselves, the study participants saw the principal as setting parameters for the roles they play in the school as well as controlling what they are exposed to and what they gain experience in doing. Mertz noted further that participants viewed the principal as directing and reinforcing whatever norms assistant principals brought to the position. They influenced what the assistant principals learned as well as what was possible to be learned.

School-based Management and Decision Making

If assistant principals are to be better prepared to move into the role of principal, schools need to be focused more on school-based decision-making (Wheeler & Agruso, 1996). Wheeler and Agruso specifically recommended that decisions traditionally made by principals should be shared among assistant principals. These decisions include but are

not limited to scheduling, staffing needs, and instructional strategies. A shift in decision-making such as this would result in the role of the principal shifting from authority and leader to one of more guidance of the assistant principal.

Brottman (1981) expressed the idea that the role of the assistant principal should be one more involved in decision-making, which would result in a more authoritative position. Furthermore, according to Brottman, the assistant principal too often has specific duties, but the principal makes the final decisions in regard to major, complex issues.

In relating decision making to problem solving, Mertz (2000) noted that assistant principals are socialized to operate autonomously, to complete the task, but not necessarily to solve any underlying problems. They are trained to act independently, not collectively. This operative is directly opposite to the school-based management model as it requires only the basic levels of decision-making.

Maintenance versus Design

With so many assistant principal's duties being task-oriented, one might draw the conclusion that the assistant principal's goal is to maintain the organization rather

than to create change and vision through design. Burgess (1973) expressed this idea by noting that the tasks and roles that defined the assistant principal's position focused on the structure and organization of the school, on coverage and control over day-to-day events, and on establishing and/or maintaining an efficient operation. The motivation of the position was to maintain the organization.

This idea is in direct opposition to the position of the principal, who is given the freedom of design and is expected to initiate programs, solve problems, evaluate staff members, and coordinate and implement responsibilities (Malone et al., 2000). In addition, the principals not only have duties that are more of design in nature, but they assign the maintenance duties to the assistant principals. A study conducted among school leadership teams found that the formal duties assigned to the assistant principal were clearly focused on organizational maintenance (Malone et al., 2000).

Golanda (1991) cited a study of assistant principals who were asked to evaluate their preparation in 14 competencies that were of a design nature as opposed to maintenance. The competencies were categorized in three levels of school management: (a) leader in staff personnel,

(b) community relations, and (c) instructional leader. The participants responded that they felt prepared in only 4 out of the 14 competencies.

Mertz (2000) reported on the reactions of assistant principals participating in a study in which they were surveyed as to their perceptions of their roles compared to the roles of the principal. While the majority of these participants also were assigned tasks more closely associated with maintenance of the organization rather than design for the organization's structure, several also reported their attempts to delve into the area of design. The results concluded that over time, in the face of a lack of support or encouragement for realizing their objectives, the assistants abandoned these attempts to realize their higher-level leadership goals. Not only were they given maintenance tasks, but they were not supported in their attempts to exercise more leadership.

Another study revealed how assistant principals were kept more in the realm of maintenance rather than design of the organization (Lovely, 1999). This study followed assistant principals of four different schools. In three of the four schools, assistant principals were taught to coordinate and control, to manage the school, and, in doing so, to maintain the existing structure. Their comments

revealed that they felt they might be hard pressed to think of, much less create, frames of true leadership and design in which they had not experienced.

Career Development

In trying to focus more on how assistant principals can better be prepared for the role of principal, one realizes that most assistant principals are expected to learn on-the-job. Very few researchers disagreed with this notion. In fact, many supported it. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2000) addressed this concept in its statement on Leadership Development for School Administrators:

> Be it therefore, resolved by the National Association of Secondary School Principals that . . . [school] districts provide funding and opportunities to engage principals and assistant principals in ongoing, sustained, job embedded leadership development that focuses on knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will improve a principal's or assistant principal's ability to lead and manage middle level and high school in an optimal fashion. (p. 2)

Learning-by-doing is also stressed by Brottman (1981) in that there is little or no distinction in graduate education programs or state certification. Most assistant principals, according to Brottman, learn their particular job through an apprenticeship, even though it often is not termed an apprenticeship.

A significant part of the development of an assistant principal's career often lies within the auspices of the principal, as he or she is the person who defines the assistant principal's duties and is in direct supervision of the assistant principal. Burgess (1973) reinforced this concept by stating that the building principal has a professional obligation to help the assistant principal in training and to give him or her opportunities to broaden educational experiences in all aspects of leadership.

Wheeler and Agruso (1996) concurred by proposing that assistant principals' training should be hands-on and simulate as closely as possible actual problems that will be faced on the job. This can only be done by having the principal develop a close supervisory relationship with the assistant principal.

Lovely (1996) reported on a study on approaches to train assistant principals in the United States. The study focused on a program titled "Outreach," in which assistant principals were actively sought out in order to train to be effective principals. The assistant principals were provided with all the experiences and responsibilities typically required of a principal. The assistant principals were able to hone their leadership skills through ongoing collaboration with qualified principals who clearly

understood the diverse elements of the job and who agreed to supervise and monitor the progress of the candidates closely.

Hopkins-Thompson (2000) suggested a strong mentoring program for assistant principals as the best way to prepare them for principalship. Many universities are adding mentoring components to their programs as a way to provide the much-needed experience as better preparation for the job of principal. Future school administrators should have the opportunity to step into an assistant principalship in which they can work closely for a year with a school administration team in order to gain insight and knowledge about their chosen field. This would include both managerial and leadership components of the job.

The mentorship program of the Santa Cruz schools is described by Bloom and Krovetz (2001). This program includes the following:

1. Developing future principals through structuring the assistant principalship as an apprenticeship
2. Developing future school leaders who have the skills, attitudes, behaviors, and courage to lead and manage public schools in a manner that will maximize the learning of all students

3. Designing the role of the assistant principal in a manner that supports the work of the principal as a site leader
4. Designing the principalship and assistant principalship in a manner so that the individuals who serve in these positions not only survive, but thrive.

Bloom and Krovetz (2001) reported that, with components such as these, the program was successful. One assistant principal reported after moving into a principalship that she was prepared to take on the responsibility of principal because of the coaching and mentoring interactions between her and her principal-mentor. She reported that they worked as a team sharing all aspects of leadership, including evaluating, planning, and strategizing.

Self-assessment has also become an area in which assistant principals are gaining insight into preparation for the principalship. The Institute for Educational Leadership (2000) reported a program in Texas schools in which the principals have taken the responsibility for guaranteeing effective school-level leadership. This program is based on self-assessment, as all principals and assistant principals in the state must periodically diagnose their own learning needs. Each is required to

maintain a professional growth plan with activities based on an assessment of skill strengths and developmental changes. Principals and assistant principals base their decisions about appropriate professional development on assessment results including reflective self-assessment.

Golanda (1991) proposed that instead of the principal's being totally responsible, the assistant principal should share equally in the career development. The principal can only assign tasks, but it is up to the assistant principal to respond and make the most of the experiences. In addition, Golanda suggested that the assistant principal not only perform the tasks well, but also be constantly seeking tasks of greater involvement.

Summary

Research on the roles of assistant principals is initiating a call for better preparation of assistant principals before they assume the role of principal. In their current position, assistant principals are typically given narrow, managerial duties that require them merely to keep things going smoothly within the environment of the school. They are very seldom given responsibilities that require higher level decision-making, creativity, or initiation, all of which are required skills for the job of principal.

This has led in great part to many assistant principals' feeling frustrated and dissatisfied not only with their current job, but also with their job after they gain a principalship, as they realize that they are not prepared. Lovely (1999) suggested that assigning a challenging job such as principal to someone who lacks the skills and training necessary for the job will in many cases lead to failure.

According to most researchers, the key to successful principalships for assistant principals lies with their current principal because he or she assigns the assistant principal's duties and oversees their performance. A tight working relationship, also called a team effort, has been shown to be an effective method of making sure the assistant principal is prepared to move into a principalship. Thedford and Walter (2001) suggested that principals be willing to empower the assistant principal and give the assistant principal some instructional duties, allow him or her to participate in evaluation, public relations and communication efforts, personnel decisions, and campus-level budgeting. In other words, principals should be willing to share with assistant principals all the duties involved with such a position of leadership. No matter what leadership model or theory is applied to the school

setting, keeping all of the higher-level leadership duties within the auspices of the principal is only going to keep the assistant principal at a more task-oriented, managerial level of preparedness.

Flanary and Reed (2001) of the National Association of Secondary School Principals believed that even if the most effective development opportunities exist for the assistant principal, activities must be crafted and an experienced mentor must guide them. A trusted mentor can assist an assistant principal in developing the ability to reflect rather than worry about actions, and that reflection can in turn create real experiences. Again, the role of the principal in the assistant principal's preparation for principalship is pointed out as most crucial. The tasks of the assistant principal and the principal need to be compared to determine if the job of the assistant principal prepares one for a principalship. In addition, these tasks need to be viewed within a leadership perspective because it is leadership rather than simply management that is required for successful principalship.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which existing school processes prepare assistant principals to serve as public school principals in the state of Georgia. Presented in this chapter are the research design, population, instrumentation, operational definitions, procedures for collection, and analysis of the data for the study.

Research Design

The design of the present descriptive study was survey based. Descriptive research involves observation and description of variables as they are distributed throughout a population (Crawl, 1993). I chose a descriptive design because descriptive research allows researchers to understand variables or conditions in a situation based on the current status of the phenomena. It provides a viable framework of discovery and description in the investigation of competencies of principals.

The descriptive design consisted of the closed-ended questions at the end of the survey. The survey yielded

numeric, descriptive data that allowed analysis of variable (descriptive or demographic and perceptions) distributions among the newly appointed principals. The validity of survey research methodology is of critical importance. Therefore, the present research was designed to adhere to the four major tasks in the conduct of survey research: (a) matching the survey design to the researcher's questions, (b) defining the sample, (c) selecting and developing data collection methods, and (d) analyzing the data (Crawl, 1993).

Newly appointed principals were surveyed regarding the real and ideal competencies of assistant principals in six task areas: management of school, leadership in staff personnel, community relations, instructional leadership, student activities, and pupil personnel. Data from this survey were used to answer the research questions:

1. What are the perceived ideal professional tasks assistant principals should perform prior to becoming a principal?
2. Which tasks are performed by assistant principals?
3. Do the performed tasks prepare assistant principals for principalship?

Population

The target population for the study included all Georgia public secondary school principals (grades 6-12) who previously served as assistant principals and who were appointed as principals within the previous 1-3 years. Information regarding principals employed for the 2006-2007 school year was obtained from the 2007 Georgia Public Education Directory located on the Georgia Department of Education's website (http://www.doe.k12.ga.us). This directory is published annually by the Georgia State Department of Education and is made available to all public school systems in the state. From the list of the schools in the state of Georgia's Public Education Directory, all the schools with middle and high in their names were chosen to build a distribution list of principals that met that aspect of the desired target population. The years of experience of the principals on the state of Georgia department's website were not provided; hence, there was no way to determine the true number of principals in the sampling frame. As a result, all principals on the distribution list were contacted for participation. For purposes of this study, the self-selected sample respondents were principals who had previously served as assistant principals and who had been appointed as

principals within the previous 1-3 years. Because there was no singular reference source that indicated the number of persons who met all the criteria for inclusion, the only way to determine if they were part of the target group was based on their response to the survey. Hence, it was not possible to calculate the return rate.

Instrumentation

A 59-item survey developed by Kriekard (1985) was used to obtain responses from secondary school principals appointed to their principalship within the previous 1-3 years. Kriekard's study, which was to determine the competencies needed to serve as an assistant principal, included 289 randomly selected secondary school assistant principals in a six-state area in the southwestern United States. The competencies on Kriekard's instrument were developed from (a) The National Association of Secondary School Principal's Task Inventory; (b) The Performance Evaluation of Educational Leaders, a nationally validated instrument developed by Demcke at Arizona State University; and (c) a competency listing for assistant principals developed by Kriekard and Norton in 1980. A popularity index was used to validate the competencies listed in his study by identifying the extent to which assistant principals agreed with the competency being an ideal or

real part of their job. Point values were assigned to the competencies and mean scores of the competencies were calculated. Valid descriptors for the real and ideal competencies of assistant principals were determined by competencies with an index score closer to 1.0 than 0.0. Kreikard (1985) reported reliability coefficients ranging from an alpha of .85 to an alpha of .93.

For this study, a pilot of the instrument was performed with 23 principals in the target population who attended the Georgia Leadership Institute Conference with the researcher. Each of the secondary school principals agreed to complete the survey to help the researcher to determine the approximate length of time it would take to respond to the survey, to determine which method of administering the survey would be most beneficial, and to suggest modifications (if any) in language, format, or length. The group of 23 unanimously agreed that the Web-based survey method would be the best method for eliciting responses. Some of the reasons provided by the pilot group were that it would be quicker for the participants to complete the survey, it did not involve additional paperwork, and the risk of respondents not sending the survey back was minimal because principals check their e-mail daily. They also indicated that they would be more apt to

complete the survey right away, and finally, it would probably be more cost effective for the researcher. The pilot group reported their completion time for the survey to be approximately 20 minutes.

Data were collected on demographic characteristics (personal and professional variables including gender, ethnicity, number of years of teaching experience, and educational undergraduate degree) and job tasks. The questionnaire for this study included demographic questions and an area at the end of the survey to allow respondents to share additional comments relating to the assistant principalship.

Operational Definitions

The questionnaire items measuring assistant principal tasks were consistent with NAESP (2001) standards regarding what principals should know and be able to do. Job tasks of assistant principals were defined in six categories: school management (questions 1-7), leadership in staff personnel (questions 8-21), community relations (questions 22-29), instructional leadership (questions 30-38), student activities (questions 39-48), and pupil personnel (49-59). Tasks measured by questionnaire items were operationally defined as follows:

School management consisted of the day-to-day tasks of organizing and running the school. These duties included delegating authority, development and completion of reports, records and written communication, setting of standards, maintenance of order and cleanliness of school facility, pursuit of resources for maintenance, repair of the school plant, and coordination of facilities used by community groups.

Leadership in staff personnel involved duties that related to securing and maintaining the human resources necessary to carry out the schools' program. These duties included: staff selection, recruitment, orientation, and evaluation; dealing with conflict among personnel, parents, and students; decision-making regarding faculty; use of effective evaluation procedures; participating in professional growth activities; and encouraging growth in others.

Community relations involved duties associated with participation in community activities to include giving and receiving information about the school, its program, students, and staff. These duties included administrative representation at community functions, use of multiple methods to make contact, being a professional leader in the community, and helping parents and school personnel to communicate with each other.

Instructional leadership involved duties that helped improve instruction, such as keeping staff informed about new technology, facilitating staff involvement in new programs, working to equalize educational opportunities for students, clarification of goals, serving on committees, preparation of the master schedule, and resolving conflicts related to instruction.

Student activities involved responsibilities for the non-classroom activities of students. These duties applied to student organizations, activities such as athletics or debates, meeting with student leaders and administrators, encouraging parental involvement, creating the master schedule, and assisting with student fundraising.

Pupil personnel involved duties associated with student management procedures to include establishment of procedures regarding positive student behavior, discipline, attendance, and counseling and guidance; monitoring of student problems such as racial or sexual composition of groups; and insurance of appropriate use of community agencies.

Procedures

Following study proposal approval by the doctoral committee, a phone call and letter were used to request permission from Dr. Kriekard to use his instrument. Once

permission was granted, I submitted the instrument and a proposed cover letter to the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for its approval.

Following IRB approval, the online software, Survey Monkey, was used to distribute to potential participants an e-mail which included a cover letter, the letter of consent to participate, and a link to the survey. The cover letter explained the purpose of the study and guaranteed complete confidentiality to all respondents. At the end of the 3-week period, Survey Monkey was designed to redistribute a reminder e-mail with a link to the survey to non-respondents to encourage their completion and return of the survey. To avoid duplication of responses, all questionnaires were monitored through the Web-based instrument and were not delivered to those who had already responded.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 15) was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and cross tabulations) were used to describe the sample's demographics and responses to ideal and actual tasks of the assistant principal. Each response to perceptions of ideal and actual tasks were rated on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). The first two research questions (What are the

perceived ideal tasks assistant principals should perform prior to becoming principal? What are the perceived tasks assistant principals actually perform prior to becoming a principal?) were analyzed by using frequency distributions of composite scores of each of the six major task groupings (or subscales). Within each major task, responses were totaled and averaged to obtain a mean composite response for each respondent. Composite responses were arranged in decreasing percentages to indicate most ideal to least ideal tasks related to research question 1. Similarly, composite responses were also arranged in decreasing percentages to indicate the tasks most actually performed to the task least actually performed related to research question 2. Composite responses were calculated in instances where a respondent completed all of the items related to the major task (or subscale). The third research question (Do the performed tasks prepare assistant principals for the principalship?) was answered in a multistep process:

1. Frequency of responses to perceptions of ideal and actual tasks and the means of each task were calculated to present an overall picture of the sample's perceptions.

2. Pearson’s correlations between perceptions of ideal and actual tasks were performed to determine the level of dissonance in respondent perceptions of the totality of each major task. The higher the correlation, the less the dissonance. A level of significance equal to or less than 0.05 signaled acceptance of the correlation as statistically significant.
3. Paired sample t-tests were also used to determine the difference between the respondent perceptions of the ideal composite major tasks and their perceptions of the actual composite major tasks. Again, 0.05 was the accepted level of statistical significance between the means.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, I describe the research findings of the study as follows: the general description of the sample followed by the results of the data relating to the research questions and hypothesis. The general description includes respondents' demographic characteristics (gender, years of teaching experience, years of administrative experience, and number of students in the school). Number of years of teaching and number of years of administrative experience were broken down according to the following: 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-20 years, 21-30 years, and 31+ years. Of the 113 questionnaires returned, 91 participants answered all questions related to the six major tasks while 70 answered the final question related to their perceptions of the importance of the ideal and actual tasks.

Description of the Sample

Sixty-eight (68%) of the respondents were male and 40 (37%) were female. As shown in Table 1, most of the sample had either 6-10 or 11-20 years of teaching experience. Table 2 shows that a majority of respondents had 6-10 years of administrative experience. Table 3 shows the

distribution of the sample according to the size (in terms of student population) of the schools where they served.

Table 1

Participant Information: Number of Years Teaching

No. of Years Teaching	N	%
0-5 yrs	10	9.2%
6-10 yrs	33	30.3%
11-20 yrs	38	34.9%
21-30 yrs	21	19.3%
31+ yrs	7	6.4%

Table 2

Participant Information: Number of Years Administrative

No. of Years Administrative	N	%
0-5 yrs	14	12.8%
6-10 yrs	56	51.4%
11-20 yrs	32	29.4%
21-30 yrs	5	4.6%
31+ yrs	2	1.8%

Table 3

Participant Information: Number of Students

No. of Students	N	%
0-200	2	1.8%
201-400	5	4.6%
401-600	20	18.4%
601-800	17	15.6%
801-1000	22	20.2%
1001 or more	41	37.6%

Findings Related to Research Questions

Research Question 1

What are the perceived ideal tasks assistant principals should perform prior to becoming a principal? Each response to perceptions of ideal tasks were rated on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). Results are shown in Table 4.

Research Question 2

Which tasks are performed by assistant principals? Each response to perceptions of actual tasks were rated on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). Composite responses were arranged in decreasing percentages to indicate the task actually performed to the

Table 4

Ranking of Ideal Tasks

Task	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Student Activities	1.00	3.80	1.94	.64
Community Relations	1.00	2.75	1.62	.46
Pupil Personnel	1.00	3.00	1.55	.53
Management of School	1.00	2.86	1.53	.41
Instructional Leader	1.00	2.78	1.48	.44
Leader of Staff Personnel	1.00	2.29	1.37	.33

N = 84.

task least actually performed related to the research question. Composite responses were calculated in instances where a respondent completed all of the items related to the major tasks (or subscales). Findings are shown in Table 5.

Research Question 3

Do the performed tasks prepare assistant principals for a principalship? To address this question an item summary of ideal and actual tasks is presented; frequency distributions show the percentages related to ideal tasks and how these compare with actual tasks (see Table 6).

Table 5

Ranking of Actual Tasks Performed

Task	N	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Student Activities	87	1.00	4.10	2.40	.74
Community Relations	76	1.00	4.00	2.16	.68
Instructional Leader	90	1.00	4.40	2.01	.69
Pupil Personnel	79	1.00	3.00	1.88	.56
Leader of Staff Personnel	94	1.00	4.36	1.79	.56
Management of School	84	1.00	2.86	1.53	.41

Table 6

Frequency of Responses (Research Question 3)

	Item Question		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	Management of School						
1	Organizes, coordinates, and delegates authority	Ideal	68.30%	30.80%	0.00%	1.00%	0.00%
		Actual	23.10%	65.40%	5.80%	4.80%	1.00%
2	Understands and accepts scope of authority	Ideal	70.90%	29.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	30.40%	59.80%	5.90%	3.90%	0.00%
3	Assumes responsibility for the development and/or completion of reports, records, and written communication desired or required to facilitate the work of the school and school district	Ideal	68.30%	30.70%	0.00%	1.00%	0.00%
		Actual	34.70%	53.50%	5.00%	5.90%	1.00%
4	Sets standards, communicates and monitors standards for orderly maintenance of school facilities	Ideal	67.75%	31.30%	1.00%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	33.30%	56.60%	4.00%	6.10%	0.00%
5	Reports on nature and cleanliness of the building and its maintenance to district	Ideal	44.40%	46.50%	6.10%	3.00%	0.00%
		Actual	28.30%	48.50%	12.10%	10.10%	1.00%

(Table continues)

	Item Question		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6	Requests and pursues districts or central resources for maintenance and repair of school plant	Ideal	44.00%	46.00%	6.00%	4.00%	0.00%
		Actual	29.70%	50.50%	9.90%	7.90%	2.00%
7	Coordinates and oversees use of facilities by community groups.	Ideal	26.70%	50.50%	10.90%	11.90%	0.00%
		Actual	14.90%	44.50%	14.90%	23.80%	1.00%
Leadership in Staff Personnel							
8	Selects, assists, supervises, and evaluates both certified and classified personnel	Ideal	78.80%	21.20%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	45.50%	49.50%	2.00%	3.00%	0.00%
9	Deals with conflicts that arise among teacher-student-parent-support staff relationships	Ideal	76.80%	22.20%	0.00%	1.00%	0.00%
		Actual	56.60%	37.40%	2.00%	4.00%	0.00%
10	Follows established district procedures for selection of new staff	Ideal	63.60%	34.30%	1.00%	1.00%	0.00%
		Actual	32.30%	41.40%	12.10%	13.10%	1.00%
11	Makes decisions involving faculty members and/or other staff personnel where appropriate	Ideal	65.30%	33.70%	1.00%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	27.60%	56.10%	6.10%	10.20%	0.00%
12	Accepts responsibility for the evaluation of staff competence	Ideal	69.70%	28.30%	1.00%	1.00%	0.00%
		Actual	46.50%	44.40%	5.10%	4.00%	0.00%
13	Observes teachers' classroom performance for the purpose of evaluation and/or feedback to teacher	Ideal	83.80%	16.20%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	62.60%	30.30%	3.00%	3.00%	1.00%
14	Uses systematic and effective evaluation procedures	Ideal	77.80%	22.20%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	57.60%	33.30%	3.00%	5.10%	1.00%
15	Provides feedback to teachers concerning their performance	Ideal	79.80%	20.20%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	53.10%	37.80%	2.00%	6.10%	1.00%
16	Evaluates the job performance of custodial, secretarial, or other support staff	Ideal	53.50%	43.40%	0.00%	2.00%	1.00%
		Actual	26.30%	56.60%	4.00%	10.00%	3.00%
17	Establishes orientation for new teachers/staff	Ideal	37.40%	54.50%	3.00%	5.10%	0.00%
		Actual	21.20%	53.50%	6.10%	17.20%	2.00%

(Table continues)

	Item Question		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
18	Encourages involvement of staff in professional organizes and supports involvement in workshops and classes	Ideal	45.50%	52.50%	1.00%	1.00%	0.00%
		Actual	24.20%	59.60%	9.10%	6.10%	1.00%
19	Participates in professional growth activities, attends professional meetings, reads professional journals, takes classes or attends seminars on relevant topics	Ideal	68.40%	28.60%	3.10%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	40.20%	50.50%	4.10%	4.10%	1.00%
20	Assumes personal responsibility for his or her own professional development	Ideal	69.70%	28.30%	2.00%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	57.10%	35.70%	7.10%	0.00%	0.00%
21	Encourages the staff to develop, pursue, and continually evaluate its major educational goals and specific objectives	Ideal	57.60%	38.40%	3.00%	1.00%	0.00%
		Actual	28.30%	51.50%	10.10%	10.10%	0.00%
Community Relations							
22	Deals with community groups in a manner that promotes better understanding and goodwill	Ideal	53.60%	43.30%	3.10%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	22.70%	56.60%	9.30%	13.40%	0.00%
23	Communications effectively with parents and other school patrons to secure favorable understanding	Ideal	69.10%	29.90%	1.00%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	38.80%	50.00%	7.10%	3.10%	1.00%
24	Seeks to know the parents and to interpret the school's programs to them	Ideal	66.70%	31.30%	2.10%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	43.80%	45.80%	4.20%	6.30%	0.00%
25	Uses various methods for making positive contact with the community	Ideal	60.80%	39.20%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	22.90%	55.20%	13.50%	8.30%	1.00%
26	Demonstrates professional leadership in the community	Ideal	58.30%	36.50%	3.10%	2.10%	0.00%
		Actual	30.90%	49.50%	9.30%	9.30%	1.00%
27	Participates in various community agencies and concerns not solely academic	Ideal	35.10%	41.20%	14.40%	8.20%	1.00%
		Actual	12.40%	42.30%	19.60%	23.70%	2.20%

(Table continues)

	Item Question		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
28	Responds to requests for input or ideas on various community programs and activities not directly involving the school	Ideal	25.00%	59.40%	9.40%	6.30%	0.00%
		Actual	12.60%	44.20%	22.10%	21.10%	0.00%
29	Responds to requests for information or help from various community groups, agencies, etc.	Ideal	28.90%	59.80%	6.20%	5.20%	0.00%
		Actual	15.60%	47.90%	16.70%	19.80%	0.00%
Instructional Leader							
30	Initiates activities to improve instruction	Ideal	70.80%	28.10%	0.00%	1.00%	0.00%
		Actual	32.60%	47.40%	10.50%	8.40%	1.10%
31	Keeps oneself informed about new techniques and how they might affect various staff elements and encourages appropriate educational effort	Ideal	71.90%	28.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	33.30%	55.20%	7.30%	3.10%	1.00%
32	Facilitates staff involvement in program development	Ideal	58.30%	38.50%	2.10%	1.00%	0.00%
		Actual	28.10%	56.30%	7.30%	7.30%	1.00%
33	Encourages staff to search for and implement new programs	Ideal	50.00%	41.70%	3.10%	5.20%	0.00%
		Actual	20.80%	56.30%	11.50%	10.40%	1.00%
34	Constantly works to equalize educational opportunities for all students	Ideal	65.60%	33.30%	1.00%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	37.90%	52.60%	4.20%	5.30%	0.00%
35	Contributes to the definition and clarification of the educational goals and objectives of the school district	Ideal	59.80%	31.50%	4.30%	4.30%	0.00%
		Actual	30.10%	47.30%	9.70%	12.90%	0.00%
36	Serves on district-level curriculum and policy committees	Ideal	56.30%	39.60%	1.00%	2.10%	1.00%
		Actual	34.40%	40.60%	9.40%	13.50%	2.10%
37	Prepares and implements the master schedule	Ideal	54.70%	35.80%	2.10%	6.30%	1.10%
		Actual	33.70%	37.90%	5.30%	17.90%	5.30%
38	Resolves conflicts in class schedules, works with data processing, and teachers to effect solutions	Ideal	54.20%	40.60%	3.10%	2.10%	0.00%
		Actual	34.40%	43.80%	7.30%	12.50%	2.10%

(Table continues)

	Item Question		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Student Activities							
39	Supervises and administers student organizations	Ideal	39.40%	44.70%	7.40%	8.50%	0.00%
		Actual	22.30%	50.00%	10.60%	16.00%	1.10%
40	Develops and coordinates student activities with other schools and out of the district	Ideal	30.90%	51.10%	4.30%	12.80%	1.10%
		Actual	19.10%	53.20%	7.40%	19.10%	1.00%
41	Reviews the number and nature of student activities or establishes a system to review and eliminate or add activities	Ideal	25.80%	53.80%	9.70%	9.70%	1.10%
		Actual	11.70%	42.60%	22.30%	21.30%	2.10%
42	Meet with leaders of student organizations	Ideal	34.00%	54.30%	6.40%	5.30%	0.00%
		Actual	19.40%	46.20%	16.10%	18.30%	0.00%
43	Encourages and secures parent involvement in student activities as participants and chaperones	Ideal	32.30%	53.80%	4.30%	8.60%	1.10%
		Actual	19.60%	46.70%	12.00%	20.70%	1.10%
44	Confers with coaches and other activity leaders to insure space, time, and resource requirements for various activities	Ideal	32.30%	58.10%	2.20%	6.50%	1.10%
		Actual	23.10%	49.50%	11.00%	14.30%	2.20%
45	Supervises and administers the athletic program	Ideal	32.30%	43.00%	6.50%	16.10%	2.20%
		Actual	20.70%	40.20%	10.90%	23.90%	4.30%
46	Plans facility use and maintains a master activity schedule	Ideal	33.00%	57.40%	4.30%	5.30%	0.00%
		Actual	25.50%	40.40%	13.80%	19.10%	1.10%
47	Assumes responsibility for development and implementation of necessary schedules involving students, staff, community facilities, and equipment	Ideal	31.20%	55.90%	8.60%	4.30%	0.00%
		Actual	17.00%	55.30%	8.50%	18.10%	1.10%
Pupil Personnel							
48	Approves, oversees, and works with student fundraising efforts and exercises	Ideal	24.50%	52.10%	7.40%	12.80%	3.20%
		Actual	10.60%	45.70%	10.60%	29.80%	3.20%
49	Assume responsibility for student management procedures	Ideal	53.30%	38.00%	5.40%	3.30%	0.00%
		Actual	33.70%	48.30%	10.10%	7.90%	0.00%

(Table continues)

	Item Question		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
50	Cooperatively establishes procedures for developing and maintaining a high level of positive student behavior	Ideal	69.60%	30.40%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
		Actual	61.50%	35.20%	3.30%	0.00%	0.00%
51	Organizes a system where by discipline problems are handled	Ideal	76.10%	21.70%	0.00%	2.20%	0.00%
		Actual	63.70%	34.10%	1.10%	1.10%	0.00%
52	Monitors disciplinary actions involving students to insure the process is followed	Ideal	73.90%	25.00%	0.00%	1.00%	0.00%
		Actual	70.70%	29.30%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
53	Finds and develops programs to reduce absenteeism, tardiness, and behavioral problems	Ideal	65.60%	31.10%	2.20%	1.10%	0.00%
		Actual	47.80%	38.90%	8.90%	4.40%	0.00%
54	Manages and supervises the attendance procedures	Ideal	58.20%	36.30%	3.30%	2.20%	0.00%
		Actual	36.70%	44.40%	13.30%	5.60%	0.00%
55	Provides teachers with uniform procedures for keeping and reporting attendance	Ideal	58.70%	31.50%	3.30%	5.40%	1.10%
		Actual	38.00%	44.60%	5.40%	10.90%	1.00%
56	Provides for effective counseling and guidance services for students	Ideal	45.70%	33.70%	8.70%	10.00%	1.10%
		Actual	21.70%	42.40%	17.50%	16.30%	2.20%
57	Insures appropriate use of community agencies and refers students with special needs	Actual	41.80%	41.80%	8.80%	7.70%	0.00%
		Ideal	24.20%	47.30%	19.80%	7.70%	1.10%
58	Monitors the racial, sexual composition of student groups and the compliance of the school with the provisions of Title IX	Ideal	43.50%	45.70%	4.30%	4.30%	2.20%
		Actual	30.70%	31.10%	13.30%	23.30%	2.20%

Pearson Correlations (Research Question 3)

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations (PPMC) were used to assess the relationship between perceptions of ideal and actual tasks to determine the level of dissonance in respondent perceptions of the totality of each major task;

the higher the correlation, the less the dissonance. Correlation coefficients may range from -1.0 to 1.0. Values close to 0.0 are considered to represent weak relationships between variables. Values near -1.0 or 1.0 are considered to represent strong relationships between variables. Cohen (1987) suggested that a correlation coefficient around .10 or −.10 represented a small effect size, a correlation coefficient around .30 or −.30 represented a medium effect size, and a coefficient of .50 or −.50 represented a large effect size (p. 82).

A Pearson correlation was calculated for the relationship between ideal instructional leader tasks and actual instructional leader tasks. A medium, positive correlation was found ($r(84) = .376$, $p < .05$). Ideal instructional leader tasks were only somewhat related to the actual instructional leader tasks performed.

A Pearson correlation was calculated for the relationship between ideal Leader of Staff Personnel tasks and actual Leader of Staff Personnel tasks. A nonsignificant correlation was found ($r(84) = .211$, $p > .05$). The results did not suggest that Ideal Leader of Staff Personnel tasks were closely related to the actual Leader of Staff Personnel tasks performed.

A Pearson correlation was calculated for the relationship between ideal Student Activities tasks and actual Student Activities tasks. A large positive correlation was found ($r(84) = .552$, $p < .05$). Ideal Student Activities tasks were related to the actual Student Activities leader tasks performed.

A Pearson correlation was calculated for the relationship between ideal Management of School tasks and actual Management of School tasks. A medium to large, positive, correlation was found ($r(84) = .389$, $p < .05$). Ideal Management of School tasks were closely related to the actual Management of School tasks performed.

A Pearson correlation was calculated for the relationship between ideal Community Relations tasks and actual instructional leader tasks. A medium, positive correlation was found ($r(84) = .352$, $p < .05$). Ideal Community Relations tasks were somewhat related to the actual Community Relations tasks performed.

A Pearson correlation was calculated for the relationship between ideal Pupil Personnel and actual Pupil Personnel tasks. A large, positive correlation was found ($r(84) = .658$, $p < .05$). Ideal Pupil Personnel tasks appeared closely related to the actual Pupil Personnel tasks performed (see Table 7).

Table 7

Correlations Between Ideal and Actual Tasks

Task	Pearson's *r*	*p*
Instructional Leader	.376	.000
Leader of Staff Personnel	.211	.054
Student Activities	.552	.000
Management of School	.389	.000
Community Relations	.352	.000
Pupil Personnel	.658	.000

Paired Sample T-test (Research Question 3)

Paired sample t-tests were conducted to examine differences between ideal and actual tasks. There were six subscales contained in this survey. These subscales measured perceptions of importance in six areas: management of school, leader of staff personnel, community relations, instructional leadership, student activities, and pupil personnel. Respondents were asked about two aspects of these measures: First, how important did they believe each to be, on a 5-point scale; then, how would they rate their current administration on a 6-point scale. The first measure was called the ideal and the second was referred to as the actual. The t-tests compared the scores of ideal to

actual on each of the six subscales. In every case, the actual scores were significantly lower than the ideal (see Table 8).

In summary, correlations between the ideal and actual tasks showed that there were significant correlations between the ideal and actual tasks performed in each of the competency areas with the exception of the tasks in the area of leader of staff personnel. T-tests revealed that there was a significant difference between ideal tasks and actual tasks performed by the assistant principal. In every case, the actual task performed scored significantly lower than the ideal task performed by assistant principals. In light of the data, the hypothesis is supported; there is a difference between perceived ideal talks that should be performed and the actual tasks performed by assistant principals.

Table 8

Paired Samples Statistics

Pair	Tasks	M	SD	t-test
1	Ideal management of school	1.5680	0.4196	-7.093*
	Actual management of school	2.0119	0.5872	
2	Ideal Leader of Staff Personnel	1.3648	0.3278	-6.598*
	Actual Leader of Staff Personnel	1.8002	0.5822	
3	Ideal Community Relations	1.6131	0.4553	-7.695*
	Actual Community Relations	2.1577	0.6491	
4	Ideal Instructional Leader	1.4683	0.4260	-7.827*
	Actual Instructional Leader	2.0423	0.7044	
5	Ideal Student Activities	1.9750	0.6107	-6.013*
	Actual Student Activities	2.4190	0.7827	
6	Ideal Pupil Personnel	1.5429	0.5188	-5.740*
	Actual Pupil Personnel	1.8250	0.5665	

* $p < .001$ (2-tailed). $N = 84$.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION

This section presents a summary of research objectives and findings of the analyses related to research questions. The discussion explains the significance of the findings and their relevance to previous research as well as study limitations. The conclusion addresses implications of the results and recommendations for future studies.

Summary

The research objective was to determine whether or not the role of assistant principal in the state of Georgia prepares one to serve as a principal.

Research Question 1

What are the perceived ideal tasks assistant principals feel they should perform prior to becoming a principal? The analysis of the rankings of the perceived ideal tasks assistant principals should perform prior to becoming a principal revealed that the competencies falling under the category of Leader of Staff Personnel were ranked most important tasks that an assistant principal should perform prior to becoming a principal (1.37). According to the participants, it would be of great value for the principal

to have experience in activities that related to securing and maintaining the human resources necessary to carry out the school's program. These duties applied to staff selection, recruitment, orientation, and evaluation. They also included dealing with conflict among personnel, parents and students; decision-making regarding faculty; use of effective evaluation procedures; participating in professional growth activities and encouraging growth in others. The tasks falling under the category of Instructional Leader ranked second in importance. An assistant principal should be experienced in duties that helped to improve instruction such as keeping staff informed about new technology, facilitating staff involvement in new programs, working to equalize educational opportunities for students, clarification of goals, serving on committees, preparing the master schedule, and resolving conflicts related to instruction. The third most important task area that an assistant principal should be exposed to before assuming the role of principal was that of Management of School. This task included delegating authority, completing reports, setting and communicating standards, and maintaining school facilities. Pupil Personnel ranked fourth in importance. This task included student management procedures such as establishment of procedures regarding

positive student behavior, discipline, attendance, and counseling and guidance; monitoring of student problems, such as racial or sexual composition of groups; and insurance of appropriate use of community agencies. Community Relations ranked fifth followed by Students Activities at sixth. All of these areas were agreed or strongly agreed to be ideal for the assistant principal in preparation for the role of the principal.

Research Question 2

What tasks are performed by assistant principals? The competency tasks associated with the job of the principal ranked with mean values falling as: first, management of school, second leadership of staff personnel, third oversee pupil personnel, fourth serve as instructional leader, fifth foster community relations and sixth develop and organize student activities.

Research Question 3

Do tasks performed prepare assistant principals for principalship? The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), revealed that a positive correlation did exist between the ideal skills assistant principals should have to be prepared as a principal and the actual practice of these skills as assistant principal. Concurrently, examining the means from the t-tests also indicated that

the actual tasks performed by assistant principals do not prepare them for the role of the principal. The summary of question items showed that scores for ideal and actual tasks are not similar and highest scores are found for ideal tasks as compared to actual tasks performed in most cases. There is a gap between which tasks are ideal and which tasks are actually performed. This question is further addressed with the study hypothesis.

Summary of Findings Related to Hypothesis

I hypothesized that there would be a significant difference between perceived ideal tasks that should be performed by assistant principals and tasks performed by assistant principals. In summary, correlations between the ideal and actual task showed that there were significant positive correlations between the ideal and actual tasks performed. To varying degrees, assistant principals were performing tasks that they felt ideally prepared them to become principals, with the exception of the Leader of Staff Personnel category, where no significant relationship was found. Strongest correlations were identified related to the categories of Pupil Personnel and Student Activities.

T-tests were conducted to examine further the hypothesis by a breakdown of differences between six ideal and

actual tasks: perceived ability in management of school, leader of staff personnel, community relations, instructional leadership, student activities, and pupil personnel. Respondents were asked to rate how important they believed each to be (ideal), on a five-point scale and how they would rate their performance (actual), on a five-point scale. In summary, for every case, the actual task performed scored significantly lower than the ideal task performed by assistant principals. Thus, there was a significant difference between ideal and actual tasks, which may provide additional implications that the role of assistant principal in the state of Georgia actually does not prepare one to serve as a principal. For this reason, the debate regarding whether the assistant principalship is adequate training ground for one to ascend to the role of the principal is further warranted.

Discussion

The finding that most of the participants in this study reported higher ratings for ideal tasks compared to actual tasks performed is consistent with the notion that the role of assistant principal is not providing enough training for principalships. Previous research indicates that the assistant principalships may not be the most productive ground for future principals (Bloom & Krovetz,

2001; Goodson, 2000). The position of assistant principal has been perceived as a means to facilitate the effective administration of the school, and to provide training opportunity for future school principals (Goodson). However, research findings show that the assistant principal position does not prepare assistant principals to become principals or provide appropriate training for the principalship because the roles of assistant principals tend to be managerial and transactional, which does not prepare them to take on the role of visionary or transformational leader. Assistant principals do not receive adequate training (Fields, 2002; Goodson; Mertz, 2000).

Findings are further explored within the study's theoretical framework, which pointed out that the transactional leader focuses on management duties while the transformational leader focuses on inspiring others to follow (Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996). For this study, I predicted that transactional leadership with management skills does not provide adequate preparation for transformational leadership required by the role of principal. Daft (1999) noted that, ideally, a transformational leader would be able to develop followers into leaders, elevate followers' needs to a higher level, inspire followers to work for the

good of the group, and articulate the vision of the organization in a manner that inspires others.

Findings from this study imply that, as noted in the literature, assistant principals are not being adequately prepared for principalship and this includes their inability to perform tasks and act as a transformational leader. For example, study findings show that principals are not able to perform to ideal standards when it comes to balancing management and leadership roles (management of school), setting high expectations and standards (leadership in staff personnel), demanding content and instruction that ensures student achievement (instructional leadership), and creating a culture of adult learning (student activities) as noted by NAESP Standards (2001). However, they are more trained in being able to use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools (Pupil Personnel; NAESP Standards, 2001). Findings from this study support the need to train assistant principals in all areas except pupil personnel tasks, specifically the task of organizing a system to handle discipline problems and monitoring disciplinary actions.

Limitations

Because the sample selected for this study was from an available volunteer population, the results of this

research may not be generalizable to nonvolunteer individuals. Because the study variables were not directly manipulated, results are observed from existing groups, and findings are descriptive. The study is also limited by my choice to use only a single survey instrument. Multiple instruments would assess multiple aspects of the issue. The use of an instrument designed by the researcher lacks substantial support for reliability and validity.

Conclusions

Most study participants ranked tasks related to leader of staff personnel as most important, which was followed by tasks related to instructional leader, management of school, and pupil personnel; fewer participants rated tasks related to community relations and student activities as most important; mean scores related to the different tasks performed were similar and ranged from 1.5 to 2.4, with the lowest mean score for student activities tasks; ideal tasks ranked higher than actual tasks except for question #52 (Monitors disciplinary actions involving students to ensure the process is followed) and ideal and actual tasks ranked equally for question number 51 (organizes a system whereby discipline problems are handled); most participants did not always practice the tasks they reported were ideal. There were significant correlations between ideal and actual

tasks in all areas. Pressure is on school leaders to improve teaching and learning. The duties and responsibilities of assistant principals have to be expanded further to include the responsibility for leading school reform that raises student achievement. The study emphasizes that although the assistant principals are exposed to the various tasks associated with the principalship, their skills remain underdeveloped in regard to transitioning to the principalship.

Implications

Implications of the findings are that because scores for ideal and actual tasks are not similar and highest scores are found for ideal tasks compared to actual tasks performed in most cases, actual tasks performed are not always ideal to prepare assistants for principalships. While this may imply that participants found the role of assistant principal in the state of Georgia does not prepare one to serve as a principal, more information is needed to support this conclusion. Findings also show that in most instances principals either strongly agreed or agreed in the importance of question items, which may imply that these two categories were considered similar or that principals need to place more importance on the ideal items. More information is needed to provide this clarity.

This study is presented with limitations; however, it provided important information regarding tasks viewed as ideal and tasks actually performed as a principal.

Recommendations for Future Research

Because there are study limitations caused by the sample, I recommend that the study be replicated in a future study that includes a larger sample, randomly selected from multiple geographic locations. Because the study is limited by its design, I recommend that a future study explore multiple variables. For example, a study is needed to assess directly new principals' views of whether the role of assistant principal helped them to prepare for the principalship. This study determined ideal and actual tasks performed with comparisons of each, which shows whether new principals actually perform tasks that they should. However, it remains unclear whether the lack of practice of ideal tasks actually implies that the role of assistant principal does not prepare one for principalship.

Because the study is limited by the choice of instrument, I recommend that a future study include the use of multiple instruments to assess multiple aspects of the issue. For example, instruments can be used to assess principal views of the issue; factors that influence, facilitate, and hinder the practice of ideal tasks; and

principal conclusions regarding the higher ratings for ideal tasks compared to actual tasks performed, to include specific differences perceived between *Strongly Agree* and *Agree* ratings of what is most important.

While this study provided important and useful information regarding ideal and actual tasks performed by recently appointed principals, a more comprehensive understanding of the topic is needed to conclude whether the role of assistant principal prepares one for principalship. It is therefore recommended that a future study further investigate the variables and findings from this study and the additional factors noted above. While findings from this study are limited, the present study's research questions were designed to add to the existing body of literature and provide further knowledge that may offer suggestions for improving the preparation of assistant principals. The questions were designed to specifically examine the experiential component of preparation from the perspectives of principals of secondary schools. Study findings that ideal tasks outranked most actual tasks performed provided important information for improving training of assistant principals. For example, assistant principals need to receive greater training in most task areas.

This means that they require more training in the tasks that coincide with NAESP standards (2001): the ability to balance management and leadership roles (management of school), set high expectations and standards (leadership in staff personnel), actively engage the community (community relations), demand content and instruction that ensure student achievement (instructional leadership), create a culture of adult learning (student activities), use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools (pupil personnel). Findings from this study support the need to train assistant principals in all areas except the following: pupil personnel tasks concerning specifically the task of organizing a system to handle discipline problems and monitoring disciplinary actions.

Summary and Conclusions

In summary, this study sought to determine whether or not the role of the assistant principal in the state of Georgia prepares one to serve as a principal. This study also sought to provide an understanding of the tasks that need to be performed by an assistant principal in preparation of the role of principal. Recently appointed principals were surveyed regarding the perceived ideal and real tasks performed as assistant principals. Findings showed that higher ratings for ideal tasks were found compared to

ratings of actual tasks performed in most areas. Tasks related to discipline and community relations were the only ones that yielded equal scores or higher scores for actual tasks performed compared to ideal tasks. Thus, findings implied that assistant principals require additional training in areas of management of school, leadership in staff personnel, instructional leadership, student activities, and some areas of community relations and pupil personnel.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Request for Permission to Use Survey Instrument

Dr. John Kriekard
1502 N. 32nd Street Phoenix,
Arizona 85032

February 6, 2006

Dr. Kriekard,

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia, and am currently working on my dissertation. The focus of my study is to determine whether the duties and responsibilities of an assistant principal adequately prepare one for the role of a principal in the state of Georgia. When I began my doctoral studies, I was a middle school assistant principal. I am presently serving as a principal in an elementary school.

In conducting my research, I came across your dissertation and instrument and felt that it would be suitable, with minor modifications, to use in my study. This letter is a follow up to a phone call on February 6, 2006, and I am requesting your written permission both to use the instrument and to make modifications in the instrument so that it is applicable to the focus of my study. I sincerely appreciate your consent, and I will be happy to send you a copy of the modified instrument as well as the results of my findings when my study is complete. You may fax your signed consent to 770-460-2343. Thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely,

April C. Madden

APPENDIX B

Permission to Use Survey

Paradise Valley
Unified School District
"Where individual excellence is our goal"

February 9, 2006

Dear Ms. Madden:

You have my permission to use the instrument contained in my dissertation and to make modifications in the instrument so that it is applicable to the focus of your study.

Sincerely,

John A. Kriekard

John A. Kriekard, Ed.D.
Superintendent

tc
By fax

Office of the Superintendent
District Administrative Center ♦ 15002 North 32nd Street ♦ Phoenix AZ 85032

APPENDIX C

Cover letter for Survey

Dear Principal:

I am currently working on my dissertation at Georgia State University. My topic is Preparation of the Assistant Principal for the Role of the Principal: An Examination of Real Tasks as Compared to the Perceived Ideal Tasks. As a practicing principal, I know how much time it takes to effectively run a school. Your time is precious, but I would greatly appreciate you taking approximately fifteen to twenty minutes of your time to look through the survey and make a selection based on your prior experience as an assistant principal. The survey is completely anonymous and voluntary. Overall summary results will be available on-line at the completion of the study.

There is an attached "Consent Form" that describes the project in detail and outlines your right as a participant. Please review the form carefully and please call me at 770-652-9896, amadden@clayton.k12.ga.us if you have any questions. You may also contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-463-0674 or svogtner@gsu.edu

Thank you in advance for taking time out of your busy schedule to assist me in my research.

Sincerely,

April C. Madden

APPENDIX D

Consent form to Participate in Survey

Georgia State University
Department of Educational Policy Studies
Informed Consent

Title: Preparation of the Assistant Principal for the Role of the Principal: An Examination of Real Tasks as Compared to the Perceived Ideal Tasks

Principal Investigator: Dr. Douglas Davis

I. Purpose
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether or not the role of assistant principal prepares one to serve as a principal. As a practicing principal, you have been invited to participate based on your prior experience as an assistant principal. Approximately 781 participants will be recruited for this study. The survey should not take more than 10 minutes of your time to complete.

II. Procedures:
If you decide to participate, you will complete an on-line survey instrument regarding the role of the assistant principal as preparation for
the role of principal.

III. Risks:
In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day life.

IV. Benefits:
The research is expected to contribute to the body of literature on the assistant principal and provide further knowledge that may offer suggestions for improving the preparation for the role of the principal. The study will assist districts in developing or enhancing professional growth programs for assistant principals who desire to eventually serve as principals.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:
Participation in research is voluntary. You have the right not to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

VI. Confidentiality
We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. A code number on study records will replace your name. The list containing participant's names and code numbers will be kept in a locked file. The coded list will be destroyed once the study has

been completed. Your name or other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally.

VII. Contact Persons:
Please call Dr. Douglas Davis, Faculty Advisor/Principal Investigator, at 404-651-2582 or April C. Madden, student Principal Investigator at 770-652-9896, amadden@clayton.k12.ga.us. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-463-0674 or svgotner1@gsu.edu.

APPENDIX E

Circle a number in the left column that reflects the extent to which you feel the competency should be held by an assistant principal to become a principal.

Then circle a number in the right column that indicates the extent to which you feel the competency was actually practiced by you as an assistant principal.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree

IDEAL		ACTUAL
	Management of School	
1 2 3 4 5	Organizes, coordinates, and delegates authority.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Understands and accepts scope of authority.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Assumes responsibility for the development and/or completion of reports, records, and written communication desired or required to facilitate the work of the school and school district.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Sets standards, communicates and monitors standards for orderly maintenance of school facilities.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Reports on nature and cleanliness of the building and its maintenance to district.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Requests and pursues districts or central resources for maintenance and repair of school plant.	**1 2 3 4 5**

IDEAL		ACTUAL
1 2 3 4 5	Coordinates and oversees use of facilities by community groups (i.e., church and recreation).	**1 2 3 4 5**

Leadership in Staff Personnel

1 2 3 4 5	Selects, assists, supervises, and evaluates both certified and classified personnel.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Deals with conflicts that arise among teacher-student-parent-support staff relationships.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Follows established district procedures for selection of new staff members.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Makes decisions involving faculty members and/or other staff personnel where appropriate.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Accepts responsibility for the evaluation of staff competence.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Observes teachers' classroom performance for the purpose of evaluation and/or feedback to teacher.	**1 2 3 4 5**

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	**agree**	**undecided**	**disagree**	**strongly disagree**

IDEAL		ACTUAL
1 2 3 4 5	Uses systematic and effective evaluation procedures.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Provides feedback to teachers concerning their performance.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Evaluates the job performance of custodial, secretarial, or other support staff.	**1 2 3 4 5**

1 2 3 4 5	Establishes orientation for new teachers/staff	**1 2 3 4 5**

IDEAL		**ACTUAL**
1 2 3 4 5	Encourages involvement of staff in professional organizations and supports involvement in workshops and classes.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Participates in professional growth activities, attends professional meetings, reads professional journals, takes classes or attends seminars on relevant topics.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Assumes personal responsibility for his or her own professional development.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Encourages the staff to develop, pursue, and continually evaluate its major educational goals and specific objectives.	**1 2 3 4 5**

Community Relations

1 2 3 4 5	Deals with community groups in a manner that promotes better understanding and goodwill.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Communicates effectively with parents and other school patrons to secure favorable understanding and support for the school and its programs.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Seeks to know the parents and to interpret the school’s programs to them.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Uses various methods for making positive contact with the community.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Demonstrates professional Leadership in the community.	**1 2 3 4 5**

1 2 3 4 5	Participates in various community agencies and concerns not solely academic (i.e., Kiwanis, churches, Chamber of commerce, Lion's Club, senior citizen groups).	**1 2 3 4 5**

---

1 strongly agree	**2 agree**	**3 undecided**	**4 disagree**	**5 strongly disagree**

IDEAL		**ACTUAL**
1 2 3 4 5	Responds to requests for input or ideas on various community programs and activities not directly involving the school.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Responds to requests for Information or help from various community groups, agencies, etc.	**1 2 3 4 5**
	Instructional Leader	
1 2 3 4 5	Initiates activities to improve instruction.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Keeps oneself informed about new techniques (computer technology, human relations, etc.) and how they might affect various staff elements and encourages appropriate educational effort.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Facilitates staff involvement in program development.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Encourages staff to search for and implement new programs.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Constantly works to equalize educational opportunities for all students.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Contributes to the definition and clarification of the educational goals and objectives of the school district.	**1 2 3 4 5**

1 2 3 4 5	Serves on district-level curriculum& policy committees.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Prepares and implements the master schedule.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Resolves conflicts in class schedules, works with data processing, and teachers to effect solutions.	**1 2 3 4 5**

Student Activities

1 2 3 4 5	Supervises and administers student organizations.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Develops and coordinates student activities (athletics, debates, etc.) with other schools in and out of the district.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Reviews the number and nature of student activities or establishes a system to review and eliminate or add activities.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Meets with leaders of student organizations.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Encourages and secures parent involvement in student activities as participants and chaperones.	**1 2 3 4 5**

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1 strongly agree	**2 agree**	**3 undecided**	**4 disagree**	**5 strongly disagree**

IDEAL		**ACTUAL**
1 2 3 4 5	Confers with coaches and other activity leaders to insure space, time, and resource requirements for various activities.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Supervises and administers the athletic program.	**1 2 3 4 5**

1 2 3 4 5	Plans facility use & maintains a master activity schedule.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Assumes responsibility for development and implementation of necessary schedules involving students, staff, community facilities, and equipment.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Approves, oversees, and works with student fundraising efforts and exercises.	**1 2 3 4 5**

Pupil Personnel

1 2 3 4 5	Assumes responsibility for student management procedures.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Cooperatively establishes procedures for developing and maintaining a high level of positive student behavior.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Organizes a system where by discipline problems are handled.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Monitors disciplinary actions involving students to ensure the process is followed.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Finds and develops programs to reduce absenteeism, tardiness, and behavioral problems.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Manages and supervises the attendance procedures.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Provides teachers with uniform procedures for keeping and reporting attendance.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Provides for effective counseling and guidance services for students.	**1 2 3 4 5**
1 2 3 4 5	Insures appropriate use of community agencies and refers students with special needs.	**1 2 3 4 5**

1 2 3 4 5	Monitors the racial, sexual composition of student groups and the compliance of the school with the provisions of Title IX.	**1 2 3 4 5**

(cont.)

Rate each of the major task areas as to their importance to you as preparation to assume the role of principal.

	Highest					**Lowest**
Management of school	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Leader of staff personnel	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Community relations	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Instructional leader	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Student activities	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Pupil personnel	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**

Demographics *(for analysis and descriptive purposes only)*

1. Number of years of teaching/administrative experience?

   _____ years

2. Number of years of administrative experience?

   _____ years

3. Number of student enrolled in your school?

   _____ students

4. Are you:
   _____ male
   _____ female

Comments_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your participation!