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## **School Improvement Policy: Have Administrative Functions of Principals Changed in Schools Where Site-Based Management is Practiced?**

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### **Abstract**

Have administrative functions of principals changed in schools practicing site-based management (SBM) with shared governance? To deal with this issue we employed the Delphi technique and a panel of 24 experts from 14 states. The experts, which included educational specialists, researchers, writers, and elementary school principals, agreed that the implementation of SBM dramatically influences the roles of the principal in management/administration and leadership. Data revealed that the elementary principal's leadership role requires specialized skills to support shared governance, making it necessary to form professional development programs that adapt to innovations evolving from the implementation of SBM.

### **Introduction**

Americans have begun rethinking and redesigning the most fundamental aspects of the way we run our schools--a process known as "restructuring" or "systematic reform" (Fiske, 1995). One of the most widely used approaches to encourage school improvement through this reform effort is site-based management (SBM). Ideally, SBM policy moves control and decision making from the central office to the local building level.

SBM with shared governance represents a major change in the process used to resolve problems. Ideally, instead of problems being resolved from a central location by

a staff not directly involved, the local school community settles dilemmas (Caldwell & Wood, 1992). Moving decision-making authority to the building level affords parents, teachers, and students the opportunity to have an active voice in decisions made at the school level. We are, in effect, "creating ownership for those responsible for carrying out decisions by involving them directly in the decision-making process -- and by trusting their abilities and judgments" (Harrison, Killion, & Mitchell, 1989, p. 55). As a result, increased autonomy of the school staff to make decisions at its facility is the expectation. With the expectation of change in the principalship and the demand for the principal to maintain a high level of performance, Wohlstetter and Odden (1992) assert that it is necessary to establish a clear definition of the role of principals.

"Although site-based management appears in many guises, at its core is the idea of participatory decision-making at the school site" (David, 1996, p. 6). Inherent in SBM is the expectation that the role of the principal will change. In particular, those people nearest to the problems, issues, and situations are included in the decision-making process (Goodman, 1994). Critical to the effectiveness of restructuring is the encouragement of teachers to participate in problem solving and decision making (Thurston, Clift, & Schacht, 1993). This job is the major responsibility of the principal, and the key individual identified as instrumental in determining the success of schools is the principal (Krug, 1993).

## **Background for the Study**

In analyzing the emerging role of the principal in the 1990s, Hallinger, Bickman, and David, (1990) concluded that the leadership of the principal is an intricate, context-dependent set of behaviors and processes. The larger, prevailing context is change, and change in the role of the principal is essential to any reform that is to be both quick and lasting (Carlin, 1992). Daniels (1990) in discussing his leadership role in SBM stated that

While the principal ultimately remains accountable for what happens at the school level, the school's steering committee plays an active role in nearly all decisions made . . . I gave up veto power in an effort to gain the trust and commitment of the staff. (p. 23)

Findings reported by Wohlstetter and Briggs (1994) from their study of 25 elementary and middle schools in 11 school districts in the U.S., Canada, and Australia underscore the status of the role of the principal changing from being the primary decision maker to one of empowering others. Further, Wohlstetter and Briggs found that the most effective principals involved in SBM made available four critical resources to teachers and community members: power, knowledge and skills training, information, and rewards. As a result of the investigation by Aronstein and DeBenedictis (1991), four basic processes of what administrators do when they manage SBM schools surfaced: Principals are to work collaboratively with staff members to analyze problems, set need priorities, resolve issues, and use group dynamics skills.

In the early, developmental stages of SBM, Lindelow (1981) suggested that in the implementation of school-based management, the jobs and functions of the principal would change from those of middle manager for the district to the leader of the school. Over a decade later Wohlstetter (1995) acknowledged that

The schools where SBM worked had principals who played a key role in dispersing power, in promoting a school wide commitment to learning, in

expecting all teachers to participate in the work of the school, in collecting information about student learning, and in distributing rewards. (p. 24)

Principals have moved from middle managers to leaders at the school site. Principals in Goldman's (1991) study indicated that their primary role in SBM became one of supporting people and being the advocate for their work. Talking to others and coaching and looking for opportunities to positively interact become the everyday expectations of the principal's job.

Even though research provides insight into the emerging role of the principal in the 1990s, Drury (1993) states: "it appears that the traditional role of the building principal is in a state of transformation, but that the ultimate result remains to be seen" (p. 19). To increase the likelihood that schools carrying out SBM are effective, the necessity to clarify the roles of the principal has surfaced (Gleason, Donohue, & Leader, 1996; Guskey & Peterson, 1996).

Three themes emerged from the literature as basis for this study:

1. The establishment of the administrative roles of the individual who occupies the position of school building principal is a controversial issue that is pervasive in the educational community (Blase, 1987; Stephens, 1987).
2. A new form of leadership is necessary to effectively support the processes involved in the implementation of school-based management at the site level (Doud, 1989; Vann, 1996; Wohlstetter & Briggs, 1994).
3. "The key role change [in SBM] is the principal's shift from top-down manager to a supporter and facilitator who maintains his or her leadership responsibilities" (Spilman, 1996, p. 36). "Teacher involvement in certain kinds of decisions can be mutually enhancing: it returns to teachers the power to govern their own professional affairs, and teachers, in turn, empower administrators to make decisions that enhance the organization's goals" (Conway & Calzi, 1996, p. 49).

## **Purpose of the Study**

With the policy trend toward the use of SBM influencing school operations, the purpose of this study was to detect changes in selected administrative functions (leadership, decision making, and management) of the principalship. Another purpose was to discover the components of a job profile for elementary school principals working under SBM with shared governance. To this end, a sample of practitioners and educational researchers participating in various aspects of SBM was polled through the Delphi method.

## **Research Questions**

Based on the aim of this study, the following research questions were generated as a guide:

1. What changes have occurred in the principal's role with respect to management and administration after the implementation of SBM?
2. What changes have occurred in the elementary principal's role with respect to leadership after the implementation of SBM?
3. What are the primary management and administrative tasks of the elementary principal in SBM?
4. What are the primary leadership tasks of the elementary principal in SBM?

5. How does the implementing of SBM policy alter the role of the elementary principal in the decision-making process?

## **Value of The Study**

In the past, the organizational structure within school districts has supported the strategy of exerting control over the operations and personnel at the local school from a central office. One prevalent plan to decentralize the organizational management system is the implementation of SBM. However, documentation of the roles and primary tasks of the elementary school administrator participating in SBM with shared governance has not been completed. Building level administrators working in SBM need basic guidance in planning for professional and personal growth. The results of this study are expected to be of value in training programs, establishment of evaluation guidelines, and identification of leadership skills for educational administrators.

During the transition to school-based management, many principals may be asked to assume responsibilities for which they are unprepared or for which their preparation has become dated. Therefore, development of the job description and principal selection criteria for principals in SBM schools are crucial. The primary functions of the principal in SBM identified in this study may be beneficial to school systems requiring the performance of specific roles and tasks of principals. As a result, applicants and job criteria may be more effectively matched.

## **Method**

The need to clarify the roles of the principal provided a sound basis to select a method of inquiry involving consensus building. Consequently, the Delphi technique was selected. We assumed that people who do the work should be involved in defining roles of their jobs. "Ultimately, it will be the people who carry out site-based management that determine what it is--and can become" (David, 1996, p. 9).

To reach the goal of clarifying the principal's role, the study focused on discovering the functions most often performed by principals in schools operating under SBM policy. Emphasis was placed on narrowing and refining responses of the selected expert panel to a consensus of opinion (Putnam, Spiegel, & Bruininks, 1995; Tanner & Williams, 1981).

## **The Delphi Technique**

Early Delphi studies originated at The Rand Corporation with Olaf Helmer (1967) and his colleagues. These studies involved a systematic method of eliciting expert opinion on a variety of topics with a focus on scientific and technological forecasting (Sackman, 1974). Putnam, Spiegel, and Bruininks (1995) described Delphi as a process to determine opinions or judgments of a group of people. "Delphi may be characterized as a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem" (Linstone & Turoff, 1975, p. 3).

## **Cycle I**

Uhl (1983) asserted that in the traditional Delphi study panel members are given the opportunity to provide responses to unstructured questions. The panel members in Cycle I were asked to respond to a query soliciting their perceptions regarding the job of

the elementary principal involved in SBM (Table 1). No background information or definitions of SBM were included with the questionnaire to avoid influencing the opinions of the participants.

**Table 1**

**Cycle 1: The impact of SBM on the roles of elementary school administrators**

Please respond to the open-ended questions below: List item statements that define the roles of the elementary principal whose school is involved with SBM with shared governance. Include any additional comments for other areas that would provide for a more comprehensive Profile of the Elementary School Principal.

- I. How has your job changed in carrying out site-based management with respect to?
  - Administration
  - Management
  - Leadership
  - Other
- II What are the elementary school principal's primary tasks in?
  - Administration
  - Management
  - Leadership
  - Other

**Survey Instruments**

In order to guarantee that the Delphi statements reflected the panelists' intent, a semantic analysis was conducted on the written replies. To begin the analysis, two individuals were named coders. They had the responsibility to develop sets of responses similar to those of the expert panel members. During the first step in the semantic content analysis process, each written statement was recorded on an index card. Next, index cards were categorized into sets of responses with each set representing one content idea. The last step consisted of formulating one Delphi item statement to represent each set of responses.

**Criteria for Consensus**

Criteria for convergence of opinion was established before the study. In determining whether convergence of opinion was reached between cycles, the following criteria were established:

- (1) At least 60% of the responders must be in agreement (Skutsch, & Schofer, 1975).
- (2) There is no significant change ( $p < .01$ ) in views between Cycles, indicating that stability has been reached (Linstone & Turoff, 1975).

**Panel Selection Criteria and Process**

The national panel of experts consisted of two subsets: 12 school principals in

elementary schools that had worked in SBM for at least three years, and 12 professionals (authors, researchers, professors, consultants, and administrators) who had attained national, regional, or local recognition as knowledgeable educators in the area of SBM. This second category was identified in the study as specialists.

Efforts were made to eliminate potential researcher bias by devising a nomination process for selecting expert panel members. First, an extensive review of the SBM literature published in 1988-1995 was performed. From this a pool of prominent educators, school districts, and organizations involved in SBM was compiled. Members of this pool were contacted to nominate potential panel members.

Each member of the pool was contacted by telephone and given the opportunity to nominate an expert panel member. Expert panel members were to satisfy one of the following criteria: (a) persons who had written about SBM from field experience or university settings and had been published in a nationally distributed journal within the last five years, (b) individuals whose schools had been identified in a nationally distributed journal because of participation in SBM, (c) investigators who had done studies related to SBM, (d) persons who had conducted training and coordinated programs related to SBM for national, regional, or local organizations, (e) educators who had received recognition in a nationally distributed journal, (f) individuals who had held positions with a national, regional, or local organization or a higher learning institution involved in the implementation, research, teaching, or training in relation to SBM, and (g) principals who had held a position in an elementary school implementing SBM for at least three years. Principals assigned to SBM schools, but who lacked three years' experience as an administrator carrying out SBM, were excluded from this study.

Each nominee was contacted by telephone and asked to participate in the national expert panel for this study. During the telephone discourse, the purpose and significance of the study, the time frame, criteria for expert panel consideration, and the responsibility of participants were explained. Each person was assured anonymity. Special effort was made to have participation of a representative expert in as many different regions of the United States as possible. Calls were stopped when 12 specialists and 12 elementary school principals agreed to be members of the panel of experts. A biographical account of the selected panelists is provided in the Appendix. Letters to confirm each panel member's participation were sent with the Cycle I questionnaire.

## **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

### **Cycle I**

The initial mailing included a cover letter, the questionnaire (Table 1) with detailed directions for its completion, and a stamped return- addressed envelope (N = 24). The phrasing of question one in the Cycle I instrument for principals was different from the same query for specialists. Principals were asked about changes in their job in SBM with respect to administration, management, and leadership in question one. Specialists were asked about changes in the elementary school principalship in SBM with respect to these same three areas.

After four weeks, non-respondents were contacted by telephone to encourage return of the Cycle I instrument. A follow-up postcard was sent to confirm the telephone contact. By the end of September, 22 of the 24 experts had returned their completed instrument. The two non- respondents changed occupational positions, and neither responded.

A total of 513 responses were received, 140 of which addressed change in

management and administration. Sixty-four (64) written responses cited changes in the elementary principal's roles with respect to leadership. There were 188 panel statements regarding the primary tasks of principals in the area of management and administration, while 121 statements related to the primary tasks of the principal in the area of leadership. The semantic content analysis conducted on these data resulted in the formulation of 57 Delphi item statements for the Cycle II survey instrument.

### **Cycles II and III**

A "bogus statement" was inserted as item and a distorted group answer was reported for this item. The purpose of the "bogus statement" was to assess the ability of the survey instruments to withstand manipulation by the researchers (Cyphert & Gant, 1971). The survey instrument consisted of 58 Delphi item statements. In Cycle I, a majority of the respondents commented that administrative and management tasks of the elementary principal are too similar and tend to overlap. Panelists suggested that these two categories be combined in succeeding cycles. This suggestion was followed.

An external review panel was utilized to confirm the proper formulation of the Delphi statements prepared for the Cycle II instrument as suggested by Linstone and Turoff (1975). The review panel consisted of ten educators. Four members were teaching in a school implementing SBM. They were asked to review the survey item statements for content validity by making a comparison to the original responses received from the expert panel in Cycle I. The other six reviewers, at another location, were asked to examine the final survey instrument for clarity.

Reviewers were asked to report the length of completion time. This information was included in the cover letter to the expert panel members. Suggestions and comments from both review groups were used in construction of the Cycle II survey instrument.

The Cycle II survey instrument was developed in October 1995 (See Table 2 for the 58 statements). A packet including the survey instrument, cover letter, and return envelope was mailed to the remaining 22 members in the first week of November 1995. A fax number was included for the convenience of panel members who wanted to return the survey electronically.

For identification purposes, each panel member's name was entered at the top of the instrument. Detailed instructions were also included on the first page. Each responder was asked to indicate his or her level of agreement with each statement on the following scale: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4). At the end of November, non-respondents were contacted by telephone and encouraged to return the Cycle II instrument. Postcards were sent to confirm the telephone conversations.

By the first week of December, 21 of the 22 panel members had returned their Cycle II Delphi survey form. The final respondent's survey instrument for Cycle II was not received until the first week in January, which was too late to be included in the Cycle II data tabulation. This panel member was dropped from the study.

In Cycle III, the mode for each Delphi item in Cycle II was reported to the panel. Before providing responses to Cycle III statements, each panel member saw the group mode and his or her response per item to Cycle II. With this information in mind, each person was asked to consider a new response in light of the modal response or state a reason for not changing the Cycle II response.

When the mode for each Delphi item is presented in the findings of this study, it is reported as the most frequently selected numerical scale value. For the "bogus item," number 44, the highest frequency (15) scored by the experts was a scale value of "3"

(agree). To find out if the distortion of data by the researcher would be rejected by the panel, the "bogus item" was reported as a scale value of "1" (strongly disagree).

Cycle III was mailed to 21 participants, and 21 surveys were returned. Several statistical procedures were performed on the data obtained from Cycles II and III. The major objective was to determine consensus.

Table 2, reveals the mode, reported by item, and the highest number and percentage of respondents in agreement after Cycle III. Agreement was reached on 51 out of 58 (87.9%) Delphi item statements. A total of 19 experts were in agreement (90.5%) on two items (40 and 52). (For purposes of verification or reanalysis, the entire data set from this study is available for downloading here in either [ASCII](#) or [Excel Spreadsheet](#) format.

**Table 2**  
**Responses to Cycle III (n = 21)**

Item	Experts in Agreement	
	Mode	n %
<b>Changes With Respect to Management/Administration</b>		
1. The principal makes fewer unilateral decisions	4	16 76.2
2. The principal has an ex- panded role in administration	3	13 61.9
3. Time management is more crucial because of the increased responsibility regarding the orchestrating of shared decision- making	4	17 81.0
4. Instead of the principal being singularly responsible for the attainment of the school's goals, all collaborating parties share this responsibility.	4	18 85.7
5. There is an increased responsibility for the principal to build consensus among constituencies.	4	16 76.2
6. The principal delegates more responsibility as a result of having to spend more time involved in a broader array of decisions.	3	14 66.7
7. The principal has more of a commitment to the empowerment of teachers in decision-making.	4	16 76.2
8. The principal has more responsibility in managing decisions at the site level (e.g., Issues the School Leadership Team will resolve).	3	14 66.7
9. There is more need for the principal to expand his/her knowledge base in such areas as group process and inter- personal skills.	4	17 81.0
10. The principal has more responsibility in managing resources.	4	11 52.4
11. The principal has an increased responsibility in managing personnel (e.g., Recruitment of personnel, staffing, defining specific jobs, evaluating personnel performance).	2	12 57.1
12. The responsibility of the principal has increased to function more as a liaison between the community and the school.	3	15 71.4
13. The need has increased for the principal to stay abreast of current research/ educational issues.	4	13 61.9
14. The principal continues to be responsible for the ongoing, day to day work in the school.	4	16 76.2

### **Changes With Respect to Leadership**

15. The principal has become more of a facilitator of the decision-making process.	3	14 66.7
16. The principal has an increased responsibility to build consensus among all constituencies.	4	15 71.4
17. The responsibility of the principal has increased to cultivate leadership from the ranks of teachers.	4	18 85.7
18. There is an increased need for the principal to have more communication with people on a consistent basis--both oral and written.	3	11 52.4
19. The principal has an increased responsibility to provide teachers with the information needed to reach decisions.	4	14 66.7
20. The nature of site-based management demands that administrators develop extensive "people skills."	4	15 71.4
21. The principal has moved away from being the instructional leader at the school to a school manager focused on developing decision-making processes that involve various stakeholders.	2	14 66.7
22. The principal must spend increased amounts of time networking with other schools, professional groups, and community/business groups.	3	14 66.7

### **Primary Tasks in Management/Administration**

23. Building consensus.	3	16 76.2
24. Staying abreast of the work of the whole school while allowing people to assume responsibility for their part.	4	16 76.2
25. Dispersing information among various school constituencies so that all are informed and have information necessary for making decisions.	3	11 52.4
26. Developing a School Improvement Plan (SIP) through strategic planning.	4	13 61.9
27. Facilitating the involvement of others in school decision-making.	4	17 81.0
28. Coordinating among all the school's constituencies (site, system, community, state, federal, union).	3	15 71.4
29. Carrying out the ideas developed by the group.	3	17 81.0
30. Orchestrating meetings.	3	16 76.2
31. Serving as the manager of people at the site level (e.g., Providing for the recruitment selection, development, evaluation and, if necessary the separation of faculty and staff members who work in the school).	3	16 76.2
32. Maintaining a safe and orderly school environment.	4	13 61.9
33. Creating organizational structure (e.g., Work teams) for school that involves all faculty members in decision-making.	4	16 76.2
34. Facilitating programs by management of resources.	3	15 71.4
35. Recognizing all "SUCCESSSES."	4	16 76.2
36. Providing school-wide staff development on a continuous basis.	3	14 66.7
37. Monitoring site activities in terms of what is legal.	3	14 66.7
38. Facilitating research/ data gathering in support of the work of the governance team.	3	15 71.4
39. Managing groups day to day.	3	14 66.7

40. Promoting the vision and the mission of the school.	4	19 90.5
41. Overseeing the budget.	4	12 57.1
42. Overseeing the operation of the school in areas such as building maintenance, safety, transportation, etc.	3	12 57.1
43. Seeing that the SBM Council (school leadership team (SLT), governance team, etc.) elections are held.	3	14 66.7
44. Coordinating the social services provided to families in the community.	3	13 61.9
<b>Primary Tasks in Leadership</b>		
45. Coaching.	3	15 71.4
46. Building consensus.	3	13 61.9
47. Facilitating the involvement of others into decision-making.	4	18 85.7
48. Building a school-wide vision of what can be accomplished.	4	17 81.0
49. Promoting strategic planning for school improvement efforts.	4	17 81.0
50. Providing opportunities for professional growth for all staff.	4	18 85.7
51. Promoting team spirit.	3	12 57.1
52. Keeping the staff informed.	4	19 90.5
53. Communicating with all the school's constituencies.	4	18 85.7
54. Facilitating the change process.	4	18 85.7
55. Organizing meetings.	3	17 81.0
56. Overseeing the operation of the school (budgeting, scheduling, hiring, etc.).	4	16 76.2
57. Carrying out demo- cratically made decisions.	4	14 66.7
58. Helping the School Leadership Team members to build coalitions for the greater good of all students.	4	17 81.0

A statistical comparison between Cycle II and Cycle III is shown Table 3. The variability from the mean for each Delphi statement is shown as well as the change in the standard deviation. In addition to the modes, means and standard deviations were calculated for more in-depth analysis of the convergence of opinion. "The mean and standard deviation, taken together, usually give a good description of the nature of the group being studied" (Borg & Gall, 1983, p. 366).

Means of Cycle II ranged from 2.38 to 3.80. The highest mean score (Mean = 3.80) was reported for item number 40. In item number 40, panel members concurred that a primary task of the principal in SBM is to promote the vision and mission of the school. Item number 21 received the lowest mean score (Mean = 2.38) in Cycle II. Panelists did not agree that the principal's role changed from instructional leader to school manager in SBM.

Mean scores in Cycle III ranged from 2.33 to 3.90. The largest means (Mean = 3.90) for Cycle III were recorded for Delphi statements 40 and 52. Experts emphasized, again as in Cycle II, that promoting the vision and mission of the school (item number 40) is a primary task of the principal in SBM. For item number 52, experts were in agreement that a primary task of the principal is to keep the staff informed. Item number 21 received the smallest mean score (Mean = 2.33) for Cycle III. In Cycle III, more of the participants' opinions converged to the group response of disagreement with the Delphi statement (number 21), which indicated that the principal's role has changed from

instructional leader to school manager.

**Table 3**  
**Report of Means and Standard Deviations**  
**for Cycles II and III and the**  
**Difference in Standard Deviation by Item**

Item	Cycle II (N=22)		Cycle III (N=21)		Cycle II to Cycle III Change in SD
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	3.76	.436	3.76	.436	0.000
2	3.15	.745	3.10	.641	-0.104
3	3.62	.669	3.71	.644	-0.025
4	3.71	.561	3.81	.512	-0.049
5	3.52	.602	3.76	.436	-0.166
6	3.25	.716	3.15	.587	-0.129
7	3.62	.498	3.76	.436	-0.062
8	3.10	.641	3.25	.550	-0.091
9	3.71	.561	3.76	.539	-0.022
10	3.25	.786	3.40	.754	-0.032
11	2.76	.768	2.57	.746	-0.022
12	2.76	.539	2.81	.512	-0.027
13	3.33	.730	3.52	.680	-0.050
14	3.57	.746	3.71	.561	-0.185
15	3.43	.507	3.33	.483	-0.024
16	3.52	.512	3.71	.463	-0.049
17	3.67	.577	3.81	.512	-0.065
18	3.43	.598	3.38	.590	-0.008
19	3.43	.676	3.57	.676	0.000
20	3.71	.463	3.71	.463	0.000
21	2.38	.865	2.33	.730	-0.135
22	2.81	.814	2.81	.680	-0.134
23	3.10	.625	3.10	.625	0.000
24	3.48	.750	3.67	.730	-0.020
25	3.33	.730	3.33	.730	0.000
26	3.10	.995	3.38	.921	-0.074
27	3.43	.746	3.71	.717	-0.029
28	3.10	.831	2.95	.669	-0.162
29	3.14	.793	2.95	.590	-0.203
30	2.81	.750	2.81	.602	-0.148
31	3.05	.740	3.00	.632	-0.108

32	3.48	.602	3.57	.598	-0.004
33	3.48	.602	3.71	.561	-0.041
34	3.30	.571	3.20	.523	-0.048
35	3.62	.590	3.71	.561	-0.029
36	3.38	.590	3.24	.539	-0.051
37	3.43	.507	3.33	.483	-0.024
38	3.19	.680	3.10	.539	-0.141
39	3.00	.775	2.86	.573	-0.202
40	3.80	.410	3.90	.308	-0.102
41	3.33	.730	3.48	.680	-0.050
42	3.29	.717	3.14	.655	-0.062
43	3.10	.944	3.10	.700	-0.244
44	2.90	.768	2.52	.873	0.105
45	3.43	.598	3.29	.463	-0.135
46	3.48	.512	3.38	.498	-0.014
47	3.62	.498	3.86	.359	-0.139
48	3.62	.498	3.81	.402	-0.096
49	3.43	.676	3.81	.402	-0.274
50	3.67	.483	3.86	.359	-0.124
51	3.48	.512	3.43	.507	-0.005
52	3.71	.463	3.90	.301	-0.162
53	3.62	.498	3.86	.359	-0.139
54	3.67	.483	3.86	.359	-0.124
55	3.00	.837	2.86	.573	-0.264
56	3.57	.598	3.71	.561	-0.037
57	3.52	.512	3.67	.483	-0.029
58	3.57	.507	3.81	.402	-0.105

To assess whether stability had occurred for the Delphi items, a t- test was completed for paired samples on each statement for the two subsequent cycles. The t-value statistic was tested at  $p < .01$  level of significance. This procedure answered the question, "Did the responses change significantly from Cycle II to Cycle III?" This procedure was used to determine if another cycle of the survey should be conducted.

Seven items failed to meet the criteria for agreement (Items 10, 11, 18, 25, 41, 42, and 51 as shown in Table 4). For the "bogus item," a mode of "3" (agree) was indicated by 13 (61.9%) of the 21 panel members. The "bogus item" was the only Delphi item out of the 58 that showed a decrease in the mean between these cycles and an increase in the standard deviation (0.105). Movement of panel responses from 71.4% to 61.9% consensus indicated that a distorted reporting of the "bogus item" had influenced panel members' responses.

Item number 27, facilitating the involvement of others into school decision-making, received 81.0% group agreement (N = 17). Although agreement was reached on this item, the t-value -2.83 indicated the means for the paired samples were not stable ( $\alpha = .010$ ) between cycles. Consensus was not reached on this item.

Agreement was reached for item number 49. Seventeen experts (81.0%) "strongly agreed" that promoting strategic planning for school improvement is a primary task of the school principal. However, the t statistic indicated that the difference between means from Cycle II to Cycle III was significant at the .01 level. Stability was not achieved [ $t = -2.96$  ( $df = 20$ ) ( $\alpha = .008$ )] and consensus was not reached on this item.

**Table 4**  
**Items With No Consensus**

Item	Mode	Agreement		Stability		2-Tailed p
		na	%	t	df	
10	4	11	52.4	-1.83	19	.083
11	2	12	57.1	1.71	20	.104
18	3	11	52.4	1.00	20	.329
25	3	11	52.4	.00	20	1.000
27	4	17	81.0	-2.83	20	.010**
41	4	12	57.1	-1.83	20	.083
42	3	12	57.1	1.83	20	.083
49	4	17	81.0	-2.96	20	.008**
51	3	12	57.1	1.00	20	.329

Agreement was defined as at least 60% of the responders (13 or more experts).

\*\*p indicates there was a statistically significant change ( $p < .01$ ) from Cycle II to Cycle III.

## Discussion of the Findings

### *Research Question One*

What changes have occurred in the principal's roles with respect to management and administration after the implementation of SBM? According to the findings in this study, a fundamental change has taken place in the dynamics of the role of the elementary principal. Seven items (shown as item #, statement, and % in agreement) achieving stability and receiving at least 75% agreement reveal this fundamental change:

- 4 : Instead of the principal being singularly responsible for the attainment of the school's goals, all collaborating parties share this responsibility (85.7%)
- 3 : Time management is more crucial because of the increased responsibility regarding orchestrating of shared decision-making (81.0%)
- 9 : There is more need for the principal to expand his/her knowledge base in such areas as group process and interpersonal skills (81.0%)
- 1 : The principal makes fewer unilateral decisions (76.2%)
- 5 : There is an increased responsibility for the principal to build consensus among constituencies (76.2%)
- 7 : The principal has more of a commitment to the empowerment of teachers in decision-making (76.2%)
- 14 : The principal continues to be responsible for the ongoing, day to day work in

the school (76.2%)

Other consensus items ranging between 60%-74% agreement were statements 2, 6, 8, 12, and 13. In conjunction with these findings, Black (1996) reports that many principals, the key players in the success or failure of school-based management, are 'paranoid' about their changing roles and responsibilities under this new order. As one panel member stated, "In a sense the buck has passed from the central office to the school office."

Given the findings from this study, we concluded that the elementary principal's expertise in management and administration should continue to expand. It was also concluded that principals in SBM would benefit from staff development programs that provide the opportunity to learn decision-making and management strategies, including time management. Caldwell and Marshall (1982) advise that in a staff development program which focuses on school improvement "it is assumed that if the individually identified needs of professional staff are met within the context of institutional goals, the best possible education can be provided for the students." (p. 33)

### *Research Question Two*

What changes have occurred in the elementary principal's role with respect to leadership after the implementation of SBM? Although consensus was reached on items 17, 20, 16, 15, 19, 21 and 22, only item number 17 achieved better than 75% agreement:

- 17 : The responsibility of the principal has increased to cultivate leadership from the ranks of teachers (85.7%)

The other six items ranged from 66.7% to 71.4%. In their responses concerning both the changes in the role of the principal in management/administration and leadership, the expert panel expressed its frustration in the increased amount of time put forth by site administrators working in SBM.

Experts in this study concurred that the SBM process with shared governance has created a time management problem for administrators. One panel member, a district level administrator, expressed disappointment that "the number of meetings an administrator attends and often orchestrates has increased ten fold in only a few short years." He went on to say, "gathering ideas and suggestions often creates time barriers that slow implementation."

With these findings serving as a basis for support, it can be concluded that the leadership process in SBM has become cumbersome because of the need for information from all of the stake holders. Time to focus on conducting school-based management processes is a critical factor in the success of SBM (Murphy & Beck, 1995). Elementary principals need to develop a comprehensive plan for coordinating groups and meetings. They will also benefit from leadership training.

### *Research Question Three*

What are the primary management/administrative tasks of the elementary principal in SBM? Consensus was reached on 18 items. Items 34, 38, 39, 37, 36, 43, 26, and 32 ranged between 60% and 75% agreement, while the following statements achieved a level of agreement higher than 75%.

- 40 : Promoting the vision and the mission of the school (90.5%)

- 27 : Facilitating the involvement of others in school decision-making (81.0%)
- 29 : Carrying out the ideas developed by the group (81.0%)
- 23 : Building consensus (76.2%)
- 24 : Staying abreast of the work of the whole school while allowing people to assume responsibility for their part (76.2%)
- 30 : Orchestrating meetings (76.2%)
- 31 : Serving as the manager of people at the site level (e.g., Providing for the recruitment selection, development, evaluation and, if necessary, the separation of faculty and staff members who work in the school) (76.2%)
- 33 : Creating organizational structure (e.g., Work teams) for school that involves all faculty members in decision-making (76.2%)
- 35 : Recognizing all "SUCSESSES" (76.2%)

Panelists indicate that the promotion of the vision and the mission was superior to other items related to the elementary principal's primary tasks in management/administration. Bennis (1989) stated that "true leaders work to gain the trust of their constituents, communicate their vision lucidly, and thus involve everyone in the processes of change" (p. 30). Panel members concurred that the elementary principal must function to keep the stake holders focused on the goals set forth in the mission statement. According to these findings, it may be concluded that strategic planning concepts are vital to SBM. Strategic planning is a tool for rethinking, restructuring, and revitalizing education (Kaufman, Herman, & Waters, 1996).

#### *Research Question Four*

What are the primary leadership tasks of the elementary principal in SBM? Statements on which consensus was gained and also ranging above 75% in agreement were:

- 52 : Keeping the staff informed (90.5%)
- 47 : Facilitating the involvement of others in decision making (85.7%)
- 50 : Providing opportunities for professional growth for all staff (85.7%)
- 53 : Communicating with all school constituencies (85.7%)
- 54 : Facilitating the change process (85.7%)
- 48 : Building a school-wide vision (81.0%)
- 49 : Promoting strategic planning for school improvement efforts (81.0%)
- 55 : Organizing meetings (81.0%)
- 58 : Helping the School Leadership Team members to build coalitions for the greater good of all students (81.0%)
- 56 : Overseeing the operation of the school (budgeting, scheduling, hiring, etc.) (76.2%)

Items 45, 57, and 46 (Coaching, Carrying out democratically made decisions, and Building consensus) were the remaining consensus statements. Their level of agreement was below 75%.

According to these findings, highest leadership priority should be given to keeping the staff informed, one of the keys to the success of SBM. "Particularly in a large school, the distribution of information is critical," according to one panelist. Another panelist commented that creating organizational structures whereby all those in the school are involved in decision-making is vital.

In light of the findings of this study, it was concluded that in SBM elementary

principals need to work toward becoming master facilitators and communicators. Sound backgrounds in strategic planning and group management are essential.

### *Research Question Five*

How does the implementing of SBM alter the role of the elementary principal in the decision-making process? As noted by the experts in this study, the pervasive idea that principals will negate their power and responsibilities because of SBM is not true. Panelists agreed that principals in SBM retain the authority and responsibility for some decisions. They state, however, that in SBM, the principal has a commitment to the empowerment of teachers in the decision-making process and seeks to give teachers the opportunity to be active in the shared governance undertaking. The findings suggest that the principal, by participating with others in the decision-making process and seeking ways to empower teachers to be responsible for the resolution of instructional issues, has become a leader of leaders.

"Shared decision-making is difficult when the staff continues to be isolated" (Squires & Kranyik, 1996, p. 29). Panelists suggested the principal is responsible for creating organizational structures in the school that involve all faculty members in decision-making. One principal remarked, "I recognize that it is our school, not my school and that synergy produces better solutions to problems than I can figure out by myself."

Inferred from the findings of this study is a need to identify specialized proficiencies essential for leadership support of productive shared decision-making. This suggests that professional development programs for administrators may need to be adapted to accommodate the advancement of new competencies evolving from the implementation of SBM. It also can be concluded from the data that it is a responsibility of the principal to keep constituencies abreast of vital information basic for making informed decisions. Experts in this study noted as a coach, the principal works to create a supportive environment that encourages risk-taking and participation in collaborative decision-making processes. Their perception was that it is becoming increasingly significant for the principal to create a climate in which teacher leadership may evolve. Coordinating the development of a distribution system through which information is provided to decision makers on how to prepare budgets, hire personnel, develop schedules, and plan the curriculum has emerged as an essential role of the principal in SBM, panel members remarked.

### **Summary**

This study was completed to detect the realities and the perceptions of selected administrative functions (leadership, decision making, and management) of the elementary principalship under SBM policy and create a job profile for that position. Given the content, level of agreement, and stability of each of the final 48 items, many conclusions may be made. The examples, as shown below, are drawn from the consensus statements having at least 80% agreement among the experts.

#### Changes in Administration, Management, and Leadership

After implementation of SBM policy,

- The elementary school principal working in SBM should share the responsibility of attaining the school's goals with all collaborating

- parties,
- Orchestrate shared decision making,
- Practice time management techniques,
- Obtain knowledge concerning group process and interpersonal skills,  
and
- Cultivate leadership from the ranks of teachers.

### Job Profile

The primary tasks of the elementary principal working under SBM policy with shared governance are to

- Promote the mission of the school,
- Facilitate the involvement of others in school decision making,
- Implement ideas developed by the group,
- Keep the staff informed,
- Encourage the involvement of others in decision making,
- Provide opportunities for professional growth for all staff,
- Communicate with all school constituencies,
- Foster the change process,
- Build a school-wide vision,
- Advance strategic planning for school improvement efforts
- Organize meetings, and
- Help the School Leadership Team to build coalitions for the good of all students.

### Recommendations for Further Research

To augment the results of this study and to gain a composite of the elementary school principal's role and primary tasks in implementing SBM, the following recommendations are made for additional research:

1. The results of this study should be expanded to include a comprehensive survey of elementary principals in schools that are implementing SBM at the National level. This study would further define and clarify the roles and tasks of the elementary principal in SBM and validate the findings in this study. The Job Profile of the Elementary School Principal in SBM might be used as part of the survey instrument. Comparisons might be made with the findings of this inquiry and the results of such a study would be beneficial in determining the course of study for principal preparation programs.
2. SBM, as revealed in the literature, requires new skills for the leadership roles and responsibilities of teachers and administrators in elementary schools. However, existing literature does not offer specific data to confirm exactly what professional development practices maximize the effectiveness of SBM. Further studies are needed to assess the effectiveness of professional development programs in elementary schools implementing SBM.
3. Items on which consensus was not reached need further investigation.

### Conclusion

This study suggests that within the context of a school working under SBM policy,

the elementary principal's role as leader requires specialized skills to support participative management. Considerations need to be made by colleges, universities, and job performance centers to assess their administrative training programs for congruence with changes in the field. Consideration should be given to restructuring traditional educational administration training to include the knowledge and skills indigenous to SBM such as principles of strategic management, facilitating group processes, building consensus, and enabling communications.

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## Appendix

### National Expert Panel Summary Information

Names were not included in order to preserve anonymity. Locations, occupational positions, and panel nomination sources of the selected panel members are stated, and reference is also made to the qualifications of the panel members as experts in SBM.

The composition of the panel originally consisted of 24 panel members, 13 males and 11 females. Eleven males and 10 females comprised the panel at the end of three cycles.

One of the objectives of the panel selection process was to select SBM experts that represented various regions across the United States. Of the original 24 panel members, two principals and two specialists were from the Pacific Coast States of California and Washington. One principal and one specialist were located in the Southwest Region in the state of Texas. The Heartland, comprised of Missouri and Nebraska, was represented by two principals and one specialist. Four specialists and four principals resided in the Southeast Region States of Kentucky, Florida and Georgia. The Mid-Atlantic area was represented by three principals and one specialist from Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. Two specialists were located in the Great Lakes area of Indiana and Ohio.

Various educational occupations were represented by expert panel members: (a) principals, (b) assistant superintendents, (c) director of a center for educational governance, (d) book authors, (e) lecturer and author on school reform, (f) director of a school improvement organization, (g) a Governor's Leadership Institute consultant, (h) director of a center for leadership development, (i) consultant for a performance improvement corporation, (j) director of school principals, (k) creator of a principal's training center, (l) retired chair of a department of educational administration, (m) staff members of leadership training institutes, and (n) area superintendents.

Names of the selected panel members who were principals were obtained from the following sources: (a) Two principals were nominated by a Dean of the College of Education at a large university. The school is involved in the development of educational

governance. (b) Two panel members were honored as nationally distinguished principals. (c) Five principals or their schools had been published, cited, or recognized in a nationally distributed journal. (d) five principals were recommended by the Superintendent's office of school districts involved and/or cited in SBM literature. (e) Two principals were nominated by university professors who had published articles on SBM in nationally distributed journals. (f) One principal was nominated by the Director of a university program involved in school reform. (g) Two principals were National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Distinguished Principals.

Justification for the specialists chosen to serve on the panel was based on the following criteria: (a) Five had published in nationally distributed journals. (b) The school districts of three specialists had been cited in the SBM literature. These specialists were administrators in these districts and were involved in the district's implementation of SBM. (c) Four specialists were Directors or staff members of leadership development centers supportive of SBM with shared governance and shared decision-making. (d) Two specialists were administrators in school improvement organizations. (e) Two specialists have written books relative to school reform, school improvement, and educational leadership. (f) Two specialists had presented research papers at a meeting of the American Educational Research Association. (g) Three specialists were involved with their own leadership improvement corporations.

Principals on the panel had published in the following nationally distributed journals: The Executive Educator, Principal, The School Administrator, and Educational Leadership. Specialists on the panel had published in the following periodicals: Educational Administration Quarterly, NASSP Bulletin, and Principal.

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