

A PROPOSED METHOD FOR APPRAISING BANGKOK'S CATHOLIC
SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' COMPETENCIES AND PERFORMANCE

CHAPTER I



ORIGIN AND IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

The school principalship is a professional position operating in a social environment. As an administrator, the principal is among the most public of all citizens of a town. According to Tope, the spotlight of public concern is continually focused upon himself and he cannot envelope himself in a smokescreen of technical knowledge, magical ceremony, scientific and technological equipment or symbolic language.¹ The public, including the members of the school community, sets him on a pedestal and subjects him to far reaching words of praises and encomiums when he does good, and to penetrating criticism and derision when he does wrong.

The performance of school administrators is evaluated daily by the different individuals and groups he is in contact with. The basis for evaluation often differs from individual to individual as each views the administrative performance accord-

¹ Donald Tope, et al., The Social Sciences View School
ministration (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey : Prentice Hall, Inc.,
1955) p.2.

ing to his own standards. Consequently, an administrator feels the need for a set of criteria to serve as guide for his actions in order to achieve a better and more successful job performance.

This pressure of public concern is even compounded by the fact that present trends have given the principal a more challenging role. The tremendous impact of science and technology, the burgeoning of schools and other organizations, the intricate and multifarious demands made on school administrators, the changing nature of students, the bubbling of innovative (some ephemeral) trends in education, the increasing competence, militance, and power of teachers - all have their own influence on the effective performance of the school principal. Together with the fact that as the needs of the school enlarge, more authority on the part of the principal becomes relevant; but with this increased authority the more he is divorced from reality. Zielboerg concurs : In society, the greater the authority of a given leader, the more he is sheltered from the impacts of reality.²

Today quality education requires the best performance of all professional personnel. As such the principal is prone to view the school as a total system and tries to identify the various components where improvement could be made. He has become in-

² George Zielboerg, "Authority and Leadership," (World) Federation of Mental Health, XXX 11, 5 (1950), 13 - 17.

creasingly aware that his own performance has significant consequences for the rest of the staff. That he could set the appropriate school climate in the attainment of school goals becomes a primary realization towards improvement. Yet improvements start from an analysis of the situation or evaluation of the status quo. Sad as it is to note, much of the efforts in evaluation and improvement have been geared towards the different areas of the school operation leaving the principalship distressingly neglected. Good, in enumerating the many Instruments developed through the years on appraisal failed to include or specify the principalship. He noted:

Ratings and scales have been developed for many educational, sociometric, and psychological areas of instruction and school subject fields, evaluation of outcomes, home environment, social distance, socio-economic status, attitudes opinions, morals, social and personal behavior, personality and character, temperament, employee service and efficiency, and many other fields.³

³ Carter V. Good, Methods of Research : Education, Psychological, Sociological (New York : Appleton Century, Crofts, Inc., Inc., 1954) p.687.

Yet the importance of the principalship cannot be overlooked. The Atlanta educational system in the United States points to the critical role of the principal in program organization and implementation. Here, Culbertson, Henson and Morrison observed that the principal was the single most importance factor in setting school climate and attaining school goals. They further observed that if the characteristics of a good teacher could be made, the same could be done with the idea of a " good " principal.⁴ Yet more listings of the characteristics of a " good " principal serve little value unless they are made as means by which evaluation of performance or competencies could be based.

This quest for the principal-leader stereotype has become so intense that in concentrating on specific traits or qualities, institutions lose sight of the real concern: What a man can do. This is the caution Katz makes in his study of the skill of an effective administrator. He states: It is the purpose of this article to suggest what may be a more useful approach to the selection and development of administrators. This approach is based not on what good executives are (their innate traits and characteristics), but rather on what they do (the kinds of skills which they exhibit in carrying out their jobs effectively). As used here a skill implies an ability which can be developed, not necessarily in-born and which is manifested in performance, not merely in potential. So the principal criterion of skillfulness must be effective action under varying conditions.

⁴ Jack Culbertson, Curtis Henson, Ruel Morrison, eds., Performance Objectives for School Principals - Concepts and Instruments (Berkeley, California : McCutchan Pub., 1974). p.5.

This approach suggests that effective administration rests on three basic developable skills which obviate the need for identifying specific traits and which may provide a useful way of looking at and understanding the administrative process. This approach is the outgrowth of first hand observation of executives at work coupled with study of current field researches in administration.⁵

Successful administration appears to rest on three basic skills: technical, human and conceptual.

Leaders and administrators of educational, business and industrial concerns are being told that they must change if they are to survive. Certainly this is not a new thought to the school administrators like the school principals. Accountability as a change concept and as a principal in management has passed the fad stage and is becoming a major trend. The schools, bombarded by several forces both externally and internally have become enmeshed in an accountability syndrome. The school principal as usual is in the middle and is being asked with greater frequency to become accountable for his administrative performance. In order to cope with this situation, the principal must take the initiative and respond to the syndrome. A beginning for the principal could well rest in the realm of proficiency in the development, implementation and evaluation of performance objectives.

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Robert L.Katz., "Skill of the Effective Administrator,
Harvard Business Review, XXX III, 1 (January - February, 1955)
p.33 - 42.

Although principal's accountability no doubt has gained popular support, in Thailand it has a different dimension. Evaluative methods for principals and supervisors came up. They consider, however, only the evaluations made by the principal's superiors and are primarily used for promotion purposes. Those in the private sector seldom have methods to measure and evaluate the performance and the effectiveness of the managerial and administrative skills their principals employ. More often than not, the methods being used are position descriptions which are merely listings of the technical responsibilities and often omit the segments that make up the direction and guidance of subordinates.

In the United States, the Stull Bill AB 293 was passed by the California Legislature and signed by the Governor on July 20, 1971. It became Article 5.5 of The Education Code. The intent was to establish uniform systems of evaluation and assessment of the performance of all certificated personnel within each school district of the state. This includes the school principal. Nelson Price in writing about the Stull Act noted:

As is also true of the competent teacher the strong principal has much to gain by having his skill, hard work, and talent evaluated and his success recognized. However, while the inadequate classroom teacher may postpone specific identification for months, even years, the weak principal will be exposed as Rudolf's nose. This is because a school tends to be a reflection of its principal. This means that

his technical competency, his personality and his dedication are mirrored in his school, its staff, and its students.⁶

Although this view is shared by many educators, agreeing that the principal's job performance can only be measured by looking at the functioning of his school and all the constituencies involved in school life, it is also noted that it is not the principal who should be credited or blamed as the sole determining factor for the functioning of the school. The principal's input is pivotal, but it is not the only input. There is a need to develop a profile of principal performance based on his role in relationship to teachers, community, students, parents and others, and in effect to develop a profile of the functioning of the school.

Progress and change have defined the principal's new roles. These roles identify certain normative obligations and responsibilities on the part of the principal and define, if not, prescribe his behavior. An evaluation method designed specifically to appraise performance could serve to provide a clear picture of the principal's roles. Only when such roles are clarified and accepted by others can a principal say that he is doing his functions well and is succeeding in his profession.

⁶ Nelson Price, "The Principal and the Stull Act." NAASP Bulletin, VII (1970), p.66 - 67.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The problem of determining administrative effectiveness is primarily that of developing suitable criteria of effectiveness. Thus, this study aims primarily at developing and validating a method which will appraise the performance and competencies of Bangkok's Catholic school principals.

Specifically, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the categories or dimensions of a method that would appraise the performance and competencies of Bangkok's Catholic school principals ?

2. What behavioral evidences or trait-actions of Bangkok's Catholic school principals do teachers and principals consider very significant and needed ?

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This study is limited to a survey of the views of Bangkok's Catholic school principals and teachers regarding the dimensions and categories and sub-categories of a method designed to appraise the performance and competencies of Bangkok Catholic school principals. Since this study is exploratory in the sense that it will study how the said principals and teachers view the dimensions of performance, any generalization from the data will be limited by the research method to be developed and by the procedures which will be employed. Most probably the dimensions in this study will revolve around those which concern:

- (1) conceptual skills - decision making, establishing priorities and posteriorities, anticipating consequences, and conflict management;
- (2) technical skills - planning, community assessment, group processes and communication, management and organization, and managing change;
- (3) human skills - interpersonal perceptions, morale development, and interpersonal relations.

ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions are made in identifying the areas of competencies and performance of the principal:

- 1) It is possible to define areas of professional administrative competence in terms of what the competent principal does.
- 2) Principals and teachers can identify the skills, competencies, and performance required of the principalship.
- 3) Teachers are capable of assessing the actual performance of their principal.
- 4) The acceptable stages in the development of a method are the establishment of face validity, content validity, and predictive validity.

Significance of the Study

As a descriptive survey, it is anticipated that the value derived from studies of a similar nature will accrue to principals as a result of this study. As Good states:

The result of descriptive-survey will have particular interest and importance for the school administrator, who would naturally like to know how other school systems are being run, in order that he may make comparisons with his own local school. From his comparison he may find encouragement in noting that certain of his procedures and standards appear superior to the practices in other schools, or may discover excellent practices in other systems that he can adapt to his own school. Even if he does not find helpful suggestions concerning the solution of his problems, he may derive some comfort from learning that administrators and supervisors are struggling with problems similar to his own.¹²

Since this study claims to come up with dimensions of performance and behavioral traits of the principal, they could be useful in assessing the principal's role. Deweke considers that it could provide a much needed frame of reference regarding the total role of the professional principal. Above all, lines of communication can be enhanced when all parties share a common frame of reference regarding the principal's total professional function. It is an altruism according to Deweke that:

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Good and Scates, Methods of Research, p. 553.

The principal views his own behavior in terms of the expectations he personally holds for his position. The probability that he may be the only person who holds these expectations may or may not deny the importance to the principal of having what he does and why he does it accurately perceived and accepted by those around him.¹³

Rowland in writing on managerial standards, admits that the premise on which his book is based is that the direction of people is best accomplished when the manager has a knowledge of : (1) the what of the managerial job, (2) the extent to which he is responsible for and has authority to perform each segment of the job, and (3) how well he is actually performing it.¹⁴

Drucker, in stressing the importance of effective performance noted:

In human affairs, the distance between the leaders and the average is constant. If leadership performance is high, the average will go up. The effective executive knows that it is easier to raise the performance of one leader than it

¹³ Howard J. Deweke, "The Principalship - Seven Areas of Competence" (ERIC Document), 1971, ED 057 479, p.11.

¹⁴ Virgil K. Rowland, Managerial Performance Standards (New York: The Haddon-Craftsman Inc., 3rd Printing, 1960), p.14.

is to raise the performance of the whole mess.¹⁵

This view somehow reflects Rowland's theory of the "multiplier effect" of high managerial performance. This theory states that the effects of a manager are multiplied by the number of subordinates he has under his span of control.¹⁶

Moresch stated that surveys and evaluations are primarily spring-boards to further work. They reveal the aspect of the education program in need of change and indicate the probable direction in which changes should be made.¹⁷

It is expected that the proposed method will be able to sensitize the principals to important dimensions of the position. The criteria would be especially useful to principals in two ways envisioned by Culbertson and others as:

1. The principal by using the criteria would have a valuable tool for self-evaluation for direction. This use seemed significant because of the established view that self-evaluation is one effective means of improvement. Such criteria could help the principal identify his or her priorities, isolate areas of special need, and enable him or her to

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Peter K. Drucker, The Effective Executive (New York: Harper and Row Publisher, Inc.; 1967), p.99.

¹⁶

Rowland, Managerial Performance, p. 24.

¹⁷

Angelo Moresch, Amministrazione delle scuole (LAS, Rome) p.76.

request necessary assistance or guidance.

2. Such criteria could serve as a screening tool in the selection of principals. As a screening tool, it would provide realistic and concrete criteria for assessing administrative talent.

It was observed by educational researchers that students, teachers, and administrative trainees might well profit from the creative exposure to a definition of the "whole principal" - - just as they have been exposed to the concept to the whole child.¹⁸

Likewise, the Mississippi Educational Service Center notes:

It is assumed with some good evidence that many administrators have significant guilt feelings relative to whether they are performing at an accountable or responsible level. One purpose of the evaluation is to free administrators particularly the principal, of such guilt feelings and the necessity to mumble generalities and apologies about their accomplishment, and to reward the competent, improve the promising, and rechannel the energies of those not performing at the acceptable level into fields of endeavor other than teaching.¹⁹

¹⁸ Educational Research Service: Circular No.6, 1971 (ERIC Document), ED 058 155.

¹⁹ Ibid..

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purposes of this study the following terms are used to mean:

1. Principal. - - the person engaged in the task of managing, supervising, coordinating, planning, and evaluating the affairs of the school. He/She also includes school managers, and/or administrators.

2. Performance. - - this term means action, something that is actually done. It emphasizes the things a principal does as he directs the people who report to him, and the way he handles the nonhuman resources at his command.

3. Standard of performance. - - a written statement of the conditions that exist when a job is being done well.²⁰ This is used interchangeably with the term performance objectives.

4. Assessment. - - synonymous with evaluation and appraisal. " It is a form of classification or scaling according to subjective values. It leans more heavily upon the human element than do the more objective methods of investigation, since appraisal is undertaken for the specific purpose of including the human element. It is not an attempt to measure objective characteristics, but rather to determine the effect of these characteristics upon human beings."²¹ It is also an estimate or measure of the qua-

²⁰ Virgil Rowland, Managerial Performance Standard (New York: The Haddon Craftsman Inc., 3rd Printing, 1960), p.36.

²¹ Good, Methods of Research, p.679.

lity of a person's performance based on one or more criteria which could be included or reflected in an instrument.

5. Method. - - any device used to measure, evaluate, determine the presence of, or appraise performance or competencies.

6. Validation. - - the process of determining or improving the degree of validity of a method. Validity is the quality of being grounded on truth or fact, and the extent to which a test or other method fulfills the purpose for which it is used. Face validation indicates a validity referring not to what a test (method) actually measures, but what it appears on the basis of subjective evaluation to measure. Content validity is demonstrated by showing how well the content of a method samples the subject matter about which conclusions are to be drawn. Predictive validity is the validity based upon correlation (or difference) with a criterion variable that is not available until some time after the administration of a method (for appraisal) which brings out the usefulness of a method or test results. "²²

7. Competency. - - the skill and ability needed for accomplishing a certain task or for the performance of a certain role.

8. Self-evaluation. - - the method in which the principal himself examines his own performance with the aim of improving it.

²² Certer V. Good, Dictionary of Education (New York: McGraw Hill Book c., 1973) p.636.

9. Frame of reference. - - All the realm of experience available to the awareness of the individual at a given moment, includes the full range of situations, perceptions, meanings, and memories available to consciousness. " ²³

10. Critical incidents method. - - a method for determining what abilities are needed to do a particular job in order to establish standards of success through actual incidents occurring in the job. " ²⁴

11. Role. - - part being performed by principals as professional educational managers.

12. Criteria. - - synonymous with dimensions, areas, categories, and standards and will mean those rubrics by which the total role of the principal could be categorized.

13. Performance statement. - - the written description of performance, competency, or trait which falls under a definite criteria, and which constitutes the expectation of a given role. This is used interchangeably with performance trait, trait-action, and behavioral evidence.

14. Conceptual Skills. - - skills that are most directly associated with knowledge. They represent more than the acquisition of knowledge. They include the ability to apply information as a whole and to understand how various parts of the organization relate to and affect each other, which requires diagnosis and analysis.

²³ Ibid., p.25.

²⁴ Ibid., p.154.

15: Technical Skills. - - the methods or techniques of getting a job done.

16. Human Skills. - - an individual's interaction with others, and contributing to an individual's ability to work effectively as a group member. They pervade all aspects of performance and as such influence others' perceptions of performance even in other skills.



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