



## LEGACY PAPER

# Administrator preparation: looking backwards and forwards

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper was to conduct a critical analysis of the origins and implementation of problem-based learning in educational administration as a window into the limitations of this approach and more generally administrator preparation.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The author reviewed the published work of the originator from 1970-2009, as well as his preparation program for principals, and evaluated his approach primarily in light of two perspectives, emotional labor and positive emotions. The paper probes the utility of using these sociological and psychological perspectives in studying and understanding the emotional side of administration through interviews with principals.

**Findings** – The major finding of this analysis was to question whether sufficient attention is being paid to the emotional aspects of administration in problem-based learning in particular and administrator preparation programs more generally. The analysis reveals several areas where more attention should be paid, and provides some insight into the nature of mental and emotional labor of principals.

**Originality/value** – The paper combines two theoretical approaches in a novel way to raise a series of questions that can be used to evaluate programs for preparing administrators in terms of a critical, but for the most part neglected, area – the emotional side of administration. For those who choose to incorporate this facet of administration into their preparation program, the author describes an approach that might be used.

**Keywords** Administrator preparation, Principal, Emotions, Learning methods, Educational administration

**Paper type** Conceptual paper

A few months ago the co-editors of the *Journal of Educational Administration (JEA)* inquired if I would be interested in submitting a piece for consideration in their newly inaugurated Legacy Paper series. Although I am more concerned about perishing than publishing at this point in my life, I accepted the invitation. In this paper, I invite you to join me in an intellectual journey that traces my interest in and concerns about the preparation of administrators, especially principals. You will discover that this self-examination led me to raise a series of questions about how our own preparation program handled the emotional aspects of administration. These questions may be used by others to examine their own programs. For those who choose to address this critical aspect of administration, I offer a number of suggestions for consideration.

My journey began in 1970 after reading the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines issued by the US government for tests that created an adverse impact on minority groups. In these guidelines, the EEOC defined “test”

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broadly enough to include specific educational requirements. Since school districts regularly required applicants for administrative positions to possess an administrative credential, I wondered if this educational requirement could withstand a legal challenge if it had an adverse impact on a minority group.

To satisfy my curiosity, I reviewed the extant empirical research at the time that examined the relationship between various measures of administrator effectiveness and formal preparation for school administrators. The results of my investigation revealed a rather consistent pattern: either no relationship or a negative relationship[1]. In consequence, I concluded, "In light of the available evidence, the courts will probably enjoin school officials from using the lack of graduate preparation as a disqualifier if minority groups are adversely affected by this test" (Bridges and Baehr, 1971, p. 3). This unsettling pattern of inconclusive results for the effectiveness of administrative preparation launched an intellectual journey lasting from that time to the present.

Five years later I was invited to present a paper for a conference honoring my mentor, Roald F. Campbell. Somewhat puzzled by my earlier findings on the lack of a positive relationship between formal preparation in administration and administrator effectiveness I decided to address in my paper why this troubling relationship might exist. In this paper I chose to analyze the work of a graduate student in educational administration and the work of an administrator along four dimensions: the rhythm of the work, the hierarchical nature of the work, the character of work-related communications, and the role of emotions in work. Based on this analysis, I concluded that there is a major disjunction between the work of a student and the work of an administrator (Bridges, 1977). Moreover, I dared to say that this disjunction may result in trained incapacity; in essence, to paraphrase Kenneth Burke (1935), the student "becomes unfit by being fit for an unfit fitness" (Bridges, 1977, p. 203). I had fired the shot *not* heard around the world! Or, as I was inclined to say in my most defensive moments, "There are none so deaf as those who will not hear."

Several years passed, and I had dinner with my mentor, Roald F. Campbell. Midway through dinner, Roald said to me, "Ed, it is about time you did something about what you criticized at the Ohio State Conference." Of course, he was referring to my paper about the possible dysfunction of administrator training that I delivered at the conference honoring him. My opportunity to accept his challenge occurred in 1988 when Larry Cuban, then Associate Dean of the Stanford School of Education, and Mike Smith, Dean, approached me about establishing a program for preparing future principals.

Eventually, I acceded to their request and began to consider how to proceed. In a university like Stanford, professors enjoy a special status: they teach what they want to teach. As their intellectual interests change so does the nature of their courses. Faced with this constraint and no formal authority to command the participation of my colleagues, I embarked on what I later termed "the Chardonnay approach to curriculum building." One by one I met with faculty members over a glass of Chardonnay at the Faculty Club to probe their interest in participating in a program for preparing principals. If they expressed some interest, I asked, "How would you see your interest expressed in the program?"

In this way I was able to attract a blue-ribbon faculty representing a variety of social science and education disciplines who were widely respected by their colleagues

and their peers around the world (Bridges, 1992, pp. 119-120). If a faculty member showed no interest and some did not, I asked, "Do you know of anything that I should look into that might be helpful in designing this program?" Richard Snow, a cognitive psychologist, expressed no interest, but he suggested that problem-based learning (PBL), an approach used in some medical schools throughout the world, might be of use to me and offered to lend me some material about PBL.

After immersing myself in the literature on PBL, I asked a simple, but challenging question. How can I design a PBL component in the program for prospective principals that more closely aligns the work of a student and the work of a principal? Following months of wrestling with this question, I arrived at a tentative solution to test and refine through trial and error. The results of this voyage were published in two volumes, *Problem Based Learning for Administrators* (Bridges, 1992) and *Implementing Problem-based Learning in Leadership Development* (Bridges and Hallinger, 1995). These books represented nearly 30 years of effort on my part to forge a link among three wobbly legs of administrative preparation (theory, research, and practice) that began with my paper on case development (Bridges, 1965). A decade later my collaborator, Philip Hallinger, drew on our experience in his design and implementation of a PBL program in a prominent business school in Bangkok, Thailand (see Hallinger and Bridges, 2007).

We, together, separately, or with other colleagues, have introduced this approach to countless professors and administrators throughout the world[2]. Following one of my presentations, this one in the School of Engineering at Stanford, a professor approached me about purchasing a copy of my book. Two years later he invited me to lunch and recounted to me how he had relied on the PBL approach to redesign the three quarter sequence in Product Design. According to him, many of the graduates of the design program were appointed to managerial positions after one or two years on the job. They urged him to provide some managerial training as part of the Product Design program. He used the ideas in the book on PBL to combine managerial and technical training. He then proudly announced that for the first time in the history of this program that all but one of the participants had received international prizes for their product designs.

Having retired 12 years ago, I now can undertake a more dispassionate look at my work on PBL, more particularly its effectiveness in preparing prospective principals to handle the role of emotions in their work. In retrospect, I remain confident that the emotional tone of the interpersonal environment in PBL is more varied, jagged, and turbulent than that of the more conventionally taught class. Moreover:

Students, like the administrators they aspire to be, encounter the emotional problems of working with people. These occasions create opportunities for students to test their competence in interpreting and responding to the feelings of others. When projects go awry, students also acquire insights into how they deal with frustration, anger, and disappointment (Bridges, 1992, p. 13).

However, with the benefit of hindsight, additional reading, and discussions with administrators I recognize several consequential shortcomings in my approach not apparent to me at the time. Although PBL exposes students to some elements of the emotional side of administration, I failed to exploit fully the opportunity to engage students in examining the role played by their emotions as they attempted to use rational models of decision making in solving practical problems[3]. Moreover, PBL by its very nature cannot reproduce the day in and day out emotional grind inherent in

administrative work. Finally, I failed to recognize and appreciate, as others before me also have, the important role played by positive emotions in one's life and work.

In line with this new recognition and appreciation, I believe that our approach overemphasized the mental aspects of administration (e.g. analytical problem solving and deliberation) and paid insufficient attention to its emotional aspects to the potential detriment of the health, well-being, and ability of our students to flourish in this administrative role. So that you can understand the source of my discomfoting belief, I draw on two perspectives, emotional labor and positive emotions, an interview that I conducted with an elementary principal, and the work on wounded leaders.

### **Emotional labor in the workplace**

To clarify the concept of emotional labor, I believe it is helpful to review briefly the seminal work on this topic (Hochschild, 1983). Her study focused on Delta Airlines at a time when airlines competed on the basis of service and not on price. To gain and retain its competitive edge, Delta Airlines selected its flight attendants with one flair factor in mind – their sociability. Once selected these aspiring flight attendants underwent training for their service role. The Delta Airlines training program consisted of two components: initial training and annual recurrent training (Hochschild, 1983). The purpose underlying this training program was to prepare the flight attendants to handle the emotional labor in their work, i.e. managing the feelings of others as well as their own, at least the ones upper management cared about.

The initial training focused on managing the feelings of passengers. The program emphasized how to evoke their positive feelings. To underscore the importance of positive feelings, trainers modeled the enthusiasm and upbeat attitude day after day of the arduous training[4]. When the flight attendants completed their initial training, Delta Airlines evaluated them twice a year using passenger ratings on such items as “established a relaxed cabin atmosphere” and “made me feel welcome”. Unsolicited letters from passengers regarding service went into the personnel files of flight attendants who referred to these letters as “onions” (complaints) or “orchids” (compliments).

Recurrent training focused on managing the flight attendants own feelings. Special attention was paid to dealing with difficult passengers and the feelings likely to be engendered during these unpleasant encounters. To avoid becoming angry, trainees were taught to imagine a reason that excuses the passenger's obnoxious behavior. Trainees also learned deep breathing and to remind themselves that they did not have to go home with this difficult passenger. If that failed, they were advised to remind themselves that the flight will be soon be over or chew on a chunk of ice to crunch their negative feelings away.

Since Delta realized that its flight attendants worked in teams, it anticipated that co-workers could become the basis for sharing grudges against passengers or the company. Trainers established feeling rules for dealing with their emotions. Flight attendants should not head for the galley for sympathy or to vent their frustration and anger; instead, they should seek assistance in calming down. Moreover, if they did seek support for their frustration, their co-workers should not show any sympathy for what had transpired.

When flight attendants needed to ventilate, they should turn to their supervisors. The supervisors provided an emotional outlet for the anger and frustration flight

attendants experienced on the job. In this way, management hoped to prevent the anger and frustration from surfacing while they performed their service role.

Despite the training and organization-sanctioned outlet for the emotions flight attendants experienced on the job, emotional labor had its costs, costs borne by the flight attendants. Some fused their personal identities with their role and could not separate their private self from their public self. They could not depersonalize situations and took on-the-job criticisms as evidence of their own personal shortcomings whether this was justified or not. Others perceived themselves as phonies, “not merely as an instance of poor acting but as evidence of a personal moral flaw, almost a stigma” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 134). Still others struggled with the discrepancy between how they felt and how the company expected them to feel and display their feelings while working. Some suffered from burn-out (Hochschild, 1983).

Reading Hochschild’s study stimulated me to ask a number of questions about the training program I had designed while serving as a professor at Stanford. A fundamental question occurred to me at the outset: Had our students acquired a realistic preview of emotional labor in the principalship and the knowledge and skills needed to handle this emotional labor effectively with no harmful side-effects? To answer this question, I began to imagine a rectangle with mental labor in the upper left hand corner and emotional labor in the lower right hand corner. Then I asked myself: Where would I draw the line to depict the proportion of our curriculum devoted to mental and emotional labor? The answer came quickly; the line revealed a very small proportion of the rectangle devoted to emotional labor.

Although we offered a course titled “The role of personality and emotions in organizations” taught by an eminent psychologist, the course focused primarily on the management of one’s own feelings – namely stress and how personality affected one’s interpretation of and response to external stimuli. The course certainly addressed this emotional aspect of administration quite well. However, when I reviewed the balance of our program using questions formulated after reading the study on emotional labor, I recognized how incomplete our treatment of the emotional aspects of administration had been. The questions I raised follow:

- What have our students learned about the nature of emotional labor in the principalship, and how emotional labor may vary according to the level of the school (elementary, middle, or high), the size of the school, the socio-economic background of the students, and the availability of assistant principals?
- What do our students know about the explicit or implicit feeling rules (i.e. what feelings should be expressed even if they do not correspond to the principal’s true feelings) that prevail in school districts. What are the consequences for violating these feeling rules?
- What are the personal feeling rules (i.e. personal beliefs about what feelings are appropriate or inappropriate to express) that students have adopted?
- What do our students understand about the nature of the toll that emotional labor may take on them, and what are functional and dysfunctional ways of minimizing this toll?
- What skills have our students acquired for managing the feelings of others, as well as their own?

- How do our selection procedures in preparation programs (and school districts) reflect a concern for how applicants handle the emotional aspects of administration?
- What support systems exist for helping principals deal with the emotional aspects of their job?

The answers to these questions revealed that we had indeed paid insufficient attention to emotional labor. The approach that I followed may serve as a starting point for examining the role of mental and emotional labor of any program preparing school administrators. The questions I raised also may be used as a starting point for designing the emotional component of a training program. Filling any voids in a preparatory program will depend in part on the existing base of knowledge as well as the availability of faculty members who possess the interest and requisite skills to support student development in this domain. I suspect both currently are in short supply within most departments of educational administration. While forging links with other departments like counseling psychology may be possible, this certainly represents a potential constraint in addressing this challenge.

### Emotions

Emotions are fleeting. This short duration distinguishes them from moods, traits, and emotional states (e.g. commitment) of a longer duration. Emotions fall into two major classes: negative and positive. Within each class there are numerous sub-classes. For example, anger, sadness, and fear are the most common negative emotions or feelings. The facial expressions associated with each of these feelings are similar across racial groups and gender (Ekman, 1992). Though there is general agreement among scholars on the different types of negative emotions, the different types of positive emotions remain in dispute. For the list of positive emotions, we turn to the major contributor on this subject. Fredrickson (2009), a leading theoretician and researcher in this field of study, identifies ten positive emotions: joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love. She refers to this cluster of positive emotions as positivity.

#### *Negative emotions*

Historically, psychologists and specialists in behavioral medicine have focused on negative, rather than positive, emotions. Their research has found that negative emotions are linked to both morbidity and mortality from chronic diseases, including diabetes (Lustman *et al.*, 1991), cardiovascular disease (e.g. Kubzansky and Kawachi, 2000), and asthma (Friedman and Booth-Kewley, 1987). There is also evidence from epidemiological studies that negative emotions figure in the development of such diseases as hypertension (Everson *et al.*, 1998). Finally, negative emotions are associated with unhealthy life style choices such as smoking, obesity, reduced physical activity, and excessive drinking of alcohol (e.g. Kubzansky *et al.*, 1997). In short, negative emotions can be injurious to your health and well-being.

#### *Positivity*

The study of positive emotions and positivity is a more recent development. Fredrickson (2009) has advanced a theory of positive emotions and rigorously tested it

in a variety of ingenious ways. Essentially, she argues that positivity undoes the effects of negative emotions, thus providing some hope for those subjected to negative emotions. She also argues that positivity broadens the mind. Positivity enables one to see the bigger picture or as she puts it to see the forest as well as the trees. Positivity facilitates the generation of ideas and better solutions for the problems one faces. Furthermore, positivity builds one's physical, psychological, and social resources and promotes health and well-being. Finally, positivity increases resilience, the ability to bounce back from life's inevitable setbacks.

However, for positivity to produce these results an individual needs to experience many more positive than negative emotions at an estimated ratio of 3 to 1. "What matters most is the positivity ratio people achieve not within a single day, but over time" (Fredrickson, 2009, p. 130). Since it is not uncommon for individuals to have an unfavorable positivity ratio, Fredrickson offers numerous ways of increasing one's ratio. The experimental research undertaken by Fredrickson, her students and former students, and others consistently support her theory and various ways of improving the positivity ratio. Physical health and well-being improve on a wide range of biological markers (e.g. immune system functioning and blood pressure) as does sleep. Her theory has also been supported in studies of organizational performance (Losada and Heaphy, 2004), successful and unsuccessful marriages (Gottman, 1994), and depressive patients (Schwartz *et al.*, 2002). Fredrickson (2009) offers a wide array of tools for enhancing positivity.

#### *Emotions in the home environment*

We experience emotions at home, as well as the work place. The home environment can be affectively neutral or filled with positive and negative emotions. The nature of the emotional environment in the home can decisively impact one's ratio of positive to negative emotions. As a result, the proportion of positive and negative emotions over time depends on the emotional environment present in both the work place and the home. Given that the emotional work environment of principals is more likely to be negative than positive, it seems important that their non-work environments, especially the one in the home, be supportive and positive. Otherwise, principals may languish rather than flourish. That is, they may burn out, suffer from health problems, or develop performance problems at work.

#### *Implications for preparation programs*

The work of Fredrickson brought positive emotions to the forefront and made me aware that emotional labor is likely to take its toll when one spends more time managing negative feelings than positive ones. As I examined our own approach to principal preparation, I identified four major shortcomings:

- (1) we had not underscored the importance of positive emotions in one's home and work life;
- (2) our students had not learned ways of monitoring the flow of negative and positive emotions in their lives;
- (3) they had not acquired the tools to improve their positivity ratio; and
- (4) they did not fully recognize or understand how emotions entered into their decision making process.

A significant component of any preparation program that aspires to increase the student's ability to manage one's own feelings, as well as the feelings of others, should address the shortcomings I identified in our own administrator preparation program. Perhaps, it is now evident why I stated earlier in this paper that we had paid insufficient attention to the emotional aspects of administration. I suspect others may reach the same conclusion if they examine their own program through the lenses of emotional labor and positivity using these four questions:

- (1) How has our program underscored the importance of positive emotions in one's work and home life?
- (2) What have our students learned about the ways of monitoring the flow of negative and positive emotions in their lives?
- (3) What skills have our students acquired for improving the ratio of positive to negative emotions in their lives as well as in shaping a more positive emotional climate in their classrooms and schools?
- (4) What role do emotions play in the problem solving and decision making process?

### **Principals at risk**

All administrators, but especially principals, find themselves at risk of developing health and sleep problems, as well as being unable to bounce back from life's inevitable set backs and disappointments. The nature of their work is working with and through other people (upper level administrators, teachers, classified staff, students, parents), not things. These individuals encounter problems as they also work with and through other people (staff members, students, parents). Moreover, these various classes of people may come to work with problems generated elsewhere, and these problems affect their performance in a variety of ways – impatience, short fuses, and the like.

When work or home related problems enter the principal's office door, the bearers often are angry or upset. Seldom, if ever, does someone approach the principal with a positive message like "atta boy" or "atta girl." Whenever I have asked administrators how many times someone has expressed gratitude or congratulated them on a job well done, they often answer by forming a circle between their index finger and thumb! I, therefore, suspect that over a month administrators, but especially principals, find themselves in a lop-sided emotional environment – many more encounters with negative than positive emotions – with a predictable effect: languishing rather than flourishing. This imbalance may have a wide variety of effects on the principal's level of well-being, energy, and personal and professional effectiveness (Loehr and Schwartz, 2003).

Moreover, administrators, especially principals, are likely to encounter a steady flow of problems and requests that afford them little time to deliberate, i.e. to engage in the kind of data collection, data analysis, and problem solving that has been a steady diet in their preparation programs, including the one I directed. Emotional labor represents a substantial component of the principal's work, perhaps equal to or in excess of the mental labor as I have defined it. According to the theory of positivity, the major imbalance between negative and positive emotions is apt to have an adverse impact on analysis and problem solving when needed most – crisis situations with



major consequences, as well as on the ability to see the big picture and generate creative solutions.

*The daily emotional grind: a case illustration*

In an effort to gauge the potential fruitfulness of my argument rooted in the conceptions of emotional labor and positivity, as well as my understanding of the principalship, I conducted several interviews with principals. All expressed the view that emotional labor took a much greater toll on them than mental labor. Moreover, they described in vivid detail their emotional struggles, their way of coping with them, the marked imbalance between positive and negative emotions, and the toll emotional labor took on them.

The most vivid and detailed account came from a dedicated elementary principal who worked in a K-5 school located in a low-wealth district with large numbers of children on free lunches. I have used an analytic framework based on the work of Hochschild (1983) to organize excerpts from her interview in sections that highlight the nature of the principal's emotional labor, i.e. managing the feelings (positive and negative) of others, as well as her own, how she has coped, and what the toll has been. Her view of emotional and mental labor also is highlighted.

**In Ms M.'s own words. . .**

I think almost everything that comes through is unique, particularly in the elementary principalship, where you are practically the only person. You have to handle everything, whether it has to do with the physical plant, a bathroom leaking, or whether it has to do with a student or parent. All of those things are unique and individualized and unpredictable because you are never in charge of your time, you are never in charge of your calendar. Being able to control all of that is a fallacy, just a fallacy.

The problem is there is often very little time to deliberate. It would be nice to reflect and say, "Oh, how interesting! Let me think about this!" For example, we were lined up in the morning and a group of students were going on a field trip and the uncle of a student was coming. His uncle was a wanted parolee, and so the police came running on to my campus to arrest him. With guns! I see those police; there isn't enough time to reflect. So you have to go with it.

*Mental and emotional labor*

*Mental labor:*

The mental labor has to be done, and I have a tendency to do it at the end of the day and on weekends. They are the paperwork kinds of things. I have to finish the school level plan, I have to redo the budget, I'm getting ready for school site council. It does take time, and they have to be done to keep the school running and keep in favor with the district office. That probably is equal to the emotional side. But the emotional side, you can't ever put that off to when you are by yourself. It only has to do with interactions with individuals. That takes up your entire day when people are there. So it's skewed in terms of when you can get it done, but it may be about half and half. I know a woman who loved being a principal, loved the kids and didn't do any of the paperwork. She lost her job after a year so you have to do both.

*Emotional labor:*

I spend a lot more time managing emotional situations with others than my own feelings. When things come to me, there is a crisis or there is a problem. I have to make it better.

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### Managing the negative emotions of others:

Living in Silicon Valley is hard. Families are on edge. Usually when I get a call from a parent, the parent is angry or frustrated. Sometimes I have to call the parent because their child has been involved in some problem. Generally, their first response is anger. Sometimes parents are ashamed because I am calling about a concern with their child. The child comes unkempt or the child is hungry or the child has stolen something.

Sometimes a teacher comes to me because they have reached a frustration level with a child, a colleague, or a custodian. Sometimes teachers will be going through things in their life, and they have sadness in their lives. Generally when they seek me out it's a burden they're carrying, or they are angry about something.

Besides the day-to-day emotional grind and dealing with one unique situation after another, we work under enormous pressure – high stake testing, demands from the central office, budgetary constraints, and union constraints. There will always be rules and protocols that you have to follow.

### Managing the positive emotions of others:

I do like for other people to share good experiences. I try to promote that. But when they come to me or if I have to go to someone, it tends to be because something is wrong.

Teachers will come to me and joke about what a student said or something that was good that happened in their day. But not as much as some of the more difficult issues.

Last year I had to bump some teachers out because they didn't have a CLAD (Cross-cultural Language and Development) certification, and we had to hire some new teachers with that. I thought that was very foolhardy, but the district said I needed to do this. I had to put on a good face to the parents to tell them that this is a good decision we made, and it wasn't even my decision. So you have to do that.

### Managing one's own negative emotions:

I tend to deal more with my own negative emotions than to experience positive ones. There will be times where a situation will come up, and I think to myself, "I don't know the answer to this. I don't know what to do. I have to do something." Sometimes I get angry, but I don't want to show it because it would be so counter-productive. I am constantly negating my own feelings when I tell others it's healthy to have these feelings, but I can't show them. If I get a call from the district office; it evokes fear. I think oh my God, what did I do wrong again? So it is far more negative when events occur.

There is always tension. I get frustrated that we can't just go ahead and do things that are right for kids and other people. It can wear you down a bit.

There is sadness when there is not much we can do. Sometimes it has to do with families. Our parents – because of where they are, have a hard time being a parent and aren't able to do the job that they should. They lack some skills, and I can't help them with those skills.

I also experienced personal guilt when I was in a relationship. I think the issue that really ended the relationship was I did not give enough time to the relationship. No matter where I was I felt guilty. If I was at school late, you know I had to be there and I wanted to be there, but I had a sense of guilt that I should be having a life. When I was with my significant other, I felt guilty that things were piling up at school and I needed to get such and such done, so it was almost an untenable situation. I feel guilty taking a vacation or staying away a weekend or going to a movie on any evening because in the back of my mind I feel that I should be working.

There are some things I have to keep confidential. That makes me crazy. I come out of a meeting, and I'm mad. I want to complain but you really can't. But it's hard for me to hide my true emotions.

I recently dealt with two little Hispanic girls who I believed had been physically abused by the mother; I think she also was being physically abusive to the father. I talked with one of the

girls who reluctantly told me some things. Her story confirmed my beliefs so I phoned the Child Protective Services (CPS). That's bad because I had some children taken away by CPS after coming out and doing an investigation. It hurt my relationship with the girl and the parents were down in my office screaming at me. We're mandated to report this by law, but there should have been another way to handle it.

Managing one's own positive emotions:

There is a lot of negative. However, in the long run, finally at some point when there is a positive outcome I look at my job in terms of a broader picture. I love my job, I love working with everybody, I love having that sense that I can make it better, you know, it was me, I made it better for someone. So for the overall I can take away that pride, that sense of accomplishment, that sense of optimism for the future. But on a day-to-day basis it is much more negative.

I have a situation where children write to me. They write me letters, and then I write them back. There are always new letters but sometimes I'll go back and read the older ones. They always have the sweetest, kindest words like Ms. M., you're the best principal in the whole school (laughs). Oh thank you, honey. First grade letter, you're the best principal I've ever known (laughs). Oh my, how good I feel! Those are the sorts of things that just make me feel really good. It's still a little out of balance. I realize that.

Sometimes I have to put a positive face on something I am feeling quite negative about. Actually, I have to do that a lot. There is always a district position. I'm always cognizant that I am a district representative and that I have a responsibility to them. Sometimes I have to play that role and represent a position even though my heart is somewhere else.

Coping:

I take some pills to help me with that anger. When I'm frustrated, I'm not angry with children, but more with adults who could do something and they don't. That makes me angry because I have a sense that we really need to be here for the same reason: kids are number one.

When I get home from school I don't bring stuff home with me. If I have to stay a little later or work on a weekend, when I get home, I just need a little time, a couple of hours to forget and go to sleep. Otherwise, I won't fall asleep. I just turn over every thing in the day. So that's why I do have a little medication to help me go into a deeper sleep at night, and I think that helps me stay a little calmer.

I'm not a conventional Christian, but I'm a very strong Christian and devout in my own way. One of the ways I deal with difficult issues is to pray. For the grace of God, I just think that it's with God's help that I do this. My religion helps me every day.

Toll:

By a wide margin emotional labor takes more of a toll on you than mental labor because it's relationships. Those relationships can be damaged fairly easily. The emotional component builds slowly over time, and it takes a toll on the principal. What tends to happen over time is that I'm in a situation that I have to give and give, to students to staff and to parents. Sometimes at the end of the day, at the end of the week, or end of the month or year, you feel just so drained. My personal relationships have suffered. My health has suffered. A couple of years ago I did get sick. So I went to the doctor and told him that I'm working 80 hours a week but I love it, I love it. And he said, "Do you love it enough to die for?"

I happen to know a lot of other people whose marriages have suffered because of it and who've gone through divorces because I would imagine you go home, and you just don't have anything else to give. It's almost like – don't ask me for a thing. I've given at work, I've already given! So I have to change my life. You know I had a relationship, a great steady relationship for many years and that had to come to an end. Now I have cats; cats are family.

What have we learned about mental and emotional labor from this extended interview with Ms M.? Let's seek an answer to this question by using questions similar to the ones I asked earlier about our own preparation program.

- (1) *What is the proportion of mental and emotional labor in her job?* If she were to draw a straight line in a rectangle to depict the proportion of mental and emotional labor, it would extend from the lower left hand corner to the upper right corner. The proportion would be roughly equal. However, she maintains that the emotional labor takes place mostly during the day while the mental labor occurs when she can get around to it (before and after school and week-ends). Moreover, the flow and unpredictability of problems facing her preclude deliberation and reflection.
- (2) *What is the nature of her emotional labor?* She acknowledges that she spends more time managing the feelings of others than her own, and these feelings tend to be negative (mostly anger and frustration, occasionally sadness). The source of these negative feelings is usually adults, not children. On the few occasions when positive feelings are expressed by others, gratitude never seems to be one of them. By her own admission, she tends to deal more with her own negative feelings than to experience positive ones. The negative emotions she identifies are anger, frustration, sadness, anxiety, fear, and guilt. Anger and its kin, frustration, arise due to the actions of teachers, custodians, parents, and central office personnel. Laws, district policies, rules, and regulations that prevent her and others from doing what they perceive as right for kids also contribute to her anger and frustration. She becomes sad when faced with troubling situations because she is helpless to do anything about it. Phone calls from the central office evoke fear. Guilt stems from what she considers an untenable position: the dual demands of her job and her relationship with a significant other. To bring some joy and amusement into her life Ms. M. reads letters written to her by students. She can laugh when a student writes, "You are the best principal in the whole school," or another (a student in his first year of school) writes, "You are the best principal I have ever known." She experiences pride when she steps back from the daily grind, looks at the broader picture and sees that she has made it better. Her account reveals an unfavorable positivity ratio. That is, the emotional fabric of her daily life as a school administrator is made up of many more negative emotions than positive ones. Over time, this takes its toll.
- (3) *What feeling rules exist in her district?* She may have quite negative feelings about a district policy position (for example, bumping teachers who lacked CLAD certification). However, she must conceal her own feelings and put a positive face on something she is feeling quite negative about. In my discussions with numerous superintendents, violation of this rule is considered a sign of disloyalty and a cause for dismissal.
- (4) *What feeling rules has she adopted to guide her behavior?* She believes that she should not express anger because that is counter-productive and jeopardizes relationships with others. Although she encourages others to share their feelings with her and assures them that it is healthy to have these feelings, she believes that she cannot show those same feelings herself.

- (5) *How does Ms M. cope with her emotional labor?* She uses a variety of means including taking medication for her anger and sleeping difficulties, completing her work at school, replacing a significant other with cats, altering her eating habits, and praying. These coping strategies treat the symptoms but not the underlying problem.
- (6) *What toll has emotional labor taken on her?* Clearly, she developed health problems and needed to seek medical attention. Her personal relationships have suffered, and she is not alone in this respect. She knows other principals whose marriages have suffered and/or ended in divorce due, at least in part, to the demands of the job

Of course, Ms M. represents only a single case, but her experience is consistent in many respects with other principals whom I have interviewed. Ms M.'s account offers a compelling illustration of the important role that emotions play in the work of school administrators. It further highlights that preparing principals for this feature of the role remains a challenge more than thirty years after I wrote my paper for the Ohio State Conference (Bridges, 1977). Moreover, Ms M.'s account underscores the need for research that explores how personal and situational factors enable some principals to flourish rather than languish when faced with such an emotionally intense work environment.

#### *Administrators in crisis*

Although Ms. M provides some insight into the daily emotional grind of her life as a principal, it sheds little light on the work-related personal crises that may occur in the principalship. We might infer that she is in a state of crisis precipitated by the marked imbalance between her personal and professional life. She has not identified this as a personal crisis because she apparently defines it as the nature of the job.

The work of Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2002) focuses on the crises of administrators and provides well-tested ways of helping them cope with these crises. Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski provide rich accounts of eight school administrators (wounded leaders), three superintendents and five principals, and the nature of their crises. For example, one of these accounts describes a principal who experiences a crisis precipitated by her decision to accept the principalship of a school with low test scores (a case of high-stakes testing). "Wounded leaders", a term used by Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski, learn to deal with their crises by telling their story, and the authors provide insight into how to assist these leaders during the process. Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski also describe other approaches that have been used, as well as spell out a five-step case study model that can be used in various settings (e.g. workshops and pre-service courses).

Their work raises these questions:

- How has our program provided insight into the nature of leadership crises that may arise?
- What tools have our students acquired that will enable them to convert these crises into learning opportunities to benefit their own personal and professional growth and well-being?

- What types of emotional support and practical assistance are available to administrators once they graduate from our program (e.g. leadership networks, mentors etc.)?
- How can our program ensure that graduates are prepared to anticipate the types of emotional crises that come with the job, take preventive measures, and know their options when crises arise?

### Whither?

If a program assessment reveals little, if any, attention being paid to the emotional side of administration, the response may be minimal or maximal depending on the institutional resources and constraints. In either event, the initial building block of a program that attends to the emotional aspects of administration should include a realistic job preview (Wanous, 1992). This preview should acknowledge the importance of emotions in school administration, especially the principalship, even though the management of emotions seldom, if ever, appears in the job description. Moreover, this preview should highlight the nature of emotional labor for principals who lead schools in different contexts, namely, level of schooling, socio-economic status of the student body, and geographical location. Given the scarcity of material for this job preview, graduate students may be enlisted to interview principals and to share what they have learned with their fellow students while fulfilling a course or thesis requirement. The earlier discussion of emotional labor and Ms M's case provide a potentially useful resource for students as they proceed to design an interview guide and analyze their interview data.

Alternatively, students might select several sections of Ms M's case and use them to question principals about their experiences with emotional labor. For example, the section titled "Toll" might be given to principals to read with follow-up questions concerning how Ms M's account corresponds to and differs from their own experience. Other sections of Ms M's account might be used in a similar way.

With the realistic job preview building block in place, other components may be added as institutional resources permit. Taking my lead from administrators with whom I have talked, the next component should focus on the management of self. On numerous occasions, these administrators have said, "If you can't manage yourself, you cannot manage others." Self-management includes emotion management, energy management, and time management.

### *Emotion management*

A comprehensive approach to emotion management might draw on the work of Fredrickson (2009), Easwaran (2005), Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2002), and Kahneman (2011). Each approaches this issue from a different perspective. Fredrickson (2009) offers excellent insights about the ratio of positive to negative emotions, as well as narratives of her own and others' experiences. Easwaran (2005), on the other hand, describes a comprehensive program and practical exercises to train one's mind to cope effectively with the emotional demands of everyday life and to bounce back from major stressful events. His program is based on the teachings and wisdom of the world's major religions. Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2002) provide insight into some of the crises school administrators have endured and tools for dealing with them. Unlike the other three, Kahneman (2011) provides valuable insight into how intuition,

emotions, and deliberation enter into decision making, as well as the common mistakes that occur when relying on what he terms System 1 thinking (intuition and emotions).

#### *Energy management*

Loehr and Schwartz (2003) offer the "Full engagement inventory" online for users to rate their physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional energy, as well as a program in their book for restoring these forms of energy.

#### *Time management*

Covey's (1999) work on time management addresses a common complaint of administrators, "There simply isn't enough time for me to do my job."

Once exposed to the various ideas about self-management aspiring administrators should be encouraged to create a plan of personal development, implement it, and keep a journal or log chronicling their experience in implementing this plan.

With these building blocks in place, a third important component involves acquiring the knowledge and skills inherent in managing the feelings of others. Prior to becoming a high school principal, I received formal training as a counselor that proved invaluable to me as a principal. During my preparation to be a counselor, I acquired valuable listening skills and an appreciation of the importance of reading non-verbal cues. Moreover, I learned to recognize when cognitive and emotional messages were being sent simultaneously and to respond first to the emotional messages because emotions often stand in the way of finding workable solutions. Much to my surprise, I learned that when the emotional flames had been extinguished the problem embedded in the cognitive message was no longer important. My personal experiences as a principal engendered a deep appreciation for how counseling skills can equip one to deal comfortably and effectively with the emotions of others.

#### **Conclusion**

Through retracing my intellectual journey and retaining the skepticism acquired during my childhood in Missouri, I surfaced a major shortcoming in our own graduate program for future principals: preparation for the emotional demands of the principal's role. By juxtaposing sociological and psychological perspectives, emotional labor and positivity, I raised a number of questions that both revealed and further clarified the nature of this limitation. These questions can be used by other preparatory programs to examine how they deal with the emotional aspects of administration. In addition, these questions may assist programs in deciding how, if at all, they wish to address the emotional aspects of school administration.

However, I remain a realist and suspect that once again I may have fired a shot not heard around the world. We are captives of our paradigms, and these change slowly indeed. As a case in point, I noted 40 years ago, that the dominant paradigm in administration predisposes us to examine the effects of administrators, not the effects of their environment and others on them (Bridges, 1970). I see little evidence that this has changed during the ensuing decades.

Another paradigmatic disposition is apparent in our demonstrated preference for focusing on the cognitive objectives, content and outcomes of preparation programs. Although our understanding of the emotional aspects of administration is growing, it remains relatively small when compared with the knowledge base that addresses the

cognitive objectives on which administrator preparation programs are built. Moreover, as noted earlier, the availability of faculty within preparation programs who possess the background and training to address the emotional side of administration represents another significant constraint.

These constraints are compounded by forces in the environment of preparation programs. For example, I suspect that private and public funding agencies are far more likely to support projects that focus on student effects than on the effects of the administrative role on its occupants. Moving forward, I believe that the field must connect the two as Leithwood and Beatty (2008) have quite creatively sought to accomplish[5]. Finally, state mandated credentialing requirements and future national certification programs for administrators may prove to be stumbling blocks as well. Inevitably, these requirements tend to reduce the 'program outcomes' to testable content, which again reinforces the focus on cognitive objectives.

Writing this Legacy Paper for the *JEA* in 2012 has given me the opportunity to look back at administrator preparation in education as it has evolved over my career as a school administrator and scholar dating back to the early 1960s. This exercise in reflection leads me to conclude that we have made only limited progress in reducing the disjunction between the preparation afforded to future principals and the important emotional challenges inherent in the work roles that they will assume. The obstacles that I have identified in this paper are real and need to be acknowledged as such. Nonetheless, if these obstacles are overcome, I remain hopeful that graduates of our training programs will judge our programs to be even more valuable than is currently the case.

### Notes

1. These studies have weak research designs and do not conclusively prove that training programs in educational administration have either no effects or negative effects. Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority, regardless of the measure of training or effectiveness, revealed a similar story.
2. Although we have not kept count, our best estimate would be that we have conducted training workshops on the use of PBL in higher education with 700 + university faculty members from 10 + disciplines, and 15 countries. Of these, about half came from programs specializing in educational leadership and management.
3. Bolton and English (2010) argue that current programs emphasize normative models of decision making rooted in economic thought. Moreover, they offer an alternate model of the decision process that incorporates emotion, risk, and uncertainty and more closely aligns with the process actually followed by administrators. Schmidt (2010), like Bolton and English (2010), calls for greater attention to emotions in preparation programs. Schmidt (2010) bases her argument on the changing context of administration, namely, accountability, marketisation, and globalization.
4. Delta still operates its training center for flight attendants. Available at [youtube.com/watch?v=\\_oqqalrOGg4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_oqqalrOGg4). (accessed 31 January 2012).
5. Leithwood and Beatty (2008) have examined the relationships among leadership policies and practices, the positive and negative emotional states of teachers, teacher classroom practices and professional dedication, and student learning. In the concluding chapter of their book, they explore the inner emotional states of administrators employing a variety of sources including a novel use of the internet. Administrators in several different countries share and discuss the emotional aspects of their jobs while online.



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