CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the study done on the whole. It concludes by giving suggestions on how to increase an organization’s effectiveness by improving the way in which managers do their job.

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 Background

A principal’s job is to administrate, lead and manage a school. Leading is defined in a variety of ways but can be generally accepted in the educational arena as being given the responsibility to lead and stimulate group activities with the aim of achieving the determined goals. The main characteristics of a leader are taken as:

i) The ability to exert influence;

ii) Leadership involves other people; and

iii) The outcome of leadership is some kind of goal attainment.

Management on the other hand, is the art of attaining intended
organizational objectives by working effectively with and through the human material resources of an organization. Basically, it involves elements of:-

i) Planning;

ii) Organizing;

iii) Coordinating; and

iv) Controlling

These elements were later expanded to include several sub-elements.

A school requires both a leader, to prepare and explain the vision, motivate and sets the path to be followed, and a manager to plan, set the tasks, implement plans, controls and evaluates. The task at hand, therefore, was to explore the managerial activities of a particular principal and determine their characteristics and then to determine the existence or otherwise of specific work patterns and to examine whether these patterns are indeed consistent with the findings of earlier researchers.

Data from the household surveys of bureau of Labour Statistics (Webber, 1975) show that managers put in more time than any other
occupational group, that is, 47 hours per week. It was also determined that managerial behaviour has two dimensions; responsive and directive and that managers are concerned with making the organization function as an organization and this involves the setting up of routines. By studying the components of managerial work, the effectiveness of an organization can be increased by improving the way managers do their jobs.

Mintzberg (1973) had already suggested that a manager’s work is influenced by an enormous number of variables, including the size and type of organization, the manager’s personality and preferred style of working which may change over time. This is borne out by the various studies conducted.

Henri Fayol spoke of five different managerial functions namely planning, organizing, command, coordination and control. He also proposed 14 principles of management. Frederick W. Taylor developed scientific management around his study of a factory and was concerned with the management of production workers. The University of Minnesota Studies revealed 8 managerial functions;
planning, representing, investigating, negotiating, coordinating, evaluating, supervising and staffing. For the group of managers studied, supervising and planning were the two major components of their job. In Hemphill’s research, a broader approach was taken, that is, it incorporated aspects of the managerial job such as responsibility, demands and restrictions that go beyond work performance. Haas et al (1969) studied bank officers and the results showed that negotiating and supervising were the major functions reported. At the bank, over 24% of time was spent on negotiation whereas in the University of Minnesota study, the same function accounts for only 6% of the time. This bears out Mintzberg’s theory that a manager’s work is influenced by factors such as the type of organization he works for.

Studies of the academic world revealed further differences. Cohen and March (1973) showed that University Presidents worked longer hours than the department head in the University of Minnesota. According to them, this is consistent with reported work schedules of academics generally. Their other functions remain proportionately similar. Morris et al (1984) on the other hand, found that school principals spend most time interacting with people. Half to two-thirds of their
time is spent talking and listening. He also found three major differences between the managerial activities of school principals and business executives, namely that:-

i) Business executives are more involved in mail-related activities and use written communication more than principals;

ii) Only 10% of a business executive’s time is spent on unscheduled interchanges, as compared to 76% of principals; and

iii) Principals spend more time on their feet, whereas business executives spent little time walking about their premises.

For this study, 7 categories were identified as relevant as the Principal concerned was observed to be carrying them out.

Planning and Coordinating is a major aspect of most jobs. These are activities where a manager determines goals, makes decisions about the most effective course of action to achieve those goals and formulates policies to help implementation. Coordination prevents conflicts and misunderstandings from
arising and through it the flow of work can be smoothed out. Decision making affects all aspects of the management process and is an essential aspect of any manager's job. Simon (1960) characterizes three stages in the decision-making process, that is intelligence, design and choice. Decision-making is meant to be an aspect of problem solving. In problem-solving, four basic steps are required; recognizing that a problem exists, identifying possible causes, generating alternative solutions and selecting and implementing the chosen alternative. Handling paperwork is another managerial function that permeates through all aspects of the management process. An organization is unable to function without paperwork. Almost all communication is covered in this manner. External communication may cover negotiation, purchase orders, delivery orders, confirmation letters and invoices whilst internal documentation may cover circulars, memorandums and reports. Although verbal transactions may and do occur, many managers prefer the security of a written conformation in order to safeguard their position and to hold the other party to their word. With technological advancements, the definition of written communication has expanded to cover telexes, facsimiles and now,
e-mail.

Exchanging routine information is another managerial function that is pertinent to organized planning. Communication permeates all the important components of the management process and is an aspect of directing that makes it capable of serving as an input-improving machine. Communication is often considered in terms of four levels of analysis; intra-personal, inter-personal, organizational and technical (Thayer, 1968). Communication is seen as the immediate origin of executive organization. Each member of the organization has a duty to keep his senior informed on matters which the senior may be held accountable for, any matters in disagreement, matters requiring advice, and matters involving recommendations for change. Committees create supplementary links and may be used to further facilitate communication and the dissemination and gathering of information. It also provides subordinates the opportunity to make recommendations and give advice. Then, in his monitoring role, a manager is seen as a receiver and collector of information, enabling him to develop a thorough understanding of his organization and its environment.
Evidence shows that managers spend as much time with people outside their units as with their employees. This provides an opportunity to explain programmes and garner support. It also allows a manager to understand the values and expectations of society upon whose support the school is dependent. It is necessary therefore, that intra-organizational groups understand their roles in relation to one another. Although socializing is not seen as a major managerial function, it is nevertheless important in that it can be used to build trust and confidence. Employees will assess the supportiveness and encouragement of their bosses by how they interact and trust is built depending on the frequency of contact. To accomplish this level of interaction, managers must anticipate spending at least half to three-fourths of their day talking to others.

5.1.2 Results and Analysis

The Principal of the Assunta Secondary School was observed carry out seven categories of managerial functions namely

Planning/Coordinating, Decision Making/Problem Solving, Handling
Paperwork, Exchanging Routine Information, Monitoring, Interacting with Outsiders and Socializing. The results indicated that in a week, this Principal exhibits managerial behaviour in carrying out her duties. Certain routines were established, for instance, time to process mail and to assigning tasks, as well as walking around and carrying out inspection. Less time was spent on developing procedures to increase efficiency and on coordinating activities. In other cases, the Principal carried out her managerial duties on a need basis; that is when crises arise, for external meetings and non-work related duties. Her actions are both responsive and directive, exhibiting the dual dimensions of a manager’s behaviour.

5.2 Discussion

Mintzberg (1973) states that managerial activities can be divided into three groups, that is, inter-personal, informational and decisional roles. Inter-personal roles deal with inter-personal relationships, informational, with the transfer of information and decisional, with the making of decisions. Considering the activities carried out by the Principal in this study, it can be seen that she does exhibit all three
types of roles. It has been suggested that managers of staff groups tend to emphasize the informational role and use it to build up their own expertise and understanding of their organization. Here, the Principal does spend a fair amount of time, that is, more than 18% of her time on the monitoring function; in fact, it ranks as the second major function carried out by the Principal. Studies carried out both at the University of Minnesota and by Haas et al also reveal that supervision ranks highly as a managerial function in terms of time spent on it.

The emphasis given by the Principal in this school is towards paperwork. It would appear that the Principal spends a lot of time on this particular managerial function that spans or overlaps with the other functions and therefore ends up with less time being required on carrying out the other managerial functions. For instance, the time spent on decision making and problem solving only rates a mere 6.05% of the week. Coordination activities only take 5 % of the week. Researchers tell us that ordinarily, approximately 15% of a week is spent on coordinating activities. Staff meetings and dissemination of information take up 7.71% of the Principal’s time
when Cohen and March's research indicate a much larger portion of
time, that is, over 40% of time is spent on meetings consisting of more
than two or more people. This large discrepancy may possibly be
explained by taking a look at the amount of time the Principal spends
on paperwork. Very likely the amount of time taken by the Principal
on paperwork is spent on planning as well as overlapping with
functions such as coordination and exchanging information. Planning
activities are those which help a manager determine goals, make
decisions and formulate general policies to help those who will do the
implementing. The Principal probably took up more time on this
function to prepare policies, guidelines, designation of tasks, and set
up lines of reporting and such other functions that are so
comprehensive that the end result is that she is not required to spend
as much time on her other functions as has been suggested by other
researchers. However, as no plan is absolutely comprehensive,
foolproof, and also because a good manager must evolve with
changing needs, the Principal does allocate time to other managerial
activities.
5.3 Conclusion and Suggestions

5.3.1 Research questions

There were several questions that had to be answered in relation to this study;

i) Is there a certain specific pattern of work activities done by the Principal.

ii) Does the pattern exhibit common and similar characteristics to those found by earlier researchers?

iii) What are the main activities of the Principal throughout the observation period?

i) Pattern of work activities.

During the observation period, the Principal was seen to be carrying out several occupational tasks within a 10-hour day that could be accepted as managerial functions. These functions fall within the accepted categories proposed by several leading authorities on the subject of management. It is also accepted that the type of functions and the time spent on them would depend on the type of organization
and other variables. She was also observed as having set up some kind of routine in order to carry out the said functions. For instance, specific times were set for assigning tasks and providing routine instructions, staff meetings, and monitoring work.

Whilst at first glance it may appear that there is no specific work pattern here, McCall et al (1978) suggest that a manager’s working day typically consists of a large number of brief, varied and fragmented activities with significant and trivial matters interspersed in no particular order. Examining the Principal’s activities in light of this, it would appear that her work activities do fall within the pattern suggested by McCall. For instance, between the hours of 7 – 10 a.m., she can be found carrying out a range of managerial functions ranging from deskwork to socializing. This does suggest the mix of significant and trivial matters envisaged by McCall.

Thus it would appear that the combination of duties carried out by the Principal here does reflect a work pattern of sorts. As a typical manager, her duties are interspersed, but nevertheless has some structure about it in the form of routine duties that are concerned with
making the school operate as an organization. Her behaviour also exhibits the dual dimensions of a manager’s behaviour, that is, responsive and directive behaviour. She responds to requests for meetings and information and also determines and sets tasks for her subordinates.

ii) Comparison to earlier research.

The Principal’s activities carried out during the course of her day and week proceed along the lines envisaged by Henri Fayol who drew up managerial function and proposed 14 principles of management. Although his theories were drawn up in 1916, many of them are still relevant to situations today. The Principal of the Assunta Secondary School carries out planning activities, organizes, commands and coordinates, all of which Fayol spoke of. Coordination was done by holding staff meetings and planning and commanding by assigning tasks, coordinating activities and developing new procedures to increase efficiency. Taylor’s theories on scientific management were less relevant as they relate more to production workers and are more suited to a factory situation.
Mahoney et al conducted research at the University of Minnesota which questioned more than 450 managers in a variety of companies. In this study, supervising rated the highest amount of time, that is, over 28%, followed by planning and coordinating. In the banking industry however, Haas et al determined that bankers spent more time negotiating, after which supervising followed. In this study however, the Principal spends only 4.16% of time on assigning tasks and providing routine instruction. It is proposed however, that the major bulk of her planning duties are carried out under the heading general paperwork and the time recorded as having been pent on this function, 40.83%, seem to be more in line with the earlier research figures.

Hemphill’s research focused more on a broader approach that took into account other factors that went beyond work performance. In this research, staffing and representing appear to be the more significant functions. Of the various components identified as being part of the managerial job, the Principal in this study does spend a large portion of her time on representing. As a school is unable to operate in isolation and is very much affected by its surrounds, a school principal must be aware of community needs and expectations and is expected
to represent the school in order to gain the support of the community.
As the head of the school hierarchical system, the Principal is also
expected to attend to ministry and education officials as well as other
intro-organizational requirements and meetings from time to time.

Although the Principal’s activities do fall within some general
managerial principles, the question remains whether they also fit
within the purview of research specific to the academic world and
school system. Cohen and March (1973) determined that college
presidents worked an average of 60 hours a week, compared to 55
hours for the department head at the University of Minnesota (Lewis
and Dahl, 1976). According to Cohen and March, this is consistent
with reported work schedules of academics generally. Here, the
Principal of the Assunta Secondary School works a 50-hour week,
proportionately similar to the research results. Also similar to the
results of the Cohen and March and Mintzberg studies (30%), the
Principal spends more than 40% of her time in or around her office
but less time proportionately around the organization’s premises. No
evidence is available to show how much time, if any is spent out of
town. However, the Principal does have contact with outsiders, although not as much as one third of her time.

Because of the high amount of time spent doing general deskwork, the Principal registers more time alone than managers studied in the earlier research that only clocked 25% of time alone. The amount of time spent in meetings is also considerably less than that spent by the same managers studied (over 40%). Morris et al who specifically researched secondary school principals, found that half to two-thirds of a secondary school’s principal’s time is spent interacting with people. This would also be true of the Principal in this study. Most of the day is spent on activities and managerial functions that involve interaction with other people within the organization or outside of it. And just like the principals studied by Morris, the Assunta Principal also spends less than half her day at her desk. This principal also spends a lot of time on her feet carrying out inspection and walking around which was postulated by Morris as one of the major differences between principals and business executives. What is not borne out by this study however, is Morris’s assertion that business executives spend more time on mail-related activities and written
communication. This particular principal spends the most time in a day on paperwork and mail, a staggering 42.5%.

Although not quite a textbook example, the results of this study do reveal certain characteristics exhibited by the Assunta Principal that are similar to the results and findings outlined by earlier researchers.

iii) Main activities

The results of this study show that the Assunta Principal’s main activities are handling paperwork followed by monitoring and interaction with outsiders.

5.3.2 Suggestions

A manager’s way of thinking is relative to his managerial activities. His/her assumptions, outlook, beliefs and attitudes will determine the manner in which he carries out his daily activities. One way of increasing an organization’s effectiveness is to improve the way in which managers do their jobs. Studying can do this and understanding the individual sets of activities carried out by the manager concerned.
Although it has been determined that the Principal in this study does exhibit managerial functions which are commensurate and bear out the results of earlier research, it might be worth considering the effect of lessening the amount of time on paperwork and increasing such activities such as coordination and the development of new procedures. It has been noted that requirements are constantly changing and the role of the Principal is constantly evolving as well. There is more and more demand for a principal to be more aware of business principles and run the school as a business venture. Some say that it is a shift from mere leadership to one of management. "Client satisfaction" is important and the principal as head of the organization is accountable not only to parents but the community at large. Therefore, constant improvements need to be made in line with changing needs.

Technological advancements are also changing the face of the school. Perhaps the time-consuming desk work currently being carried out by the Assunta Principal can be reduced with the introduction of standard forms and the use of electronic media as a means of communication. Alternatively, the work can be assigned to an assistant, or even the
Senior Assistant or Afternoon Supervisor. The scalar chin of command may require a re-working to avoid the Principal taking on too much personal responsibility without delegating or distributing the workload to her subordinates.

It is also noted in the earlier studies that communication is imperative in ensuring the smooth flow of work. Possibly, 2.92% time spent on staff meetings would not be sufficient in an organization of this size, to determine and cover all issues, much less provide the opportunity for subordinates to speak up and forward their ideas. There might also be a greater need for intra-organizational interaction to better coordinate efforts, not just on an isolated or localized basis but possibly on a national basis as well.

Finally, this study was limited to seven categories of management functions as the Assunta Principal was only observed carrying out these seven activities. Bearing in mind the evolving and changing nature of the school organizational system, it might be worth considering the introduction of other managerial functions.