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NARRATIVES OF LONGEVITY: WHY ADVENTIST PRINCIPALS STAY BEYOND 10 YEARS IN ONE SCHOOL

Abstract: Across public and private school systems, there is a shortage of principals in the United States. Many studies have identified reasons why school principals leave their jobs. However, few studies have been conducted to understand why principals stay. The purpose of this article is to describe the experiences of 14 principals who have remained in leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist system of education in North America longer than 10 years in a single school building. Through the lens of resiliency theory and spiritual leadership theory, meaning was captured in the lived experiences of these Christian educational leaders.

Keywords: *principal shortage, calling, resiliency theory, spiritual leadership theory*

Introduction

A shortage of school principals has been reported by both public and private schools across the country. In some parts of the country nearly 60% of principals will retire, resign, or otherwise leave their positions over the next five years (Reeves, 2008). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projected a 10 to 20% increase in vacancies for educational administrators in the coming years (Gajda & Militello, 2008).

Part of the principal shortage is attributed to the fact that the job of principal has become unappealing (Cushing, Kerrins, & Phillipstone, 2003; Young & Creighton, 2002). Malone (2002) emphasizes that the principal shortage is not due to a lack of experienced, skilled candidates, but to the difficulty of encouraging those who have leadership capabilities to be willing to serve. DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) noted that educators who hold administrative licenses are not applying for positions, and fewer are pursuing licensure. Studies suggest that although there is an ample supply of possible candidates for principal positions (individuals who have completed the necessary course work

and certification processes), educational leaders are not attracted to the job (Archer, 2003; Educational Research Service, 2000; Lashway, 2003; Mulhall, Flowers, & Mertens, 2004; Roza, 2003).

The complexities of the job and the failure of so many to choose the profession have resulted in a nationwide shortage of school principals (Copland, 2001; Mathis 2012). In one job satisfaction survey, administrators reported the principalship to be a lonely job (Zellner, Jinkins, Gideon, Doughty, & McNamara, 2002). DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) summarized the situation as follows:

The principalship is at a crossroads. Although much has been invested in the principalship in hopes for school reform, there are concerns that the resources to make these growing expectations realistic have not been forthcoming. The result is a job that looks to many to be impossible, and many of those from whose ranks principals have traditionally come are not pursuing the position. (p. 48)

In addition, the high expectations associated with the principal's job are almost insurmountable. Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) found that the "role of school principals in the United States has swelled to include a staggering array of professional tasks and competencies" (p. 4). The high expectations associated with the principal's job have led to the premise in many school systems that in order for principals to lead effectively they must be "super principals" (Pierce, 2000). This point is clearly depicted in Copland's (2001) study of the principal's job. After scanning several media sources in which the principal's job was advertised, Copland synthesized the requirements of the job descriptions by developing his own advertisement illustrating the portrait of the much-needed principal:

Position Vacant: School Principal

Qualifications: Wisdom of a sage, vision of a Chief Executive Officer, intellect of a scholar, leadership of a point guard, compassion of a counselor, moral strength of a nun, courage of a firefighter, craft knowledge of a surgeon, political savvy of a senator, toughness of a soldier, listening skills of a blind man, humility of a saint, collaborative skills of an entrepreneur, certitude of a civil rights activist, charisma of a stage performer, and patience of Job. Salary: lower than you might expect. (p. 528)

Admittedly, Copland's (2001) depiction of the "super principal" intentionally exceeds the bounds of ridiculous. However, on any given school day, what is expected of principals is almost overwhelming. It is not surprising, then, that the job is becoming less desirable.

Context of the Study

The Seventh-day Adventist educational system in North America is not immune to principal shortages experienced in other private and public school districts. Caskey (2002) identified the reasons attributed to the shortage as the complexities and demands associated with their roles, burnout, the high expectations, isolation, job dissatisfaction, controversy, and lack of support services. The supply of qualified and willing candidates is not available in sufficient numbers to meet the current personnel needs for administration within the Adventist education system because those who are currently serving as principals are leaving and those who are qualified are not interested (Caskey, 2002).

Enrollment data gathered from opening and closing reports over the last six years shows that principals stay, on average, 2.5 years in elementary schools, 3.6 years in day high schools, and 4.0 years in senior boarding schools. Educational superintendents and Union directors within the Adventist education system note that school-wide the expectations and demands associated with Adventist school principals are just as complex and daunting as those of their counterparts in public or other private school systems. However, there are principals within the Adventist system in North America who have stayed for many years beyond the average. It is important to understand how these school principals adapt to the role such that they remain in educational leadership.

This article describes the experiences of 14 school principals who were selected and interviewed because they remained in leadership at the same school building for 10 consecutive years in the Adventist system. A further purpose of the article is to share why these principals stay. Table 1 describes the ethnic and gender distribution of the 14 principals and the type of schools they represented.

Findings

The following major themes emerged from the analysis of the 14 interviews: (a) the role and expectations of the principal, (b) the complexities associated with the principalship, (c) the challenges of balance between the principal's personal and professional life, (d) principal support, and (e) why the principals stay. The themes were identified by all of the principals in the study.

Table 1. *Demographics of Participants in the Study*

Demographic	Number
<i>School Type</i>	
Small Elementary	3
Elementary	5
Junior Academy	2
Secondary School	4
<i>Ethnicity</i>	
Black	5
Caucasian	8
Hispanic	1
<i>Gender of Principal</i>	
Female	7
Male	7

The Role and Expectations of the Principal

The role of the principal is to become the main educational facilitator of the learning community. (Wilmore, 2002, p. 5)

The role and expectations associated with the principalship were never clearly defined for the principals in this study. This ambiguity caused the principals to define the roles and the expectations associated with the job by themselves. They used the term “self-taught” as they explained how their work experiences helped them define the role and expectations of an Adventist school principal. The principals drew on experiences from their academic preparation, previous work experiences, and mentors who helped clarify their roles and outlined the expectations associated with their jobs. “I surrounded myself with good people, like trusted friends and colleagues,” said one principal, “and learned how to do my job.”

Other principals learned to define their role in terms of their spiritual intuition. They prayed for divine guidance and then depended upon the Lord for direct guidance in fulfilling their jobs. One principal said that “the principalship was defined in terms of what God would have me to do.” Another emphasized the role of prayer:

I found my strength and success were from the Lord and I began to pray like never before. I really learned how to pray. I learned there’s nothing more important to a Christian leader than prayer. I was convicted that God would not only increase my decreasing enrollment numbers but would help me build a new school representing Adventist education at its best when the time came.

The fourteen principals in this study now define their role as the spiritual leader of the school—the one who establishes, fosters, and

develops the spiritual climate of the school. They believe they are responsible for developing and cultivating relationships with the school family as well as with the community they serve. They also view themselves as the chief operating and financial officer of the school as they oversee and manage all of the fiscal responsibilities of the school. In addition, they consider themselves the physical plant manager of the school.

The principals are deeply committed to their students, faculty, and staff. They are intentional about the overall professional development of their team and commit to using best practices to drive instruction. In addition, the principals feel they are effective communicators, which they demonstrate by being transparent and willing to listen, and by seeking to resolving conflict. In essence, several acknowledged that “the principal is responsible for doing all that is needed to run an effective school.” This includes being the teacher, cook, pastor, counselor, custodian, bus driver, accountant, bookkeeper, nurse, and secretary.

The Complexities Associated With the Principalship

There is no question that the role of the principal has become more complex and in many ways undoable. (Fullan, 2008, p. 3)

The irreducibility of the principalship is quite compelling for the principals in this study. They find themselves in an extremely complex profession. Because most Adventist schools are supported by constituent churches, they constantly experience political pressures and demands from the pastors and the constituent churches. The principals are in a continual battle to establish and maintain positive relationships that foster positive school cultures. They are challenged to do so based upon the unrealistic demands they encounter from the people they work with, including board members who are disengaged and lack accountability.

Grappling with issues relating to school finances was monumental for the 14 principals interviewed because they were directly responsible for the overall financial management of the school. They experienced difficulties in staffing, support or lack of support, lack of time to accomplish goals and tasks, being a teaching principal in the small school, and terminating and retaining employees.

Worshipping with parents and others within the school community created tension because often there was a lack of boundaries as people expected the principal to discuss school issues in church. Their need for privacy was often not respected.

Balance Between Personal and Professional Life

Principals must learn how to balance their job and personal time before they realize they have nothing else to give physically, mentally or emotionally. (Wilmore, 2004, p. 141)

Work-life balance is defined as an individual's ability to meet their work and family commitments, as well as other non-work responsibilities and activities. Work-life balance, in addition to the relations between work and family functions, also involves roles in other areas of life (Delecta, 2011). Work-life imbalance creates undue tension when one of the roles of the individual at work or in the family causes stress on the individual and this stress affects the other roles of the individual. The stress behaviors then exhibited are a direct result of the dissonant and conflicting imbalance at their work and out of work (Delecta, 2011).

There is a large amount of work-life imbalance in the lives of the principals in this study. They struggle to maintain balance in their lives and attribute the imbalance to the demands of the job, the lack of time to perform the job, the belief that it is acceptable to lead imbalanced lives for the sake of educational ministry, and the stresses brought on by their imbalanced lives. Unfortunately, this lack of balance is evidenced in the devastating impact it has upon their families in their personal and spiritual lives. As they struggle to maintain balance, they use denial, guilt, and rationalization as reasons to justify this imbalance.

Some principals developed strategies for maintaining balance. These strategies included taking control of their lives, being intentional about balance in their lives, never taking work home at the end of the day, spending time with their spouses and children, and dedicating time for personal renewal and restoration.

The principals who were interviewed developed coping skills to deal with the stresses accompanied by the disequilibrium in their lives. They seek the Lord's guidance through prayer and depend on relationships to sustain them. They also have hobbies, travel, and vacation. Some seek the help of professional counselors or life coaches outside of the organization. "I felt seeking professional help outside of the Adventist organization was a safer place for me than within the system," confided one principal. "I could talk freely about the things I needed to and get some balance and a reality check back into my life."

Principal Support

It is essential that all principals have a well-developed network of colleagues and friends that will support them through thick and thin. (Young, Sheets, & Knight, 2005, p. 69)

The primary source of support the principals in this study received was their families. They described this support as faithful, caring, and understanding; it provided strength in times of great need.

The principals depended on the strong relationships they developed and cultivated through the years as another source of support. These included relationships with their faculty and staff, parents, students, mentors, other principals, union and conference leadership, school board, pastors, and church members.

They especially noted the keen interest faculty and staff had for their well-being on a personal level. Parents and students demonstrated support by giving them respect and encouragement on a consistent basis. They believed parents were supportive because they were deeply engaged, satisfied, and happy with the schools their children attended. The parents were committed to the principal's spiritual development and were dedicated to praying on behalf of the principals and the educational ministry. At times, parents walked into their offices simply to pray with and for them. Other times the principals received unexpected letters of encouragement or birthday and anniversary acknowledgments.

The principals in this study identified their current and former students as supportive. Current students were willing to help and assist the principals with anything that was necessary without being asked. Often, alumni visited the schools and shared their life's experiences as a way of encouraging and supporting the student body as well.

Principals also felt valued, appreciated, affirmed, and supported by their boards and chairs. Board members demonstrated their support by collectively processing challenges and crisis situations, dealing with major facility issues, and furthering the overall mission of the school. The principals expressed deep appreciation for the manner in which their school board chairs were concerned about their personal well-being.

Most principals in this study described their pastors as pleasant, helpful, engaged, and deeply committed to the mission of their schools. They demonstrated their support by their prayers, loyalty, and guidance through the years. Pastors also shared support by visiting the schools, speaking for chapels, and conducting Bible studies with faculty, staff, parents, and students, in spite of their busy schedules. The school was an extension of the pastors' ministry, which they reflected

it in their actions.

The most supportive pastors were those employed by unions and conferences that had non-negotiable hiring policies and practices regarding pastors who had to be committed and be strong advocates for Christian education. These pastors were required to demonstrate their level of support by their willingness to enroll children from their churches as well as their biological children at the local church school. Failure to do so resulted in a failure to be hired.

Unfortunately, the principals in this study at times also sensed a lack of support from their pastors. While some were very careful and guarded about describing pastoral support, others were less reserved and shared that at times the pastors appeared to be uncaring and indifferent. One principal gives his perspective:

While there are some that are supportive, resourceful, helpful and willing to join me in ministry, there are others who simply could not care less. There appears to be a stereotype in terms of pastoral support. I believe I have experienced both kinds of pastors: supportive and non-supportive ones. Therefore, I believe and have experienced that the stereotypes are accurate and true.

Some pastors were not engaged in the school, were unaware of what was happening, were too busy to get involved, did not consider education as part of ministry, and did not have the time to support the school. In the words of one principal, “the pastors indicate that they are too busy within their own congregations to extend themselves further at the school.” Thus, these pastors were seldom available to visit or support the school. This perceived lack of support on behalf of the pastors was somewhat troubling for the principals.

The principals in this study were generously bolstered in many ways by their employing organizations. They were provided with opportunities to hold memberships in national organizations, participate in denominationally sponsored workshops, and received funding to complete advanced degrees. They valued and appreciated professional growth activities they participated in and readily encouraged their teachers to do the same. The principals experienced these types of support through their professional, personal, mentoring, and networking relationships.

Why Principals Stay

All the trials and tribulations that go with being a principal do not outweigh the joys and triumphs of trying to make a difference in the lives of young people everyday. (Wilmore, 2004, p. 6)

The 14 principals in this study stay because of their passion for the students, their commitment to God's calling, and their passion for ministry and service to others. They stand despite the difficulties and the demands of the job, which are undefined and quite complex, because of their strong relationship with God. They endure hardship and are able to thrive even when faced with adversity because they rely on God's guidance and prayer to sustain them through hardship.

Passion for Students

The primary reason the principals in this study stay in Adventist education for more than 10 consecutive years is their passion and commitment to their students. When the principals referred to their students, their intonations and body language portrayed deep commitment and passion for each of their students. One principal noted, "I live by the motto which states, 'Jesus looks at us and discerns infinite possibilities.'" The principals feel they have a direct impact on the lives of the young people entrusted to them. They consider their work with the students of inestimable value and stay because they realize the work they do with the children is critically important.

These principals' passion for students extends beyond the students enrolled at the local school. They view the students in the community and within their local constituencies with the same passion and responsibility. "I stay to provide opportunities for all school-age students, whether from church or the local community, who wish to attend an Adventist school [to have] the benefit of enrolling," said one principal. The principals shared the joy they feel each fall when classes begin and the students they have prayed for and recruited during the summer months are enrolled at their schools. The principals love and are devoted to their students, demonstrating it through their unselfish service to the ministry year after year.

Commitment to God's Calling

Each of the fourteen principals feel directly called by God, accept His calling, and have committed their lives to educational ministry. One principal puts it this way:

I have dedicated my life to this ministry because I believe the Lord

called me to it. Because I could see the circumstances when I look back which have led me to this and I think no amount of grief will run me out of this, I'm here for the long haul.

The commitment to God's calling is so evident to the principals that their deep conviction to remain in educational ministry is unyielding. One of the principals described it as a vow to God: "I stay because of my vow to God that I would remain in Adventist education until He indicated that it was time to leave." Another principal explained, "I'm not here because I want to be here, I'm here because God wants me to be here. If he wants me to go someplace else, He will show me the way and He will provide the way for me."

These principals have demonstrated their commitment to God's calling by the number of years they have served in their schools. "God has chosen me to be at my school at this particular time, place, environment, and in this particular area of the country," said a principal who had been in the same building for 30 years.

The commitment to God's calling is so strong that most principals model it in their personal lives. Several principals indicated that while they have choices as to where to enroll their children, undoubtedly they always choose Adventist education because they know about its value and power to transform lives—spiritually, mentally, and physically. One principal is so emphatic about her passion for Christian education that not only have her children been educated in Adventist schools, but her grandson is now enrolled at her school. The principal transports her grandson daily past two distinguished "A" level school districts to arrive at her school. Because the principals feel genuinely called by God to educational ministry, the hardships they face become more tolerable.

A benefit the principals experience from God's calling is the opportunity for them to grow spiritually. "I stay because of the strong relationship that I am able to develop with my God," explained one principal. "I stay because my job allows me to grow spiritually," said another. Throughout the interviews, the principals shared stories that clearly depicted experiences that strengthen their faith through educational ministry. Whether it was through an answered prayer, God's protection, God's provision, God's intervention, or God's guidance, time after time they shared unbelievable ways in which their faith was increased and remained intact because of God's faithfulness.

Passion for Ministry and Serving Others

The principals in this study stay in Adventist education because of their passion and dedication to educational ministry. They expressed great joy in helping others develop a personal relationship with Jesus. Towards that end, principals have conducted Bible studies for students, parents, community members, and neighbors. “It’s wonderful,” said one of the principals, “to be a part of a ministry that you know is ‘kissed by God.’”

Several principals experienced the joy of witnessing individuals they introduced to the Lord accepting Him through baptism. Principals describe the experience of witnessing the baptism of someone they have brought to the Lord as humbling and inspiring:

Baptism is the summation, the ultimate objective, and ultimate goal of Adventist education, which is to lead students and parents to Christ in a way where they make that final commitment to say “yes, I want to follow the Lord and I’m going to consummate my experience through baptism.”

Adventist principals stay because of their passion to serve others. A principal noted, “I stay because of my need to serve others.” Most stay because of their ability to teach and nurture the people they serve. They nurture people in the areas of life skills, professionally, and in parenting areas. One principal shared the experience of developing a team approach to leadership even though he was in a hostile environment.

The principals in this study are passionate about training adults. Whether it is in best practices or parenting skills, the joy of teaching is unquestionable. One principal explained that not only is she helping parents become better parents, she has at times become the parent when necessary. While this experience is not unique, these principals never expressed any regrets in extending themselves in their passion to serve others. Whether they are mentoring new teachers, experienced teachers, parents, church members, or colleagues, the principals recognize the value of mentoring relationships. Several of the principals explained that they mentor others because someone mentored them, and now they are able to stay in Adventist education because they were mentored effectively.

A benefit of serving others is that lifetime relationships are built. “I stay because of the lasting relationships that I have built with the people I serve,” said one of the principals. They maintain these relationships after they have left the place in which the relationship began.

In summary, the interviews with these 14 principals who stayed longer than 10 years in one school show that, despite the complexities and challenges of the job, they stayed because of their commitment to God and passion for educational ministry.

Discussion

Two primary theoretical perspectives help in making meaning of the five themes emerging from this study: resiliency theory and spiritual leadership theory.

In the social sciences, resiliency has been defined as the ability to bounce back from negative life experiences and become stronger while overcoming them (Henderson & Milstein, 1996). Most recently, resiliency has been used to conceptualize studies in the field of educational administration. Geocarís (2004) applied resilience theory to her study by identifying concrete ways for principals to thrive. Issacs (2003) applied resilience theory to determine the relationship among the dimensions of resilience of high-school principals toward strengthening the leadership abilities of principals. Goldstein (2003) studied perceptions of school principals pertaining to their efficacy and resiliency. Schaid (2005) studied psychological resiliency as it applied to the impact and struggle of spiritually centered educational leaders.

When resiliency theory is compared with the complexities associated with the role of the principal, it is evident that principals in this study are resilient leaders. They utilize external and internal variables pertaining to the protective factors of resiliency theory (Bonanno, 2004; Nishikawa, 2006; Ungar, 2004).

One of the most significant external variables to resiliency is an individual's social support network (Masten, 2005; Nishikawa, 2006). All of the principals in this study have supportive, confiding, and strong relationships that help them be resilient. The strong support they receive is primarily from their families, who bolster them in significant ways under the most challenging of circumstances. When experiencing hardships, the principals also rely on their relationships with their pastors, faculty, staff, parents, mentors, students, union leaders, conference leaders, educational leaders, spouses, constituent church members, and other colleagues and principals. Many of the principals shared that the relationships they have developed and cultivated have sustained them not only through very difficult times but also over the long haul of many years.

The most important protective internal variable that the principals demonstrate as resilient leaders is that they possessed high levels of optimism and hope as a result of their strong spiritual beliefs (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Masten, 2005; Wyman, Sandler, Wolchik, & Nelson, 2000). They expect positive outcomes (Bonanno, 2004; Patterson & Kelleher, 2005) when faced with adversity because they

believe they have the ability to achieve a favorable outcome with God's help. Therefore, because of their strong reliance upon God, even when faced with challenges, they are able to experience growth in the midst of the stresses associated with the principalship.

Those who research workplace spirituality contend that leaders bring unique and individual values to their jobs and are highly motivated by their spiritual need to experience a sense of godliness and community in their work. Spiritual leadership theory involves motivating and inspiring others, through a transcendent vision and a culture based in altruistic values, to produce a more motivated, committed, and productive team (Fry, 2003; Fry & Matherly, 2006; Grzeda, 2003; Kanungo, 2001).

The principals in this study bring unique value to their ministry based upon spiritual leadership principles (Fry & Matherly, 2006). They feel passionate about their calling because they have a conviction that God has called them to make a difference at their schools. While the complexities associated with their jobs are almost insurmountable, they depend on God to do their work. When faced with difficult challenges, they pray earnestly and seek the Lord's guidance. Their strong reliance upon the Lord is evident in their decision-making process and in their resolve to seek the Lord's direction for major decisions at their school. Whether the issue was expanding their facilities, budgetary issues, or staffing issues, it was evident that the principals rely upon God's leading for direction.

The findings confirm Hansen's (1983) study, in which he defined Adventist school principals as the primary individuals who establish and develop the spiritual climate of their school based upon their own personal relationship with God. Hansen describes the principal's role in the following way:

The Adventist principal must be a dedicated Adventist and believe in the philosophy of Adventist education. He should be trained in theology and have a personal relationship with God, and a love for his fellows, especially the students and teachers under his supervision. He should have faith, and trust that God will lead in all activities under his leadership. (p. 26)

Spiritual leadership theory is a causal leadership theory for organizational transformation designed to create intrinsically motivated learning organizations resulting in organizational commitment and productivity (Fry, 2003). Through their spiritual leadership, the principals have been able to transform their schools. They do not view their accomplishments or the improvements in their schools as anything

innate; rather, they rely upon the deeply rooted core values and principles they live by as spiritual leaders. They transform their schools in meaningful ways. The principals are able to collaborate with their teams to create a vision and add value to their schools with their empowered teams through buy-in, commitment, and productivity (Fry, 2003). The ability of principals to transform schools in meaningful ways establishes confidence in their leadership whereby they are invited to serve as leaders year after year.

Spiritual leadership theory espouses the belief that hope and faith in the organization's vision keep followers looking forward to the future and provide the desire and positive expectations that fuel effort through intrinsic motivation (Fry, 2003). Spiritual values and practices are related to leadership effectiveness (Reave, 2005; Sears, 2006). Therefore, organizations that have higher levels of employment commitment, productivity, and customer satisfaction when employees' spiritual needs are met are aligned with organizational vision and values (Duschon & Plowman, 2005; Fry, 2003; Malone & Fry, 2003). The principals in this study have hope and faith in the Adventist system of education. They are dedicated and hardworking and seek continuous improvement for themselves and their team. They believe in the organization's vision and will do "whatever it takes" in pursuit of the vision to continuously improve and be more effective as educational leaders because of their calling.

Spiritual leaders establish a social and organizational culture based upon values of altruistic love whereby the followers have a sense of membership and feel understood because they are loved, appreciated, genuinely cared for and concerned about, and feel appreciated (Fry, 2003). The principals establish a social and organizational culture based upon the principles of building community as defined by spiritual leadership theory (Klenke, 2003). This is evident in the value they place upon developing and cultivating relationships with their school communities. The relationships established were identified by the principals as dependable, caring, long-lasting, and loyal.

These relationships engender the support needed by the principals on an ongoing basis. They are sustained in their work by the strong support they receive from their families, faculty and staff, parents, students, mentors, union and conference leadership, school boards, pastors, and church members. These relationships create a sense of membership and social connections that empower teams. Powers (1979) addresses this:

People need something to believe in, someone to believe in, and someone to believe in them. A spiritual leader is someone who walks in front of one when one needs a friend. Spiritual leaders lead people through intellectual discourse and dialogue and believe that people, when they are involved and properly informed, can make intelligent decisions, that will appropriate information, and can assume responsibility for decisions that affect their lives. (p. 7)

Fry (2003) extended spiritual leadership theory by examining the concept of positive human health and well-being. He contended that those who practice spiritual leadership (and their followers) have a higher regard for themselves and their past life along with good quality relationships with others. This creates the sense that life is purposeful and meaningful, the capacity to effectively manage one's surrounding, the ability to follow inner convictions, and a sense of continuing growth and self-realization.

What can these 14 principals teach us that will help reduce the shortage of principals in the Adventist system and possibly the wider educational community? It seems clear: Spiritual leadership that is deeply committed to God and establishes strong people relationships will provide the strength and wisdom principals need as they face the challenges of their daily work. With these two pillars in place, it seems that Christian principals will be more resilient, will have more satisfying work experiences, and will be likely to stay longer.

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