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Introduction to the Journey

Kelly Marshall spent 12 years as an elementary schoolteacher in a suburban school district in the Midwest. Last week, she began a journey related to but still different from all the earlier journeys of her life. On Monday, August 17, she opened the front door of Woodland Elementary School, an old but well-kept building in an industrial community not far from where she lived and worked for so many years, and stepped in as the new principal. The day marked the end of a lot of hard work for a bright, energetic, and very thoughtful person who spent many hours away from home, family, and friends while taking courses and pursuing the graduate degrees and state certificates that permitted her to look for administrative jobs. She realized that despite all that she had gone through over the past several years, her arrival at Woodland and walking into her office—*the principal's office*—was the moment when her life would change drastically. Her journey, however, was truly only beginning.

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The purpose of the book you are about to read is to provide you with an introduction to a new professional role, that of school administrator. It is assumed that in looking over this brief scenario about Kelly Marshall, you found a lot in her background that is similar to your own. You might not have as many years of teaching experience, and you may or may not have already completed the graduate courses needed for a state certificate or license to be a principal. But in all probability, you have been a teacher for a while, you have some experience with graduate school (even if you are now enrolled in your first course beyond a bachelor's degree), and you have a personal life. Like Kelly, you may be handed the keys to a school building and be told that

you are now the principal, the leader—the boss—the person in charge. At that point, you will be taking off in a very new direction in your professional life.

My goal throughout this book is to provide you with insights into what you are likely to experience as you embark on your own journey in educational leadership. Other courses that you are likely to take will focus on the kinds of knowledge and skills needed to be an effective and competent administrator. As a result, you will acquire knowledge about legal issues, finance, personnel management, budgeting, curriculum, and physical plant management. You are already aware that school administrators need to know about these topics if they are to survive. It is also critical that you get a sense of what it *feels like* when you are placed for the first time in the hot seat of administration. This statement is not based on pure speculation or unsubstantiated theory: It is a research-based fact. One of the most critical needs confronted by a beginning school administrator is knowing how the title is likely to change the person. Of course, it is important to know *how* to do many things associated with administration. But for beginning school principals, that is not always enough.

What Do Beginning Principals Need?

People have served as administrators of schools for more than 100 years in the United States. Ever since the mid-19th century, when an increasing number of U.S. schools shifted away from the common school (one-room schoolhouse) model, in which one teacher offered all instruction across all grades to all pupils, many realized that managing schools was an increasingly complex and demanding job. Until the beginning of the 20th century, however, schools had staff members serving primarily as teachers, and one person received some form of release time or other compensation to serve as a part-time building manager or administrator. After all, it was important for someone to attend to the business of paying for supplies, paying the other teachers, greeting parents and other visitors to the school, maintaining the physical plant of the school, and so on. Although these duties were time-consuming and varied, they were still not so complex as to prevent an individual from also teaching at least part of the time. Still, these teacher-administrators took on a special role and title, namely *principal teacher*.

In the United States, as the 20th century progressed and the nation moved rapidly from an agrarian to a more urban and industrial society, schools changed rapidly as well. Perhaps the biggest structural change was that schools became bigger, with more students and more staff. Curricula became more inclusive of subjects that went well beyond the three R's of the 19th century. Society changed and became significantly more complex than it had been in the past. The consequence of this shift from smaller schools—in

which all adults served primarily as teachers—to larger, more impersonal (and “efficient”) organizations was that providing for all the managerial duties was no longer possible on a part-time basis. As schools in the United States moved further into the 20th century, the concept of identifying a principal teacher to run individual schools was modified. The *principal* was no longer a *teacher*. The role of the school administrator, particularly the principal, has changed dramatically in a way that makes it markedly different from what people experienced earlier in their careers as classroom teachers.

As the role of the school principal began to emerge as something apart from traditional visions of what teachers did, it became increasingly important to provide individuals with the kinds of management necessary to serve in new roles in schools. In the past, those who became principal teachers did so largely because they had been recognized as effective teachers. As they moved into managerial positions, they simply picked up along the way whatever skills were needed to do their jobs. Often, new principal teachers learned their duties simply by watching what their more experienced colleagues did and then trying to do the same things. When the role of the principal was first being identified, this approach to management training and preparation was reasonably effective.

As schools and school districts grew in size and complexity and as the role of the *educational administrator* became more and more of a stand-alone position, programs designed to prepare people for their new duties began to appear across the United States. For the most part, these programs tended to focus primarily on training individuals to step into management roles in schools. A whole new field of academic study—educational administration—was launched and became a part of the curriculum in universities across the nation. Now, more than 500 institutions of higher education provide post-baccalaureate programs designed to certify individuals for principalships and other administrative posts in schools. Whether or not those programs are truly effective in preparing people for their important duties is a matter open to further discussion and analysis.

Do Beginning Principals Feel Ready to Lead?

One of the bases that might be used to determine the effectiveness of preparation programs is the extent to which people first entering the field of school administration express the sense that they are ready to be administrators. What are the kinds of problems, frustrations, and issues faced by newcomers to the principalship? In recent years, more and more attention has been directed toward that issue by researchers not only in this country but across the world as well.

In the space below, list the issues you believe you must address as a school principal but in which you believe you lack experience or expertise.

Research on beginning school administrators has been carried out in the United States, the United Kingdom, Holland, Australia, Canada, Singapore, South Africa, and several other countries. Although there are some differences in the research due to the diversity of cultures, educational practices, and traditions in all these settings, the overall findings have been remarkably similar. One of the common findings is that administrators' first years on the job are best characterized as time filled with frustration, anxiety, and self-doubt. The principalship (and administration of schools in general) represents a paradox: It is a job defined largely by constant interaction with people, but it is a lonely job as well.

A comprehensive study conducted by Dick Weindling and Peter Earley (1987), a pair of British researchers, reviewed the characteristics of the first years of secondary school head teachers (principals) in England, Scotland, and Wales. They surveyed and interviewed beginners, their teaching staffs, and their managerial superiors about what frustrated the newly appointed heads in their new positions. Among the many recommendations that came from this study was that new head teachers need to receive special attention and support from their local school districts. Weindling and Earley also noted that a major problem for head teachers is isolation, which tends to be felt strongly by novice administrators.

Basically, findings of studies looking at the critical problems faced by beginners have shown that people new to school administrative jobs experience problems in three areas:

1. Technical skills. *What* do I need to know how to do, now that I am an administrator?
2. Socialization skills. *How* am I supposed to look and act? How will my behavior affect staff, parents, students, and others?
3. Self-awareness skills. *Who* am I? *What* do I think? *What* do I believe? *What* do others see and hear when they see and listen to me?

The assumption might be made—particularly in terms of professional development at the preservice and induction levels—that effective programs must be directed toward helping people learn technical skills associated with their chosen profession. People also need to know how to fit in (socialization skills) and, most important, how they will be transformed personally in their roles. Although all three of these areas are quite important and must be recognized as critical problems faced by school leaders, particularly at the outset of their careers, the area identified as most important is self-awareness (Daresh & Playko, 1993).

Technical Skills

Research related to the needs of rookie principals clearly implies that although there is a strong and persistent need for newcomers to receive training and support related to the technical aspects of their new jobs, other issues might also be addressed with equal vigor. As a future school administrator, you will need to know about sound financial and budgetary management, effective school-community relations, staff evaluation and supervision, applicable law, and many other issues that are the core curriculum of most educational administration programs.

As you consider the issues that you believe you will face as a beginning school administrator, what, if any, of these may be described as related to needing technical skills?

Socialization Skills

In addition, when you step into your first administrative assignment, you will need skills associated with effective socialization into your new profession. Research on problems faced by novice principals shows that a consistent dilemma faced by first-year principals is how to fit into new environments and social systems (Daresh, 1986). In response to this, administrator preparation typically includes some form of internship, planned field experience, or other type of practicum to ensure that aspiring principals, assistant

principals, superintendents, and others are provided with some exposure to the daily feeling of administrative life.

What issues that concern you about your role as an administrator might be classified as part of socialization?

Self-Awareness Skills

Finally, there is a need for preparation programs to provide newcomers with a structured way to come to grips with their new professional identities as principals and the like. They need to learn how it will feel to be viewed as the boss, the prime decision maker, the person in charge, or a whole range of other roles assigned to a leader as a result of changes in self-perceptions and the perceptions of others in an organization. This is not a trivial matter. Analyses of the critical skills needed by beginning principals have found that the single most important aspect of effective initial performance is an individual's ability to demonstrate clear awareness of how he or she is adjusting to the role. In other words, "knowing oneself" is viewed as an even more critical responsibility than knowing how to do the job or fitting in.

Specifically, self-awareness involves three major skills:

1. Developing a personal response to matters calling for ethical concern
2. Recognizing the moment of transfer from one professional (or personal) self-identity to another new role or identity
3. Appreciating that one's personal identity has been coded differently in the eyes of others

What are some self-awareness issues that you believe you are likely to face when you become a school administrator?

In reviewing the critical skills needed for successful performance by school principals (i.e., the need for technical skills, socialization skills, and above all, self-awareness skills), the question naturally arises about whether or not some things can be learned from how other professionals view these competing preparation demands and perspectives.

Beginning Principals' Critical Skills

It might be interesting for you to discover how you feel about the kinds of skills needed by beginning school administrators. You might want to complete and score the Beginning Principals' Critical Skills Survey (Figure 1.1) before proceeding with the rest of this chapter.

If your highest scores are among the first eight items on the survey, then you believe that the most important things for you to master as a beginning principal are the technical skills associated with the job. Research shows that you are in agreement with most other individuals who have taken this survey while they were enrolled in preservice programs to prepare them to become administrators. However, you are not in line with what experienced principals and superintendents believe are the most important skills to be mastered. Principals who have been on the job for 3 or more years rated the eight middle items (which address socialization skills) as the most important, and superintendents believe that the last eight items (which address self-awareness skills) are the most critical items for beginning principals. Both principals and superintendents rated technical skills as the least critical issues.

These discrepancies suggest that those who have spent some time working as practicing school administrators realize that the journey toward leadership involves good management, appreciating personal values, and getting along with other people.

In the space below, indicate your rank ordering of critical skills as elicited by the Beginning Principal's Critical Skills Survey.

Figure 1.1 Beginning Principal's Critical Skills Survey

DIRECTIONS: For each of the items below, please assess how important you believe each item is for a beginning principal to carry out in order to be successful. Please use the following scale in making your assessment.

- 5 = Extremely Critical
 4 = Critical
 3 = Somewhat Important
 2 = Not Critical
 1 = Irrelevant

Item	Rating
1. Evaluating staff	5 4 3 2 1
2. Facilitating/conducting group meetings	5 4 3 2 1
3. Designing and implementing a data-based improvement process	5 4 3 2 1
4. Developing and monitoring a building budget	5 4 3 2 1
5. Organizing and conducting parent-teacher conferences	5 4 3 2 1
6. Establishing a schedule for students and staff	5 4 3 2 1
7. Being aware of issues related to school law	5 4 3 2 1
8. Managing food service, custodial, and office staff	5 4 3 2 1
9. Establishing a positive relationship with other administrators.	5 4 3 2 1
10. Determining who is what in a school/district	5 4 3 2 1
11. Relating effectively to board members and central office personnel	5 4 3 2 1
12. Balancing district professional values and personal values	5 4 3 2 1
13. Understanding the principalship as it affects personal lives	5 4 3 2 1
14. Developing interpersonal networking skills.	5 4 3 2 1
15. Encouraging involvement by all parties in the educational system	5 4 3 2 1
16. Developing positive relationships with other organizations	5 4 3 2 1
17. Demonstrating awareness of possessing organizational power and control	5 4 3 2 1

18. Demonstrating awareness of why one was selected for a leadership role in the first place	5 4 3 2 1
19. Portraying a sense of self-confidence on the job	5 4 3 2 1
20. Having a vision along with an understanding of what is needed to achieve organizational goals	5 4 3 2 1
21. Demonstrating a desire to make a significant difference in the lives of students	5 4 3 2 1
22. Being aware of one's biases, strengths, and weaknesses	5 4 3 2 1
23. Understanding and seeing that change is ongoing, and that it results in a continually changing vision of the principalship	5 4 3 2 1
24. Assessing job responsibilities in terms of the "real role" of the principalship	5 4 3 2 1

The Current Field of Administration

As educational administration has become more widely recognized as a field needing specialized training, you might expect that preparation programs would address the need for future school leaders to acquire equal amounts of training in technical skills, socialization skills, and self-awareness skills. However, most current approaches to educational administration training still emphasize the acquisition of technical skills as the best preparation for these jobs. As a result, "becoming an educational leader" is most often equated with gaining an appreciation of financial management, the legal aspects of education, supervising and evaluating teachers, budgeting, pupil and staff personnel management, taking care of the physical plant and school grounds, and similar activities. Defining the nature of school leadership almost exclusively as the accomplishment of these tasks also has a long tradition in the literature of our field.

An early example of an individual who produced text materials that helped introduce one to the world of school administration was Ellwood P. Cubberly, who served as a professor of education at Stanford University for many years. His writings have been extremely influential in defining how universities have envisioned what school principals and superintendents do and what they need to know if they are to be successful in their jobs. In 1916, Cubberly produced one of the earliest formal textbooks in the field of educational administration, *Public School Administration*. Among the topics covered in that book are many of the same things that we will examine later in this book, such as the nature of state and local school governance and what

building-level administrators and superintendents are supposed to do. The major focus of the work of Cubberly—and most of the other authors who have written material to introduce students to the field of school administration over this 20th century—has been on the managerial duties of administrators, as if that vision defined the entire world of administration. Cubberly, for example, noted that the major duties of school superintendents centered on such matters as how to maintain balanced budgets, keep accurate student records, report school issues to the public, and oversee the maintenance of buildings and grounds. Other authors who followed Cubberly continued their presentation of school administration exclusively in terms of “how to” carry out certain functional responsibilities of management. Paul Jacobson and William Reavis in 1941 presented a similar image of the work of administrators in their text *Duties of School Principals* (pp. 13-14). As part of their presentation, they noted that principals are individuals who carry out the following mandatory and discretionary duties:

Mandatory ministerial duties. Duties required of the principal not only as to performance but also as to how and when performed:

- Be present in the building between specified hours
- Keep certain records and accounts
- Receive delivered supplies
- Check school census
- Inventory equipment, books, and supplies
- Check payroll list
- Report injuries to pupils and employees
- Fly the American flag

Discretionary ministerial duties. Duties that are discretionary only as to how the required end is achieved:

- Conduct fire drills
- Supervise janitors
- Report needed building and equipment repairs
- Supervise the building at recess and noon hour
- Notify parents of unsatisfactory work of pupils
- Regulate, permit, or refuse entrance to visitors
- Regulate, permit, or prohibit advertising or exhibits in the school building
- Requisition and dispense supplies and equipment

Discretionary powers. Powers that the principal may use individual judgment on as to how, when, and sometimes whether a certain matter must be done.

Principals vary in the amount such discretion is provided by local control and dictate:

- Classify pupils
- Keep personnel records of teachers
- Keep personnel records of pupils
- Assign teachers
- Make curriculum schedules
- Conduct teachers' meetings
- Allocate funds made available for the building, according to budget
- Obtain substitutes for teachers who are absent
- Evaluate teachers' efficiency
- Supervise instruction
- Cooperate with juvenile court and other law enforcement agencies
- Regulate or abolish activities of teachers and pupils in buildings
- Handle complaints of patrons
- Discipline pupils

The popular view of what it meant to be a school administrator throughout most of the history of this field has been one of "getting the job done." Traditionally, an introduction to the field of school administration has been to orient people to the kinds of tasks that are expected to be done by professional managers such as principals and superintendents. Over the years, we have adopted the notion of trying to explain school administration in terms of task areas of administration, which normally include the following:

- Financial management
- Staff personnel management
- Physical plant and facilities oversight
- Pupil personnel management
- Maintenance of school-community relations
- Supervision of curriculum and instruction

In general, defining administration in terms of these types of tasks is consistent with a long-standing definition of educational administration referred to as *scientific management*, a concept that we shall explore in greater detail in Chapter 5. My purpose here is not to downplay the importance of having school administrators develop competence in areas such as finance, fixing the building, personnel evaluation, and dealing with the public. On the other hand, you have a very incomplete picture if you think that because you are able to balance a budget sheet and repair the roof of the schoolhouse and you are comfortable with doing those kinds of things, you know what you

are getting into as a principal or superintendent. As you may recall, the research noted earlier on the needs of beginning principals makes it clear that although performing in a technically competent fashion is important, other aspects of becoming a leader need to be addressed. Most traditional programs designed to train or prepare people to become school administrators do little more than concentrate on the development of technical skills. The focus in this book will be on helping you to understand how doing those sorts of things must fit into your personal value framework and understanding of education.

Since the 1950s, people have recognized that the preparation of a successful educational administrator must be based on more than just how to do certain managerial tasks. Over the last 40 or more years, these people have been influenced by what is often termed the Theory Movement in Educational Administration (Culbertson, 1995), in which the emphasis is on the development of conceptual skills rather than on training in management practice. Conceptual frameworks have been borrowed from an array of social sciences, including sociology and psychology, as a way to explain how school administrators must be made aware of insights and skills well beyond what it takes to discipline a student, hire a teacher, or find ways to finance a particular program. The books *Administrative Theory in Education*, edited by Andrew Halpin (1958), and *Educational Administration as a Social Process*, by Jacob Getzels, James Lipham, and Roald Campbell (1968), have served for many years as influential and visible statements of the belief that the world of administration is not simply about “doing things” but, more important, about being able to “understand and explain” things that happen in the daily lives of schools. Discussions of administrative task areas are generally replaced by discussions of decision theory; the nature of conflict, authority, and power; and the organizational structure of complex organizations. Again, my goal is certainly not to discount the importance of understanding administration and administrative behavior from a theoretical perspective. On the other hand, appreciating the world of administration solely through the lens of the analyst does not tell the entire story of what your life is likely to be after you first step into the principal’s office. Is there room for learning about the conceptual bases of administrative practice? Yes, but there is still more to the puzzle that must be learned and understood at the outset of your personal journey.

Another Perspective

To this point, we have considered very briefly two visions of educational administration that have been quite popular throughout the history of our field. The first perspective suggested that administration is defined largely

as the business of keeping organizations headed in the right direction by making certain that operational details were addressed: bills are paid, people are evaluated, and so on. The second perspective indicated that being an administrator involves being able to appreciate the way things work in an organization so that it might be possible to intervene when necessary. Administration from a theoretical perspective would hold that knowledge about human motivation theory and research is an indispensable part of administration, because administrators need to know how to motivate people if organizations are ever to be effective.

As you read this first chapter, you may start to wonder if my goal is to convince you that all former approaches to explaining the complex issues associated with managing schools are somehow wrong and that we ought to erase all past descriptions of how to administer schools. That belief would be incorrect. The important assumption I am making is that the administration of schools is a complex task. It is an extremely demanding and challenging task to oversee all the issues that must be addressed to keep schools operating smoothly so that children can learn effectively.

My major goal in this book is to lead you through the process of exploring a field of practice, namely school administration—in light of your own personal values, beliefs, and views. Simply stated, becoming a school administrator is something that will make great demands on your time and talents, and it will change many patterns of your life. If you are now a classroom teacher, you will build on the things that you now do in your work. Becoming a principal or superintendent is going to make new demands on you and change your life. If you walk into that new role with its new expectations without appreciating the nature of how you might be changed, it is likely that your journey into a new career will be unhappy and you will be unsuccessful in what you are doing. Again, we return to the findings of the research related to beginning administrators, which has shown that self-awareness in a new job is the single most important ability needed by the effective school leader.

My consistent theme is to help you to assess your personal commitment to the demands of the job of a school administrator. To grasp what those demands are likely to be, we will explore three major components of the role of school manager.

First, we will explore the nature of what administrators do. Ideally, this review will assist you in developing a clear, personalized image of what administration is as a job.

Second, we will explore the nature of leadership. This topic is the focus of a great deal of popular analysis, both in terms of educational leadership and what constitutes leadership in a variety of organizations. We will explore some historical images of leadership as well as some of the current thinking in this area. A major focus of this review will be on the conceptual and practical

differences that may exist between *leadership* as an activity and *administration* or management. Are there distinctions between these terms, and if so, how are they likely to affect your life?

Finally, we will examine another important concept in the world of the school administrator, namely formal governance structures. This deals with the way schools and school districts are supposed to be established, according to law. We will look at such issues as the federal government's involvement in educational practice, what roles the states play in education in this country, and what is meant by the concept of local control. All of these issues must be understood by the aspiring and beginning administrator, because the governance structure of education defines what leaders must do in a formal sense.

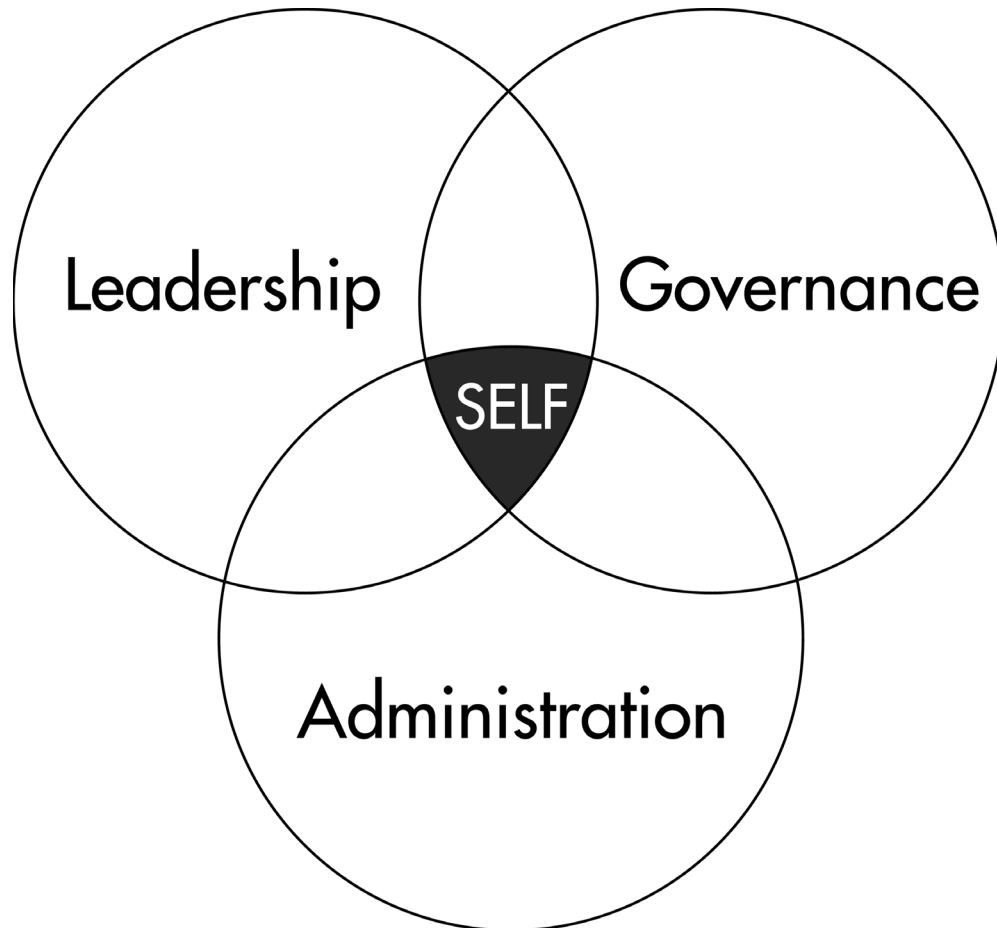
Figure 1.2 is a pictorial representation of how the material in this text will be presented. Three circles of equal size represent the concepts of administration, leadership, and governance. Although these concepts are separate, there are elements of each that overlap with the other circles. For example, leaders must be effective administrators, and the formal governance structure of education defines the job of administrators in a legal sense. But as we proceed through the book, it should become increasingly evident that there are also differences between the three major areas of focus. At the center of the diagram is a smaller but most important point: Self. This is meant to indicate you as the person thinking about moving into a new professional role. As the center of this diagram, it is important that an ongoing assessment take place of your personal views, values, and talents as they may relate to the circles.

The journey will begin with some insights into how you might systematically analyze who you are as a professional educator. This material is critical at the outset, because as each chapter unfolds, you will be asked to reflect on issues associated with educational administration and consider whether dealing with these issues is consistent with who you are, your beliefs, and who you wish to become as a professional.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the basic rationale for this book. To introduce this rationale, I offered information about research on beginning school administrators and how it has shown that although technical and socialization skills are important, the key to effectiveness is the extent to which a beginner has a strong sense of personal values and self-awareness in relation to a new job. To complete that overview, I noted that the world of school administration has been presented in the past through perspectives that

Figure 1.2



include a review of individual administrative task areas and theoretical domains borrowed from other social sciences. I demonstrated that although these former views may have some limitations, they cannot be ignored by those interested in pursuing fields in administration, because they offer important insights into the nature of this field. However, I also noted that the primary goal of this book is not simply to review theories or administrative tasks but to assist you through a personal process of assessing the nature of a new job in light of your own sense of who you are and what you believe as an educator.

Suggested Activities

1. Reread the introductory material, which provides a brief summary of the professional life of Kelly Marshall, a new principal. We will continue to visit this administrator throughout the remaining chapters of this book as she encounters many important issues in the fields of administration, leadership, and governance. As a beginning activity, prepare a two-page summary of high points in your personal and professional life as a type of introduction that you might share with others.
2. Make copies of the Beginning Principal's Critical Skills Survey (Figure 1.1) and distribute this survey to either beginning or experienced principals. Score the survey and compare your findings with those explained in this chapter. Are they similar or dissimilar? If your findings are different from the research noted here, how might you account for that fact?
3. Interview two or three experienced school principals or superintendents and determine whether or not they believe that the job they now do is consistent with the job they believed they were going to do when they took their first administrative position.