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Theory Z for Supervisors

The supervisor is the one in the middle—the individual responsible for receiving information from one source and passing it on to others in a way that makes them willing to respond. William Clark and Henry Houser¹ suggest that under Theory Z assumptions, this middle role becomes more positive: the supervisor serves as a *coordinator* rather than a buffer or information block.

Theory Z has been defined in many ways. Most sources agree that essential components include clearly defined organizational goals and objectives

that are determined and pursued in a participative atmosphere. The supervisor who subscribes to Theory Z must balance concern for organizational needs with concern for individuals. Clark and Houser cite M. Scott Myers' work in describing the Theory Z supervisor as one who:

- Participates with people in problem solving and goal setting.
- Gives people access to information they want.
- Creates situations for optimum learning.
- Explains the rules and the consequences of violation and mediates

conflict.

- Allows people to set goals.
- Teaches improvement techniques to employees.
- Enables people to pursue and move into growth opportunities.
- Recognizes achievements and helps people learn from their failures.

¹W. D. Clark and H. F. Houser. "The Supervisor's Role Under Theory Z." *Supervising Management* (May 1984): 24-29.

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The Professional Development of Principals

The world seems to have rediscovered the school principal. Central office administrators, state department officials, and university researchers have come to recognize what most teachers, parents, and students have known right along—the quality of a school is related to the quality of its leadership. Three responses to this realization are becoming growth industries across the land: a move to strengthen the preservice training and certification of aspiring principals so that those who move into the principal's office are prepared to use it wisely and effectively; renewed attention to the process for selecting principals so that those most likely to be successful leaders are given the opportunity; and the proliferation of activities to promote the professional development of practicing principals.

Heretofore the repertoire of staff development activities for principals has been meager. When asked how they find professional replenishment, principals report informal activities such as reading and conversations with fellow principals, university course work, inservice programs within a district, programs offered by national organizations such as the National Associations of Elementary and Secondary School Principals, and activities devised by private foundations.

Several factors now promise to expand this list dramatically. Principals' longevity on the job continues to far exceed that of superintendents and even teachers. Time invested in principals will pay off over time. And the central message from the burgeoning field of adult development is that grown-ups continue to grow. Rather than being completed or finished, adults learn and change and develop

throughout their lives. Furthermore, every principal has a context for learning, access to primary source material—a school—and motivation to learn. Most want to do the job better and perhaps with greater ease. The school, then, can be an important locus for adult learning.

The current surge of interest in the professional development of principals is accompanied by many encouraging signs. Most staff development for principals has been something done *to* principals by others. Inservice has commonly been prescribed from outside; it has frequently met with resistance and resentment from inside. Now more and more principals are voluntarily engaging as learners. Moreover, many are exercising leadership and ownership in their professional growth. At the Harvard Principals' Center we are assembling a directory of such activities around the country. We

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