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BCPVPA members have demanding jobs, with a high degree of volexity. 'Volexity' is a term coined by former Member Support Services Director Harold Krische to signify both the volume and complexity of the work of school leaders. Perform a Google search of Principal caricatures, and you are likely to find images of happy, yet overworked Principals balancing a range of tasks. Over the years, education researchers have done numerous time-use studies to attempt to better understand the relationship between the time that Principals and Vice-Principals spend on specific tasks, and the impact on their school communities.

The most recent research on this subject has been captured in the book, *How School Principals Use Their Time; Implications for School Improvement, Administration and Leadership* (edited by Moosung Lee, Katina Pollock and Pierre Tulowitzki). The researchers present international evidence from school systems across the globe, building a case for the implications for school improvement and leadership. The book consists of empirical studies that provide fresh perspectives and provide evidence-based findings on how Principals use their time, and how their use of time can impact their school.

One of the most interesting aspects of the book is how a set of researchers chose to quantify the time used by Principals. Traditional time-use studies have looked at a Principal's day and attempted to ascertain the percentages of time that are used on specific leadership or managerial tasks. This has some advantages, as it can more clearly define the



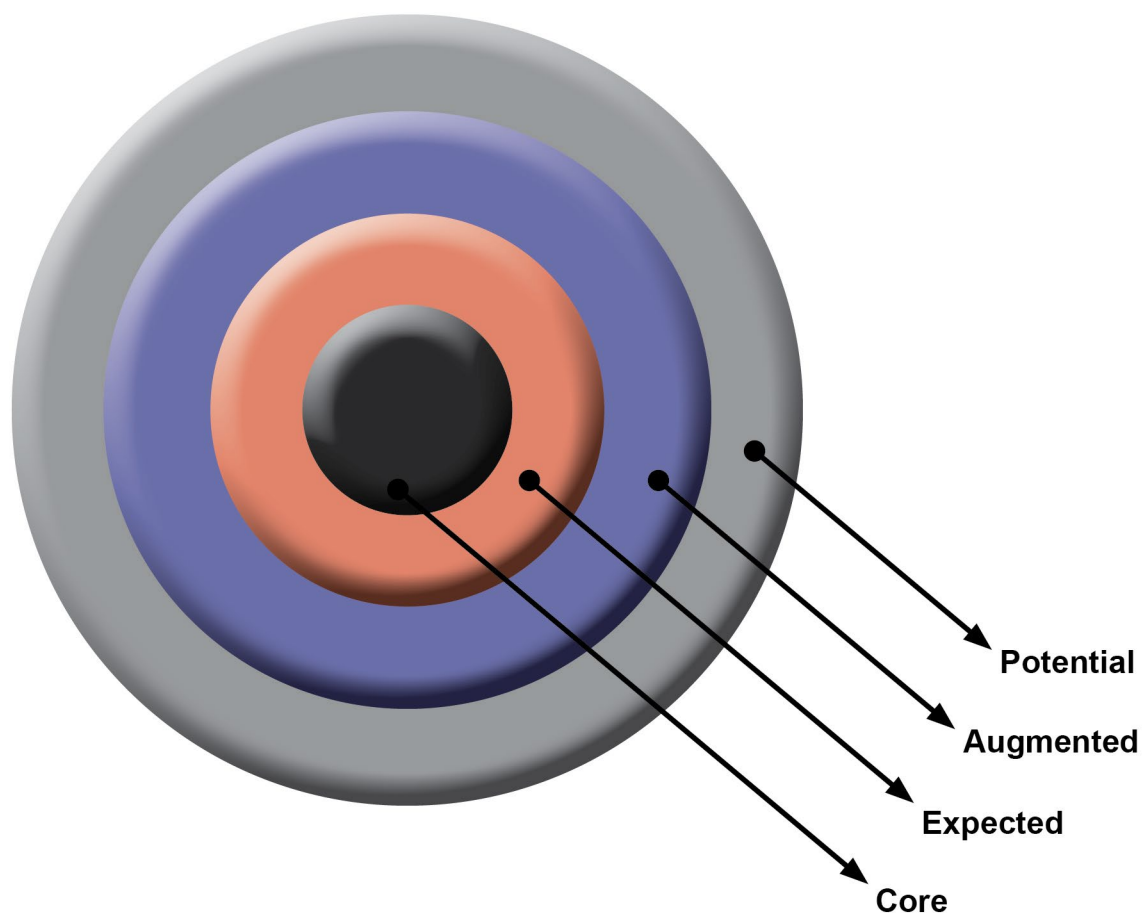
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Principals...

and their Most Important Resource

complexity of work that Principals and Vice-Principals do both inside and outside of school. Australian Principals who were studied found that they spent about 60 hours a week on traditional Principal duties. However, when you factor in the amount of time spent reflecting and wondering about their work, a number of Principals reported working 80-100 hours per week.

In one instance, the researchers chose not to focus on tasks but to take a Total Role Concept (TRC) approach. The TRC is a framework that defines leadership and management as complementary – but often very different – tasks. The assumption is that Principals need to balance these roles to lead their school communities capably and effectively.



Rather than focus on the clock, the researchers argue that conceptual models should focus on the interplay between leadership and management. Adapted from the Total Product Concept, the model contends that any consumer product is, in part, a promise. When purchasing a new car there is the tangible element of the car itself, as well as the intangible promise of expected performance, longevity, and so on. School leadership is not vastly different. The tangible managerial expectations are blended with the less tangible leadership expectations. Both models speak to the promise of the model.

In the Total Role Concept framework, the authors use a model of concentric circles to illustrate the model:

The Core represents the duties of a school leader's role that are often formalized in legislation or Board policy.

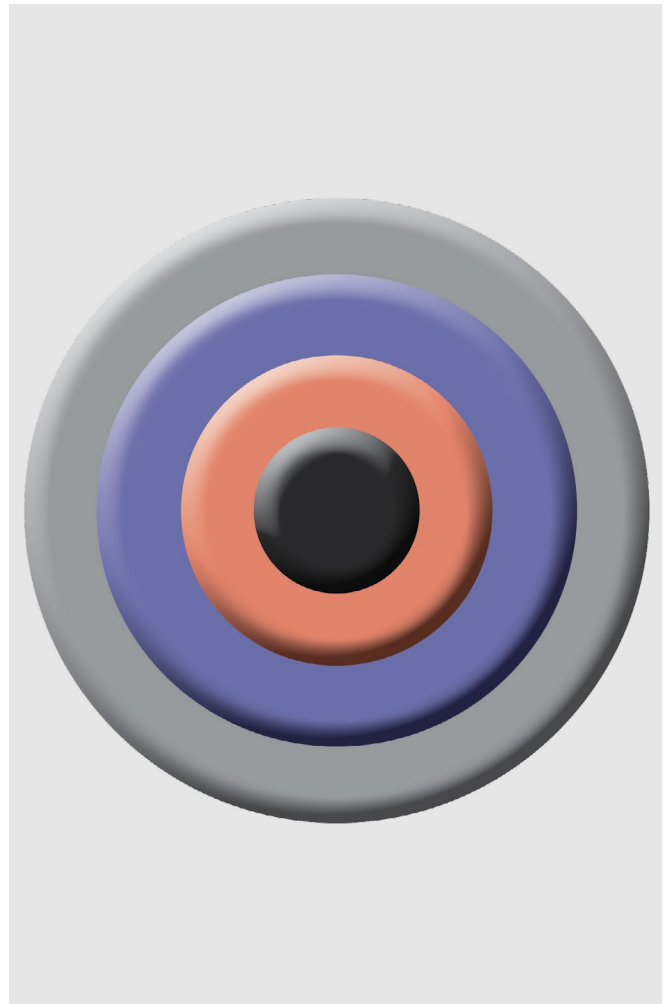
The Expected circle represents a set of expectations that various groups have of the Principal's duties in leading the school.

The Augmented circle represents those elements of the job that the Principal believes encompass their responsibilities, but are neither explicit nor implicit. They are the things that the Principal believes are important to the role, but can be difficult to find the time to achieve (e.g. creating a collective vision, collaborative communities, etc.)

The Potential circle represents the creative and innovative initiatives that are more entrepreneurial in nature.

The managerial tasks of Principals tend to live in the Core and Expected circles, while the leadership initiatives live in the Potential and Augmented circles. The Core and Expected tend to be defined by the district, Board and Ministry, and encompass those often urgent, but not important priorities that Steven Covey would have defined in Quadrant Three of his model. The Potential and Augmented circles are less easily defined and tend to be more abstract. At the risk of being glib, if we thought of the concentric circles as a donut, then the hole of the donut would contain the duties and responsibilities of the Principal, and the donut itself is what Principals can do in their roles to go beyond those managerial expectations. I believe that many of us would agree that the donut itself is much more appealing than the hole in the middle. Insert your own metaphor here.

According to the researchers, Principals who focus more on the donut than the hole are considered post-heroic. Post-heroic leaders transcend the model of Command and Control, and strive to create school



communities that are modelled on collaboration and shared responsibility. While heroic leaders move a school forward by sheer will, post-heroic leaders have a clear sense of their own values and work to access the collective wisdom of the school and distribute leadership. Principals that focus their time on the donut and not the hole can make substantive and meaningful change for their school communities.

A Principal's influence on the learning conditions of the school is influenced by the time that they spend leading the organization instead of managing the organization. Experienced Principals tend to have learned the tips and tricks of addressing the managerial aspects of their jobs quickly and effectively so there is more time in their day to focus on leadership initiatives. The TRC model could help Principals and their supervisors better analyze the use and impact of their time as they strive to make meaningful change in the lives of their students.