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Institutional Change and the Principalship in an Era of Educational Reform

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Institutional Change and the Principalship in an Era of Educational Reform[1]

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Abstract

Recent scholarship on the principalship emphasizes the impact of educational reforms on school principals who continue to be at the centre of educational restructuring. The described shift in the nature and structure of school organization is termed 'new managerialism' or 'new educational management.' School principals are responsible for supporting increasingly sophisticated technologies for managing educational pedagogies. Yet, the institutional implications of these new management technologies are often invisible to those who implement them in the school. In this paper, we argue that the changing work of school principals is institutionally organized and linked to educational issues arising in a global educational arena. We contend that research on school administration and leadership must address the institutional structures of current educational changes in order to give principals the critical tools to shape the goals of education.

Introduction

School principals and school leaders in most Western democracies are encountering new challenges and responsibilities as government-initiated, accountability-driven reform and restructuring policies filter down through school systems. School administrators are central to the changes at the local school level and are often seen as the "keepers of the process" of change (Leithwood, 2001, p. 223). In this paper, we argue that the changing work of the school principal is institutionally

organized and linked to educational issues arising in a global educational arena. The current research literature on the principalship has, in general, remained focused on pedagogical issues such as leadership strategies for improving teaching and learning, new management processes, and the development of individual characteristics to support school management. We contend that research on the principalship must address the institutional basis of current educational changes in order to give principals the critical tools to shape the goals of education.

Our paper is divided into three sections. In the first section we examine current restructuring measures in the context of global educational changes. Next, we review the literature describing the changing nature of the work of principals. Lastly, we explore the need for change in the education of principals in order that a critical perspective on educational reforms might be developed.

Educational Change and the Institutional Context

As a social institution[2], education's goals and the methods for achieving them are always being negotiated (Olson, 2002). The history of public education in the U.S., Canada, and elsewhere indicates that institutional reform and restructuring are as old as public education (Griffith, 2001). The history of schooling can be read, in part, as the struggle to both shape and reshape education's goals. Historically, the principal or school administrator has been at the fulcrum of these debates. For example, in 1845 Horace Mann "recognized that school-by-school test results would give them [elected school officials] political leverage over recalcitrant headmasters" (Ramirez, 1999, p.208). School testing was developed as a way to 'reform' schooling by controlling pedagogy. The institution of education has remained remarkably stable since its inception. Institutional goals continue to be managed by pedagogical controls.

The policies for managing the far-flung pedagogical processes of education are embedded in a changing relationship between government and school systems. Weiner (2002), with reference to the UK notes, "As central government divests itself of responsibility for public institutions, checks and audits are substituted to promote efficiency and value for money" (p.120). Recent educational restructuring measures have supported a retreat from the possibilities of emancipatory or critical leadership and a move toward the non-democratic tyranny of bureaucratic-managerial leadership (Griffith, 2001). This shift has had a profound impact on the work of principals in Western liberal democracies. A globally-organized context of influence (Ball, Bowe & Gold, 1992) is shaping educational policy development across national contexts (Daniel, 2001; 2003).

In both Canada and the UK, the pedagogical processes of education are the focus of change. Pedagogical reform is seen as a way of managing institutional changes in areas such as finance, and working and learning conditions. In Ontario and Alberta, for example, "fiscal motivations were central to educational reform initiatives during the 1990's" (Taylor, 2001, p.2). Levin (2001) argues that three common strategies are employed in educational reform. These are increased achievement testing, decentralization, and various forms of choice. In Ontario, for example, finance, curriculum, and testing have been centralized, limiting the effectiveness of the decentralized initiatives such as school councils. School-based management initiatives have almost completely disappeared. A discourse of crisis, a push for accountability, and cost-cutting measures form the context of influence that frames Ontario's Bill 160 within an economic reductionist framework characterizing schooling as a business (Dei, et al., 2000). Current educational restructuring initiatives in many Western liberal democracies emphasize standards, assessment and accountability to impose homogeneity while also individualizing outcomes. The focus on accountability in terms of fiscal measures and test scores has overshadowed the concerns about equity and social justice[3] goals.

The case of Ontario's recent educational restructuring is illustrative. In this province, educational restructuring has been coordinated by a 'New Right' agenda (Apple, 1996) shaping public education to the ideologies of a globalizing marketplace. A Conservative government was swept into power in Ontario in June 1995 under the banner of the election platform termed, 'The Common Sense Revolution' (CSR). "The CSR was both an election strategy and a statement of neo-conservative philosophy" (Ibbitson, 1997, p. 63). The CSR pledged to stimulate Ontario's economic structures by encouraging spending through the reduction of taxation, and by eliminating the growing deficit of the province. One way to achieve this aim was to reduce public spending in the areas of education, health and welfare—the divesting by government of responsibility for the institutional goals of its traditional social mandate.

Bill 160, The Education Quality Improvement Act (1996), was one of the first large-scale initiatives passed by the neo-conservative

government. It is a policy ensemble of restructuring measures that has many similarities to Britain's 1988 Education Reform Act. Both promised to implement a wide range of reforms encompassing almost every aspect of the public education system with a focus on efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Britain introduced a National Curriculum to cover all subject areas, and the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training introduced curriculum documents that replaced the more generic Common Curriculum of previous years. Britain established the Office of Standards of Education (OFSTED) to carry out routine and regular inspection of schools, to establish a program of national testing, and to publish test results in the form of league tables. In Ontario, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) is in charge of province-wide testing measures. The similarity of changes is indicative of a larger trend of policy borrowing – a policy isomorphism that includes coercive, mimetic and normative influences (Scott, 1995).[4]

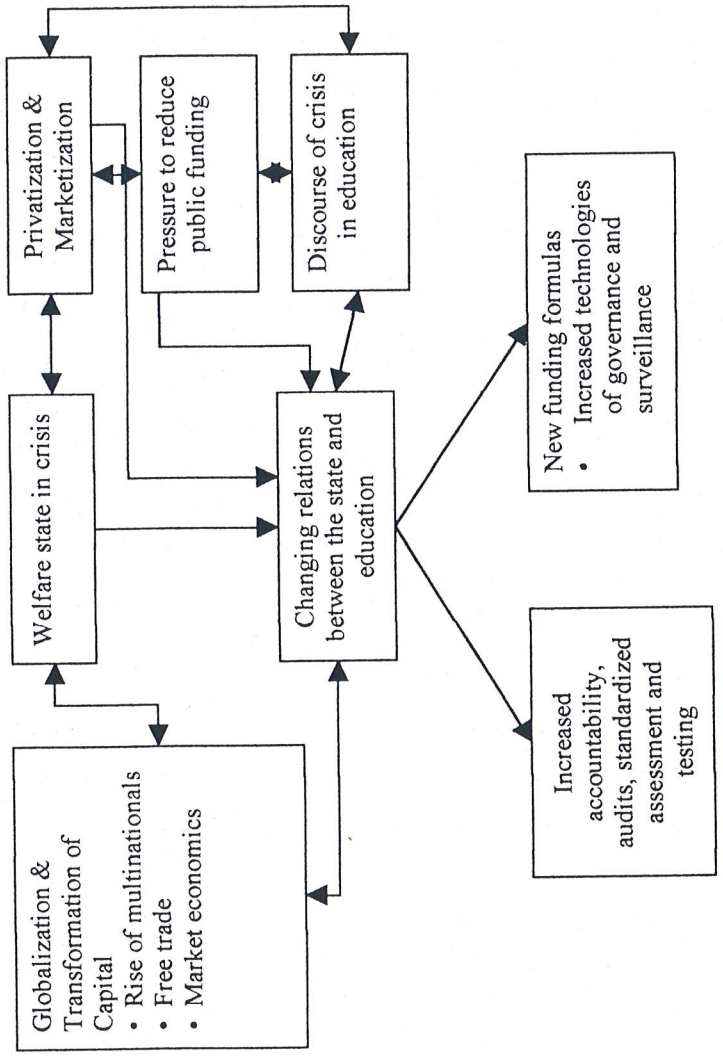
The diagram on page 11 (Figure 1) illustrates the links between the local school experience of change and the larger national and global issues that are shaping that change[5].

The school principal continues to be at the centre of these changes and is responsible for supporting increasingly sophisticated fiscal technologies for managing educational pedagogies. Yet, the institutional implications of the new management technologies are often invisible to those who implement them in the school (Taylor et al., 1997).

The Changing Role of Principals

Research on education and educational reform, according to Olson (2002), conflates institutional and pedagogical processes. He states, "...the goals of the former, the institution, are addressed in terms of the outcomes of the latter, the beliefs, intentions and responsibilities of the learners" (p. 36). As we will see below, Olson's criticism is supported by current research on educational change, which tends toward a focus on leadership styles and management strategies. This emphasis is similar to the two trends we saw in our interviews with keynote and plenary session presenters at the 2001 International Conference for School Effectiveness and Improvement in Toronto (Daniel, Edge & Griffith, 2002)[6].

Figure 1
The Context of Influence – Educational Change in Ontario



First, we found a glaring omission of equity, diversity and social context in many educational restructuring initiatives. Indeed, the focus on raising the levels of student achievement through pedagogical changes obscures these social issues quite effectively. Second, we found an (almost absolute) lack of dialogue between the people who engage in the policy and practice of equity issues and the people who are engaged in theorizing and designing school reform initiatives. In other words, there is little conversation between those researchers exploring the pedagogical changes in education and those focusing on the institutional features of education.

Educational reform and the principalship

Recent scholarship on the principalship emphasizes the impact of educational reforms on school principals. Caldwell (2000) situates the recent wave of educational restructuring in a global context. He claims that the current challenges faced by schools around the globe have no counterpart in the history of education. Institutionally, schools are expected to prepare students to function effectively in the global economy. Under conditions of decreasing governmental support for public education, educators must equip students with the required skills and knowledge. On a broader scale, schools are expected to balance the expectations of the state with the economic realities of the market. The described shift in the nature and structure of school organization is termed the 'new managerialism' or 'new educational management.'

In several venues, principals and vice-principals are no longer affiliated with teacher unions or federations, which places them in a new labour relationship to the teachers they supervise. In Ontario and in British Columbia, principals and vice-principals were removed from the teacher federations by government legislation. In Ontario, the legislation came after earlier promises made by the government to the teacher unions that such a measure would not be implemented. Many principals and vice-principals had participated in the political protest of October 1997, the largest job action in Canadian history that closed the schools to 2.1 million students in Ontario. The government claimed an inherent conflict between a principal's federation affiliation and his/her obligations as a manager. The government argued that schools, just like the private sector, needed to have standards as part of their ability to assess their performance. Principals must be part of that performance appraisal system. The Education Act (Bill 160) was amended to exclude principals and vice-principals from the definition of a teacher. Principals and vice-principals are excluded also from the provision of the Labour Relations Act, 1995, so that they are not entitled to apply separately to be unionized. However, they still retain the ability to perform the duties of a teacher despite any provision to the contrary in a collective agreement.

Principals, despite the rhetoric of self-management, are accountable to the central office for delivering the mandated reforms while functioning with diminishing resources. In addition to their traditional roles, the principal must now be an interpreter of new laws, a program manager, and an instructional leader, among other things (Fennell, 2002).

Role Expansion

Overall, role extension with little added power has been a defining characteristic of the profession in recent years. Castle and Mitchell's (2001) study of elementary school principals in Ontario delineates five key roles and task sets: management, relationship building, mentorship, accommodating special needs, and direction setting. The multiplicity and complexity of these tasks and roles are further exacerbated by tensions and the ambiguity of these responsibilities. Principals must balance between managerial demands versus instructional leadership; responsibility versus authority; change versus stability; and relationship building versus gaining a sense of control of the personal work environment. Castle and Mitchell's study finds that these tensions and pressures are not limited to Ontario, nor are they likely to diminish in the near future.

There is a significant increase in the workload and responsibilities assigned to principals. Principals experience an increased degree of vulnerability, and new and specific expectations create a high degree of visibility. This vulnerability and visibility ultimately alter the meaning of the principals' work. Principals are more accountable to their schools and communities and, at the same time, are receiving less support from their school districts. In other words, principals have been assigned more responsibility for the institutional issues of schooling, while being given only pedagogical and managerial resources with which to address the problems educators face.

How do principals respond to the new roles? In a study conducted on Ontario school principals, Slater (2001) found that the new roles and responsibilities are constantly shifting, vaguely defined, and poorly supported by the bureaucratic hierarchy of education. Many principals

say that they do not necessarily go along with the new expectations placed upon them and do not automatically accept the new roles. One Canadian principal said, "...we're not doing it here that way because it doesn't work for our kids; here's the way we are going to do it. And it's not about being confrontational; it's remembering your focus" (p.25). The literature points to two levels on which change occurs: the subjective/individual and the organizational.

Changes at the Subjective/Individual Level

Multiple changes and transitions in the principalship and the new roles and responsibilities exerted upon principals necessitate a re-visiting of philosophies of leadership on the part of practicing principals. This process of re-visiting occurs as they begin to reflect upon their professional biographies in the context of current developments. As principals incorporate the new demands and representations of the principalship into their emerging and shifting concepts of school leadership, the question arises as to how principals in different educational contexts re-write their professional biographies and reconfigure their ideas and images of the principalship to reflect the changed realities of their jobs. Portin (1999) suggests that when principals are confronted with new challenges, they begin to develop a more complex understanding of leadership. Portin notes that in the initial stages of reform, principals are overwhelmed. However, over a period of time they develop strategies that allow them to maneuver between managerial, transformative and critical leadership frames. They learn to overcome the dissonance between management and leadership, and begin to see management as part of leadership. They develop the potential to find a balance and to tame the managerial imperative. Interestingly, Portin (1999) notes that many principals return to their instructional leadership activities despite the increased managerial demands. These principals actively resist competitive marketization forces and emphasize their commitment to equity in education.

Changes at the Organizational Level

Research suggests that the added roles and responsibilities for principals that have become the source of much anxiety and frustration within the profession can be successfully addressed through the restructuring of the decision-making processes at the school level (Castle & Mitchell, 2001; Mitchell & Kumar, 2001). These authors suggest that it is imperative for the principal to delegate certain responsibilities to other stakeholders, especially teachers. In their executive summary Castle and Mitchell (2001) state:

> The demands of too many tasks found in this study clearly imply a need for principals to delegate some of what comes across their desks. The kind of single-handed management that we found in many schools did not position the principals to play a central role in school development... This issue implies a need to attend to the preparation of teachers for shared leadership because people need to see the big picture, the little picture, and the hidden picture if they are to be successful leaders (p. 4).

The various models of shared decision-making found in different educational jurisdictions have shown that this approach can be a structural solution to the increased workload and responsibilities of principals. However, as Rauch (1999) notes, the responsibilities of the decision-making bodies at the school level "must be clearly defined and correspond to the official responsibilities of the head" (p. 99). As well, some studies report multiple cases of teacher reluctance and even refusal to participate in school decision-making. Many teachers do not want to conflate teaching and administrative functions, and therefore prefer to stay away from any kind of involvement in administrative affairs. The task of administration is still an unloved child, and seen as the principal's specific job. In our own experiences in schools, we have encountered teachers saying, "Let him/her (the principal) do it. They get the big bucks. It's not my responsibility. I'm only a teacher."

Despite all the talk of participatory decision-making models, teachers' participation is often more symbolic than substantive. As teachers become more resistant and resentful of the large-scale reforms that they see as being imposed, their participation in school administration dwindles. "Research in different educational settings shows that in practice, site-based management models often translate into a concentration of power in the hands of the principal. This, in turn, leads to deterioration in the relationship between teachers and principals" (Blackmore, 1999, p. 350).

Educating for Today's Principalship

Educational goals are strongly tied to the social context in which they have been developed. As the society changes, so too must the

institution of education. Our previous research (Griffith, 2001; Daniel, 2001, 2003; Daniel, Edge, & Griffith, 2002), and that of other researchers (for example, Levin, 2001; Taylor, 2001, 2002; Weiner, 2001) suggests that successful educational change depends on school administrators developing a critical perspective that will allow them to implement educational initiatives in ways that support – or transform – institutional goals. In this section, we review some of the changes that have been called for, and the initiatives that have been undertaken. As we will see, few address the institutional goals of education.

One of the major shifts in the area of principal preparation has to do with the movement away from top-down and authoritarian leadership styles to more collaborative and collegial forms of leadership (Behar-Horenstein, 1995). Responding to the changing nature of the principalship, university-based principal preparation programs orient themselves towards helping their graduates meet the demands of the rapidly changing profession. The ability to function in diverse population settings, to articulate the vision of an improved and effective school, and to combine the leadership and managerial aspects of the work are at the core of some principal preparation programs. Generally, the formats of such programs are based on current research that identifies and examines the new competencies, skills and knowledge required by the profession. According to a report prepared by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) in the US, effective professional development programs include coaching and study groups where principals discuss problems, as well as networks of principals who serve as 'critical friends'. Some of the practical recommendations offered by NSDC include:

- Providing principals with more real world experiences and perspectives.
- Establishing incentives and accountability to improve principals' skills.
- Reorienting preparation and professional development to include more hands-on learning.
- Setting benchmarks for funding that ensure sufficient support for programs.

Caldwell (2000) suggests a list of skills or competencies for principals. Drawing on a study conducted with Australian principals, he proposes the following taxonomy of competencies:

1. Driving school improvement (passion for learning and teaching, taking initiative, achievement focus);

2. Delivering through people (leading the school community, holding people accountable, supporting others, maximizing school capability);

3. Building commitment (contextual know-how, management of self, influencing others); and

4. Creating an educational vision (analytical thinking, big picture thinking, gathering information).

A review of the different approaches to the restructuring of principal preparation programs designed and implemented in North America and internationally shows that many of the programs emphasize the importance of aspiring principals learning from those in the field. In other words, these programs are grounded in the premise that aspiring principals will benefit significantly from some sort of professional interaction and communication with practicing principals. Whereas some of the programs utilize more traditional modalities of connecting aspiring and practicing principals (such as internships), others are structured as innovative delivery models, such as interviews conducted by aspiring principals of practicing principals of different backgrounds and experiences (see, for example, Joachim and Klotz, 2001). Using the life history method as a way of learning about the profession, aspiring principals are afforded the opportunity to understand how principals construct and articulate their professional identities in the turbulent and rapidly changing landscape of the principalship, what dilemmas and challenges they encounter in their work, and how they respond to them.

In recent years, many principal preparation programs have integrated technology-mediated models of professional dialogue between aspiring and practicing principals into the formats of their programs. Most of these programs are built around computer-mediated case narratives from the lives of experienced school administrators, for example, the on-line mentoring component of York University's Principal's Qualification Program (Griffith & Taraban, 2002):

> Computer-mediated discussion groups allow for interactions between experienced and aspiring

> administrators, mentoring relationships that no longer need to be confined to a single classroom or school. Indeed, this on-line technology allows for networking across the large distances of the GTA, and provides the opportunity for people working in diverse school situations to learn from each other through the discussion of cases drawn from the everyday experience of principals working across the diversity of GTA schools. (p. 4)

The use of video-cases, computer-based simulations, and on-line case scenarios resonates with the need to decrease the gap between classroom instruction and practice and to enhance participants' abilities to make sound decisions that are at the core of school leadership. Although these decisions include the technical dimension, they must also be strategic and political.

We note, however, that the institutional issues that are increasingly defining the work of the principal are noticeably missing from these educational initiatives. So, too, the issues of equity and diversity are either subsumed under issues of "vision" and "real world perspectives," or absent. Rather, the focus is on in-school pedagogical issues in a time of declining institutional resources and re-defining of institutional issues in a globalizing economy.

Diversity and equity

As transnational immigration transforms the racial, ethnic and language profiles of students, linguistically and culturally diverse students and parents have become an integral part of school communities in many Western societies. Given the growing numbers of (im)migrant and refugee populations arriving in Western nation-states, the number of schools where minority students comprise a large percentage of the student body is steadily growing. Global economic restructuring, economic hardship and armed conflicts around the world will continue to generate large migration flows. According to a report by International Social Service (2000), the number of people in migration will increase over the next decade. In pluralistic societies, such changes in the demographic profiles of education would undoubtedly call for re-articulation of the principal's role to attend to the issues of diversity, equity and social justice.

A major task for principals is to ensure that all students are able to meet their educational potential in school. This is a challenge for principals in a milieu of increasing diversity in the student population. Ryan's (2003) comprehensive study aimed at documenting how school principals in Canada perceived and addressed issues of racism in their respective schools found that there was a general ambivalence toward issues of race. He concludes that the reason principals are reluctant to "see" racism in their schools is that they have been trained "to ignore systemic inequalities" (p. 149). They tend to operate from an individualistic perspective that claims that hard work results in success for those who persevere in the face of difficulties. "They saw racism primarily in terms of individual actions and isolated incidents" (p. 150). While individual principals may be aware of and working towards inclusive schools, the same cannot be said for the majority of school leaders:

> Conspicuously absent from the debates on antiracism are the concerted voices, perspectives, and the administrative action of curriculum leaders within the school: the principals. Since these leaders carry tremendous responsibility for influencing school culture and for being role models for curriculum innovations, why have the antiracism policies developed in school jurisdiction not materialized in equitable classroom practice? (Solomon, 2002, p. 175)

Solomon's study examined school principals' awareness of racial inequities within their schools, their conceptualization and practice of anti-racism pedagogy, and explored the power and influence of different interest groups to oppose those committed to an equity agenda. He found that although the principals in his study generally acknowledged the existence of racism, they lacked conceptual clarity about antiracist education. They did not have a deeper understanding of the political formation of the work of principals and the institutional factors that undercut their antiracism work.

Both Solomon's (2002) and Ryan's (2003) research note the lack of attention paid to issues of racial equity and to the lack of resources with which principals can attend to these issues. *Ldr magazine* (published in the UK by the National College for School Leadership) reported that "A national study by the University of North London last year showed that of 132 secondary schools none had appointed a

person of ethnic minority in the past 12 months and in primary schools 49 out of 50 new heads (principals) were white" (September 2001, p. 18). In the Canadian context, the issue of under-representation of minorities and women in school principalship has been a persistent concern at the national and provincial levels throughout the last decade. While equity may be on the administrative, managerial, pedagogical, or community-outreach agenda of individual principals, it is not identified as a central issue in much of the literature on changes to the work of principals.

Yet, the cultural and demographic changes in Western liberal democracies are placing increasing pressure on schools and their administrators. School reform measures grounded in abstract universalism (Hatcher, 1998) cannot address local issues of social justice. Principals must be able to engage in a critical analysis of policy initiatives that is not only reactive but also proactive in order to explain "the links between local practices and external contexts" (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 20).

Gender and equity

Changes in the gender distribution of the principalship have been dramatic over the past 20 years. Particularly at the elementary level, the numbers of women principals appear to have reached, or exceeded, that of men. The Royal Commission Report on Learning provided a statistical snapshot of the situation in the educational system of Ontario in 1995:

> Approximately 62 percent of all full-time teachers are women—a percentage that is expected to remain constant or even grow in the next few years. However, only 31 percent of Ontario principals or vice-principals are women...Beyond the issue of gender, there has been significant concern about the under-representation of minority groups in the profession.

Hall (2002) and Young (2002) argue that women do not enjoy an advantageous position in school leadership. "Canadian women educators have consistently been under-represented in all types of administrative roles, despite their high proportion in the teaching workforce" (Young, 2002, p. 79). These findings support the claims made by Shakeshaft (1993) and other scholars who argue that women

are over-represented in teaching and under-represented in administration[7]. Many studies portray women principals as relational leaders and describe them as collaborative, caring, and reflective (Shakeshaft, 1989; Regan & Brooks, 1995). Jacobson (1990) maintains that the selection process and organizational socialization preclude women from entering into and advancing in principalship positions. Grogan (1999) points to three factors that contribute to women's under-representation in administrative positions:

- Women administrators experience conflicting discourses (e.g., a conflict between administrative discourses and mothering);
- Women's ways of leading are considered secondary or subordinate to men's ways (e.g., leadership qualities associated with women are less valued);
- There is a manufactured crisis in leadership (there are qualified women who are not being recruited for principal's positions).

Grogan (1999) also draws our attention to the lack of a research base on women of colour who are principals. Murtadha and Larson (quoted in Grogan 1999) found that "the leadership narratives of African American women are strikingly rooted in anti-institutionalism, rational resistance, a sense of urgency, and deep spirituality" (p. 567).

Gosetti and Rusch (1995) propose that women as educational leaders and administrators function in a landscape in which the culture of the white male privilege continues to set the norms and policies for the profession. Many women and minority women principals 'buy in' to these norms in order to move up the hierarchical ladder. The gendered character of the principalship then becomes harder to address.

The current educational context is market-oriented and client focused; there can be no special treatment on the basis of rights and needs. As Blackmore (2002), in pointing to global patterns and a shift in discourses states:

> In the new managerialism, women (and other groups) are viewed as producers and in an increasingly feminized "postmodern" workplace. They are viewed as a force to contend with, or to exploit. A discourse of diversity, which is ultimately assimilationist, prevails. A discourse of difference,

> which derives from an understanding that difference should be recognized and valued, is muted. (p. 50)

Blackmore argues that women in leadership and administrative positions in education are placed in a very difficult political context in the current milieu of educational change. The discourses of markets, choice and efficiency "decontextualize, distort and depoliticize the issue of gender, and then refuse to see how educational restructuring and shifts in cultural values continue to reshape, and indeed constrain the possibilities for feminist leadership practices" (1999, p. 3). Thus, despite the increasing number of women in the principalship, the rhetoric of change obscures the ways that androcentric discourses continue to hold sway. Despite the increase in the number of women and minorities, school staffs rarely engage in a discourse that challenges "the asymmetrical power relations and other aberrations of democracy that currently dominate school curriculum and practice (Dantley, quoted in Solomon, 2002, p. 192).

In Young's (2003) recent study of the leadership crisis in K-12 education in Iowa, she employed a critical feminist perspective and found that gender and minority representations were generally non-issues, as the problem was framed in neutral tones. She concluded:

> A critical examination of the predicted shortage of educational leaders and the ways in which leadership positions are typically filled demonstrates the strength and depth of the dominant ideology - an ideology that maintains the predominance of White middle-class men in school administration. (p. 293)

In most cases institutional responses, as Young's (2003) study indicated, addressed "the quality of administrative preparation and administrative candidates rather than the availability of candidates" (p. 276).

Educating for equity

There are new models and views of educational leadership that approach the institutional goals of education through proposals for different relationships between the people working in the system. The scholarship that emerged in the last decade on women principals' experiences with power criticizes the traditional portrayal of power as "power over" and theorizes relations of power in school leadership as

"power with" (Blackmore, 1989; Hurty, 1995). That is, rather than using power as an instrument of control and domination in order to bring about intended effects, many women principals view power as multi-dimensional and encourage empowerment of all organizational members (Blackmore, 1989; Fennell, 1999). Hurty (1995) identifies five components of "power with" used by women principals:

- The use of emotional energy (honest and open use of emotions in interactions with teachers, students and parents);
- The use of nurturing growth and working with others;
- Reciprocal talk (listening to and accepting different viewpoints);
- Pondered mutuality (keeping others' interests and needs in mind in planning and decision-making); and
- Process of collaborative change (involving others in transforming the school community).

In her study of four Canadian elementary school principals in Ontario and British Columbia, Fennell (1999) found that her interviewees perceived power mostly in terms of positive power and empowerment. One of those interviewed articulated power "in the sense of energy and the creation of energy, the supporter and the nurturing of energy" (p.39). Another emphasized the importance of empowerment in her role as a school leader: "I think that you cannot just empower people overnight. I think it's a very long-term process that doesn't end, that your job is going to be to continue to empower the students and teachers, and parents that you work with; and if you do it in a meaningful way, it should never stop." (p. 40). She is articulating the characteristics of emancipatory action (praxis) — continually searching for alternatives and probing existing inequities and unjust practices (Grundy, 1993). In Ontario, emancipatory action is becoming increasingly difficult as the principal's responsibilities become more focused on managerial issues (Griffith, 2001).

Principals who engage in interpreting, experiencing and exercising 'power with' rather than 'power over' begin to reconfigure school administration (Fennell, 1999, p.23). However, as Grogan (1999) suggests, this transformation will be possible only if educational leadership itself is associated with the attitudes and practices of care. The dominant value upheld in most organizational structures is the administrator's capability to anticipate and comply with the (gendered) educational discourse. The recent educational changes in most Western liberal democracies reduce the scope and cost of social responsibility,

while refocusing on individual responsibility. Reynolds and Young (1995) conclude that what is currently needed is the transformation of existing approaches and models of school leadership. Women and minority candidates from all backgrounds must learn to "resist the hegemonic discourse around gender, race, class and equality that continue to shape our perceptions of reality" (p. 98). Such change requires women to gain access to the process of defining values. Grogan (1999) states that if issues of diversity, gender equality and equity were closely attended to in scholarly and public discussions on the school principalship, a more caring, relational approach rooted in social justice might become the norm, substituting the technology of the masculine with the pedagogy of the feminine.

Mitchell and Kumar (2001) offer a "curriculum for moral discourse" (p.47) based upon a collaborative-expressive model in which power and authority are re-framed to become all-inclusive and encompassing. Central to their curriculum is a focus on diversity, equity/equality and alternative concepts of power. New university-based principal preparation programs that focus on the issues of diversity in school leadership have been developed in recent years. For example, Dr. Patricia First (University of Arizona) developed a graduate course for aspiring principals entitled "Leadership in Diverse Communities." The course focused on the difficulties of, and need for, communicating across institutionally-maintained racial, ethnic and cultural boundaries. The course was "designed to further knowledge and attitudes of embracing and celebrating the diversity present today in all children's lives."

A program that seems to be unique in addressing institutional goals and the principal's role in transforming them is the National Head-Teachers Training Program introduced by The National Agency for Education in Sweden in January 2002. This nation-wide approach to principal training has, as its main focus, three dimensions of leadership: democratic, learning and communicative leadership. Johansson (2001) states: "A school leader can — and should because of the democratic objectives of the institution — act democratically" (p. 12). Both thematically and in terms of articulation of the role of the principal, the Swedish model with its strong emphasis on ethical and transformational dimensions of principalship offers a stark contrast to the principalship preparation programs that emphasize the managerial dimension of principalship. The goal of the Swedish approach is to train democratic leaders who will lead school organization using democratic leadership practices. Most importantly, the principal is expected to create a school culture that promotes dialogue on the issues of democracy, equity and social justice. According to Johansson (2001), "The democratic reflective school leader understands that it is not sufficient that education imports knowledge of fundamental democratic values. Education must also be carried out using democratic working methods and preparing pupils for active participation in civic life" (p. 11).

Concluding Comments

The global educational context is influencing national and local educational initiatives in unprecedented ways. This paper brings into view the struggles that are taking place in most Western liberal democracies to address the dramatic changes in education that are reshaping the work of the school principal. Unfortunately, a discussion of these systemic changes and their effect on both the institutional organization of education and, thus, the work of school principals are rarely addressed in the literature.

The work of the principal continues to be pivotal in the restructured relationships of K-12 education. Today, principals must acquire technical expertise in many areas; curriculum, assessment, instruction, education law, and so on. They must develop the ability to communicate complex policy structures to the community of parents, students, teachers, and other stakeholders. They must also develop the ability to apply judgment and compassion in a hierarchical and highly bureaucratic policy environment. And most importantly, they must have a greater understanding of the impact of policy changes on issues of equity and diversity in order to be strong advocates for their students. Yet, the principalship is being allocated fewer resources as central office support is withdrawn and pedagogical accountability is increasing.

As school populations continue to reflect changing multicultural and multilingual populations, the job of the principal must also change to support the challenges this brings to the institution of education. For example, there is a need for studies that investigate how the education and the work of the principal are being transformed by the changing profile of the student population. As social norms about gender change, questions are raised about the traditional reproduction of inequities that have been part of education's history. Yet, principals appear to have few resources on which to draw as the institutional goals of education are negotiated once again. Our research suggests that

principals, and those who train or educate them, would be well served by a critical understanding of educational restructuring that addresses both the pedagogical and the institutional changes currently occurring in education.

Notes

1. Research for this paper was funded, in part, by the Ontario Principals' Council. We thank Svitlana Taraban for her contribution as a research assistant to the original research. A version of the paper was presented at the International Conference on School Leadership, National College for School Leadership, Nottingham UK, Oct. 16 – 19, 2002. We would like to thank also the anonymous reviewers whose comments were extremely helpful.

2. "Education is an institution created by a society as a means of achieving a set of goals including the preservation and enhancement of its language(s) and culture, its workforce and its sponsoring institutions whether governmental, legal, medical, scientific or economic" (Olson, 2002, p. 36).

3. In policy disclosures, the terms equity, equality and social justice are used interchangeably, which in itself is highly contentious (Taylor et al., 1997).

4. Coercive influences are formal and informal pressures, which in our context are the results of the prevalence of the ideologies of the marketplace taking place within a discourse of crisis. Mimetic influences are evident in the ways governments initiate similar policies, and normative influences refer to the perception that common solutions are possible (Taylor, unpublished paper).

5. The diagram was adapted for the Ontario case from the work of Ball, Bowe and Gold (1992) on the English educational system and Taylor's (201) analysis of educational changes in Alberta. The similarities between the systems are striking. Griffith's current research is exploring the ways that a globalizing educational discourse, policy-borrowing, and neo-liberal / neo-conservative economics are drawing educational policies and practices into alignment across national boundaries.

6. In our previous study funded by the Max Bell Foundation we interviewed all the keynote speakers who participated in the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) held in Toronto from Jan. 4-8, 2001.

7. We were unable to find current data on the status of women and minorities in educational administration in Ontario or Canada.

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