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ABSTRACT

Various sources are cited indicating that the actual role of educational administrators, especially school principals, is largely one of communicating with teachers, students, supervisors, parents, and others and monitoring, reviewing, and assessing what is occurring in the school work setting. Suggested as the cornerstones of effective school administration are moral imagination (the capacity to develop a compelling vision regarding what is possible and desirable to achieve in a given school situation) and interpersonal competence (the knowledge and skills needed to influence teachers and others in desired directions). Aspects of the relationship between certain features of the school work situation and the personal qualities of the administrator are examined. Formal and informal role socialization processes and outcomes and their relationship to preparing individuals to work effectively as school administrators, as well as implications of these ideas for the preparation of educational administrators and school principals, are briefly discussed. The paper concludes with a summary of the major ideas and a set of tentative propositions regarding the preparation of effective school principals. Appended are 87 references. (WTH)

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Moral Imagination, Interpersonal Competence,
and the Work of School Administrators

by

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ABSTRACT

The three-fold purpose in this paper is to (1) examine aspects of the relationship between certain features of the school work situation and personal qualities of school administrators, (2) briefly discuss formal and informal role socialization processes and outcomes and their relationship to preparing individuals to work effectively as school administrators, and (3) examine the implications of these ideas for the preparation of educational administrators, particularly school principals. The paper concludes with a summary of the major ideas and a set of tentative propositions regarding the preparation of effective school principals.

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Introduction

The three-fold purpose in this paper is to (1) examine aspects of the relationship between certain features of the school work situation and personal qualities of school administrators, (2) briefly discuss formal and informal role socialization processes and outcomes and their relationship to preparing individuals to work effectively as school administrators, and (3) examine the implications of these ideas for the preparation of educational administrators, particularly school principals. The paper concludes with a summary of the major ideas and a set of tentative propositions regarding the preparation of effective school principals.

Three central assumptions underly the ideas to be discussed. First, one's effectiveness in a work role, such as that of school principal, is primarily a function of the degree of match or "fit" between personal qualities of the individual and the demands of the work situation itself. If there is a close "fit" then one is likely to be effective in a given work role. Second, the school work setting is a normatively complex and highly ambiguous social situation characterized by multiple and frequently conflicting standards of goodness; these standards are maintained or changed primarily through interpersonal

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interactions among participants in the situation. Third, the school work situation reflects a social order negotiated within a complex set of professional, organizational, cultural, and environmental constraints and opportunities, and is always subject to renegotiation; thus it is a "temporary" order in that it is highly susceptible to internal and external threats to stability.

There are other assumptions, of course, but these three are fundamental and serve to guide the discussion in this paper. The ideas expressed here are offered in a speculative vein in an effort to reconceptualize the way we think about the work of school principals, and about efforts to enhance their effectiveness on the job, particularly as it relates to the improvement of instruction in schools.

Where Are We?

The current "image" of principal effectiveness is one entwined with the idea of instructional leadership, the assumption being that schools will be more effective to the extent that the school principal emphasizes the importance of academic achievement and provides teachers with instructional supports (Edmonds, 1982; Achilles, 1986). This concept of instructional leadership is a very narrow view of the work of school principals, particularly to the extent that it suggests that working directly with teachers is what effective principals actually do.

The question that is not being asked is "Why do school principals spend their time as they do?" Prescriptions calling for principals to be instructional leaders confound the issue by implying that the way they do spend their time is inappropriate. The thesis advanced in this paper is that principals are doing their work as they know it must be done, given the demands of the work situation. The framework developed

in this paper is intended to be responsive to what principals actually do, rather than to prescribe what they should be doing.

The literature is pretty clear about what principals actually do at work and indicates that most school principals spend very little time directly supervising or observing teachers in classrooms (Gorton & McIntyre, 1978; Byrne et al, 1978; Wolcott, 1978; Peterson, 1978; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980 & 1986; Morris et al, 1978; Lortie et al, 1983; Dwyer et al, 1983; Goldhammer et al, 1971; Greenfield, 1982; Martin and Willower, 1981; Dwyer et al, 1985; Little, 1982; and others). Basic conclusions that can be derived from these and other studies is that a principal's work is largely social in character, occurs outside of classrooms, and involves a lot of verbal, face-to-face interaction with multiple actors on the school scene. For example, one recent set of studies indicates that the vast majority of the work activity of the elementary principal involves communicating with teachers, students, supervisors, other actors in the school, and with parents and various persons and groups external to the school; the second largest work activity includes monitoring -- reviewing, watching, being present, and assessing (without any intended formal evaluation) what is occurring vis a vis work structures, student and staff relations, plant and equipment, and safety and order concerns (Dwyer et al, 1985). These recently completed in-depth studies of seven principals at work by Dwyer and his colleagues indicate that more than 60% of an elementary principal's behavior is focused on the routine activities of communicating and monitoring, and that these at best are only indirectly (but importantly) related to instruction.

In short, reforms which call for principals to work more closely and directly with teachers on instructional matters is somewhat misleading and based upon a normative rather than an empirical conception of the work of principals. Principals who interpret that call to mean that they should spend more time working directly with teachers are likely to frustrate themselves and, indeed, may do their staffs and the children they serve a real disservice (Deal, 1986). There is much that a school principal must do in order to administer a school well, and relatively little of that is related directly to working with teachers in classrooms. What the school principal spends most of his/her time doing is what might be called responding to "situational imperatives" -- events and activities that demand immediate attention -- which if not attended to have a high potential to threaten the stability of the school situation (including the capacity of teachers to teach and the opportunities for youngsters to learn).

The concept of instructional leadership is not only misleading, it is ambiguous and reveals little about the work of principals or what is required of principals in order to be effective in the school situation. As suggested earlier, being effective as a principal requires responding appropriately to the demands of the school situation. Understanding the nature of the school situation holds the key to understanding why principals behave as they do, and why some schools and some principals are more effective than others. A descriptive understanding of the work situation encountered by a principal will enable one to (A) explain why principals behave as they do, and (B) prescribe changes in behavior (or requisite knowledge, skills, and personal dispositions) directed at a

more appropriate "fit" between the requirements of the situation and the actions and orientations of the principal.

The call for more and better instructional leadership is a "prescription" that reflects virtually no understanding or recognition of the realities of the school work situation encountered by the principal. A brief sketch of important aspects of the school administrator's work situation is offered next, and is followed by a more detailed examination of "moral imagination" and "interpersonal competence" -- two lower-order concepts which illuminate important dimensions of the work of principals, and which are grounded in an understanding of the nature of the school work situation itself.

The Work Situation in Schools

As stated earlier, the notion of effectiveness guiding the discussion is one which focuses attention on the match or the "degree of fit" between the demands of the situation and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the actor in that situation, in this case the school principal. Any effort to describe or explain what school administrators do at work must conceive of that behavior as a function of the individual's perception of and interaction within the school situation (Lewin, 1951; Blumberg and Greenfield, 1986). Ten features of the school principal's work situation are briefly outlined below:

1. The relationship between a school and its larger system, the district, is loose. Each school is a more or less self-contained entity, and its primary concerns are its immediate participants and setting. The relationships between principals are transitory and tend to be based on interpersonal friendships. The focus of the principal is inward, giving primary attention to what is occurring in his or her school. In Weick's (1976) terms, schools are loosely-coupled to one another and, by and large, to the Central Office.

2. The dominant values in the larger system are "peace-keeping" and loyalty. Keeping the school and the district running smoothly and communicating loyalty to superiors are uppermost in the minds of school administrators, and serve to foster the stability of an organization that is extremely susceptible to parental and community pressure and other external influences on one's school.
3. The demands placed on the school principal are frequent and varied, and call for quick responses. This fosters a reactive stance on the part of the principal, and much that occurs does so unpredictably. The work setting is full of uncertainties. The school principal never knows what the next demand will be, how problematic it will be, or whether it will be associated with a teacher, student, parent, or some other actor in the system; in addition to "people" demands there are those that might be termed mechanical or physical (malfunctioning equipment and school support facilities) in nature. As Wolcott (1973) observed, virtually every problem that arises is viewed as important by a school principal.
4. Teachers have total responsibility for production (instruction) in their classrooms, the effect of one teacher's work on another is hard to discern. What occurs between one teacher and another or between a teacher and the principal has no necessary bearing upon what happens elsewhere in the school, and how well a teacher does his/her job bears little immediate relation to the effectiveness of other teachers. The teacher's view of the school is not one of organizational membership, but rather "a place where I teach." There is little concern by most teachers for what occurs beyond their classroom door.
5. The work effort of the principal tends to focus on individuals rather than groups, and this is reinforced by the norms of teachers as a group. Efforts to introduce change tend to emphasize changes in individual behaviors, not group norms. As noted in early conceptions of the administrator's role, and in more recent studies, its' essentially dyadic character is central to understanding the nature of their work (Coladarci & Getzels, 1955; Griffiths, 1959, Dwyer et al, 1985; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986).
6. Schools are under attack, reflect a culture built on a history of vulnerability to the public, and are not very secure environments. School goals often are ambiguous, it is difficult to demonstrate effectiveness to the public, and schools often are unsure of their very reason for being. Schools are ontologically insecure organizations (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986).
7. In part due to multiple and ambiguous goals and a relatively low level of codified technical knowledge about effective teaching practices, teachers and principals confront a normatively complex situation characterized by competing and sometimes conflicting standards of good practice. This is

exacerbated by a heterogeneous clientele, a teacher culture which values individual autonomy with regard to teaching practices, and a tradition that emphasizes "learning-by-doing", "doing it on you own", and "getting through the day." It is not a reflective culture, places a low value on technical knowledge and evaluation of practice, essentially abdicating group standards. There is little discussion of or consensus about standards of good practice.

8. The work that occurs in schools is mediated through dyadic and larger-group interactions. The school is a highly normative social situation, and this places a heavy reliance upon interpersonal exchanges as the primary vehicle through which teachers and principals influence one another, children, and others. Communication is primarily verbal and face-to-face.
9. The social order in schools is transitory, highly vulnerable to internal and external threats to stability, and always subject to renegotiation. A complex of professional, organizational, cultural, and environmental forces come together in a school, and there is on-going competition and conflict relative to the distribution of ideological and other resources. The school is a political arena and principals and teachers are critical political actors in the game of schooling, with some having more influence than others (Wiles, 1981; Burlingame, 1986).
10. Unlike counterparts in other sectors, school principals tend to have few assistants or specialized (non-teaching) staff under their immediate control, particularly in elementary schools. While middle and secondary schools usually have larger administrative staffs, the size generally is small given the overall size of the enterprise. It is not uncommon, for example, for an elementary principal to supervise 30 or more teachers with no assistant principal. The average span of control of supervisors in industry and other work sectors is considerably more narrow.

The preceding comments suggest only some of the features of the work situation encountered by a school principal. There are other features and many school researchers have written much more extensively and insightfully about these matters (Waller, 1932; Bidwell, 1965; Jackson, 1968; Goslin, 1965; Dreeben, 1970; Becker, 1980; Lortie, 1978 and 1983; Wolcott, 1973; Burlingame, 1979; Morris et al, 1981; Little, 1986; Dwyer & Smith, 1986; Sarason, 1985 & 1971; Cusick, 1983; Sergiovanni, 1984). The point the writer wishes to emphasize is that a

great deal is known about the character of the school as a work setting. Yet, in discussions or studies of administrator and school effectiveness, little attention is given to what might be called the "situational imperatives" in schools.

One may agree or disagree that the described situation is or is not desirable, but that misses the point. The reality is that the school situation represents a set of circumstances to which the school administrator must respond. Calling for new responses without a recognition of what the situation actually demands of school principals is futile vis a vis efforts to improve schools or to make principals more effective. School principals can be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to lead and manage schools well, and to improve teaching conditions for teachers and learning opportunities for children. Indeed, if the way the school is administered is not changed there will be no discernable changes in the school situation itself. Schools in the year 2036 will look much like schools do today, and as they did in 1936. However, proposed changes in the way schools are to be administered will only be effective to the extent that they are responsive to the actual demands of that work setting.

In order to change the way schools are administered it in part will be necessary to equip principals with knowledge, skills, and dispositions that fit the requirements of the school situation. In short, it will be necessary to attach much greater importance to the match between personal qualities of principals and the demands of the work situation than has been the practice historically. There are many personal qualities that may be important (and some of these, such as intelligence, have been validated empirically), but only two are

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Studies of the work of school principals and effective schools increasingly point to the significance of aspects of the work itself and contextual properties of the school, its environment, and its history as important determinants of the activities of principals and teachers and instructional outcomes for children (Cuban 1984; Manasse, 1985; Dwyer and Smith, 1986). However, while these are important new directions and are to be encouraged, personal qualities of the individual teacher or the principal continue to receive extremely limited attention, either by researchers or by those concerned with staff development programs and associated efforts aimed at improving the day-to-day performance of professional educators. The issue is not to emphasize the importance of traits, attitudes, and other individual characteristics per se (Bridges, 1982), but rather to understand the relationships between the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of individuals and characteristics of the situation in which they work. This strategy assumes that individual effectiveness in a given situation is in large part a function of the degree of match between the demands of the situation and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the individual (Becker, 1964; and Schein, 1978).

While relationships between the personal qualities of school administrators and elements of the school work culture and organizational context are not well understood, evidence does suggest that the character of the principal is central to leading a school effectively (Blumberg and Greenfield, 1986). Their initial study (1980) identified vision, initiative, and resourcefulness as three key elements associated with a principal's effectiveness, and resulted in the development of a "grounded" or middle-range theory of leading and

managing a school. Given certain features of the role of principal which derive both from the larger system and from the school itself, Blumberg and Greenfield speculate that several personal qualities characterize the principal who would lead a school well:

- Being highly goal oriented and having a keen sense of clarity regarding instructional and organizational goals;
- having a high degree of personal security and a well developed sense of themselves as persons;
- having a high tolerance for ambiguity and a marked tendency to test the limits of the interpersonal and organizational systems they encounter;
- being inclined to approach problems from a highly analytical perspective and being highly sensitive to the dynamics of power in both the larger systems and in their own school;
- being inclined to be proactive rather than reactive--to be in charge of the job and not let the job be in charge of them;
- having a high need to control a situation and low needs to be controlled by others--they like being in charge of things and initiating action;
- having high needs to express warmth and affection toward others, and to receive it--being inclined toward friendliness and good-natured fellowship; and,
- having high needs to include others in projects on problem-solving, and moderate to high needs to want others to include them.

(1986: 182-185)

Their discussion of the results of a follow-up study of the principals who participated in the original investigation emphasizes the "embeddedness" of the principalship in the school culture, and lends additional support to the idea that the personal qualities of school principals are instrumental determinants of their success in coming to terms with a school's culture, the value orientations of teachers as a social group, and the larger organizational and community context in which the school is situated (1986).

Although there has been only limited study of the specific "qualities of person" presumed to characterize those who would enact an instructional leadership conception of the principalship (Debevoise, 1984), current images of that role usually contain three key ideas: (1)

that the effective principal holds an image or a vision of what he or she wants to accomplish; (2) that this vision serves as a general guide for the principal as he or she sets about the activities of managing and leading a school; and (3) that the focus of the principal's work activity should be upon matters related to instruction and the classroom performances of teachers (Manasse, 1985; Strother, 1983). Like many others, the writer agrees that a school principal can and should be instrumental in determining the direction and effectiveness of school programs, and that "vision" is a critical antecedent to effective school administration.

Why is this so? What is the relationship between this personal quality of the principal and the nature of the school work situation? The purpose of the next section is to examine the concept of "vision" and to explore its fuller meaning vis a vis the nature of the school as a work setting. The discussion will then turn to a consideration of factors which may be instrumental in the development of school administrators capable of "vision" and committed to leading and managing schools well and improving instruction.

School Administration: Values in Action

School administration is referred to here as actions undertaken with the intention of developing a productive and satisfying working environment for teachers and desirable learning conditions and outcomes for children. Administrators are effective to the extent that these broad purposes are achieved in a particular school or school district. The discussion to follow is centered on school principals, though it is believed that the elements and conditions to be described are also

relevant to understanding efforts by teachers, department heads, and others committed to school effectiveness.

Interpersonal Competence and Moral Imagination

Two aspects of the work situation of principals appear critical. First, decisions must be made and actions must be taken, usually in the face of competing and conflicting norms. That is, the standards by which others will judge whether the chosen decision or action alternative is appropriate or effective may be unknown, unclear, or may be different than those employed by the principal. Second, the principal's work-world is a highly interpersonal one. Frequent verbal exchanges and face-to-face interaction with teachers, students, parents, supervisors, and other adults on the school scene (aides, custodians, cafeteria workers, and security personnel, for example) characterize much of the work of a principal. The capacity of a principal to influence instructional and organizational arrangements thus depends to a large degree upon his or her ability to work effectively with and through people.

There is both a factual and a value component to action. Decision or action alternatives always require the assignment of values to facts and the exercise of judgement in arriving at an alternative--to embark upon one line of action versus another, or to choose one decision alternative over another (Simon, 1957). These often are choices of habit and may not necessarily involve deliberate and conscious choice between competing facts and values, but action always requires that a judgement be made. Whether by habit or by deliberation, judgements are made as values are assigned to facts and as decision or action alternatives are evaluated (Dewey, 1957).

School administration as it is conceived here thus involves the assignment of values to facts and the necessity to select one decision or course of action over another. Decisions and action alternatives often confront the principal with competing standards of goodness--the criterion one uses as the basis for judging that one alternative is to be preferred over others. Will it be a standard of efficiency, friendship, good educational practice, convenience, political expediency, or some other standard? In this sense there is a moral component to action, and principals or others may frequently be confronted with moral dilemmas (Schrag, 1979; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986; Greenfield, 1986). The concept of "moral imagination" is discussed next to suggest aspects of the processes by which one evolves a "vision" regarding the educational or organizational arrangements in one's school.

Moral Imagination

Moral imagination refers to the inclination of a person to see that the world, in this case the school and the associated activities of teaching and learning, need not remain as it is--that it is possible for it to be otherwise, and to be better (Green, 1984). It is the ability to see the discrepancy between how things are and how they might be--not in terms of the ideal, but in terms of what is possible given a particular school situation. This is the element of "imagined" possibility.

It is "moral" imagination because the discrepancy, the possibility envisioned, is rooted in an awareness of and a commitment to the standards of good practice, of effective schools and good teaching, that characterize membership in the normative community of educators. Thus, it is "moral" in that it is the application of some standard of goodness

that illuminates the discrepancy between the present and what is possible, and better.

Evolving a vision thus entails the exercise of moral imagination. The latter is a process that involves observation of the current state of affairs in a school and the making of a judgement as to whether or not the current state is satisfactory. Implicit in the activity of making a judgement is the application of some standard of goodness. It is a consideration of what is observed in light of the standard applied that results in the decision to leave things as they are, or to try and change them for the better. Engaging in this process is thus requisite to the development of a "vision" of what might be both possible and better, in a particular school situation.

Given the desire to pursue some more desirable alternative, relative to what is observed in the present, the principal must then act to realize those objectives. He or she must articulate the vision to others, and move others to action aimed at achieving or at least working toward the desired state. Because the school setting is essentially a social situation, the principal's primary means of influencing what happens in a school is to work with and through teachers and others. "Interpersonal competence" thus is central in articulating one's vision to others and to influencing others to act on that vision (Argyris, 1962).

Interpersonal Competence

The daily work of the principal is characterized by an endless series of brief interpersonal encounters and exchanges with students, teachers, parents, superiors, and others (Peterson, 1978). To paraphrase a recent study of principals, "talk is the work" (Gronn, 1983). The medium of the work is verbal, and it frequently involves

face-to-face interaction (Wolcott, 1973). The social order negotiated by the principal is highly complex and often is characterized by competing norms and expectations, and it is not unusual that misunderstandings, conflict and miscommunication occur (Dwyer, et al, 1984 & 1985; Lortie, Crow, & Prolman, 1983; and Morris et al, 1981).

Interpersonal competence refers to the knowledge and skills that enable an individual to shape the responses he or she gets from others (Foote and Cottrell, 1955). In an extension of that idea, Weinstein (1969) conceptualizes interpersonal competence as the interrelation of ten basic elements:

- Interpersonal task - The response one actor is intending to elicit from another.
- Interpersonal competence - Being able to achieve interpersonal tasks.
- Lines of action - What one actor actually does to elicit a desired task response from another.
- Encounter - Any contact between people that involves an interpersonal task by at least one party to the exchange.
- Situation - All the potentially meaningful stimuli present in an encounter.
- Defining the situation - The process by which participants in an encounter select and organize situational stimuli into a coherent understanding of what is actually occurring during an encounter.
- Projected definition of the situation - These are lines of action by one actor intended to influence another actor's definition of the situation.
- Working consensus - This is the definition of the situation to which participants in the encounter jointly subscribe.
- Situational identity - All relevant situational characteristics determining who the actors are and what they represent to one another.
- Identity bargaining - The process by which actors influence their own or each other's situational identity.

The last concept, that of identity bargaining, is pivotal (Weinstein: 757). Identity bargaining is the process through which one shapes the situational identity projected and maintained for one's self and for others, and it is this situational identity which determines one's ability to influence another; that is, to get the desired response. The

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Being interpersonally competent therefore requires that one have in his or her possession a fairly extensive set of possible lines of action to enact. The idea of being interpersonally competent as a principal thus implies not only a good deal of familiarity with the work of teachers, but also requires that the principal be knowledgeable about the viewpoints that teachers hold of themselves, their students and colleagues, and of their work.

To summarize the discussion to this point, two major ideas have been suggested as the cornerstones of effective school administration. The ability to exercise "moral imagination" underlies one's capacity to develop a compelling vision regarding what it is possible and desirable to achieve in a given school situation, vis a vis more effective instructional practices and organizational arrangements. "Interpersonal competence", the ability to elicit desired task responses from another, refers to the knowledge and skills needed to influence teachers and others in desired directions.

In each instance a judgement must be made. One must apply some standard of goodness as the basis for deciding upon a preferred course of action. The chosen course of action may be aimed at eliciting a desired task behavior from an other in the immediate situation, such as influencing a teacher to experiment with an alternative method of instruction or another way to manage student behavior. On a larger scale, it may be aimed at cultivating or maintaining a more encompassing "vision" of what is possible and desirable in a given school, vis a vis organizational and sub-group norms and practices associated with effective instruction, improved school-community relations, or other

activities or outcomes. In both cases, standards of goodness are applied and a judgement is made.

Neither the exercise of moral imagination nor being interpersonally competent occurs in a contextual vacuum. In both cases one is constrained by and must be sensitive to the realities and the limits characterizing a particular school, a group of students, or a particular teacher or group of teachers. The exercise of moral imagination thus is the ability to see the discrepancy between how things are and how they might be--not in terms of the ideal, but in terms of what is possible given a particular individual, group, or school situation.

In order to administer a school well, it is proposed that one must have a "vision" of what is desirable and possible in that school's context, and one must also be able to mobilize others to work to achieve those possibilities. Administering a school well thus requires that one be knowledgeable about and committed to the standards of good educational practice, and that one be interpersonally competent and able to articulate those possibilities to others, and thereby to move others to action to work toward those goals.

Developing Interpersonal Competence and a Capacity for Exercising Moral Imagination

How do school administrators become interpersonally competent, and how do they develop their capacity to exercise moral imagination? If, indeed, these two personal qualities are antecedent to one's ability to manage and lead a school well, can their development be guided or cultivated by a school district or by a professional preparation program in educational administration? The writer believes that the second question can be answered affirmatively, and that knowing how to

cultivate these two personal qualities depends upon answering the first question--how are these qualities developed; by what processes? Socialization theory offers a number of useful ideas and serves as a general framework guiding the discussion to follow.

Socialization refers to the processes and conditions which mediate the acquisition of knowledge, skills, beliefs, and personal dispositions required to perform a given role satisfactorily (Brim and Wheeler, 1966). The processes by which this occurs can be differentiated into those which are formal and those which are informal. Formal processes refer to role-learning situations in which both the role of learner and the material to be learned are specified in advance. One example is a professional preparation program designed to train and develop prospective school administrators. Another example is found in staff development programs and inservice education activities sponsored by school districts and professional associations.

Informal socialization processes refer to those in which neither the role of learner nor the material to be learned are specified. One example is the process encountered by a newcomer to the school setting. Although neither the "learner" role nor the "lessons to be learned" are formally specified in advance, the rookie teacher quickly learns the "do's" and "dout's" of what it means to be a teacher in that school. The informal group norms are passed on fairly quickly by "old hands", and the "rookie" who deviates from those norms is likely to experience difficulty in gaining acceptance by the group. Another example is the informal learning that occurs as one makes the transition from teaching to administration. Upwardly-mobile teachers take on more and more of the values and orientations of the administrator group, and begin to

develop administrative skills and values as they engage in administrative activities and interact more frequently with administrators (Greenfield, 1985a). In both cases the learner role and the material to be learned are not clearly specified--yet much role-relevant learning nevertheless occurs.

In addition to these formal and informal role-learning processes, socialization theory points to important variations in the "content" to be learned. Socialization outcomes can be characterized as moral or technical (Bidwell, 1965). Moral outcomes refer to the sentiments, beliefs, standards of practice, and value orientations characterizing the reference group in which one holds or seeks membership. Technical outcomes refer to the instrumental knowledge and skills required to satisfactorily perform tasks associated with a given role or status.

Moral and technical learning outcomes can be influenced by formal as well as informal socialization processes. In educational administration, as in many other fields of practice, efforts to develop the capabilities of prospective practitioners tend to emphasize technical knowledge and skills, and depend primarily upon formal rather than informal processes. However, moral socialization outcomes generally receive little explicit attention through formal processes, and thus the development of beliefs, values, and role-relevant sentiments and personal dispositions tends to occur informally in school settings. As a result, what one learns is highly variable and depends upon the character of the individuals with whom one associates, what kind of work one does, and the culture that characterizes a particular work group or school setting (Greenfield, 1985b).

Four basic relationships describe the conditions which influence the socialization of school administrators, and these are depicted in Figure 1 as the interaction between the nature of the material to be learned (moral and technical) and the processes by which such learning occurs (formal and informal). Cell I represents the current focus of formal efforts to help school administrators acquire the technical knowledge and skills needed to perform administrative tasks and duties. The examples reflected in this cell are illustrative of the kinds of formal activities employed to influence the technical role-learning of administrators. Cell II suggests potential sources of formal moral development, but tends not to be fully exploited in current practice; the formal learning that occurs is likely to be rather limited in scope and rarely is an explicit socialization target in either graduate programs or inservice programs.

Cells III and IV represent informal "on-the-job" learning opportunities, with technical knowledge and skill being the focus in Cell III, and group norms, individual values, and standards of practice being the focus in Cell IV. These two cells represent the most complex

[Figure 1]

learning conditions for two reasons. First, the material itself is not formally specified. What is learned comes through informal association with others and as a result of doing particular tasks. Second, in actual practice there is often a moral dimension to the technical skill or knowledge to be acquired. In other words, "some" techniques or "ways of doing things" are preferred over others. They may or may not be more effective in an empirical sense, but they frequently are assumed to be effective, and they almost always are viewed as "appropriate" or as

"better" than another alternative. This may occur for several reasons. The emphasis on some skills but not others, and the value attributed to some facts and not others may be influenced by various elements: a school's history and its immediate context; the culture of the work group; the values and dispositions of influentials in the setting; traditions within the community; and perhaps the reality that a given practice "works"--or at least appears to given the criteria applied by the actors involved.

The preceding discussion identified formal and informal processes by which the development of moral imagination and interpersonal competence are believed to occur. The framework depicted in Figure 1 suggested that the knowledge and skills requisite to developing and articulating a "vision" of desirable instructional and organizational arrangements in a school have both a technical and a moral component, and, to the extent that one develops these personal qualities, they tend to be learned informally, rather than deliberately.

Implications for Administrator Preparation

The school is a normatively complex and ambiguous organizational setting where-in one encounters numerous moral dilemmas. A principal is regularly confronted by the necessity to take action or make a decision in the face of competing and often conflicting standards of goodness; hence, the importance of the ability to exercise moral imagination. Further, the school situation is essentially social in character, and if the principal is to influence instructional and organizational arrangements, he or she is constrained by the necessity to work closely with and through people; hence, the importance of being interpersonally competent. The discussion to follow suggests that the two personal

qualities of moral imagination and interpersonal competence can be deliberately developed and cultivated, and that graduate preparation and staff development and inservice programs can be more effective than they currently are in helping prospective school administrators develop these qualities.

Developing Moral Imagination

Moral imagination requires technical skills in observation and analysis as well as formal knowledge about alternative standards of good practice--the criteria by which one judges the desirability of a given situation, relative to what is possible. The technical skills of observation, data collection and analysis could be the focus of formal learning activities in Cell I, and proficiency would be fairly easy to determine. Standards of good practice, the criteria applied in the process of determining the value of alternatives and judging which alternative is to be preferred, would be the province of formal learning in Cell II. Proficiency regarding an individual's knowledge of standards (normative as well as empirical), and skills in developing and defending competing arguments related to those standards, could be assessed rather easily through oral or written examination, or perhaps through evaluation of a number of short "position papers" or "cases" written by the candidate.

It is not suggested that prospective or practicing administrators be indoctrinated, but rather that they be deliberately introduced to alternative empirical and normative standards of effective practice, and that they be provided with formally designed opportunities to apply those standards in simulated conditions: to practice resolving value conflicts; to engage in discussions of standards; and to prepare

defenses of the relative merits of one standard of practice over another. In short, formal moral socialization efforts (Cell II) would attempt to assure that prospective school administrators become informed of competing standards of good practice, and that they have opportunities to practice making and defending their decisions regarding the alternatives they believe would be most desirable in given situations.

Administering and leading a school requires actions and decisions, and doing so involves reliance on both moral and technical knowledge and skill. It is proposed that providing administrators with deliberately conceived opportunities to acquire and use knowledge about competing standards of good and effective practice will increase their capacity to exercise moral imagination, and will increase the likelihood that they will be able to manage and lead a school well.

Developing Interpersonal Competence

How do school administrators develop interpersonal competence? The dominant mode at present occurs informally as depicted in Cells III and IV, although it is true that limited opportunities exist in some preparation programs and through some inservice programs (workshops in conflict management, communications, and interpersonal skill development, for example). However, those formal opportunities which do exist are for the most part found in only a few preparation and inservice programs, and the focus is likely to be limited only to the interpersonal skill dimension.

As described in the preceding section, interpersonal competence calls not only for certain skills, but also requires a great deal of formal and informal knowledge about the work activities and perspectives of the person whom one desires to influence. Thus, to be

interpersonally competent as a school administrator, one needs certain skills as well as a great deal of knowledge about teachers, the teaching task, and teachers' views of themselves, their students, and their work. A substantial formal knowledge base exists for all of these areas, and much could be done through Cell I types of activities to introduce individuals to this knowledge and to provide them with opportunities to practice using that knowledge and the related interpersonal skills. While the centrality of interpersonal competence to influencing others in a school setting may seem obvious, it is an aspect of the administrator's role that is largely unattended to by those concerned with understanding administrator effectiveness, and basically ignored by those concerned with the selection, training, and development of school administrators.

The discussion thus far has suggested several points of intervention through formal processes. It is also possible to intervene in informal processes, and to do so without reducing the special "potency" that accompanies such learning conditions. The key strategy available to school districts, which is where the bulk of the informal learning occurs, is to attend more carefully to the general conditions associated with the processes employed to recruit, select, and develop prospective and practicing administrators. Interventions might occur in several ways: by being sure that prospective administrators have many practice opportunities to make judgments about instruction and organizational arrangements and to influence teachers; by being sure that district and school expectations for administrator and teacher practices are clearly communicated and reinforced, and that they reflect

what is known empirically about effective practice; and by being sure that prospective leaders are exposed to good role-models--those who have demonstrated their capacity to exercise moral imagination and their interpersonal competence with teachers and others. The basic issue is not to "formalize" the informal, but rather to capitalize on what is known to occur informally by shaping and structuring the circumstances through which those learning processes unfold.

Conclusion

The major thesis advanced in the preceding analysis is that one's effectiveness in a given work role, such as that of school principal, is largely a function of the degree of match or "fit" between personal qualities and orientations of the individual and the demands of the work situation itself. One's ability to exercise moral imagination and one's level of interpersonal competence were suggested as instrumental personal qualities determinant of one's ability to lead and manage a school well.

Demands of the work situation in schools were discussed briefly. The school work setting was conceptualized as a normatively complex and highly ambiguous social situation characterized by multiple and frequently conflicting standards of goodness that are maintained or changed primarily through interpersonal interactions among participants in the situation. Schools reflect a social order negotiated within a complex set of professional, organizational, cultural, and environmental constraints and opportunities, and is always subject to renegotiation. It is thus a "temporary" order, highly susceptible to internal and external threats to stability.

An excellent illustration of the "demands" of the work situation characterizing schools may be found in the seven case studies of principals at work, recently completed by the Far West Laboratory (Dwyer et al, 1985). Those data make it abundantly clear that a principal's work is largely social in character, that there is a significant moral dimension to the work, and that their behavior at work is largely a function of the interaction between the demands of the situation (as perceived by the principal), and the personal qualities and orientations characterizing the principal (the knowledge, skills, values, and motives that an individual brings to bear on the situation).

The seven cases provide an important record of the consequences for school principals of differences in school and community contexts, and they illustrate important connections between the backgrounds and orientations of principals, school and community contexts, and the routine behaviors and activities by which principals influence and develop a school's culture. These routine behaviors and activities serve to reinforce and develop the vision held for his or her school by the principal; a vision operationalized in terms of specific initiatives aimed at cultivating an instructional climate and organization designed to achieve particular student outcomes. The school principal is a key agent in shaping and reinforcing a school's culture.

These case study data and other studies of principals at work provided the basis for the ideas developed in the paper. The work of the principal was examined from a "values in action" perspective, and consideration was given to the concept of vision and its import vis a vis characteristics of the school situation. Two lower-order concepts, moral imagination and interpersonal competence, were discussed in terms

of (1) understanding the factors which underly the development of vision and its articulation to and acceptance by others, and (2) identifying aspects of the work situation itself which mitigate the development of consensus regarding purposes and practices among school participants. Consideration was then given to describing the factors which contribute to the development of one's capacity to exercise moral imagination and ability to be interpersonally competent. Formal and informal influences on the moral and technical learning of administrators were discussed, suggesting various points of intervention having the potential to shape role learning outcomes.

The propositions concluding this report highlight the interplay between moral, social, and technical dimensions of the work of school administrators, and focus on relationships between those demands and the formal and informal role-learning processes by which administrators acquire the knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions required by the work situation. Effectiveness in the role is a function of the degree of fit between the demands of the situation and the knowledge, skills, and orientations of the administrator. Preparation programs will become more effective to the extent that they reflect role-appropriate learning opportunities.

1. The constraints and opportunities characterizing the principal's work situation differ from one school to another, and these differences in the work situation are attributable to differences in institutional and community context and culture. What works well in one setting may be impossible or inappropriate in another setting.
2. Effective principals are responsive to the situational imperatives characterizing their particular school. The character of the principal's response to the demands of the

situation is largely a function of the principal's background and orientation--the specific knowledge, skills, values, and motives characterizing the principal. These personal qualities shape what a principal perceives as problematic or important in the situation, and inform the actions taken in response to those priorities and problems.

3. Effective principals are able to articulate a coherent and compelling vision to others regarding school purposes and practices. Developing and articulating one's vision requires the exercise of moral imagination and interpersonal competence. There are competing standards of goodness to be applied, consensus on means and ends is difficult to obtain and sustain, and working with and through others on a face-to-face basis is the primary means through which others are influenced to act in preferred ways and in support of preferred goals.
4. Whether conceptualized as problem-solving, decision-making, leading, or managing, the activity of valuing is central to being a principal. Judgements are made and actions are taken, and whether by habit or through deliberate reflection, effective school principals actively communicate their priorities, values, and beliefs to others through what they do and say, what they pay attention to, and how they respond to crises.
5. There are moral, social, and technical dimensions to the work of school principals, and while many of the routine activities and behaviors of principals cannot be adequately described or interpreted as leading or managing, they are never-the-less central to their ability to sustain or change a school's culture.
6. Prospective and practicing principals can develop their ability to exercise moral imagination and their interpersonal

competence, and to the extent that they become more cognizant of these dimensions of their work, they will be more effective in that role.

7. Formal graduate programs preparing school principals will be perceived by graduates as effective to the extent that program participants have extensive opportunities to gain knowledge about alternative standards of good practice regarding instructional and organizational arrangements, about the dynamics of groups and interpersonal behavior, and about teachers and their views of themselves, their work, one another, and the school principal.
8. Formal graduate preparation programs will be perceived as effective to the extent that they provide participants with realistic and frequent opportunities to practice using the knowledge and skills noted above in proposition seven.

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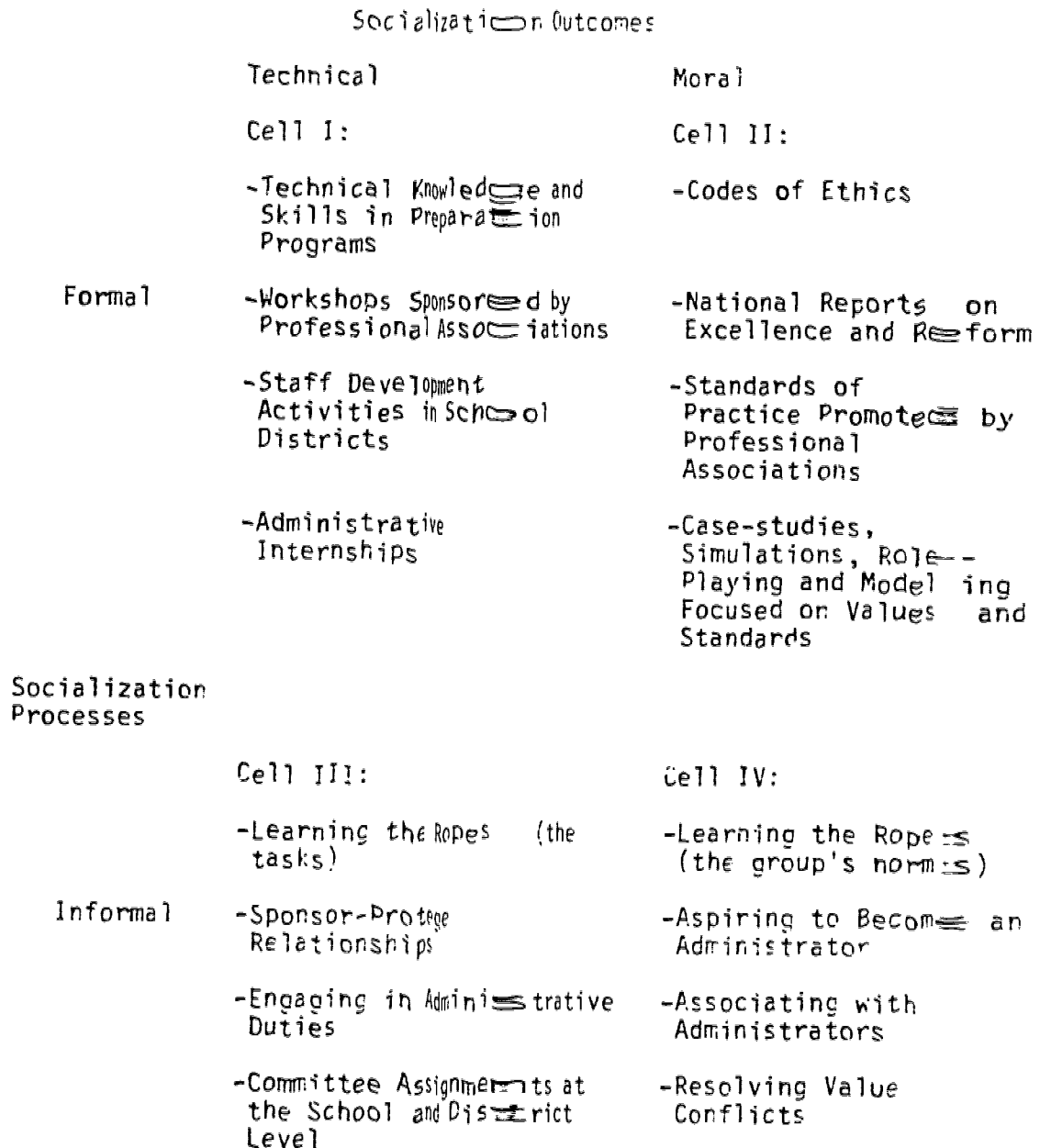


Figure 1: Influences shaping socialization processes and outcomes in educational administration (Based upon Brim and Wheeler, 1966).