

School Leader Professional Socialization: The Contribution of Focused Observations

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In this study, we examine how the Educational Leadership Program for Aspiring Principals (ELPAP) at the University of Pennsylvania uses a guided inquiry experience, the Focused Observation, to facilitate role conceptualization and identity development for pre-service leadership students. Focused Observations involve university faculty, current and former ELPAP students, and school and district leaders in critically examining current educational policies and practices in place at select visited schools and districts. Using qualitative data from current and former students and school and district staff, we explore how these Focused Observations facilitate professional socialization and foster students' internalization of an identity as a change-oriented leader.

There are a number of excellent educational leadership preparation programs throughout the United States that have impacted on the development of school leaders, challenging them to improve teaching and learning, including providing cutting edge theory and research about organizations, leadership, and teaching/learning (Young, Crow, Orr, Ogawa, & Creighton, 2005). However, current approaches to leadership preparation are not without their critics (e.g., Levine, 2005). These programs have the task of

preparing school principals to meet the challenge of improving teaching and learning for all students in often difficult contexts. To assist future school leaders in meeting these challenges, many programs attempt to help them develop the knowledge and skills that are consistent with the needs of leadership for transforming teaching and learning to meet current economic and social challenges. Regardless, commentators on the state of school leadership have argued that principal preparation programs do not meet current

expectations for developing school leaders who can engage their schools in reforms that will enable students to meet the demands of a global economy, rapidly changing technology, and increasingly diverse societies (e.g., Adams & Copland, 2005; Crow, 2006).

Heck (1995) argues that one reason for this lack of preparedness is that pre-service experiences are inadequate for the professional socialization and consequent identity development that a change-oriented leader needs. In their work on the difficulties that new school leaders must address, Daresh and Playko (1994) cited role clarification, or an understanding of their new roles and who they are in relation to these expectations, as the most important component of identity development. They also reported difficulties for new leaders with socialization to the profession more generally. Normore (2003), in his review of school leader socialization, argued that the most difficult challenge that a new school leader faces is the need to develop a professional identity or a view of the self as a proactive leader who can make a difference. Greenfield (1985) argued that the on-the-job socialization processes of school leaders reinforce a custodial orientation and that positional school leaders have not been provided with either the professional socialization or the learning support that would help them to develop and sustain innovative leadership identities.

These concerns have already been taken into consideration to some degree through leadership program attempts to facilitate situated learning,

through such program components as internships and mentoring. Such opportunities have grown rapidly in the recent years. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education's (NCATE) accreditation standards for principal preparation programs specifically include an internship component (National Policy Board for Educational Administration [NPBEA], 2002). Preparing future school leaders who will engage in needed instructional improvement is accomplished not only by learning about practice, but also by situating that knowledge in the communities of practice in which knowledge takes on significance (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Pounder & Crow, 2005). Leaders' learning, like learning in general, often achieves its richest possibilities when leaders can gain some outside perspective on their own emerging practice (Donaldson, Marnik, Mackenzie, & Ackerman, 2009). In support of these expectations for licensure programs, research by Browne-Ferrigno (2003) has established a link between mentoring and role development. However, socialization theory points to a clear limitation of even these improvements to preparation programs because the kind of situated learning that typically occurs in traditional mentorship opportunities is typically a limited form of organizational socialization.

However, as Crow (2006a) points out, given the format of most of these mentoring opportunities, this type of socialization is primarily organizational in contrast to professional, and it tends toward a conservative development of leaders and maintains the status quo of

their roles in improving teaching and learning. Crow (2001) summarized research on the limitations of traditional mentor relationships and provided additional areas of potential concern: (a) mentors may have their own interests that may undermine the best interests of the mentee, (b) mentor relationships can create dependency, which in turn can be dysfunctional and reduce learning, and (c) some mentors attempt to clone their mentees, which does not foster the necessary thinking and skill development that will be applicable to multiple leadership situations and contexts.

Despite identification of the problems with current programmatic approaches to identity development for new school leaders via mentorships/internships, there are currently few guidelines as to what may serve as alternatives. We are also not aware of any research that examines alternative approaches to situated learning that might facilitate the professional socialization of future school leaders whose role conceptualization and identity are consistent with the needs for organizational innovation called for by Crow and others. This paper explores one leadership preparation program's attempt to facilitate professional socialization for change-oriented leadership through an innovative program component, Focused Observations, which addresses some of these potential limitations.

Since 2000, the Educational Leadership Program for Aspiring Principals (ELPAP) at the Graduate School of Education (GSE), University of

Pennsylvania (UPenn), has been implementing and continually improving one guided experience—the Focused Observation—as an opportunity for leadership students to develop lenses of inquiry and capacities for leading change to facilitate school improvement. In collaborations around this experience, university faculty, leadership students, alumni, and school and district leaders critically inquire into current educational practices, policies, and programs of the schools in which the Focused Observations take place. These Focused Observations occur five times per year in the course of the ELPAP program and revolve around school leadership (especially positional and shared) of content-area instruction (literacy, social studies, mathematics, science, and the arts/technology). As real-time experiences, they appear to provide a different set of learning opportunities for students beyond what even recently recommended coursework—such as case studies, simulation, mentorships, et cetera—can provide.

This paper represents our effort to capture what we have learned from qualitative data gathered about the Focused Observations' contribution to change-oriented leader development via professional role socialization. The Focused Observations, in combination with a sound comprehensive leadership program, seem to help students to conceptualize and begin to adopt identities as change-oriented school leaders. They also allow pre-service leaders the opportunity to begin enacting these roles in a supportive environment, where carefully selected

mentors have experience leading ambitious reform.

Using qualitative data that has been collected across the past eight years of the program, we ask two primary questions:

- Do Focused Observations support the socialization of future school leaders toward identities associated with the knowledge, skills, and values required of leaders who will engage their schools in the process of improvement necessary to meet current expectations for teaching and learning?
- How do the Focused Observations support this socialization and identity development?

Through our analysis of this data, we identified four elements of change-oriented leadership required for school reform that are the primary focus of pre-service leaders' efforts towards in role conceptualization and identity development: (a) engaging self and others in implementing a vision that informs instruction, (b) shaping effective communication that promotes individual and collective growth, (c) embodying the disposition to critical inquiry, and (d) understanding the complexity of organizational change. Following a review of the research and theory of socialization and identity development, we provide detail both about the ELPAP program and the Focused Observations themselves. We also review our approach to data

collection and analysis prior to our discussion of findings and implications.

Theoretical Framework

The transition from the role of teacher, with its particular norms and expectations, to the role of a principal is marked by a complex role and identity change involving considerable challenge and dissonance. This transformation requires broadening not only skill and knowledge (competence), which has been the focus of most school leadership preparation programs, but also forming a professional identity comprised of a set of personal values consistent with professional norms and expectations for this role, and coming to see oneself as a leader (confidence). Such an identity requires a strong belief in the need for improving teaching and organizational supports for teaching and learning, accepting the need for continuous improvement, and having the motivation to engage in ambitious reform.

Thinking about principal preparation as professional identity development suggests a more expansive and complex undertaking for preparation programs than approaching it as training or imparting certain skills and knowledge. Rather, it requires learning opportunities that will cultivate a prospective leader's identity as a change-agent consistent with current expectations for school improvement. Crow (2006a) points out that traditional mentorship has fostered organizational socialization (in contrast to professional socialization) and tended toward a conservative development of leaders as

well as maintenance of the status quo in teaching and learning. Importantly, both the competence and confidence to attain these expectations and to maintain this emerging identity in an entirely new organizational role that may be hostile to current professional norms must also be addressed. Facilitating this development requires careful attention by preparation programs to the socialization of aspiring principals into their future roles. We lay out here a basic overview of theory and research on socialization as it pertains to the development of future school leaders.

Socialization Theory

A central purpose of leadership education is the socialization of individuals into the cognitive and affective dimensions of social roles related to the practice of this occupation. Through socialization, novices “acquire the values and attitudes, the interests, skills, and knowledge, in short the culture, current in the groups of which they are, or seek to become a member” (Merton, Reader, & Kendall, 1957, p. 287). Both formal and informal contacts between those charged with socialization (e.g., faculty) and prospective leaders have been found to be an important part of the socialization process (Merton, 1957). Organizational climate plays a key role in these contacts, and socialization is facilitated when professional norms are clear and agreed upon (Merton).

In their classic work Van Maanen and Schein (1979), identified four types of socialization: anticipatory, professional, organizational, and personal socialization. These types

approximate phases of identity development. As the focus of this paper is on pre-service and university based socializing processes, we limit our discussion to anticipatory and professional school leadership socialization. A description of each follows. However, as noted above, it is important to be aware of the distinction between professional and organizational socialization, as professional socialization is more likely to be in line with current demands for school reform than organizational socialization, which may be more tied to traditional ways of school or district functioning.

Anticipatory socialization.

During anticipatory socialization, a person projects him or herself into a future social role (Merton, 1957). Future school leaders do not enter professional preparation programs absent any mental model of what good/bad school leadership is. Browne-Ferrigno (2003) found that teachers’ leadership experiences in educational settings or through professional associations were primary contributors to their vision of the work of a school leader. Additionally, most aspiring school leaders have been both students and teachers, where they have had direct interactions with and opportunities to observe the work of at least one school leader. This is an “apprenticeship of observation,” a term used by Lortie (1975) to describe anticipatory socialization for teachers.

Professional socialization.

Professional socialization is the process of developing a role-based identity with values, norms, and symbols that may span many organizations within or

across multiple fields. This type of socialization facilitates acquisition of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to fulfill the duties of this role. Moore (1970) described professional socialization as the process of "acquiring the requisite knowledge and skills and also the sense of occupational identity and internalization of occupational norms typical of the fully qualified practitioner" (p. 71). This interpretation of leadership socialization is consistent with our experience that many of our students arrive with the perception that they must learn how to conduct classroom observations as part of being in a principal preparation program. However, Cohen (1981) amplified the description of professional socialization in his argument that it also involves the internalization of the values of the group into the person's own behavior and self-conception, and that, in the process, a person gives up the prevalent stereotypes and adopts those held by members of that profession.

The Processes and Outcomes of Socialization

In the literature on socialization, there are several consistently cited outcomes of the process of socialization. Identity development is the ultimate outcome, albeit one that is in flux, which consists of both role conceptualization and internalization. Role conceptualization, a vision of a future role, in this case school leadership, begins during anticipatory socialization and initial contact with leadership generally and school leadership more specifically, but is also an ongoing process throughout an individual's

professional and organizational socialization. Role conceptualization can be thought of as an idealized vision against which one measures his or her own actions. Professional training and socialization have a purposeful impact on role conceptualization and attempt to shape it to conform to ideals, values, and norms promoted by the profession in contrast to more stereotypical visions of the role. Therefore, if one maintains an identity consistent with professional socialization, then one judges one's own leadership behaviors in accordance with these professional standards and where violated, potentially lead to dissonance and self improvement to meet the standards. There is an important element of involvement in a professional network to help maintain these role-based standards.

The role of faculty in pre-service school leadership programs is to impart the ideals and knowledge/value framework of the profession. However, there is no consensus on professional standards—not all versions of the ideal school leader involve work as a change-agent. Consequently, this perspective is likely more difficult to embrace and implement. It requires a focus on the development of skills and knowledge that support dispositions and a role conceptualization consistent with a change-agent identity. In this view, leadership is viewed not as a set of precepts (when x happens, do y) but as a complex process that requires habits and skills associated with critical inquiry (when x happens, attempt to understand it more deeply, compare it to the variety of theoretical frames based in the current best research and thinking

in the field, engage others in this process of analysis, engage the best solution, and then continually evaluate what happens and make refinements as necessary, following the same inquiry process). Similarly, Crow (2006a) noted how traditionalist views of socialization involve a "role-taking" outcome. In contrast, a "role-making" outcome involves the development of capacities to "meet the dynamic, fluid nature of the context" (p. 321). The challenges and possibilities of this role making orientation have been particularly relevant to the work of the ELPAP program, as we attempted to adopt this approach to instilling a leadership identity consistent with that of a role maker, which we would argue is necessary for the development of a change-agent leader.

Whereas role conceptualization can exist for an individual divorced from any professional training or active leadership role, the development of a professional identity requires some more direct activity to try on the framework of a conceptualized role within a like-minded community that can both facilitate identity development and also reinforce the values and norms of which it is comprised (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The interaction between this idealized role and one's own behavior contributes to a professional identity. Identities are iteratively developed and reflect one's assessment of a coherent set of (professional) values, norms, and symbols as filtered through the response (and the perception of that response) of others. In other words, identities are developed and shored up (or not) through the

process of socialization—the interactions with the social and institutional structures that attempt to instill normative standards and the skills and knowledge to successfully enact these norms, skills and knowledge at the proper moment. However, they are not embodied and internally upheld without a self perception of successful enactment, which is the result of positive feedback when attempting to enact this identity. Successful enactment accompanies confidence building and internalization/embodiment of this emerging identity (duToit, 1995).

There are two primary ways to think about the process of internalization and the associated confidence that comes with successful internalization. The first reflects role conceptualization as a mental model of values, norms, and symbols (professional identity). Leadership students who have less unresolved conflict or dissonance with previous mental frames (Piaget, 1952) are likely to have greater internalization of professional ideals and correspondingly greater comfort and confidence with their new roles. In terms of the second way of understanding internalization and the associated sense of confidence, the insights of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1985) on the development and deployment of cultural capital may be helpful. Bourdieu pointed out how lower class students who attempt to use the linguistic trappings of the upper classes (the linguistic competency that he argues is the basis for receiving high marks in school) but who do so awkwardly are judged negatively for their lack of linguistic and cultural

fluidity. If again we take socialization as the process of acquiring and successfully employing the values, norms, and symbols (language) of a professional culture, the feedback an individual receives in trying on this cultural capital will play an important role in his or her internalization of a leadership identity. It follows that having opportunities to try on this identity apart from organizational socialization forces and receiving constructive feedback would lead to stronger professional identities. This approach seems to be a hallmark of the Focused Observations and is supported by some related previous research.

Stouffer, Suchman, DeVinney, Star, and Williams (1949) established that there is a correlation between internalization of values and norms associated with the profession and successful transition into a professional role. They found that individuals who internalized the implicit values and norms associated with their professional field moved into this role more frequently than their counterparts who did not. More specific to the development of educational leaders, Browne-Ferrigno (2003) found that not all students in a principal preparation program underwent a role transformation by adopting a school leader identity. The key socialization process that led to this differential outcome was participation in field-based activities with current school administrators who acted as mentors. Importantly, she also argued that these activities fostered role clarity, increased technical capacity and skills, transformed professional anticipatory

role conceptions, and fostered professional behaviors, all of which facilitate identity development and make certain students more likely to enter and succeed in the profession.

ELPAP Program Description

The cohort-based model of leadership development in ELPAP focuses on helping aspiring principals develop the competence and confidence required to become effective school leaders who are capable of guiding their schools toward practices of teaching and learning that will prepare K-12 students for the social and economic demands of the 21st century. Placing school improvement at the center of its principal certification programs conveys a clear message that the job of the principal is directly connected to the core purposes of schooling—teaching and learning (Evans, 1991; Murphy, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1993). The research on school leadership has established the importance of school leaders' initiating, implementing, and sustaining school improvement efforts (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Ford & Bennett, 1994; Fullan, 1997; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Kelley & Peterson, 2002; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Louis & Marks, 1998; Murphy & Louis, 1994; Newmann & Associates, 1996). Developing the skills and dispositions to enact the principal's role as one of modeling, and establishing cultures for, continuous inquiry and evidence-based decision making has been an essential part of this one-year intensive program.

The ELPAP program emphasizes that successful principals who promote school improvement intentionally

demonstrate four leadership behaviors. These behaviors are consistent with dimensions of effective school leadership noted by others. This new style of principal is expected to be: an *instructional leader* who promotes high expectations for student achievement and translates these expectations into daily practice (Murphy, 1990); an *organizational leader*, who is a collaborative builder of relationships and structures in the process of creating a learning community focused on transformation and reform through problem solving (Marsh, 2000); a *public leader* who builds partnerships with other schools, parents, and the community (Sarason & Lorentz, 1998), and an *evidence-based leader* who engages in continuous inquiry into the performance of the organization through gathering and analyzing a variety of organizational data (Schmoker, 1999; Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). Moreover, this new style of principal engages in reflective practice and the ongoing process of examining his or her actions by being open to criticism and change and encourages others within the organization to adopt this stance (Schon, 1983; Argyris, 1990). By the completion of the program it is expected that leadership students will develop and internalize their own leadership styles reflective of this framework as they become socialized into the role of school leader.

To enhance the ability of aspiring principals to lead their organizations, five cross-cutting competencies are deliberately and recursively developed in the ELPAP program. They exist in the program for two reasons: as lenses for

students to connect theory and practice in ways that support awareness of a leader's role and potential impact, and as characteristics for informing progress towards standards of competence. These lenses integrate (a) *habits of mind* (Costa & Kallick, 2000), (b) *intrapersonal/interpersonal growth* (Boyzakis, & McKee, 2005; Goleman, 1995), (c) *reflective practice* (Schon, 1983; York-Barr, Sommers, Ghore, & Montie, 2001), (d) *communication skills* (Baker, Costa, & Shalit, 1997; Kegan & Leahy, 2001), and (e) *professionalism* (ethical and moral decision making) (Strike, 2007; Starratt, 2004; Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 2005).

Primary Program Goals and Activities

In 1999, Penn GSE redefined its approach to its principal preparation program. The program was redesigned to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of instructional, organizational, public, and evidence-based leadership. Various standards affiliated with certification paths were integrated, including the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards (1996) and the Pennsylvania State Standards (2001). Also incorporated were the experiences recommended for K-12 school leadership preparation programs noted in the current literature as summarized in the work of Kelley & Peterson, 2002; Kraus & Coreriro, 1995; Milstein & Krueger, 1997. Those experiences continue to include: greater integration of theory and practice, a long-term internship that is integrated into the content and activities of the program as a means of connecting theory and

practice, fostering reflection on personal and professional growth through portfolios, the use of a cohort model, experience with authentic problem solving, ongoing collaboration between instructors and practitioner community, coordinated planning and teaching that bypass traditional barriers to integration of a program and its curriculum, and observations of a diverse range of schools successfully engaged in ambitious instructional reforms.

The program integrates coursework with a 360-hour internship. Since students are usually full time teachers, most students engage in internships in their own schools. ELPAP course assignments are typically contextualized within the school setting of the internship. Since the program values preparing students to be leaders of school improvement, an overall program goal is to prepare leadership students to serve as leaders of inquiry into their own practice. To this end, students complete weekly journal reflections, periodic journal syntheses, and synthesis of readings charts. During the program, not only do students engage in significant self-inquiry about their own leadership development, but they also engage in projects which promote improvement in the schools they serve.

Throughout the year, students are assigned several inquiry projects in which they collect data and develop plans for improvement based on the context of their own or a team member's school. They prepare their class presentations as if they are speaking to a particular audience, just as they will need to do as principals. In one project

they create the oral and written products appropriate for the Superintendent's Cabinet. In others, they develop presentations for faculty, parents, students, and community members. In the feedback sessions that follow, they hear the comments of their cohort colleagues, as well as the instructors and university-affiliated mentors, all who have served or are currently serving as principals. The feedback provides the leadership students with a mirror to gauge how well they are meeting our program goals for their role socialization as well as the processes which will lead them to be successful principals.

Focused Observations

Focused Observations, structured daylong visits to schools, provide a unique opportunity for leadership students to inquire first-hand into how ongoing instructional leadership is provided for a content area within the uniqueness of a particular site. The visits are organized in cooperation with the local district to highlight how instructional leadership is manifested in one of the following curricular areas: literacy, social studies, mathematics, science/technology, and the arts. To provide students with varied K-12 school settings, we seek a balance between public, charter, and private schools across urban and suburban districts in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

We view Focused Observations as opportunities for our students to step into leadership roles through which they practice some of the skills required as leaders of school improvement

efforts. Including Focused Observations in settings away from participants' schools provides contrasting opportunities for students to understand how other school communities are engaged in continuous improvement. Initially, our goal was for leadership students to only see models of good leadership in action. The experience has morphed to provide a key learning opportunity for leadership students to try on real-time leadership behaviors in the presence of faculty and practitioners, particularly around analyzing qualitative and quantitative data, crafting feedback, and communicating feedback. In that the leadership students work in teams away from their home schools, that the students are responsible to themselves and others for thinking deeply about critical implementation of programs, and that university faculty are on-site as critical friends to the leadership students' deliberations and feedback, the experience applies in a pre-service environment some of the characteristics of leadership coaching advocated by Robertson (2008).

The school visits are preceded by an in-class presentation from the school principal and leadership team members who share demographic and quantitative achievement data, the school's mission, and the reform practices being implemented. Additional background information is distributed which might describe schedules, supervision protocols, professional development plans and budgets, and students are encouraged to view data about the school on the school's own website and on state

education websites. In preparation for the visit, the school team develops a question to frame the day's inquiry. At the Focused Observation through a structured process of data collection, synthesis, and analysis, the leadership students are challenged to respond to this question.

In the fall, to encourage students to transition from their perspectives as teachers to the lenses of aspiring principals, the university faculty provides a protocol to assist in data collection. In our continuing efforts to improve the opportunities for socialization of our students, program faculty asks the aspiring leaders to set personal leadership goals for each visit. Also, we expect that they will co-develop an observation framework and develop some hypothesis to test in lieu of solely responding to questions posed by the school.

Leadership students collect data by visiting classrooms where they observe instruction in the curricular area of focus as well as by reviewing curriculum and interviewing groups of teachers and students. Data is shared at debriefing sessions, led by university faculty, where disparate impressions are discussed, and threads, which are consistent across comments, surface. To promote collaborative learning, leadership students are assigned to teams. Following their analysis, the teams prepare an oral report, which they present to the school's principal and faculty. In the case study included later in this paper, we describe in detail the components of a Focused Observation, which will help to illustrate how the day is structured.

Data and Methods

Over the past eight years, data collection on ELPAP students' perceptions of the role of Focused Observations in their professional socialization has included yearly student evaluations of the program, written student reflections following each visit, students' work samples critically assessing leadership in these schools (e.g., charts documenting the warm feedback and areas for further inquiry generated on-site during the visits), feedback from alumni shared in yearly focus groups, and interviews with the visited schools' leadership. Focus groups specifically addressing the Focused Observations were conducted in 2005 and 2006 with current and former ELPAP students who had participated in these observations and the program alumni who initiated visits to their own school.

Three focus groups were conducted. Current students and alumni from Cohorts 1-IV participated in a focus group in 2005 (n=13) and in 2006 current students and alumni from Cohorts 1-5 participated in a focus group (n=15). In 2006, alumni who were staff at one of the visited schools, participated in a third focus group (n=2). All sessions typically lasted 1.5 hours and were conducted in groups of 4 to 6 by the authors. Notes were taken and the conversations were recorded and transcribed.

From 2000-2009 program participants typically ranged in age from 20-50 years old, with 36% minority (African-American, Hispanic, or Asian), 48% male, and 52% female.

They had a minimum of three years of teaching experience in public, charter, and private schools from both urban and suburban communities. For the 2005 focus group, 13 out of the 50 current and former students attended. The group was fairly representative of current and former students and included: 3 urban school administrators; 7 Suburban administrators; and 3 teachers, 1 from a charter school and 12 from public schools; 3 African-Americans, 1 Hispanic, and 9 White students; and 7 females and 6 males. For the 2006 focus group, 15 out of the 66 current and former students attended, with no overlapping participation from the previous year's focus group. Again, the group was fairly representative of current and former students and included: 4 urban school administrators, 7 suburban administrators; and 4 teachers, 15 from public schools; 3 African-Americans, 1 Hispanic, and 11 White students; and 8 females and 7 males. The focus group with program alumni who were staff at a charter school that hosted a Focused Observation included 1 White female chief academic officer and 1 African-American male teacher.

To gather ELPAP student perceptions through the Focused Observations, two protocols were developed and used across sessions—one for former ELPAP students and graduates who participated in the Focused Observations (Appendix A) and one for the ELPAP graduates who worked in the schools where the Focused Observations were conducted (Appendix B). Written responses to the protocol questions also came from 6

graduates who emailed their responses to the questions. Additional data came from students' reflections on their Focused Observation. In the succeeding years (2006-2009) following each visit, we have continued to collect this data from students' written reflections.

Data analysis occurred in stages over multiple years. Data was analyzed formatively on a yearly basis to uncover any problems with the Focused Observations from the perspectives of either the leadership students or the school/district administration. This information was then used to enhance any features of the visit, develop the inquiry leadership skills of the students more generally, improve other parts of the program work that would help to in achieve program goals, and determine whether a return visit to the school site would be beneficial for the next cohort or whether a new site should be sought. Data analysis included careful review of all documents by the core program faculty and director to note patterns of coherence and contradiction. Individual analyses were shared in multiple debriefing sessions where these patterns were noted and were applied to implementing program changes that capitalized on these findings.

A similar approach to data analysis was used for developing the themes that are the focus of this manuscript. All relevant program-related documents, such as written student reflections on Focused Observation visits, actual feedback provided to the school, notes from faculty during these visits, summaries of formative evaluations, and focus group and interview data specifically

addressing the formative assessment experience, were analyzed for emerging themes with a particular focus on evidence of student socialization. Attention was paid to aspects of the process that contributed to or inhibited student socialization, ways that the process could be improved, and evidence of student growth and application of what they had learned as a result of the Focused Observations. Analyses were conducted independently by the authors to detect emerging patterns, which were then reviewed and synthesized in multiple joint analysis sessions. Evidence to support and contradict these themes was then analyzed by all researchers to determine credibility of the primary themes (Maxwell, 2004). As the analysis progressed, the decision was made to develop case studies that were illustrative and typical of the process and that also highlighted how the students benefited from the experience in terms of their emerging professional socialization, one of which was retained for this manuscript and is discussed in the next section.

The authors of this report, who also served as the research team, include two ELPAP program faculty members and a former doctoral student hired as a research assistant for the program from 2003-2004, but who continued to serve as an unpaid collaborator through the development of this manuscript. Given two of the authors' positions as developers and advocates for the program, the issue of bias is relevant, as it is possible that they may have ignored negative data about the program. However, we would argue that this bias

is mitigated by: the use of multiple forms of data for the purpose of triangulation (Maxwell, 2004), the formative evaluation process that was undertaken each year for the purposes of program improvement that involved multiple stakeholders and focused on problems that needed improvement, and the presence of the author (former doctoral student) who had did not have a similar interest in advocating for the program and who served as a critical voice throughout the research.

Findings

In this section, we document how these Focused Observations promote teachers' professional socialization into leadership roles and the development of the attending confidence and competence necessary to implement change-oriented school leadership. From our data collection we noticed four elements of the socialization process, negotiated during the Focused Observations, were supportive of change-oriented leadership: (a) engaging self and others in implementing a vision that informs instruction, (b) shaping effective communication that promotes individual and collective growth, (c) embodying the disposition to critical inquiry, and (d) understanding the complexity of organizational change. We also found that these elements were interrelated rather than independent components in the role-socialization process associated with the Focused Observation experience.

In the following sections, we first present a 2006 case study of one Focused Observation. This case study

demonstrates role socialization of aspiring leaders as they grapple with the intricacies of how to synthesize, analyze, and provide feedback from their critical inquiry that promotes change at this school. The case study of Brown School¹ (the Case) is representative of the kinds of experiences students typically underwent during the focused observations, and it especially illustrates how the leadership students identified the disparity between espoused theories embodied in the school's stated mission and the school's theories in use as observed in their actual behaviors. Following an overview of the context of the Case, we describe the leadership students' processing of their observations and their presentation of feedback to the school's faculty and leadership. Next, an analysis of the impact on the leadership students is presented. This analysis provides a transition to the sections which follow, where we lay out the primary themes (noted above) connecting role socialization that emerged from this case and our other data. Finally, we discuss these themes in the context of the wider literature on school leader development and socialization.

Case Study

Brown School met ELPAP criteria as a Focused Observation site because it engaged in the following: (a) commitment to leadership for school improvement, (b) collaborative engagement of administrators and teachers in curricular improvement, and

¹ A pseudonym.

(c) disposition towards inquiry into practice. Additionally, the students' scores on the state tests have consistently surpassed the state averages in reading and mathematics. The Chief Academic Officer (CAO), an ELPAP program alumna, welcomed the opportunity to obtain feedback for her school. The December 2006 visit was our second site visit to Brown School as the school had hosted a Focused Observation on leadership for social studies instruction in 2005.

In 2005, the Brown School, a K-8 charter school, had a total of 538 students. The majority of the students were White (61%), followed by Asian-Americans (18%), African-Americans (17%), and Hispanic-Americans (4%). Thirty-five percent were eligible for free or reduced lunch, 13% had been identified for special education services, and there was an almost even split between male (51%) and female (49%) students. The majority of students (58%) were from the nearby county towns adjacent to Philadelphia, and the other 42% lived in Philadelphia.

The school had embarked on the implementation of *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Essential questions had been created by each grade-level team and time had been allotted for team planning in the summer and on a regular basis throughout the school year. This time, utilized for unit-planning, allowed the school to integrate the curriculum. Each grade had a concept that was based in the humanities and connections were made with language arts, science, mathematics, art and the performing arts. Cross curricular connections were

made through the development of authentic assessments.

Brown School had a distinctive mission/vision statement that held promise for innovative programming. Some of the language included in that vision read as follows: "[We will] create a sanctuary where all members of the learning community are partners and show by example their commitment to the school's vision: high achievement, life-long learning and active learning, diversity and equity, and collaborative problem solving." "The sanctuary," they described, "is a safe, physically protected and emotionally literate place where every member is responsible for helping to create this climate." The vision statement continued, "In our sanctuary, our children come first. No child is expendable. Everyone is recognized as having a capacity for learning. Skills such as active listening and considering multiple perspectives were consciously taught to students, as part of school's the school's attention to students' social development.

ELPAP students synthesis process at the Focused Observation. After spending the day observing several classroom lessons, interviewing students, talking to teachers, and moving feely around the building, the aspiring principals worked in teams to respond to the questions posed by the school. As they analyzed the data, they sought a method to "balance inquiry and advocacy" (Argyris, 1990), a phrase used throughout the program to help leadership students focus on the quality and nature of their communication. Their goal was not only to share "warm" feedback, but to help the school

continue to learn. With the guidance of the program faculty members, they agreed to introduce feedback with the phrase "We observed..." and to raise issues beginning with the phrase "We wondered..." ELPAP faculty were disposed to using these frames as they had become tools by which to provide "cool" feedback and simultaneously build the confidence of the leadership students as they presented.

The data shown in Table 1 present the responses formulated by the

leadership students to a total of four questions they thought relevant to the main questions. The responses show a balance of warm feedback, positive comments, accompanied by wonderings, cool feedback, which might inform future practice regarding the curricular program. For the most part, the responses indicated that the teachers possessed a good understanding of instruction and curriculum.

Table 1

Focused Observation Questions and ELPAP Students' Responses

<p>1. How are teachers utilizing higher order thinking questions during lessons and discussions to push critical thinking skills to the next level for students?</p> <p>We Observed...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflection during and after activities.• Good use of tools: graphic organizers, T-chart, et cetera <p>We Wondered...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do you ensure that student discussions are related to content? (and essential questions)• How do you ensure that instructional materials lead to critical thinking skills?• How are instructional practices developing critical thinking skills with students?
<p>2. What are the common features in questioning strategies and content exploration within grade levels?</p> <p>We Observed...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Same lesson plans and resources• Common organizational and note-taking strategies• Common pacing <p>We Wondered...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a common structure for instructional practices?• Has peer observation been considered?• Is there commonality in assessments, use of rubrics and grading?• Are there common teacher and student reflections?
<p>3. How are teachers applying project based/exploratory learning in the lessons you observed?</p> <p>We Observed...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are learning by DOING• Connection to student lives• Efforts made by authentic assessments• Student creativity & creative expression <p>We Wondered...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do you ensure that best practices are used?• How do teachers model real world excellence?• How do you determine developmental appropriateness?• How do you ensure activities are connected to essential questions?
<p>4. How are teachers using essential questions to develop content knowledge and skills within their daily lessons?</p> <p>We Observed...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers had clearly kept essential questions in mind during planning <p>We Wondered...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How important is it to explicitly communicate the essential questions to students through out each lesson?• Is there a way to evaluate the precision of essential questions?

As it happened, these comments, though sophisticated, were easy for the students to share. However, there were other issues that the students' critical inquiry perspective brought to light, confronting them with a greater challenge. They unearthed and were supported in confronting issues about race and bias that are usually taboo topics in most schools, helping to socialize them into leaders who are willing to take on the challenges of leading difficult, but meaningful reform.

During the late morning debriefing session held to review their observations and plan for providing feedback, the leadership students concurred that they had concerns regarding the equitable treatment of minorities and disabled students within the school. Several teams noticed inequities in the school's inclusion model and teacher behavior which bordered on prejudicial. In one class they observed that not only were special education students primarily African American, but also they were physically separated from their classmates, as their seating isolated them in the room. Others had visited an inclusion class where all three African American children, all students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs), were segregated at a separate table from their peers. Additionally, one African American girl was seated away from others in a space that had formerly been a closet; during the observed class, her hand was raised for some time and went unnoticed by the three adults in the room. The leadership students were concerned about what the seating arrangement

might convey to the child and the other students.

Several other incidents were observed that leadership students believed highlighted teacher insensitivity to racial diversity. One team was concerned that a teacher appeared to be providing misinformation about Native Americans. They reported that she repeated several times that "Native Americans had no language." She used this to explain why Native Americans used symbols in writing. Another aspiring principal raised the issue about the lack of diversity of staff, remarking that while the student population of the school was 15% African American, there was only one African American teacher on staff.

As midday approached, the students were challenged as to how to present their feedback to the CAO, leadership team, and teachers who would be present at the debriefing. They were faced with how to present such potentially sensitive feedback, especially since they felt very passionate about the discrepancies they observed between the school's mission and the behavior of several teachers. The leadership students were at first hesitant to bring up equity and access issues they perceived that went beyond their expectations for commenting on the school's social studies instruction. However, they felt compelled to report on these issues. They realized that they could feel some confidence in presenting these observations if they framed them in the context of the school's mission statement and

illuminated the espoused theories and theories-in-use they encountered.

Table 2

Additional Feedback to Brown Lane Charter School

Observations	Questions
<p>Your mission statement indicates a commitment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high achievement • life-long and active learning • diversity and equity • collaborative problem solving 	<p>We are wondering...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What specific strategies are you employing to insure fulfillment of your mission? 2. How do you measure your progress in each of the categories above? 3. Are there opportunities to reflect as individuals or as a group on various levels about your progress?

With guidance from the ELPAP faculty, the leadership students presented the feedback to a group of eight people (the CAO, leadership team and some of the teachers who had been observed) supported by Table 2. The group listened quietly until the discrepancies were highlighted. Then, eyebrows were raised and mouths dropped open in disbelief of what they had heard. They were thoroughly surprised by this feedback. Afterwards, one leadership student reflected on her own cohort's pride in their ability to illuminate these discrepancies between mission and practice and to provide feedback in a constructive manner, which held promise for promoting learning in the school. She wrote:

We structured our feedback in terms of whether the school thought it was meeting some of

the goals of its mission statement – one of the goals specifically addressed equity and diversity. The school panel replied that they thought they were doing a good job of addressing this because they use resources that reflect various cultures. Their blind-spot was quite evident, so I asked a follow-up question about what kind of professional development they offer their staff, a staff that has only one person of color in a school that is quite ethnically and racially diverse. The answer was none. We were diplomatic in suggesting that they look into this area. One of the people on the administrative team sought our group out afterward to thank us and to share that she

has been pushing for this kind of professional development.

Analysis of Findings

Understanding the relationship between espoused theories and theories in use was central to the role socialization that occurred at this Focused Observation. This lens was developed early in the program through readings (e.g., Arygris, 1990; Schon, 1983) and faculty presentations as part of the focus on reflective practice. Even though this was not part of the content focus in the module on leadership of social studies instruction, the students' training made it inevitable that they would catch glaring discrepancies between the stated mission around equity and diversity of the school (espoused theories) and the actual behaviors of teachers (theories in use). One student remarked in his reflection about the Brown School experience, "Their espoused theories did not match their theories in use, a phrase that our professor constantly reminds us of when thinking about our future as principals." The CAO, as previously noted, had also developed a disposition to critically examine the gap between espoused theories and theories in use; it was one of her stated goals in initiating the visit.

Nationwide, a great deal of concern is voiced about confronting the achievement gap. Honest talk about race and ethnicity needs to be led by school leaders if schools are to move forward. The principal must not only recognize, but also communicate to others that issues of teaching and learning are embedded in the social context of racial

and economic inequality. As has been clearly pointed out by sociologists, schools play a role in perpetuating inequalities, particularly if the structures and practices remain unaddressed. Despite all its good intentions reflected in its mission statements, staff at the Brown School had yet to face this reality, struggle with their own values, and reflect on how they would actively respond to overcome these disparities. One ELPAP student expressed her concerns and uncertainty of how to respond:

After I finished cringing, I thought about countless amounts of misinformation that is probably communicated to students daily throughout schools. I wondered what happens to this information. Does it turn into stereotypes, biases, violence, and racism? How does leadership combat this type of experience for students?

Based on this visit where leadership students witnessed a teacher presenting content misinformation about Native Americans, the comments below demonstrate their reflection on what were to them perplexing responsibilities in the exercise of school leadership:

While I recognize it is impossible to be in all classrooms listening and monitoring everything that comes out of a teacher's mouth, it is also important to have clear expectations about what teachers should teach. I am certain that most teachers do not give out

such blatant misinformation. The question is: How many do?

And,

We wondered collectively how to combat this problem. I suppose that as a principal, you can only observe so much to find this problem [teachers providing misinformation about different cultures]. Our cohort explored the option of peer observations. I think these would be extremely valuable because teachers could not only check up on problems such as this, but they could also learn from each other. If that younger teacher we saw first could see either of the two teachers we saw later, she could get some great ideas as to how to deepen her students' learning.

This Focused Observation provided a unique opportunity for aspiring principals to problem solve as a team to confront one example of an adaptive challenge these future leaders might need to address as they become leaders of school-change efforts.

Developing the confidence to provide feedback about anything, especially critical feedback, is an important skill for leading change. Through this Focused Observation, these aspiring principals were faced with a particularly sensitive issue and had the opportunity to lead others to consider their practice through carefully constructed feedback. The following reflection exemplifies how a student began thinking about her own

leadership abilities after providing feedback at the Focused Observation, which might eventually assist this aspiring leader to help teachers she will supervise, to surface their tacit beliefs:

I have now decided to reframe my thinking/expectations about these observations. I now want to look at these from the "balcony" (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997) and address the observations as if I were an administrator in this school, thinking what I would be saying to my teachers.... As the administrator, I would immediately question the teacher on the reason for the separation of these particular students. I anticipate that two of the students have behavioral issues. My questions would be to ask what the teacher is putting in place to help these students meet success.

Faced with this issue of inequality and how, as an administrator, they would deal with it, leadership students recognized that the response cannot be the principal's alone. By facing this real situation, to which they had to provide a solution, they realized the limitations of the school leader in solving this problem by him or herself. This experience reinforced the importance of distributive leadership (Spillane, 2006), as well as creating a culture of inquiry within a school about the teachers' own knowledge and practice.

The impact of this Observation on the students seemed to be significant. They expressed sentiments that they

were being transformed from their roles as current classroom teachers to aspiring school leaders who think systemically and view the school activities as an integrated whole. Their communication skills had increased, not only in presenting critical feedback, but also in facilitating the learning of this school community as the next leadership student summarized:

On the whole, it was a wonderful opportunity to put into practice some of what we have been learning in class—we were able to observe an effort to put *Understanding by Design* and inclusion into practice as well as to use some of our new found leadership skills to observe and assess teachers in this new charter school. I think we are all feeling that we are being transformed from teachers to administrators.

By exploring the school's culture, the aspiring principals saw themselves as learning partners with this school by identifying issues that were valuable and useful. Principals acting as learning partners to teachers extends the "enabling leadership style" advanced by Prestine (as cited in Hausman, Crow, & Sperry, 2000). The central tool the leadership students utilized was their awareness of how to assess the coherence between espoused theories and theories in use. In applying this theory of observing for coherence of espoused theories and theories in use to the real life setting of the Brown School, they were able to help the school staff

surface their own underlying beliefs, which were in contradiction to the school's espoused beliefs.

This case study is representative in a number of ways of what emerged from our analysis from other visits as well. The issues raised and the data presented illustrate the role socialization of the students. The data and related narrative serve as illustrations of both how the Focused Observations facilitated socialization and leadership student progress in developing innovative leadership identities. These illustrations are associated with the themes of leadership vision, communication skills, critical inquiry, and understanding the complexity of change, which had the most prominent role in the socialization processes and outcomes.

Discussion

Although there were a number of student outcomes associated with the Focused Observations, the case study and our other data demonstrate that one of the most prominent themes is the degree to which students clarify role conceptions and begin to develop and embody identities in line with these conceptions. In other words, the Focused Observations seem to facilitate professional socialization. Our data confirm that the Focused Observations enable students to enact ELPAP's philosophy of conceptualizing leadership not as a set of precepts (when x happens do y) but as a complex process that requires habits and skills associated with critical inquiry (when x happens, attempt to understand it more

deeply, compare it to the variety of theoretical frames based in the current best research and thinking in the field, engage others in this process of analysis, engage the best solution, and then continually evaluate what happens and make refinements as necessary, following the same inquiry process).

Importantly, the role conceptions and identities being developed were clearly in line with the range of work identifying the dispositions (norms, values, and symbols) of leaders who would act as change agents in their future schools. In fact, unlike a mentorship, which may have a variable outcome in terms of its reinforcement of a change agent leadership identity (Crow, 2006a), these experiences clearly tended to reinforce this needed reform orientation across the board. Specifically, we have identified four elements of role-making conceptions that leadership students consolidated through the Focused Observations:

- Engaging self and others in implementing a vision that informs instruction
- Shaping effective communication that promotes individual and collective growth
- Embodying the disposition to critical inquiry
- Understanding the complexity of organizational change

In our conclusion, we comment on how interdependence of these four elements, which seem related to a unifying of vision or a braiding of understandings that were at one time

compartmentalized, may represent how productive role conceptualization develops for prospective school leaders.

Engaging Self and Others in Implementing a Vision that Informs Instruction

Leadership students came to appreciate how well-articulated and publicized mission and vision statements facilitate the work of school improvement by galvanizing staff around a cohesive moral purpose that can be evaluated for the extent of its implementation in every classroom. ELPAP students have told us that the role-making perspective they found most valuable in a Focused Observation, and which program alum have told us has carried over to their positions as school leaders, was to question the extent to which a school's espoused theories matched its theories in use (Schon, 1984). According to Robertson (2008), "One of the most important aspects of coaching is the coach and education leader together clarifying the values and beliefs about education and learning on which leadership practice and decision making rest" (p. 30). Practicing school leaders, leadership students and coaching faculty together all wrestled with important theory-in-practice issues in the Focused Observations.

In the case of Brown School, students observed that mission statements enabled school leaders to conduct program supervision from the perspective of an aligned, rather than fragmented, effort. On another Focused Observation, where the faculty of a middle school mathematics department

had asked for feedback on the extent to which they were implementing "active engagement," the leadership students again found it useful to ground their comments in espoused theories and theories in use. They noted the limited ways in which the practice of active engagement was being interpreted and implemented. The leadership students asked the faculty to consider creating a mission statement reflecting a profile of the mathematics student they were trying to graduate as a way of consolidating their sense of purpose in both theory and practice.

Leadership students also noticed how through day-to-day visibility in classrooms, principal facilitates focus on agreed-upon priorities. Leadership students saw that informal observation was more capable of nurturing the mission and vision of the school than the formal observations which had pre-occupied many of them when they began the program. Among other things, they realized that no one formal observation was an exclusive indicator of the ability of staff to enact a vision.

Across Focused Observations, they began to understand that consensus in lived practice required considerable face to face discourse and meeting time. For example, they promoted this value by (a) recommending to one faculty member that they spend time developing what "essential questions" for promoting classroom-based inquiry looked and sounded like, (b) advocating in another school for the construction of common assessments as well as processes for inquiring into student work products against rubrics, and (c) asking a third

school faculty to consider a common mathematics curriculum series across a span of grades for the threads of continuity it might offer for student understanding of larger ideas.

Marks and Printy (2003) synthesized the literature on leaders in high performing schools. They described the transformational school leader as a person who

seeks to raise participants' level of commitment (Burns,1978), to encourage them in reaching their fullest potential (Bass&Avolio,1993),and to support them in transcending their own self-interest for a larger good (Bass & Avolio,1993; Leithwood, Tomlinson,& Genge,1996; Sagor & Barnett,1994; Silins, Muford, Zarins, & Bishop, 2000) (372-373).

In our study, we learned that socialization to these aspects of principal leadership were enhanced when prospective school leaders were put into situations that gave them the opportunity to realize how acting from a consistency of purpose relative to a clear mission could be both grounding for them and enabling to the school community.

Shaping Communication that Affords Individual and Organizational Growth

In the previous section, we attempted to demonstrate how leadership students came to understand and adopt as part of their understanding of their future role that school commitment to change is

facilitated by continuously embedding and comparing its mission to its working practice. Here we focus on how the prospective leaders learned through the Focused Observations that their communication styles can invite ongoing struggle with difficult issues. In support of this finding, Donaldson, Mamik, Mackenzie, and Ackerman (2009), writing about their work with new educational leaders in Maine, assessed that "Through observation and feedback from colleagues, principals come to see how their own words, actions and manner—including the ability to hear cognitive *and* emotional messages—enhance or inhibit their success as instructional consultants" (p.11).

The ELPAP program emphasizes in its curriculum that new principals' role socialization is enhanced by communication skills that can facilitate and leverage inquiry, rather than shut it down. The Brown School Focused Observation provided ELPAP students with the real-time experience of shaping communication in ways that will have an impact on instructional improvement. The presence of ELPAP faculty at Brown School and other Focused Observations provided an opportunity for leadership students to use other people as resources to frame the multiple ways of raising an issue. Inquiring with others—professors, other cohort members, and eventually their own faculties—had been emphasized as a sign of strength and not of weakness. What became critical was formulating a message so that it could be heard. Focused Observations provided leadership students with the

opportunity of presenting both warm and cool feedback in authentic situations, rather than simulated ones, which was also practiced during course meetings. The dialogue skills they studied throughout the year (Arredondo, Lechner Brody, Zimmerman, & Moffett, 1995) laid the groundwork that allowed them to adopt role expectations that included facilitating communication for inquiry. As Crow, Hausman, and Paredes-Scribner (2002) commented, "To reshape the principalship is to venture into a place where tensions exist—between change and continuity, between complexity and routines, between the global and the home" (p. 190).

In the data, many alumni and students commented about the tensions they experienced as they perceived an ethical responsibility to provide critical yet productive feedback to their hosts at the Focused Observations. Expressing this discomfort marked a critical self-awareness for these leadership students about how positional authority functioned in their roles, specifically with respect to providing feedback. Based on their experiences in delivering such feedback during Focused Observations, several alumni concluded that feedback is a powerful leadership tool in effective change, and has to be used with discretion, consideration, follow-through, and support.

The Focused Observation at Brown School in particular provided a unique opportunity for aspiring principals to problem solve as a team about a very real situation by thinking through options and their viability within a school context. This experience

provided invaluable practice for confronting the kinds of adaptive challenges these future leaders will need to address as they become leaders of school change efforts.

Embodying the Disposition to Critical Inquiry

The aspiring principals identified that one of the most important roles of an effective school leader was to nurture a culture of inquiry in the school. They conceptualized that an effective school leader demonstrated the importance of inquiry in several ways, including making the time for faculty inquiry, acquiring first-hand knowledge of faculty and student work, and inviting outsiders to critique the school's practices.

By participating as critical friends to hosting principals, leadership students experienced how an inquiring disposition on the part of leaders could open doors to perspectives they would not have considered despite assigned literature advocating the value of this approach. The leadership students admired that the Brown CAO had twice invited program students and faculty into the school for honest feedback about the initiatives the school had undertaken. On another Focused Observation, they found it admirable that teachers and administrators together would be willing to assess what met and did not yet meet the school's expectations about newly-required high school graduation projects. In contrast, but still evidence of their support of critical inquiry, on a visit to a middle school, they criticized the principal who absented himself from

the end-of-day debriefing on the math program. Importantly, ELPAP's aspiring principals generally came to understand through the Focused Observations that a leader who engaged his or her school faculty in a pervasive disposition to inquiry shaped the school culture in many ways.

The ELPAP students came to value how a disposition to critical inquiry could have an effect on instruction implicitly as well as explicitly. On a Focused Observation of a K-8 school, the leadership students attributed certain classroom dynamics to the inquiry disposition adopted by the principal and faculty consistent with their view of science education. The leadership students noted that when the K-8 students posed questions in other content areas, the faculty encouraged students to do the research to find the answers for themselves. The leadership students concluded that this disposition to inquiry had been developed through conversation championed by the principal about the nature of the science program, but the faculty had expanded those conversations to support of critical thinking across subjects in the K-8 curriculum.

During our research on the impact of Focused Observations, ELPAP alumni told us they credited the Focused Observations with giving them insight into the importance of evaluating K-12 students' learning by discussing actual student work products and making this a regular part of their critical inquiry into instructional practice. The alumni told us they have incorporated these behaviors into their current approach as supervisors of

instruction. In this respect, the Focused Observation helped leadership students deepen their appreciation of the use of certain features of instructional walk-throughs (Downey & Frase, 2001; Skretta, 2007; Ziegler, 2006). Having first-hand knowledge of student learning is part of the "informed professional judgment" so significant and effective for a leader to demonstrate in his or her position (Barber, 2002). During their interviews as prospective students in the leadership program, candidates often expressed the hope that said they would learn the skills of observing and evaluating teachers in ELPAP. Our data indicated that the Focused Observations transformed the students' priorities about the leaders' role in classrooms: having an expanded, non-evaluative presence, one that was informed about and responsive to the intricacies of teaching and learning, became more important. In his journal, one student demonstrated his awareness of the importance of this approach following a Focused Observation:

I left the school committed to conducting non-evaluative classroom observations. I have to know what is going on in the school. I have to have a sense of how teachers are instructing students. If we, as a faculty, have made a commitment to student-centered classrooms, then I would expect to see more talking by and from the students to each other. Class observations would also help give me a sense of the supports I may need to provide

for teachers as they work with students.

The Focused Observations have been instrumental in socializing *prospective* principals to the value of embodying a disposition to critical inquiry and leadership necessary for *practicing* principals. Writing about *practicing* principals, Robertson advocated for their having continuing opportunities with other principals and coaches to think about instructional practice critically. Specifically, Robertson (2008) asserted that

...people who are influential in education should focus, as their main priority, on educational leadership that improves learning. Thrupp and Willmott (2003) describe this focus as "critical leadership," where there is not only a reflection on learning but also a "public commitment to doing things differently" (p. 180) and "reflection on wider issues of social structure and politics" (p. 181). This stance requires continual critique of the role and practice of leadership in learning and articulation of the dilemmas and tensions faced within that context (pp. 4-5).

Therefore, the conclusions reached by the ELPAP participants about how enacted dispositions to inquiry have the potential to transform multiple dynamics of school achievement become arguments for why collegial review of instructional programs in the form of

Focused Observations may be important to begin during the leader preparation period.

Understanding the Complexity of Change

Leadership students who engaged in Focused Observations concluded that change is a complex undertaking that demanded they frequently reconsider the leader's role in developing the learning organization. In the case of their visit to Brown School, a charter school, the ELPAP students realized that their responsibilities to K-8 student learning meant that they had to go outside their ostensible roles as commentators on social studies instruction to lead adults to confront impediments they were creating to some students' opportunities to learn. Our data show that they also deepened their understanding of a leader's responsibilities as an intermediary in a larger educational system. At another school, they questioned the budgeted adoption of new textbooks without simultaneous funding of opportunities for professional development; at a third school, they questioned an assistant superintendent about her stance that only technically proficient work could be posted on bulletin boards anywhere in the school, including in the early childhood wing.

Students engaged in Focused Observations recognized that change is a complex undertaking. They developed positive attitudes and an eagerness to engage in reform efforts in their future role as school leaders. As noted below, they indicate an understanding that this complexity concerns issues of time,

relationships, and candor. One student noted, following another Focused Observation where he observed teachers and a large group of administrators talking and intently listening together about the success/problems of a graduation project, how important transparency was in regards to resolving problems. In addition, the student assessed that there was a need for honesty and reflective practice while monitoring progress and being patient and change here and elsewhere occurs but takes time. Multiple students noted from the Focused Observations as a whole that it became very clear to them that they could improve schools on their own. They compared successful reform oriented schools with ones that were less successful and found that two of the key factors were agreement about the mission, which was in turn related to a joint effort at implementing reform. Students' realization echoes the assessment Hausman, Crow, and Sperry (2000) made of effective principals: "They see leadership as an organization-wide phenomenon and allow others to grow and develop" (p. 7). One focus group participant's response to how these visits advanced his thinking about leading school reform efforts indicated his growing awareness of the interconnected components of leadership as a result of the Focused Observations: "More than the school leader needs to be involved. Partnering with universities or parents can be valuable. Sometimes no matter how beautiful the building, major issues can be overlooked and change is possible."

These comments are reminiscent of Michael Fullan's (2008) conclusions

about what he learned from research into the reform initiatives of the York, Ontario school district:

Learning is developing the organization, day after day within the culture. There is much more to organizational development than I can address in this brief essay. It is about openness of practice, precision, creativity, wise and continuous use of data, learning from each other inside and outside the organization, and linking into the big picture. This is turning out to be much harder than anyone thought (p. 49).

Nonetheless, our students embraced change as possible. Based on reports from the leadership students, it appears that part of the role socialization they experienced during the Focused Observation came from projecting themselves as job applicants for a school leadership position in schools with similar challenges. Key to deepening their resolve that they could undertake this role effectively was the awareness that they could articulate standards for their schools and that those standards would be motivating and workable for themselves and others. Given that as of 2009 that 65% of ELPAP students have assumed leadership positions within two years of completing the program, the Focused Observations appear to be another support to candidates' self-confidence that they can succeed in the principalship. Indeed, individual ELPAP students so often impressed

district-level administrators who dropped in on these visits that they were encouraged to interview for upcoming school leadership positions in those districts. However, some of the leadership students asserted that these visits resulted in their reconsidering the importance of school and district culture with respect to their pursuit of positions. They better appreciated that the school culture needed to be sufficiently aligned with their values and priorities, and that support from upper level administration was essential to making their first positions satisfying experiences for all concerned; henceforth, such a culture needed to be evident within the school and district.

Conclusions and Implications

Attesting to the benefit of having engaged in Focused Observations, one alumnus put out a call inviting graduates from across the program to participate in an Alumni Focused Observation in April 2007:

You will recall that one of the most enjoyable and rewarding experiences of ELPAP was our participation in Focused Observations of best instructional practices at schools. ...These observations equipped us with the tools to view our own programs with a critical lens and to be cognizant of using data to help make informed instructional leadership decisions (remember Habits of Mind-Taking Responsible Risks). Finally, these observations generated

opportunities to network with experienced and well connected administrators throughout the area...I believe that such a professional activity would serve us even more valuably as practicing school leaders who are attempting to implement new instructional ideas and/or change within our own buildings. Therefore, I am extending an invitation to those ELPAP alumni (all cohorts) who would like to attend a focused observation of an instructional practice in my school. I also volunteer to generate a calendar of future Focused Observations at other schools around the area hosted by other alumni.

In December 2008, a second program graduate hosted what has now become the annual Alumni Focused Observation. The institutionalization of this event by alumni is a testimony to the extent that this learning experienced is valued. The alumni, as they have attained administrative positions, have eagerly expressed their disposition toward inquiry, inviting their colleagues to explore the principal's vision in the context of initiating change in their schools.

Having the competence and confidence to undertake the principalship grows with transformative experiences. In response to our first research question, our data suggests that the Focused Observations are transformative experiences where leadership students deepen their appreciation of their own abilities to

lead school change efforts. Through observations of these school visits, reviewing student journal entries, and analyzing focus group interviews, we have learned that students use these experiences for role definition, which is an important part of identity development.

In regards to the second research question, several components of the Focused Observations appear to be central to the professional socialization process. Sites chosen for Focused Observations are expected to provide key experiences for leadership students to try on real-time leadership behaviors with their peers and in the presence of faculty, particularly around analyzing qualitative data and providing and receiving feedback. Choosing schools engaged in current instructional reforms appears to be central to site selection as these schools provide fertile ground for a wide variety of leadership issues to emerge. We also learned that participating in these Focused Observations as a cohort afforded students the opportunity to compare, enlarge, and modify their perspectives on the identities they were developing because they could discuss their perspectives with one another in context. Having faculty mentors present to help leadership students reflect on what was being observed and how best to present their critical findings to the school staff was also an important part in students' growth.

We also believe that the identification of the four elements of change-oriented leadership that seemed to play an important role in how the leadership students approached their

identity construction is a useful finding. Again, these areas included the following: (a) engaging self and others in implementing a vision that informs instruction, (b) shaping effective communication that promotes individual and collective growth, (c) embodying the disposition to critical inquiry, and (d) understanding the complexity of organizational change. The emergence of these elements in the data not only demonstrates evidence of reform-oriented leadership identity development, but also suggests areas that might prove useful as areas of focus for program development through Focused Observations or other similar critical inquiry learning and socialization opportunities. We were sometimes challenged by how to organize the data we collected as our students' comments demonstrated an interdependence of these areas, especially for students who went on to leadership positions. This interdependence suggests that an indicator of the success of professional role socialization during a principal preparation program may be the extent to which students are able to reflect on critical incidents as "braided" events—events needing processing through multiple lenses of leadership.

Implications of this work for future research might include a shift in focus from learning and curricula or learning activities to incorporate the broader and more theoretically grounded concepts of identity development and socialization. We submit that this shift does not merely represent a change in terms, but a shift in how both research and practice are

approached to consider leadership student development beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills. This shift stresses the importance of social influences or norms that may be either barriers or supports to such development in considering the structure of socialization opportunities. Research that attempts to capture the impact of similar critical inquiry programs longitudinally beyond pre-service practice would be particularly welcome to confirm and extend our more limited focus. Although promising, our research only hints at the possibilities for reform-oriented leadership in practice, as a strong identity and supportive social network are important. But, the demands of organizational socialization that might mitigate against these values is strong and needs to be better understood.

Epilogue: Continued Improvement of the Focused Observation Process

The opportunities to promote professional role socialization in conjunction with the Focused Observations have changed over the nine years we have been making visits to schools. To further promote leadership students' initiative and collaborative learning, we began to assign students to simulated leadership teams. We expected that they would co-develop an observation framework and a hypothesis to test in lieu of solely responding to questions posed by the school.

In the last few years, we have also required students to reflect on their individual learning in their weekly journal entry, specifically writing about what effective leadership behaviors the

visit encouraged for them as well as drawing connections from the literature they have read about best practices in this curricular area. The journal has helped students clarify their own vision and beliefs about how this content area should be taught and assessed, and what they will do as principals to promote this kind of learning for students. The weekly journal has been sent to their university mentor as well as to the faculty participating in the visit. Depending on the comments, outstanding issues may have been taken up in the next class.

Students have shown their ownership of these Focused Observations as they themselves continue to suggest ways to improve the experience. Specifically, the 2007-2008 cohort, after concluding that the planning for a February 2008 visit had not been a transparent process with teachers and administrators, sought to develop a Focused Observation Handbook that could function to improve the experience for all concerned: themselves as visitors, school administration, teachers at the school, and university faculty. They generated the core principles and format for this Handbook immediately following the February focused observation.

The Handbook was structured around questions that were aimed at promoting productive experiences in all the phases of the Focused Observation: before the visit, during the visit, and after the visit. Among the questions in the Handbook were the following:

- Who is on the core planning team?
- What will constitute evidence (to you) responsive to the essential question or guiding principle?
- Who will present segments of the feedback to the school?
- How will we know that we have answered the essential question posed?
- Did the observation feedback address strengths and weaknesses in instruction driven by the essential question or guiding principle?
- How can all staff be made aware of the feedback from the focused observation?

The draft document of the handbook generated by the students was used to support the April, 2008 observation. The result was that the dialogue in the concluding feedback session was more concise and engaged the school faculty and the leadership students in more genuine discussion. The Handbook, in setting clear expectations for the visit, provided a helpful tool in communicating the purpose of the visits to new schools and future cohorts. We noticed in Focused Observations taking place in 2008-2009 that teachers on site have a better understanding of the process and that from planning visits through debriefing, the dialogue has been richer.

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Appendix A

Focused Observation: Focus Group Questions

Procedures

Sign-in sheet

Introduction

Divide into three groups

Warm-up

- *meditating on purpose of focused observation*
- *meditating on meaning of focused observation*

1. What did you gain from the focused observations?

- a. Did the focused observations impact your confidence in serving as a prospective school leader? If so, how?
- b. Did the focused observations contribute to your confidence and skills built to lead outside your area of previous experience? To critically observe practice? To provide constructive feedback?
- c. Did the focused observations help you to judge the evidence of learning? If so, how? If not, why not?
- d. In what ways did these visits impact your thinking about how schools improve over time?
- e. How did these visits advance your thinking about leading school reform efforts?
- f. What connections were you able to make between effective instructional leadership and the other program frameworks of organizational, public and evidenced-based leadership? Please provide specific examples.
- g. Faculty members were present to facilitate the sessions. Were there things that you learned from their behaviors? If so, what did you learn?

2. Are there any connections that you can draw that link your focused observation experiences with your current practices?

- a. In what ways did these visits shape your perspective on what leadership in a school should look like?
- b. How did these observations influence your own leadership style?
- c. What did you learn about informal and positional leadership?

- 3. Think about your own school/district. Comment on ways that you currently use to gauge if improvement/reform efforts have been successful.**
 - a. Can you attribute any of these practices to what you learned in the focused observations? If so, what specifically?
- 4. The focused observations were organized around intentional inquiry about the school's practices. What did you learn from that process of inquiry?**
 - a. What did you learn from the use of an organizing question?
 - b. What did you learn about using data to inform decision making?
 - c. Has this process of inquiry (i.e., focused questions, observations, and feedback) influenced your own practice? If so, how specifically?
- 5. Across the year the focused observation provided a recursive process through which to build your skills. In the fall semester we distributed a protocol to guide your entry to the schools. In the spring you were to create your own protocols based on the literature and your own experiences. How did your thinking change as you planned your entry into schools, considering your engagement, participation, and learning.**
 - a. How did you utilize the literature in this process?
 - b. How did these visits inform your cross cutting competencies including:
 - habits of mind
 - reflective practice
 - communicating: engaging people in inquiry, providing constructive feedback
 - interpersonal skills
 - ethical and moral decision making
- 6. Now that you are out of the program, what feedback do you have about the focused observations that might help to improve their value for learning for both the students and the schools/districts visited?**

Appendix B

Visited School Staff Focused Observation Focus Group Protocol

We would like to explore more deeply the value of our ELPAP Focused Observations for the schools we have visited. We are writing a paper in which we hope to share the value of these visits.

1. What have you understood to be the purpose of these visits to your school/district?
 2. Why did you choose to have these visits to your school/district? What about the process appealed to you?
 3. In planning this event did you have any reservations or concerns about the contribution that the focused observation would make? If not, why not? If so, why? Did you do anything to mitigate your concerns?
 4. Describe the receptivity to this process of both administration and teachers. What was the general feeling following the visit?
 5. In what ways have you and/or your school/district benefited from these visits? What benefits have endured?
 6. In what ways did the school/district engage in follow-up activities after the visits?
 7. In what ways do you think that the leadership students from the University of Pennsylvania may benefit from these visits?
 8. In what ways could the visits be improved to meet your goals/needs?
 9. What might you say to other school leaders who might want to engage in a Focused Observation?
-