



Complexity and the beginning principal in the United States: perspectives on socialization

Gary M. Crow

University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to contribute to the literature and practice on beginning principal socialization by identifying the features of post-industrial work that create a more complex work environment for the practice and learning of the principalship in the USA.

Design/methodology/approach – Based on recent literature on the changing nature of work, the paper applies those features of complexity to components of beginning principal socialization.

Findings – The nature of work in post-industrial society and the changes in education, including a knowledge society, technology, demographic changes, and public accountability increase the complexity for US school principals. These features provide an important conceptual and normative basis for understanding and changing the content, sources, methods, and outcomes of beginning principal socialization.

Originality/value – The paper contributes a set of conceptual and normative features that strengthens the understanding of how beginning principals learn the role.

Keywords Principals, Socialization, Sociology of work

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

The role of school leader in the USA has, in the last several years, taken on added significance in the educational reform and accountability movements. Although the relationship between the principal's actions and student achievement is indirect, the importance of this role for developing and maintaining school culture, promoting a vision of academic success for all students, and creating professional learning communities has clearly been supported by research and theory (Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2000).

Along with this evidence of the importance of the principalship has come the recognition that the principal's role has changed within an increasingly high stakes policy environment. In the USA, the advent of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, enacted by Congress in 2001, has clearly raised the stakes not only for schools but also for principals. The higher expectations for US principals in the area of instructional leadership, created among other things by the NCLB Act, increased public scrutiny of public schools, and the promotion of privatization as a public policy agenda, have significantly changed the role of school principal in the USA.

In addition to these policy environment changes, US principals work in a societal context that is more dynamic and complex than in the past. Changing student demographics, the knowledge explosion, the larger web of roles with which the principal interacts, and the pervasive influence of technology are a few features of this complex environment. Many of these features affect school leaders in other national



contexts, but this paper focuses primarily on how these contextual features affect US principals.

In response to these changes, a growing discontent in the USA with how principals are socialized, i.e., learn their jobs, is evident in the literature and policy debates. Reports and opinions have claimed that the preparation of principals, particularly in universities, is inadequate for the new policy and societal contexts (Levine, 2005; Hess and Kelly, 2005; Haller *et al.*, 1997). A set of counter arguments has also been made that, although university preparation should be more rigorous, it is still the best model for principal preparation (Young and Petersen, 2002; Young *et al.*, 2005).

The attention in the US on improving principals' socialization, with some exceptions, has tended to result in a piecemeal collection of strategies without a conceptual understanding of socialization. Furthermore, most of the attention has focused on the university level in terms of reforming this stage of learning without sufficient attention to a broader understanding of socialization that includes the induction period for new principals and a more relevant understanding of the complex environment in which socialization for these new principals occurs.

This paper seeks to contribute to a more relevant conceptual understanding of US beginning principal socialization occurring in a complex work environment and to apply this understanding to various features of the practice of beginning principal socialization in this environment. The discussion will begin with a brief description of traditional principal socialization in the USA. Following this description, the paper will examine the nature of educational work in a complex society, identifying features of complexity in the larger work arena and applying these to educational work, in particular the work of school principals. Next the paper will identify a variety of conceptual and practical features of the socialization of beginning principals in complex, post-industrial society, specifically in the US. The paper concludes with a set of implications for research to inform beginning principal socialization.

Traditional socialization of beginning principals

The socialization of beginning principals is usually characterized by two broad types:

- (1) professional; and
- (2) organizational (Greenfield, 1985a).

Professional socialization, which in the USA occurs primarily in university preparation programs, relates to the initial preparation to take on an occupational role such as school principal and includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to enact the role regardless of the setting. Organizational socialization, in contrast, is context-bound and includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to conduct the role in a particular setting. These two forms of socialization frequently conflict as professional socialization is focused on inculcating a conception of the role for newcomers and organizational socialization is focused on making these newcomers effective organizational members.

In the case of US principals, professional socialization typically includes courses on topics primarily derived from management science and industrial psychology (Callahan, 1962; Crow and Grogan, 2005), e.g. finance, law, leadership, and organizational theory. In addition, university preparation programs include a field component, typically in the form of an internship (Milstein *et al.*, 1991;

Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004). The internship places the student in one or more educational settings that should enable the aspiring principal to gain experience in practical roles. Supervision from both the school site administrator and a college instructor is usually part of the design.

In the US approximately 500 university preparation programs currently exist. As far back as 1987, policymakers were calling for a reduction in the number of university programs to ensure more rigorous standards of preparation (Griffiths *et al.*, 1988). However, there has been little change in the number of programs. Evidence regarding the quality of university preparation programs is scant, and most arguments resort to anecdotal evidence or have questionable methodologies. Considerable opinion, however, exists that this stage of principal preparation needs to improve and rigorous empirical evaluations of leadership preparation need to be conducted (Orr, 2004).

The organizational socialization of beginning principals is typically described as consisting of individual, informal, random, and variable learning (Greenfield, 1985a). Beginning principals essentially make sense of their roles by themselves or by using informal feedback from teachers, students, parents, and other administrators. Although principal evaluations occur, these are typically few and lack useful advice (Lashway, 2003). Some principals, especially at the secondary level, become assistant principals before becoming principals. However, the nature of the assistant principalship in the US has changed over time from being an apprenticeship to being narrowly focused on some area, e.g. student discipline. This narrow conception rarely provides the kind of socialization experiences to enable an individual to experience the full range of principal responsibilities (Greenfield, 1985b).

Instead of a mediated entry, beginning US principals are immediately responsible for the full gamut of principal duties. Recently school districts and intermediary organizations (e.g. professional associations) are providing induction resources for new principals, including workshops, mentors, and coaches. These induction resources are frequently provided in a piecemeal way without an underlying conceptual understanding of principal socialization based on features of work in a complex society.

Complexity and the world of educational work

The societal changes that impact the nature of work in general and the practice of beginning principals in particular can be seen in the distinction between industrial and post-industrial societies. In describing these differences, it is important to acknowledge that these changes are still evolving and that in some occupations, notably education, not all the changes may be as apparent as in other occupations. Nevertheless, identifying the move from industrial to post-industrial society suggests a way to highlight the increasing complexity that exists both in work generally and in educational work particularly.

Complex work in post-industrial society

The phrase “post-industrial society” is usually attributed to Bell (1976) and others who emphasized “the movement from a society based on heavy industry to the age of information and high technology” (Hage and Powers, 1992, p. 2). The characteristics of this change have been described in numerous ways, but usually include the move to a

knowledge society (Toffler, 1981), the globalization of the economy and other sectors (Friedman, 2005), the importance of internet and digitization technologies, and the growing use of e-commerce (Cooper and Burke, 2002).

Imbedded in this societal transformation is the recognition of increasing complexity. This change does not simply involve doing more of the same kind of work or in a more intense way. Rather, organizations, work, and life take on new dimensions that are unlike previous generations, thus increasing complexity. For example, the interaction between organizations and their environment is increasingly complex because of the dynamic, fluid nature of both the organization and the environment, which causes each to influence the other (Morrison, 2002).

This movement to a more complex, post-industrial society has influenced workplaces in a variety of ways. Leicht and Fennell (2001, p. 3) identified six characteristics of the modern workplace:

- (1) flatter organizational hierarchies;
- (2) growing use of temporary workers;
- (3) subcontracting and outsourcing;
- (4) massive downsizing of the permanent workforce;
- (5) a post-unionized bargaining environment; and
- (6) virtual organizations.

Morrison's (2002) description of complex organizations expands this list to include: small organization, teamwork and matrix structures, multi-team membership, open, flexible boundaries, person-centered, consumerist, self-organizing, empowering, and unpredictable (p. 16). Thus, post-industrial workplaces are very different from the large, hierarchical, closed, self-contained, and predictable workplaces of the industrial era. These workplace features have major implications for how work is conducted and how individuals confront changing work dynamics.

Hage and Powers (1992) argue that the nature of work changed in post-industrial society in fundamental ways that can be distinguished in terms of an emphasis on complexity in contrast to the rationality emphasis of industrial society. In industrial society, work was characterized by several factors, all of which contributed to increasing rationality:

- the use of standard operating procedures to decrease ambiguity and discretion;
- a de-emphasis on human activity in order to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity;
- limited contact with other roles; and
- efficiency and quantity of work as assessment criteria.

In contrast, work in post-industrial society emphasizes the following characteristics that contribute to increasing complexity in work:

- a preference for customized responses;
- the importance of the individual in searching for new information to solve problems and customize responses;
- intense and consistent contact with other roles; and
- an emphasis on creativity and innovation as assessment criteria.

Several authors have argued that this increased complexity has produced unintended consequences for working conditions. Richard Sennett (1998), for example, argues that changes in the nature of work have brought with them such conditions as a loss of character, a loss of self-understanding, and a disengagement from work. Robert Reich (2000), former US Secretary of Labor, describes the personal and community costs of new work arrangements, including an end to steady work, the necessity of continuous effort, and widening inequalities. Robert Putnam (2000), in his study of community engagement, identifies the declining involvement of individuals in civic and community associations.

Complexity in educational work

Although educational work is undoubtedly different from manufacturing work, these societal changes from industrial to post-industrial put pressures on educational workers in general, and on school principals in particular. These changes warrant a new understanding of the socialization of beginning principals who enact their role in this complex, post-industrial society.

Various societal changes in the USA have impacted schooling in dramatic ways. Gary Marx (2000, p. 3) identified ten trends that US educators face:

- (1) for the first time in history, the old will outnumber the young;
- (2) the country will become a nation of minorities;
- (3) social and intellectual capital will become the primary economic values in society;
- (4) education will shift from averages to individuals;
- (5) the Millennial Generation will insist on solutions to accumulated problems and injustices;
- (6) continuous improvement and collaboration will replace quick fixes and defense of the *status quo*;
- (7) technology will increase the speed of communication and the pace of advancement or decline;
- (8) knowledge creation and breakthrough thinking will stir a new era of enlightenment;
- (9) scientific discoveries and societal realities will force difficult ethical choices; and
- (10) competition will increase as industries and professions intensify their efforts to attract and keep talented people.

Marx's trends clearly point to a change in the role that knowledge plays in the society; social and intellectual capital have become dramatically important. Schools take on obvious and significant responsibility for building the capacity for this knowledge society and contributing to the accumulation of social and intellectual capital. The work of educators in a knowledge society involves more than simply recognizing the knowledge explosion. Educators must promote a more complex sense of knowledge, in which "knowledge is a flexible, fluid, ever-expanding, and ever-shifting resource" (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 16).

This knowledge society puts new and increasingly complex demands on teachers and principals. They not only must keep up with a rapidly increasing knowledge base

but also must create school environments that are focused on continuous learning and building learning capacity. Such responsibilities are not simply a more intense work environment but a more complicated one in which capacity building, motivation, and the involvement of an increasing number of roles and people in the knowledge process are critical.

These changes toward greater complexity in educational work also involve responding to new and expanding technology. The importance of technology for schools can be seen in the following features of the knowledge explosion:

- every two or three years, the knowledge base doubles;
- every day, 7,000 scientific and technical articles are published;
- every two weeks, satellites orbiting the globe send enough data to fill 19 million volumes in the Library of Congress;
- high school graduates have been exposed to more information than their grandparents were in a lifetime;
- only 15 percent of the jobs will require a college education, but nearly all jobs will require the equivalent knowledge of a college education; and
- there will be as much change in the next three decades as there was in the last three centuries (National School Boards Association, 2000, as quoted in Marx, 2000, p. 58).

These features create a dynamic and complicated environment for principals in responding to the information needs of teachers and students, creating resources to acquire hardware and software, developing a professional learning environment to support the use of technology, and closing the digital divide between rich and poor students.

Another factor contributing to the complexity of the principal's job is the changing student demographics in schools. As Marx (2000) notes, the USA is becoming a nation of minorities – a term currently being debated, since the traditional white majority becomes the minority race. Recently in the state of Texas, one of the most populous states of the country, the number of people of color now outnumbers the number of whites. Several states, including Texas, California, New Mexico, and Hawaii, are “majority-minority” states and at least five other states – Maryland, Mississippi, Georgia, New York, and Arizona – are quickly joining this group. The latest estimate is that by 2050, the white race will be a minority race in the USA. Race, however, is only one factor of the changing demographics. Mobility, at-risk conditions, poverty, and language create a different clientele of students and parents than many teachers and administrators have previously experienced. For teachers and principals who were socialized in homogenous settings with students of the same race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and language, these demographic changes demand culturally relevant sensitivities and knowledge of learning differences. Principals in most schools now encounter a vastly different and more challenging organizational setting, which demands community support in social, mental, and health services; professional development for principals and teachers in cultural sensitivities and learning styles; instructional monitoring and support for new kinds of educational services; and a commitment to ensuring that all students learn. These demographic changes also

present the opportunity for principals to use the resources of diversity for leadership and learning, but such opportunities must be recognized and valued.

Along with more complex knowledge, technology, and demographic changes, US principals are also faced with a dramatic increase in public scrutiny of schools. The federal law, No Child Left Behind, passed in 2001, raises the stakes on student learning. The stakes can involve loss of federal funding, public embarrassment, and in some cases loss of jobs for teachers and principals. This high stakes pressure is also occurring simultaneously with a conservative political swing that advocates privatization initiatives, including vouchers to private schools, charter schools, and other strategies aimed at reducing the so-called monopoly of public schools.

This dramatic increase in accountability and public scrutiny has added to the complexity of the principal's job, requiring principals to be entrepreneurial, to be more focused on student outcomes and instructional processes, and to be more connected with their communities. While all three requirements are appropriate and critical, they create a more complex job for principals not only in the number of demands but also in the conflicting and dynamic nature of the demands.

The changes in the principal's role also bring unintended consequences. Hargreaves (2003) argues that the current changes in educational work within this more complex knowledge society have resulted in a variety of dysfunctional features, including a culture of dependency, divisiveness among staff, loss of integrity, an end of ingenuity, and emotional strain. Various writers (Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002; Lindle, 2004) have acknowledged the increased emotional strain and stress faced by contemporary US principals.

Socialization of beginning US principals in a complex society

The complex environment in which beginning US principals take on their positions and the changing nature of the principal's role require new features of principal socialization. This section will identify four conceptual elements of socialization, based on the classic outline presented by Van Maanen and Schein (1979). The features of socialization described here include conceptual elements as well as some normative elements. The normative elements are based on the previous discussion of principals' work in a complex society and the changes that have occurred in the role. The purpose of this description is not to develop an extensive conceptual model but to suggest conceptual features and some implications of these features for principal socialization in a complex society. Again, some of these features are relevant to other national contexts, but the discussion of socialization in the following section is focused on US principals.

Content of socialization

The traditional socialization of beginning principals as consisting of professional and organizational socialization content ignores that socialization is a complex and dynamic process that involves more than what occurs in a university and a school. In order both to understand the nature of beginning principals' socialization and to enhance that socialization, we must begin before admission to a university principal preparation program.

Anticipatory socialization. The large majority of principals have been teachers. The socialization that occurs during the teaching experience is a kind of anticipatory

socialization that is part of the leadership development process (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Hart, 1993). Some researchers encourage leadership development among teachers (Smylie *et al.*, 2002), but this is not typically as a precursor for the principalship. However, as Browne-Ferrigno (2003) found, teachers' leadership experiences in schools, districts, and professional associations contributed to the development of principals' role conceptions. Crow and Glascock (1995) found that aspiring US principals identified three major sources of role conception:

- (1) witnessing principal work while they were teachers;
- (2) their own expertise as teachers; and
- (3) non-education work experience.

A more intentional use of leadership experiences during the teaching career needs to be seen as part of the principal socialization process. Recognizing that beginning principals' socialization begins with the teaching career provides the opportunity to understand how these beginning principals develop their instructional orientation, their understanding of the nature of knowledge, their cultural sensitivity to students, and their conceptions of instructional leadership.

Professional socialization. Traditionally professional socialization in the USA focuses only on what happens in the university, through coursework and perhaps internships. However, a more rigorous form of professional socialization for new principals in a complex society engages districts and schools, as well as universities, working together as agents in the process of learning the role (Grogan and Andrews, 2002). Since leadership is context-specific, blending university and school/district context in the preparation protects against the university training being brushed aside as irrelevant and provides a stronger learning opportunity for aspiring principals to develop the context-specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Browne-Ferrigno (2003) found in her study of US principals that "the key socializing experience [. . .] was working directly with school administrators in real settings" during the professional socialization period (p. 486). She also found that these university-school experiences increased role clarity and technical expertise, changed role conceptions, and developed skills and professional behaviors (p. 495). Jackson and Kelley (2002) found in their study of innovative US preparation programs that one of the most common features of these programs was a strong collaboration between university and district.

These kinds of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, important during professional socialization, should reflect the types of changes in a complex society identified earlier. For example, demographic changes and accountability requirements (Marx, 2000) confront beginning principals with the need to know culturally relevant learning strategies, to use data for assessment, and to monitor and enhance teacher instruction and student learning. For example, McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) and others (Scheurich and Skrla, 2003) have used the concept of equity traps and equity audits to prepare US school leaders to create schools that are equitable – particularly for students of color – and that respond to accountability demands.

Additionally, individuals in a complex society work in networking webs rather than in isolation (Hage and Powers, 1992). Professional socialization for beginning principals should involve the skills necessary for teamwork and collaboration. Norris *et al.* (2002) describe US preparation programs that use collaborative learning

communities to prepare leaders to lead professional learning communities in their schools.

In addition to coursework, professional socialization in the USA typically involves an internship where the leadership candidate is placed in a real administrative setting under the supervision of a practicing principal and a university faculty member. In order to prepare aspiring principals for a complex society, internships need to do more than simply provide the aspiring principal with an understanding of the rhythm and pace of the administrator's day. They should provide these future principals with the opportunity to work with a variety of students, a variety of effective, culturally relevant teaching, and a variety of school and work settings in order to prepare aspiring principals for the kind of demographically diverse settings they are likely to encounter. In addition, effective internships include carefully screened and trained mentors (Crow and Matthews, 1998; Jackson and Kelley, 2002).

Organizational socialization. During organizational socialization the new principal typically learns "how things are done here". But such a weak and narrow notion of organizational socialization is ineffective for beginning principals in a complex society. Broadening the notion of organizational socialization to include not only a particular school, but also social, mental, and health agencies; community religious and governmental entities; and other schools with similar and different demographics, can strengthen the learning of beginning principals. Although in the USA such an extensive organizational socialization model is rarely provided, its usefulness for understanding and developing the skills to lead schools in a changing student demographic context is obvious.

The typical organizational socialization of beginning principals in the USA follows a format in which the new principal is bombarded with all the responsibilities that a veteran principal has. The lack of mediated entry creates burnout, stress, and ineffective performance as beginning principals develop quick fixes and unreflective practices – responses that are counterproductive to the type of effective leadership needed in a complex society. Reinvigorating the assistant principalship position in the USA so that it provides a mediated entry by deliberately structuring the assistant principalship as a leadership development position (in a similar way to the deputy headteacher position in England) can remedy this problem and strengthen the organizational socialization for beginning principals, as well as contributing to the school's learning capacity (Greenfield, 1985c; Matthews and Crow, 2003).

Personal socialization. A fourth type of socialization is rarely identified in the literature. Personal socialization involves the change of self-identity that occurs as individuals learn new roles (Ortiz, 1982; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Matthews and Crow, 2003). For beginning principals, personal socialization can include identifying with the larger view of schools that goes beyond one classroom and with a different image of the role than a traditional, masculine or white image (Ortiz, 1982).

Additionally, in a complex society, the personal socialization of beginning principals must include seeing the principal's role in a societal perspective in which student learning is seen in the context of oppression and privilege in the larger society (Crow, 2006; Larson and Murtadha, 2002). Seeing oneself as an advocate for social justice-oriented schooling and learning is a different personal orientation than typically found with previous generations of beginning principals but is beginning to be viewed as a critical part of US principal preparation programs (Grogan and Andrews, 2002).

Learning content. In a post-industrial society in which complexity is key, the content of socialization must involve an orientation and openness to change – change in personal identity, change in the priorities of the principal’s tasks, and change in what constitutes an effective organization. Various reform initiatives in the US are currently calling for school principals who are transformational leaders dissatisfied with maintaining the *status quo* (Elmore, 2000; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2000). But not any change is appropriate in this complex context. The change required in a post-industrial society with the kinds of complexities we have identified previously includes an action orientation deliberately aimed at continuous learning for all students. This involves not only technical knowledge and skills, such as supervision, and the interpersonal skills, such as communication, to create learning environments that make it possible for all students to learn. This action orientation demands a set of dispositions and values based on cultural sensitivities and commitments to the learning of all students (McKenzie and Scheurich, 2004; Scheurich and Skrla, 2003). Until recently, principal preparation and professional development in the USA focused exclusively on knowledge and skills. But the values and dispositions that a beginning principal carries into the job and develops on the job are critical for the way the role is enacted. Peterson (2002) in his study of professional development programs in the USA found that cultural elements that helped develop values and dispositions were key factors in these programs, and these elements included linkages to organizational history, values, and community. Socialization content must include learning and internalizing these values (Feldman, 1976).

Sources of socialization

The traditional sources of beginning US principal socialization include teachers, veteran principals, and professors, i.e. educational agents. These traditional categories of agents restrict both the educational and non-educational sources for socialization. Certainly teachers and other principals have a tremendous amount of influence on the learning of beginning principals. These individuals present dilemmas for the new school leader, provide or hoard information, and test the new leader’s authority and values (Crow and Matthews, 1998). But students and parents also serve as socialization sources for the new principal. These individuals have traditionally been ignored in the descriptions of US principal socialization. Students, however, are major participants in the school who create problems, challenges, and opportunities that influence the beginning principal’s learning of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The changing student demographics that contemporary US principals encounter are a major source of influence not only on the role but the learning of these new principals. Parents also are a major socializing source in the school by presenting problems, challenges and opportunities that help define the new principal’s learning content and by pressuring district office administrators in ways that may influence what values, knowledge, and skills are celebrated or rejected. Increased public scrutiny, divergent parental interests and the increasing power of local conservative lobby groups increases the pressures on the role conception, norms, and behaviors of US principals.

Family members and friends also serve as socializing agents by valuing or de-valuing certain conceptions of the role (Crow and Matthews, 1998) that they may see as constraining their relationships with the beginning principal. The increasing

complexity and intensity of the role may also influence the level of support of these socialization agents for the beginning principal.

In addition, in a complex society sectors other than education influence the learning of beginning principals. The business sector historically plays a significant, and perhaps overly influential, role in the learning process of beginning principals (Callahan, 1962; Tyack and Hansot, 1982). The pressure placed on schools by the business community to prepare current and future workers as well as the resources provided by this sector with their attached demands, influence the learning of beginning principals. Think tanks, business lobbies, and local business interests influence the principal's role in terms of accountability, programs, and extracurricular activities.

Social service agencies are currently more involved in schools as educators recognize the importance of responding to the whole child in the learning context and the need to collaborate with social, health, and mental health agencies in order to augment the school's response to the unique and complex needs of contemporary students. Various approaches, such as inter-agency collaboration (Crowson, 2001) and community schools (Dryfoos *et al.*, 2005), influence the role of the beginning principal by expanding the web of relationships and the demands for the principals to engage with a broader set of roles.

Methods of socialization

The classic typology of socialization methods is found in Van Maanen and Schein (1979), who identify several dimensions, including individual versus collective, formal versus informal, serial versus disjunctive, and investiture versus divestiture. US principals tend to be socialized individually, informally, by veterans, and with an emphasis on divesting of earlier, teacher experiences (Greenfield, 1985a). Obviously there are differences depending, for example, on district induction programs, where the socialization may be formal, in groups, and focused on using the new principal's teaching experience.

The use of veterans as mentors to socialize beginning principals is common and almost sacred in the US. Sometimes this is done without acknowledging the conservative bias of mentoring, in which the veteran passes on the learning to the newcomer (Crow and Matthews, 1998). Although mentoring can be an important and effective tool for socializing beginning principals, it must be considered in the context of the complexity of post-industrial society. A variety of trained mentors who provide experiences with diverse students in diverse settings and who encourage innovative, culturally sensitive leadership practices can be particularly influential and effective for beginning principals (Jackson and Kelley, 2002).

The classic typology of socialization methods tends to overlook the more subtle cultural tactics that socializing agents use. Cultural modes, such as ceremonies, rites, rituals, songs, stories, and myths, are potent forms of socialization for all occupations, including educators (Trice, 1993). Teachers and veteran principals tell stories, for example, that relay special, critical messages to new principals that warn them against rocking the boat, making waves, and other possibly innovative strategies (Shackelford, 1992). Like most cultural modes, these can be more potent than the formal, overt methods. Crow and Pounders (1996) discovered several cultural methods used by faculty, students and supervisors in one US district to help aspiring principals "learn

the ropes". These included rituals (early bombardment of responsibilities), rites (testing by teachers), and ceremonies (introduction to teachers and staff) that these aspiring principals say were powerful socialization tools. Socializing agents, as well as beginning principals themselves, must be cautious about the message of cultural tactics, which can contradict models of effective leadership needed in a complex society.

In addition to these previously identified socialization methods, a frequently overlooked dimension of socialization method is variety versus similarity. The degree to which the beginning principal's experiences take place in the same district, same school, and same demographic context versus taking place in different settings provides learning experiences that can constrain or expand, impoverish or enrich the experience and ability of the new principal to work in a complex, ambiguous, and diverse environment. In a post-industrial society where customized response is demanded, where individual agency is emphasized, where webs of networking are necessary, where student populations are culturally diverse, and where the criteria for effectiveness are creativity and innovation, variety of experience is essential. Karaevli and Hall (2004) point to the impact that career variety and diversity have on facilitating administrative learning in a knowledge society. Crow (1992) found that principals in Chicago suburbs who had experience in more than one district were more likely to risk conflict with district office administrators in order to maintain school independence and change.

Outcomes of socialization

Merton (1968) identifies a broad set of socialization outcomes including conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion. A traditionalist notion of effective socialization typically assumes a certain degree of conformity, where the new principal is socialized to conform to a conception of the role that is accepted by the socializing agents. This basically involves a "role-taking" outcome (Hart, 1993), where the new principal takes a role conception given by the school, district, university, or community. Such an outcome assumes a static notion of the role designed to fit all situations. However, in a post-industrial society where roles are dynamic and the demands are fluid, a conformity or role-taking outcome by itself is likely to be ineffective and even dysfunctional. In contrast, more innovative, perhaps even rebellious, outcomes may be more effective for beginning principals in a complex environment. At least, this calls for a "role-making" outcome where the new principal creates a role to meet the dynamic, fluid nature of the context. The current US political environment with its conservative swing creates dilemmas for US principals, e.g. where entrepreneurial marketing goals and achievement test score accountability demands may conflict with innovations, especially in terms of a progressive curriculum.

Implications for research

The conceptual and practical features identified in this paper for the socialization of beginning principals suggest several possible areas for research that could enrich the understanding of beginning principals' socialization in the USA and perhaps in other national contexts.

The post-industrial trend toward creating customized responses to problems versus the industrial model of standardization is a dilemma confronting contemporary

beginning principals. Principals in the USA experience a tension between building enriched learning communities that support innovation and creativity and responding to the standardization approach in most accountability initiatives. Examining how this tension influences the processes and outcomes of beginning principal socialization would be useful in informing such areas as administrator stress and leader effectiveness during the induction period.

The anticipatory socialization of US principals has rarely been researched. A variety of factors of teaching experience (e.g. type of school, content area, and variety of experience with different student demographic groups) have possible implications for not only the way principals enact the role but the way they learn. Van Maanen (1984) argues that previous socialization experiences have an impact on subsequent socialization processes. Understanding the teaching experience of new principals may provide an understanding of and support for beginning principals' socialization.

Earlier in the paper, we identified variety versus similarity as an overlooked dimension of socialization methods. This dimension is currently being considered in some of the business literature on leadership in turbulent situations (Cooper and Burke, 2002). However, research on this dimension of socialization for beginning US principals is lacking. An understanding of how variety of work and life experiences support the learning of new principals who encounter the demographic diversity of contemporary schools would be useful for enriching beginning principal socialization in a complex, post-industrial society.

In a similar vein, an examination of the types of socialization methods used to effectively prepare beginning principals to address the social justice and learning equity outcomes of schools would be beneficial. A growing body of literature exists on strategies for university professors to use in preparing leaders for social justice (Marshall, 2004; Marshall and Oliva, 2006), but very little on the larger socialization processes (e.g. induction) that facilitate this type of leadership.

Learning how to do a job does not occur in the vacuum of a profession or an organization. The larger societal context in which roles are enacted impacts the socialization process. The dramatic changes of post-industrial society create an opportunity and a challenge for beginning US principals in learning their jobs. These principals themselves, as well as district leaders, professors and policymakers need to acknowledge how the complexities of these societal changes impact the socialization of this important group of school leaders.

References

- Ackerman, R.H. and Maslin-Ostrowski, P. (2002), *The Wounded Leader: How Real Leadership Emerges in Times of Crisis*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Bell, D. (1976), *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, Basic Books, New York, NY.
- Browne-Ferrigno, T. (2003), "Becoming a principal: role conception, initial socialization, role-identity transformation, purposeful engagement", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 39 No. 4, pp. 468-503.
- Browne-Ferrigno, T. and Muth, R. (2004), "Leadership mentoring in clinical practice: role socialization, professional development, and capacity building", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 40 No. 4, pp. 468-94.
- Callahan, R.E. (1962), *Education and the Cult of Efficiency: A Study of the Social Forces That Have Shaped the Administration of Public Schools*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

- Cooper, C.L. and Burke, R.J. (2002), *The New World of Work*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Crow, G.M. (1992), "Career history and orientation to work: the case of the elementary school principal", *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, Vol. 25, pp. 82-8.
- Crow, G.M. (2006), "Democracy and educational work in an age of complexity", *UCEA Review*, forthcoming.
- Crow, G.M. and Glascock, C. (1995), "Socialization to a new conception of the principalship", *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 22-43.
- Crow, G.M. and Grogan, M. (2005), "The development of leadership thought and practice in the United States", in English, F. (Ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Educational Leadership*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 362-79.
- Crow, G.M. and Matthews, L.J. (1998), *Finding One's Way. How Mentoring Can Lead to Dynamic Leadership*, Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Crow, G.M. and Pounders, M. (1996), "The administrative internship: learning the ropes of an occupational culture", paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY, April 8-12.
- Crowson, R. (2001), *Community Development and School Reform*, JAI Press, Amsterdam.
- Dryfoos, J., Quinn, J. and Barkin, C. (2005), *Community Schools in Action: Lessons from a Decade of Practice*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.
- Elmore, R. (2000), *Building a New Structure for School Leadership*, The Albert Shanker Institute, New York, NY.
- Feldman, D.C. (1976), "A contingency theory of socialization", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 21, pp. 433-52.
- Friedman, T. (2005), *The World Is Flat. A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York, NY.
- Greenfield, W.D. (1985a), "Being and becoming a principal: responses to work contexts and socialization processes", paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL, March.
- Greenfield, W.D. (1985b), "Studies of the assistant principalship: toward new avenues of inquiry", *Education and Urban Society*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 7-27.
- Greenfield, W.D. (1985c), "Developing an instructional role for the assistant principal", *Education and Urban Society*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 85-92.
- Griffiths, D., Stout, R. and Forsyth, P. (1988), *Leaders for America's Schools*, McCutchan, Berkeley, CA.
- Grogan, M. and Andrews, R. (2002), "Defining preparation and professional development for the future", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 38 No. 2, pp. 213-32.
- Hage, J. and Powers, C.H. (1992), *Post-Industrial Lives. Roles and Relationships in the 21st Century*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA.
- Haller, E.J., Brent, B.O. and McNamara, J.F. (1997), "Does graduate training in educational administration improve America's schools? Another look at some national data", *Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 79 No. 3, pp. 222-7.
- Hallinger, P. and Heck, R. (1996), "Reassessing the principal's role in school effectiveness: a review of empirical research, 1980-1995", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 5-44.
- Hargreaves, A. (2003), *Teaching in the Knowledge Society*, Teachers College Press, New York, NY.

- Hart, A.W. (1993), *Principal Succession: Establishing Leadership in Schools*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY.
- Hess, F.M. and Kelly, A.P. (2005), "Learning to lead: what gets taught in principal preparation programs", A Joint Program of the Taubman Center for State and Local Government and the Center for American Political Studies, Cambridge, MA.
- Jackson, B.L. and Kelley, C. (2002), "Exceptional and innovative programs in educational leadership", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 38 No. 2, pp. 192-212.
- Karaevli, A. and Hall, D.T. (2004), "Career variety and executive adaptability in turbulent environments", in Burke, R.J. and Cooper, C.L. (Eds), *Leading in Turbulent Times. Managing in the New World of Work*, Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 54-74.
- Larson, C.L. and Murtadha, K. (2002), "Leadership for social justice", in Murphy, J. (Ed.), *The Educational Leadership Challenge: Redefining Leadership for the 21st Century*, National Society for the Study of Education, Chicago, IL.
- Lashway, L. (2003), *Improving Principal Evaluation*, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, Eugene, OR.
- Leicht, K.T. and Fennell, M.L. (2001), *Professional Work: A Sociological Approach*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Leithwood, K. and Jantzi, D. (2000), "The effects of transformational leadership on organizational conditions and student engagement with school", *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 38, pp. 112-29.
- Levine, A. (2005), *Educating School Leaders*, The Education Schools Project, New York, NY.
- Lindle, J.C. (2004), "Trauma and stress in the principal's office: systematic inquiry as coping", *Journal of School Leadership*, Vol. 14, pp. 378-410.
- McKenzie, K.B. and Scheurich, J.J. (2004), "Equity traps: a useful construct for preparing principals to lead schools that are successful with racially diverse students", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 40 No. 5, pp. 601-32.
- Marshall, C. (2004), "Social justice challenges to educational administration", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 40 No. 1.
- Marshall, C. and Oliva, M. (2006), *Leadership for Social Justice. Making Revolutions in Education*, Pearson, Boston, MA.
- Marx, G. (2000), *Ten Trends. Educating Children for a Profoundly Different Future*, Educational Research Service, Arlington, VA.
- Matthews, L.J. and Crow, G.M. (2003), *Being and Becoming a Principal*, Allyn & Bacon, Boston, MA.
- Merton, R.K. (1968), *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Free Press, New York, NY.
- Milstein, M.M., Bobroff, B.M. and Restine, L.N. (1991), *Internship Programs in Educational Administration: A Guide to Preparing Educational Leaders*, Teachers College Press, New York, NY.
- Morrison, K. (2002), *School Leadership and Complexity Theory*, Routledge/Falmer, London.
- National School Boards Association (2000), "Leadership and technology", *Present and Future Change*, National School Boards Association's Institute for the Transfer of Technology to Education, Alexandria, VA.
- Norris, C.J., Barnett, B.G., Basom, M.R. and Yerkes, D.M. (2002), *Developing Educational Leaders. A Working Model: The Learning Community in Action*, Teachers College Press, New York, NY.

-
- Orr, M.T. (2004), "Conceptualizing research on the impact of leadership preparation for practicing graduates and their schools", unpublished manuscript presented at the Annual Conference of the University Council for Educational Administration, Kansas City, MO, May.
- Ortiz, F.I. (1982), *Career Patterns in Education: Women, Men, and Minorities*, Praeger, New York, NY.
- Peterson, K. (2002), "The professional development of principals: innovations and opportunities", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 38 No. 2, pp. 213-32.
- Putnam, R.D. (2000), *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon & Schuster, New York, NY.
- Reich, R.B. (2000), *The Future of Success. Working and Living in the New Economy*, Vintage Books, New York, NY.
- Scheurich, J.J. and Skrla, L. (2003), *Leadership for Equity and Excellence. Creating High-Achievement Classrooms, Schools, and Districts*, Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Sennett, R. (1998), *The Corrosion of Character. The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*, W.W. Norton and Co., New York, NY.
- Shackelford, J.A. (1992), "An uphill battle: socialization of a novice female elementary principal", unpublished PhD dissertation, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK.
- Smylie, M.A., Conley, S. and Marks, H. (2002), "Building leadership into the roles of teachers", in Murphy, J. (Ed.), *The Educational Leadership Challenge: Redefining Leadership for the 21st Century*, National Society for the Study of Education, Chicago, IL.
- Toffler, A. (1981), *The Third Wave*, Bantam, New York, NY.
- Trice, H.M. (1993), *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*, ILR Press, Ithaca, NY.
- Tyack, D. and Hansot, E. (1982), *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980*, Basic Books, New York, NY.
- Van Maanen, J. (1984), "Doing new things in old ways: the chains of socialization", in Bess, J.L. (Ed.), *College and University Organization*, New York University Press, New York, NY, pp. 211-47.
- Van Maanen, J. and Schein, E.H. (1979), "Toward a theory of organizational socialization", in Staw, B.M. and Cummings, L.L. (Eds), *Research in Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 1, JAI Press, Greenwich, CT, pp. 209-64.
- Young, M. and Petersen, G.T. (2002), "Ensuring the capacity of university-based educational leadership preparation: the collected works of the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 38 No. 2.
- Young, M.D., Crow, G.M., Orr, M.T., Ogawa, R. and Creighton, T. (2005), "An educative look at 'Educating school leaders'", *UCEA Review*, Vol. 46 No. 2, pp. 1-4.

Further reading

National College for School Leadership (2001), *Leadership Development Framework*, National College for School Leadership, Nottingham.

Corresponding author

Gary M. Crow can be contacted at: gcrow@ed.utah.edu

To purchase reprints of this article please e-mail: reprints@emeraldinsight.com
Or visit our web site for further details: www.emeraldinsight.com/reprints

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.