Unseen Forces: The Impact of Social Culture

on School Leadership

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Abstract

The emergence of the global era has raised the ante on cross-cultural understanding.

Although education has been a traditional means of cross-cultural transmission, relatively effort to

date has gone into understanding how culture influences the content or processes of educational practice. Internationally disseminated theories of educational leadership have been dominated by Western cultural and intellectual frameworks and have ignored a range of other frameworks. It is time to open up our thinking about theories and methods of organizing and administering education throughout the world.There are potential benefits to theory as well as to practice in widening the cultural and intellectual lenses being used in the field.

Our purpose in this paper is to understand how one might begin to explore educational leadership concepts and practices across cultures. We discuss how culture has been studied in fields of management outside of education. Then we examine the role that a cultural lens could play in our thinking about educational leadership and argue that the notion of societal culture will enrich both theory and practice in the field. Finally we raise some questions for future research that arise from looking at educational leadership within a cultural context.

Over the past century or more the organization of educational systems worldwide has been strongly influenced by models developed in Europe (e.g., Great Britain, France, Germany) and the United States. Today we still see the holdover of "A Forms" transplanted from Great Britain in former colonies. French educational structures and techniques are still in use in Francophone nations. And similarities to the America's "common school" are evident in countries strongly influenced by the United States. Similar program/course structures, policies and academic norms also appear frequently in systems of higher education.

Generally adopted as part these foreign systems of educational organization have been methods of administration and philosophies of education. The globalization of the past two decades, often unwittingly, has fostered homogenization of educational values, programs and practices

across the world. Private elementary and secondary schools as well as universities are now setting up off-shore branches in other parts of the world on a new scale: education is becoming internationalized to an extent that would have been quite unimaginable just two or three decades ago.

In such fast-growing economies of Asia as Malaysia and Singapore, however, local scholars and national leaders are beginning to ask questions that strike to the heart of the educational enterprise (Bajunid, 1996). For example:

Is the wholesale acceptance of Western educational practices appropriate to our national goals?

Are the educational practices we have adopted from the West consistent with and sustaining of our cultural heritage?

What are our own intellectual traditions and indigenous approaches to education and cultural transmission?

How does the indigenous knowledge embedded in our culture fit with the theories, assumptions and practices embedded in our Western-derived educational programs?

These questions are being raised not only in academia, but also in schools and the communities they serve. The recent furor over the caning of an American student in Singapore is an apt example of cross-cultural conflict over educational values. Similarly controversy over the

advisability of streaming (tracking) students or limiting access to information on the internet reflect clashes between predominant cultural values and the educational practices of different nations. The fact that such controversies are making international headlines reflects the increasing confidence of developing nations in their abilities to chart their own futures and to assert the validity of their own cultural values (Bajunid, 1996). This means, in part, taking charge of their own philosophies, goals and means of education.

It is not our purpose in this paper to explore how methods and philosophies of educational practice are disseminated internationally or to comment on the appropriateness of various educational positions. These issues have been addressed elsewhere. We do believe, however, that the recent economic rise of Asia makes this an appropriate time to open up our thinking about theories and methods of organizing and administering education throughout the world. Internationally disseminated theories of educational leadership have been dominated by Western cultural and intellectual frameworks and have ignored a range of other frameworks (Bajunid, 1996; Cheng, 1995b; Hallinger, 1995; Wong, 1996). There are potential benefits to theory as well as to practice in widening the cultural and intellectual lenses being used in the field.

Our purpose in this paper is to understand how one might begin to explore educational leadership concepts and practices across cultures. First we discuss how culture has been studied in fields of management outside of education. Next we examine the role that a cultural lens could play in our thinking about educational leadership. Finally we raise some questions for future research that arise from looking at educational leadership within a cultural context.

Societal Culture and Leadership

An Unexplored Link

As Getzels and colleagues (Getzels, Lipham, & Campbell, 1968) theorized and researchers outside educational administration have empirically investigated, organizational culture is only a portion of a broader social culture in which students of administration ought to be interested (Brislin, 1993; Hofstede, 1980; Ralston, Elissa, Gustafson, & Cheung, 1991). The broader societal culture exerts an influence on administrators beyond the influence exerted by a specific organization's culture (Getzels et al., 1968; Gerstner & Day, 1994; Hofstede, 1976, 1980).

Surprisingly, scholars have devoted little effort has gone towards uncovering the cultural foundations of leadership when referred in this broader sense (Gerstner & Day, 1994; Shaw, 1990). This is particularly true in educational administration (Bajunid, 1996; Cheng, 1995b; Hallinger & Heck, 1996b; Heck & Hallinger, in press).

Understanding culture's influence requires us to focus on a subtle interplay of foreground and background. Normally we are unaware of our own culture -- it's just the way we do things around here. Consequently, our leadership theories typically make little mention of the cultural context in which leaders work. A cultural context exists, but our "acculturated lens" blinds us to its effects. Consequently, the work of most scholars assumes the cultural context is being held constant while they conceptualize how leadership is exercised within a particular educational context.

Current conceptualizations of administrative practice represent a useful point of departure for better understanding the relationships between leadership and societal culture. Frameworks such those proposed by Bossert and colleagues (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982) point to important antecedents of leadership -- variables that shape the needs and requirements of leadership within the organization -- as well as paths by which leaders may achieve an impact on the organization. What remains is to make the social culture explicit in such frameworks in order to

explore its impact on the social and institutional system in which leadership is exercised. Theoretical work in educational administration (e.g., Getzels et al., 1968; Cheng, 1995b; Cheng & Wong, 1996) and research in the general leadership literature provide useful direction in this quest (e.g., Brislin, 1993; Hofstede, 1976, 1980).

The Meaning of Culture

In order to render social culture explicit in conceptualizations of educational leadership, it is first necessary to define it. Kluckhorn and Kroeberg (1952) referred to culture as "patterns of behaviors that are acquired and transmitted by symbols over time, which become generally shared within a group and are communicated to new members of the group in order to serve as a cognitive guide or blueprint for future actions" (cited in Black & Mendenhall, 1990, p. 120). This conception is distinct from, though related to, the institutional context and organizational culture in which the school administrator operates.

Recent definitions of culture have been associated with studies of organizational cultures. Shein (1996), locating the first academic inclinations to employ organizational culture in the 1960s, notes that until then:

We did not grasp that norms held tacitly across large social units were much more likely to change leaders than to be changed by them. We failed to note that "culture" viewed as such taken-for-granted, shared, tacit ways of perceiving, thinking and reacting, was one of the most powerful and stable forces operating in organizations"(p. 231).

Subsequently, scholars have accepted that human interaction within social systems reflects the values and behavioral norms that underlie the surrounding culture (Getzels et al., 1968; Hofstede, 1976). But empirical research on culture and administration remains relatively sparse. As Schein (1996) argues:

We need to understand better what the forces are that cause organizations of all kinds to create similar cultural milieux, incentive and control systems that operate in the same way, even though the goals of the organizations are different. (p. 234)

Inquiry About Social Culture

Theory and research concerning broader social culture is even more scarce. Studies conducted to date only begin to suggest directions for researchers. But some of these directions are fascinating. For example, recent evidence suggests that between-society variation in predominant value orientation and behavioral norms may be larger than within-society variation (e.g., Brislin, 1993; Gerstner & Day, 1994; Hofstede, 1976, 1980). Evidence also has begun to accumulate in support of Getzels et al.'s (1968) proposition that cultural values shape followers' perceptions of leaders and that these perceptions will vary across cultures (Hofstede, 1976, 1980; Ralston et al., 1991).

The seminal work on culture and management has been conducted by Geert Hofstede (1976). He is acknowledged widely as influencing the field's understanding of cross-cultural management issues through his own empirical studies and through use of his conceptual framework. Hofstede has examined international differences in work-related values using an international survey of corporate workforces. Inferences drawn about the value systems of fifty nations led to conclusion that value patterns among countries varied along four main dimensions: individualism versus collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity (Hofstede, 1983). From these dimensions Hofstede (1980) has constructed descriptions of types of expected social behavior across nations: behavior toward people of higher rank (PD); behavior toward the group (IC); behavior according to one's gender (MF) and; disposition toward uncertainty (UA). This framework has been used in business sector research and will find similar utility in

cross-cultural studies of educational leadership (e.g., Hofstede, 1983; Trandis, Brislin, & Hui, 1988).

Gerstner and O'Day (1994) assert: "Because leadership is a cultural phenomenon, inextricably linked to the values and customs of a group of people, we do not expect differences in leadership prototypes to be completely random. Rather they should be linked to dimensions of national culture" (p. 123). Their own cross-cultural research in the business sector found significant differences in how different nationalities perceive the traits of leaders. Additional analyses found that these perceptual differences were also significant when countries were grouped as being an Eastern or Western culture. Unfortunately, less empirical data is available concerning the impact of culture on the behavior, as opposed to the perceptions of leaders.

Nonetheless, our own recent discussions with principals from the United States, Australia, and Thailand provides at least anecdotal support for this claim. For example, when discussing hierarchical relationships, an Australian principal pointed out that system-level administrators in Australia receive little of the deference that American principals typically award district superintendents. A Thai principal then added, in response, that although Thai principals hold clearly delegated authority within their institutional systems, norms of seniority remain stronger than institutional authority. She illustrated this by describing how an administrator who is younger and less senior than one of his/her teachers will be constrained by cultural norms from making critical comments about that teacher's classroom instruction.

Although the research on these matters is less developed, there is also support for the proposition, at a gross level, that different cultural values and norms distinguish Eastern versus Western cultures (e.g., Ralston et al., 1991). People within these cultures have different approaches to space, time, information, and communication (Hall & Hall, 1987). At the same time, there

remains considerable variation among Eastern cultures in important values. For example, the Chinese-dominated cultures of Hong Kong and Singapore differ in important respects from those of Malaysia and Thailand. The effects of these normative differences on administration have not been well-studied inside or outside of education.

Culture is the source of values that people share in a society. As such culture can be viewed as having effects on multiple features of the school and its environment. Culture shapes the institutional and community context within which the school is situated by defining predominant value orientations and norms of behavior (Getzels et al., 1968). It influences the predilections of individual leaders as well as the nature of interactions with others in the school and its community. Moreover, it determines the particular educational emphasis or goals that prevail within a cultures system of schooling.

Since cultural values vary across nations, we would expect cross-cultural variation in the educational goals of societies as well as the normative practices aimed towards their achievement (Getzels et al., 1968). American society, for example, places a higher value on cognitive reasoning than do some Eastern (and Western) societies. Similarly, the assumptions that underlie notions of best practice in American schools reflect the heavy value placed on individual student achievement and mastery of cognitive learning goals. These values and expectations form a context for educational leadership in two ways. They shape not only what leaders and followers perceive as desired outcomes for schools in the society, but also conceptions of leadership (Brislin, 1993; Gerstner & Day, 1994; Hofstede, 1976; Ralston et al., 1992). They influence, as well, the nature of the interactions that occur between the leader and followers.

The Role of Culture in Educational Leadership Theory

Theoretical discussions of the knowledge base in educational administration that explicitly address the cultural foundations of educational leadership and administration are surprisingly scarce. That leadership is contingent upon the context in which it is exercised is by no means a new idea (Fiedler, 1967; Gardner, 1990; Getzels, Lipham, & Campbell, 1968). However, theory and empirical research in administration generally assume that leadership is being exercised in a Western cultural context. Exceptions to this assumption are found almost exclusively outside of the educational literature in general management (e.g., Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Gerstner & Day, 1994; Hofstede, 1976, 1980; Pye, 1985; Ralston et al., 1991).

The 19th and 20th centuries have been so dominated by Western intellectual paradigms that the intellectual traditions and practices of other cultures are often judged without questioning the implicit assumptions embedded in Western cultures (Greenfield, 1984). This hegemonic influence of Western knowledge which has overshadowed the intellectual traditions of other cultures has become even more acute in recent decades. Few modern discussions of leadership or administration grounded in non-Western cultural contexts can be found (Bajunid, 1996; Cheng, 1995b; Cheng & Wong, 1996; Wong, 1996).

Western theoretical treatises on the nature of leadership -- in education and other fields of management -- are often transferred across cultures with relatively little concern for their cultural validity, as well. This tendency, not limited to Western scholars, has resulted in the transfer of a Western knowledge base to non-Western societies, often without sufficient concern for its cultural salience and validity (Bajunid, 1996; Cheng, 1995b; Gerstner & Day, 1994).

Toward a Framework for Inquiry

Going back to the work of Getzels, Lipham and Campbell (1968), administrative theorists have sought to develop comprehensive conceptualizations of educational leadership (see Figure 1).

By comprehensive, we refer to models that account for personal antecedents of leadership, contextual factors that impinge on the leader's thinking and behavior, mediating variables subject to the leader's influence, and organizational outcomes (e.g., Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a).

[Insert figure 1 here]

In their seminal work, Getzels and his colleagues (1968) located the administrator and the educational institution in a cultural context and discussed at length the varying impact that different cultural values exert on the thinking and behavior of leaders and other organizational members. However, despite the potent theoretical conceptualization offered by Getzels el al. (1968), few scholars in educational administration subsequently have explored culture as a contextual determinant in understanding the exercise of educational leadership. This is true for conceptual development and even more so for empirical research.

Perhaps the best known attempt to develop a comprehensive conceptualization of educational leadership in the past 15 years is represented by the work of Bossert and his colleagues at the Far West Lab for Educational Research and Development (Bossert et al., 1982). This group of scholars gave great weight to the impact of community and institutional context on administrative leadership. However, they did not address at all the issue of cultural context.

As conceived by Getzels and colleagues (1968), a consideration of culture would entail explicit analysis of the dominant social values and norms of the larger society. They viewed social culture as a foundation variable in the social system (see figure 1) of which the school is one part. We also view culture as a variable underlying the entire social system (see Figure 2).

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

Consistent with models for understanding the nature, causes and consequences of educational leadership presented over the past two decades (e.g., Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 1990), Figure 2 attends to the interaction of school context, leadership, intra-organizational processes and school outcomes.

School Context

Bossert et al. (1982) identified both community and institutional contexts as exogenous factors influencing the exercise of school leadership. By community Bossert and colleagues (1982) were referring to characteristics of the school's external environment. These included the socioeconomic status of the parent and student population, geographic features such as urban/suburban/rural, parental expectations, and levels of community support for schools.

Institutional context is defined by the formal structure, goals, rules and regulations of the organization. This component of context encompasses features as diverse as school and district size, degree of system centralization, state and national regulations, mandated curricular goals, unionism, funding levels, and governance arrangements.

Practice in educational administration is strongly linked to the community and institutional context. In all countries community norms define, to varying degrees, the direct expectations held for those in principal and teacher roles. Tyack and Hansot (1982) called the American common school, the "community's museum of virtue". This calls attention to the critical role played by schools in cultural transmission. While community norms may vary widely within a given country, they can be expected to vary even more widely between nations and cultures. For example, in

Thailand, norms that influence the involvement of parents in education differ considerably from those found in the industrialized West. Particularly among rural parents, cultural norms of deference to teachers and authority limit the ways in which parents have been involved in school decision-making.

Leaders must respond to and establish a fit between the school and its institutional structure. Moreover, it is readily apparent that institutional structure varies across settings. So the principal of a small rural elementary school in Kentucky operates in a very different institutional context than the principal of a large secondary school in Los Angeles (or an elementary school in Hong Kong or Melbourne).

Apart from the size and complexity of the school itself, in the United States the school district and the state represent important sources of institutional variation. Consequently, at the school site level variation is apparent in virtually every sphere. For example compare personnel policies, curriculum, graduation standards, length of the school day and year, tests, resource availability and distribution, role definitions of educational staff, strength of unions, and salary structure among schools in Kentucky and California. These facets of the institutional structure will differ widely and shape the context in which the principal leads.

Such variation in institutional context is even greater across cultures. Neighboring countries such as Thailand and Malaysia operate with highly centralized, bureaucratized educational systems. In Thailand, with a population of 60 million people, virtually all educational decisions regarding policy, curriculum, goals, standards, and funding are made by a centralized bureaucracy. Even decisions about the size and weight of backpacks students may use to carry their books are made centrally.Centralized structures reduce seek to reduce the boundaries of discretionary decisionmaking open to the principal. While principals may exercise considerable authority at the

school site, their formal decisionmaking power is highly circumscribed.

In Thailand, the selection and placement of principals is accomplished at the Ministry of Education on the basis of age, years of experience, size of prior school, and test results on administrative exam. Principals are routinely rotated among schools every two to four years. This generates a set of expectations for principal performance grounded in maintenance rather than improvement-oriented activities. Principals tend not to be rewarded for efforts at school improvement. Moreover, they simply do not remain in their schools long enough to develop coherent goals and shared values among staff. This is significant given a growing body of research conducted in different cultures suggesting that principal effectiveness is related to their role in establishing a mission of shared values and goals with staff (and parents) for the school.

Contrast this institutional context of rules and regulations with that of Australia or New Zealand. There the trend has been to free to schools to make their own policy decisions. In the state of Victoria, for example, schools directly control over 90% of the education funding. This clearly represents a very different institutional context for administration or leadership. Principals in this context operate more like Chief Executive Officers than as middle managers.

This notion of institutional context focuses attention on differences in the formal organization of schooling. As such, it is conceptually distinct from the notion of societal culture which is grounded in the informal norms of a country. Though conceptually distinct, there are likely to be interesting interactions between the cultural norms of a nation and the types of formal institutional systems they design for the organization and management of education. We will return to this issue later. Next, however, we will examine the construct of school culture.

Personal Characteristics of the Leader

Administrators' personal characteristics also may be viewed as antecedents of behavior

(Boyan, 1988). Scholars assert that the values, beliefs, and experiences of principals are salient to understanding how they exercise educational leadership (Barth, 1986; Dwyer, 1986; Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1992). The number of years of prior teaching experience of a principal also is positively associated with instructional leadership activity, for example (Eberts & Stone, 1988; Glasman, 1984; Leithwood et al., 1992). Principals' personal values have been identified as potentially important by implicitly shaping principal attention to different aspects of the educational program (Cuban, 1988; Leithwood et al., 1990, 1992).

An accumulating body of research also shows an association between principal leadership and gender (Adkison, 1981; Glasman, 1984; Gross & Trask, 1976). On average, female elementary school principals are more actively involved in instructional leadership than are their male counterparts. In noting this finding in an earlier review of research, Leithwood et al. (1990, p. 26) suggest that:

the socialization experiences of men and women [are linked] with differences in career aspirations and views of the principal's role. Such experiences appear to cause more men to seek the principalship earlier in their careers (before age 30) and to aspire to the superintendency as a career move. Gender related socialization experiences also seemed to contribute to a relatively large proportion of women viewing themselves more as curriculum and instructional leaders; relatively larger proportions of men, in contrast viewed themselves as general managers.

These observations suggest that certain personal characteristics of principals may correlate with each other as well as with principals' actions.

Principal Leadership

Even within Western nations, the conceptualization of principal leadership has evolved considerably over the past 25 years (Glasman & Heck, 1992; Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood et al.,

1992). Predominant notions of the principal's role have evolved from manager, to street-level bureaucrat, to change agent, to instructional manager, to instructional leader, to transformational leader. Within the past decade, there has been a discernable shift in emphasis in the conceptualization of the principal's role.

Studies from the early to late 1980 were dominated by an instructional leadership conceptualization drawn from the effective schools literature (e.g., Andrews & Soder, 1987). This was not unexpected given the policy context of the past decade or so. More recently, less emphasis has been given to instructional leadership role and more to models which explicitly acknowledge the implications of school restructuring such as transformational leadership (Hallinger, 1992; Heck & Hallinger, in press; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1993).

A bridge in perspective, for example, is suggested in Kleine-Kracht's (1993) study of principal leadership. Kleine-Kracht used qualitative methods to investigate how instructional leadership was implemented on a day-to-day basis. Kleine-Kracht found that effective principals often dispersed their leadership to teachers by sharing power and responsibility. She concludes instructional leaders facilitate leadership in others and empower them to be leaders (Heck & Hallinger in press).

This evolution of the educational leadership role has been labeled as reflecting increased attention to "second order" changes (Leithwood, 1994) as it is aimed primarily at changing the organization's normative structure. The most frequently used model of this variety has been transformational leadership (e.g., Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Silins, 1994). In contrast to the functionalist orientation of most instructional leadership studies, Slater (1995) argues that conceptualizations stemming from Burns' (1978) work are related to conflict theories of leadership, in that they deal less with effectiveness and more with power relationships in organizations.

With respect to organizational improvement, transformational leadership focuses on increasing the school's capacity to innovate. Rather than focusing specifically on curriculum and instruction, transformational leadership seeks to build the organization's capacity to select its purposes and to support the survival of changes to the school's core technology. The core theoretical and empirical work on this model has been conducted by Leithwood and his colleagues at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Several of their recent studies examined transformational and transactional leadership constructs (e.g., Leithwood et al., 1993; Leithwood, 1994; Silins, 1994).

While this overview suggests an evolution in how we have viewed the principal's role over time, there is another dimension that it fails to illuminate. As Heck notes (1996), not only may the particular leadership frame being emphasized vary culturally, but the same frame may have different meaning within different cultures.

[I]t would be premature to assume there is one key variable or similar construct existing cross-culturally that best describes principal leadership. At the core of cross-cultural research are sets of assumptions about the structure of knowledge, the nature of reality, and the appropriate methods of investigation. On one side of the debate, some (Whyte, 1978) have suggested in conducting cross-cultural comparisons, perhaps one should start with a very different assumption: there may be no coherent concept (e.g., principal leadership) that can be identified cross-culturally. In contrast, drawing upon the work of Vygotsky, Wertsch (1991) argues that transmitting any type of experience to others involves ascribing the content of the specific experience to a known group of phenomena, which necessarily involves generalization. Thus, social interaction necessarily presupposes generalization of experience and meaning (through language and thought); that is, social interaction is possible because human thinking reflects reality in a generalized way. (p. 76)

This implies that great care must be taken in validating conceptual constructs such as leadership being used across cultures (see Heck, 1996 for an in-depth treatment of this issue). Bajunid (1996) makes the additional point that linguistic constructs used to convey what we mean by leadership and its elements may differ as well.

Corpus building in the knowledge area requires reflection, observation, research ,and explanation beyond "word deep" translations. Among the management concepts which are receiving wide and popular usage are the following: consultation [musyuawarah], collaboration [gotong royong], excellence [al falah], personal refinements [adab], accountability [amanah], et cetera. Many of the concepts being explored are indigenous concepts but Islamic in origin. (p. 53)

Untangling the indigenous meaning of such leadership concepts suggests the need to begin by elaborating leadership from within each cultures's own sets of linguistic meanings and interpretations.

A concrete example of this is offered by Cheng and Wong (1996). In their study of principal leadership in Chinese schools, they noted that principals play a strong instructional leadership role: Principals are expected to be professional leaders in schools. They are supposed to be role models for a good teacher. In the Zhejiang case, most of the school principals did classroom teaching and most of them used up to 30% of their time in teaching. They used around 15% to 20% of their time in actual counselling and helping teachers. (p. 35)

While this description of practice would certainly fall within the realm of instructional leadership in a Western conception, we suspect that few Canadian or American instructional leaders would frequently manifest these particular leadership behaviors in practice. Thus, both the conceptual constructs and the methods used to uncover the meaning of leadership within a culture represent important challenges for cross-cultural research in the field.

Not only might the practices that comprise a given leadership construct vary cross-culturally, but we would hypothesize that the desirable processes to be used in the exercise of leadership may as well. For example, management of conflict represent a key process skill used by leaders to attain their ends. In North America today, management gurus assert that conflict ought to be employed actively as an tool in stimulating organizational change. This contrasts with the stabilizing approach to conflict management that widely characterizes Asian organizations. Walker et al. (1996) observed this in their study of leadership development among Hong Kong principals.

Explanations of [higher levels of] conflict avoidance which were observable in our [Hong Kong] PBL course may reflect cultural considerations. Although students certainly had divergent ideas and were more than willing to discuss them, they appeared very reluctant to allow disagreement to become heated or emotional [when compared with reports of Western students in a similar situations]. Studies in the business field show conflict management strategies often differ between Chinese and Western managers. Chinese managers tend more toward compromise, the avoidance of conflict and accommodating strategies than their Western counterparts. This appears true even though cooperation and collaboration in teams are suggested as a more natural form of behavior in Chinese cultures. (p. 25)

Thus, we suggest that the cross-cultural study of leadership as a construct must attend to several related issues. Conceptual equivalence requires that the meaning attributed to a given construct is valid cross-culturally. The linguistic root meaning of concepts that comprise our notions of leadership must be clarified as well since they also carry deep connotations that are not always easy to uncover. Finally, we must accept that the processes associated with leadership are intimately associated with the cultural norms that predominate within a given social culture.

School Culture and Climate

The closest that researchers in educational administration have come to employing a cultural construct for analytical purposes is the exploration of organizational cultures as contexts for leadership (Bolman & Deal, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1984). From a micro-organizational perspective organizations have their own institutional cultures which can be inferred from the values, norms, expectations, and traditions that describe human interaction within the organization. Bossert and colleagues (1982) refer to this as the school learning climate. This culture or climate is comprised of those facets of a school that shape the attitudes and behaviors of staff and students towards instruction and learning (e.g., Brookover et al., 1978; Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; McDill, Rigsby, & Meyers, 1969; Miller & Sayre, 1986; Rutter, Maugham, Mortimore, Ouston, & Smith, 1979). These facets include, for example, school mission, teacher expectations, and opportunities for student to learn. Prior research on school improvement has shown that schools in which there is a clear, academically oriented mission are better able to make decisions in the interests of students and to allocate resources towards the improvement of teaching and learning. This indicates that principals may be able to influence teaching and learning effectiveness through their role in developing a shared school-wide mission.

A relatively long and consistent tradition of classroom research has shown that teacher expectations have a significant effect on student learning outcomes (Purkey & Smith, 1983). At the same time, school effectiveness researchers have concluded that schools differ in the degree to which they shape teachers' expectations for student learning (Murphy & Hallinger, 1989). Studies of teacher expectations have also shown that principals play a key instructional leadership role by shaping teachers' attitudes concerning students' ability to master school subject matter (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Oakes, 1989; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rutter et al., 1979). Thus, one way principals can influence student achievement is through raising teachers' expectations for student

learning. This is accomplished both through personal actions of the principal and through policies developed in conjunction with staff (Duke & Canady, 1991; Cheng & Wong, 1996; Goldring & Pasternak, 1994; Murphy & Hallinger, 1989).

Another component of the school's instructional climate that has received attention over the past 20 years concerns students' opportunities to learn. Simply stated, schools differ in the degree to which they provide students with access to knowledge (Murphy & Hallinger, 1989; Oakes, 1989; Purkey & Smith, 1983). This is yet another school-level variable subject to principal influence through the development of academic policies and school-wide norms, and through the direct monitoring of teachers' practices (Duke & Canady, 1991; Dwyer, 1986; Murphy & Hallinger, 1989).

While Bossert and his colleagues located the school learning climate as an organizational or endogenous variable, they also imply that the effects of the school's culture are multi-directional. That is, while their framework appears to suggest that the principal's leadership acts as an independent variable influencing the school's culture, they also note that the school's culture will likely influence the principal's leadership as well. Further research and theoretical treatment of school culture as a construct in the ensuing years affirms this latter conceptualization. While principals may be able to shape the culture of a school, the impact of the school's culture on the principal and other school-level leaders is likely to be as great or greater.

Even so, this particular notion of school culture is narrower than our concept of social culture. We hypothesize that the social culture will exercise a significant effect on the development of intra-organizational cultures. That is, there is some portion of the variance in the intra-organizational cultures that can be attributed to the larger societal culture. By way of example, Walker, Bridges and Chan (1996) studied leadership development processes in Hong Kong. They note that:

According to Cheng (1995a) groups and organizations in Chinese societies are more likely to be ordered around (hierarchical) sets of relationships and the rules of behavior which govern them than their Western counterparts. Hierarchical structures with uneven power distributions are prevalent and accepted in most Chinese social structures, including organizations and groups. Although Western students initially display interaction patterns reflective of one's status in the larger society, the meanings attached to these status differences appear somewhat different and fade rather quickly. On the whole, people appear more uncomfortable with status differences in the West whereas Chinese often believe they owe respect and deference to people who are older or more highly place. Chinese students often seem to accept status differences as legitimate whereas Western students are inclined to be uncomfortable with these differences when brought to their attention and work to eliminate them. (p. 26)

Yet, nowhere do most modern theories of educational administration and leadership acknowledge or treat the broader notion of how societal culture acts as an environment for the particular school's culture. This inattention to culture in theories of leadership is common. Different school communities are comprised of sub-cultures, the distribution and nature of which form a context for principal leadership. Yet, if we make the social culture construct explicit, then it is necessary to view the entire model as located within a cultural context.

Heck (1996) made a similar argument in his analysis of leadership cross-culturally. Making [cross-cultural] comparisons more difficult is that different behaviors may serve similar purposes within each cultural context. For example, overseeing the school's governance processes (e.g., making decisions, solving problems, implementing policies) may be a common concept to the principal's role, whether or not parents (or teachers) are involved in decision making may be a more culturally-specific behavior. Correspondingly, the same actions regarding involving parents in

governance may even have very different meanings across cultures, and therefore, perhaps, different motivations and effects. (p. 80)

Preferred forms of instructional organization also vary widely across cultures. In many cases, this is related to predominant cultural values about the goals and even the preferred processes of education. In the United States and Canada, there is a strong though by no means universal philosophical aversion to the practice of tracking or streaming students. This is based upon culturally rooted notions about the importance of providing all students with equal opportunity to succeed in school regardless of perceived ability levels. Consequently, there has been a strong movement over the past 25 years away from placing students into tracks or streams which by their nature limit students' access to different types of educational experiences.

In contrast, Asian nations, particularly those influenced by Confucianism, tend to take a more pragmatic view towards education. This view is evident in both Singapore and China. The Singaporean educational system has achieved great success over a relatively short period of time. Forty years ago, its educational levels were in the marginal to mediocre range. Today it often ranks among the top nations internationally in math and science as well as in rates of literacy. A factor often cited in explanation of this success is the tracking of students into different educational programs depending upon a combination of ability and prior achievement.

Confucian values heavily influence the instructional organization of schools in China as well. The findings of Cheng and Wong (1996) support the notion of cultural influence on instructional organization and practice.

Fourth, there is a strong tradition of high expectation on students and teachers. China operates the almost unique system that compulsory education requires more than attendance. As one of the indicators of fulfilling "compulsory education" a county should achieve a high percentage passing

among primary school graduates (95% for urban areas, 90% for the developed rural towns and 85%

for rural villages). Teaching is designed by objectives and the objectives are often uniform for

different students. The whole idea is that students will achieve when they work hard, and their

genetic abilities are secondary. "Diligence can compensate for stupidity" is the common belief and

it does seem to work for a large part of the system. Elsewhere, high expectation is a notion that is

applicable to only the most successful schools. Laying high expectations on all students, and yet

with uniform targets, is almost inconceivable in other societies. (p. 35)

Both of these examples help illustrate that perceptions of the "rightness"or "wrongness" of

this form of instructional organization are grounded in social cultural values. As Heck (1996)

suggested above, the meaning associated with practices such as tracking must be understood within

the cultural context within which they are implemented. Moreover, to the extent that such values

vary systematically across cultures, we would expect to see differences in the means and ends by

which principals exercise instructional leadership.

School Outcomes

School outcomes may be thought of quite broadly. They could include student

achievement/learning (conceived of broadly or narrowly), student retention in school, teacher or

parent satisfaction, student discipline or behavior, sense of community, or others. The particular

educational goals receiving greater or lesser emphasis is very much a matter of cultural values.

For example, despite the many similarities between the Canadian and American educational

systems, there is a clear cultural difference in the weight assigned to student achievement as an

explicit educational goal. American educators have become accustomed to assessing educational

progress through standardized achievement tests. In the cultural catch-phrase, achievement testing

represents "the way we do things around here" in the United States. But just across the border from

Buffalo in Toronto, any Canadian principal will tell you that Americans are crazy over test scores. In Canada as well as many other industrialized countries, achievements tests have not, until recently, even been administered as a matter of course. They do not represent the way things were done in those cultures.

Such differences in practice reflect differences in the values that underlie Canadian and American educational systems. These differences have both obvious and subtle effects on the operation of school systems. Subtle effects often go unnoticed, as members of the culture implicitly accept the predominant values (and educational goals) as givens.

This issue has important implications for cross-cultural studies of leadership. A significant strand of research in educational leadership over the past two decades has focused on the principal's contribution to school effectiveness and school improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, In press). During this period over 40 studies were conducted that examined the effects of principal leadership on school outcomes. Heavily influenced by British, Dutch and North American research paradigms, student achievement was the most frequently selected school outcome studied.

While commonality of outcome measures has allowed for considerable headway to be made on important research issues, even within the United States there are many critics of this view of principal effects (e.g., Barth, 1990; Cuban, 1988). Impact on student achievement, in itself, reflects a limited conception of principal effectiveness. Despite the homogenizing effects of globalization, we do not live in a world characterized by a single notion of what constitutes good education. If desired educational goals (i.e., school outcomes) vary across cultures, then notions of what it means to be effective as a leader will differ as well.

Malaysia provides an even more dramatic example because the goal of building a sense of community among children has been the dominant purpose for the educational system. This has

meant accepting certain tradeoffs against goals for educational achievement. English language

instruction was deemphasized for a period of years in order to ensure that children grew up

speaking Bahasa Malay as a national language that would further bind people into a cohesive

community. This reflects the importance that community-building holds within Malaysian schools.

In fact, in Malaysian society, culturally-based school outcomes (or educational goals) shape the

context in which principals must lead in even more direct ways. Bajunid (1996) describes these.

Another example of indigenous corpus building in the field of education is the formulation of the

Malaysian Philosophy of Education and of the Philosophy of Teacher Education. More

significantly was the formulation and nationwide dissemination of a set of ideas known as the

"Educational Vision". These ideas include the ideas of National Unity, Educational Leadership and

Management Style, A Caring Education Service, Caring Schools, Empowerment, the Monitoring

System, Knowledge Culture and a Culture of Excellence. (p. 54)

Here we have an example of how the cultural context interacts with the institutional context to

shape desired outcomes for schooling.

It is also the case that in China, education serves explicit purposes that go beyond student

achievement and on which principals are evaluated.

It has to be added that expectations on students are much more than learning in the academic sense.

The general objectives is for students "good in three aspects": conduct, learning and physical fitness,

in that order. In many places in China, students are required to pass a threshold in physical

education before they can be promoted to a higher grade. Conduct of students is considered of

prime importance. In the Chinese tradition, a student with good conduct but poor learning is

unfortunate; a student with good learning but poor conduct is unacceptable. The meaning and

standards of "conduct" are expectedly fluid. In the long tradition, the importance paid to conduct

has led to the heavy emphasis on moral education. In recent decades, "conduct" has been subject to various interpretations with different political colours according to the political climate of the time. (Cheng & Wong, 1996, p. 36)

As these illustrations suggest, social culture plays a key role in determining the desired outcomes of schooling. This suggests that cross-cultural study of the effects of educational leadership must consider the range of school outcome that are emphasized in different cultures. It also points to the interaction between the institutional context of school and the social culture as different factors that influence the choice of outcomes emphasized in practice.

Questions for Future Study

In this paper, we have attempted to demonstrate how social culture might enrich a theoretical model of educational leadership. In this concluding section of the paper, we will briefly foreshadow possible directions for future cross-cultural research in this domain. We do this by raising some questions on which researchers in educational administration and leadership who see value in adopting a cultural lens for study may wish to focus.

Cultural Values and Personal Values

Hofstede's (1980) research suggests that within a national or social culture, we would expect to find dominant cultural values. We also believe that the personal values of administrators are important in shaping their attention and behavior. What is the relationship between the two? How does each impact leadership behavior within and between cultures?

Culture and Institutional Context

We have made the case that culture has an impact on all features of the school and its institutional system. Consistent with Getzels and colleagues (1968), we view culture as being

broader and more encompassing than the institutional context. Yet, we would also expect certain relationships between the two to exist.

Take the institutional policy of decentralization of the educational system. We would expect differences in how decentralization of decisionmaking might be received and implemented by leaders in different cultures (e.g., Australia and Hong Kong). Certain educational policies and programs might simply be more compatible with the ways of thinking and acting embedded in certain cultures than in others. At a minimum, implementing the same policy initiative might require very different leadership strategies from one culture to another. While intuitively reasonable, such issues have yet to be explored.

Leadership

At the heart of the research framework that has been described in this paper, is the educational leadership provided by school staff. Research outside of education suggests that there are differences across cultures in terms of how people define leadership. The early stages of research into cross-cultural conceptions of leadership should try to explore the meaning of leadership from the perspective of people within a given culture. This will require in-depth research drawing more on anthropological than on survey methods.

At the same time, we can conceive of conducting survey research that examines the use of different models of leadership in different cultures. Researchers should, however, remain cognizant of the pitfalls of such research, as we described earlier. The linguistic as well as interpretive challenges are considerable. There is an additional trap when using surveys cross-culturally. That concerns what you don't ask in the survey. For example, in a study of instructional leadership among secondary school principals in Thailand, researchers used an American survey instrument (Hallinger, Taraseina, & Miller, 1994). Despite careful pre-study steps in translating and adapting

the instrument, it turned out that a key facet of the principal's instructional leadership role was not covered in the scope of the instrument. We can easily imagine such omissions in the use of a standard instrument in studying leadership across several cultures.

This is not to say that survey research will not play a role. It will. However, we think that exploration of leadership within a culture using locally derived concepts and formulations must occur first, or at least simultaneously.

Social Culture and School Culture

Despite the popularity of the concept of organizational culture, Shein (1996) recently noted the relative scarcity of research that explores this key concept. As suggested in this paper, the topic of social culture is even less well studied. It would, therefore, come as no shock if we concluded that the relationship between the two still remains speculative.

The core issue that comes into play here concern the variability of school cultures within a society versus variability across social cultures. That is, within a given nation, we would expect to find considerable variation in the cultures that characterize individual schools. How would the features that describe school cultures within a given country compare across cultures? Moreover, what is the relationship between characteristics of the organizational cultures to features of the nation's social culture?

School Outcomes

We earlier discussed the varying emphases given to different educational outcomes across nations. This raises several points to consider in terms of exploring leadership in education across cultures.

First, it means that studies purporting to explore the effectiveness of educational leaders must use outcomes that carry relatively equal weight across the selected cultures. The meaning

associated with an assessment of principal impact on student achievement is lessened when we find out that this represents a less significant goal within the culture. Effectiveness must be assessed in terms of outcomes that are meaningful within a given cultural context.

Second, this further suggests that multiple measures of impact or effectiveness will be wanted when we study educational leadership across cultures. While it is important to study leadership in terms of the outcomes towards which it is directed, it remains of interest to be able to compare leadership across multiple criteria.

Finally, the complexities of studying leadership effects on achievement, while considerable, are manageable. However, after adding the additional complications of cross national tests and compounding these with issues entailed in multi-level research data, we think that this approach may still be beyond our reach. A more feasible strategy would be to use intermediate measures such as organizational adaptability to change, or organizational learning as outcomes of leadership and school-level processes. Of course, the school level processes themselves represent reasonable outcomes as well.

A caveat is, however, in order. Schein's (1996) review of the historical trends in relation to the construct of organizational culture seem particularly salient here. He warns:

Particularly in relation to [organizational] culture, when I see my colleagues inventing questionnaires to "measure" culture, I feel they are simply not seeing what is there, and this is particularly dangerous when one is dealing with a social forces that is invisible yet very powerful. We are in grave danger of not seeing our own culture, our assumptions about methods, about theory, about what is important to study or not study, and in that process, pay too much attention only to what suits our needs (p. 239).

In conclusion, our goal in this paper has been to outline a rationale and framework for the

cross-cultural study of educational leadership. Other papers in this symposium will go into greater depth on the various components. The discussion reflects our own early thinking as we begin to move from conceptualization to empirical research. We are cognizant that there are others who share an interest in this topic and hope that ensuing dialogue will enrich this work conceptually and move us along practically towards empirical study.

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Notes

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