The representational and reform work of principals and their associations

Pat Thomson PSM, PhD, Associate Professor of Education.

University of South Australia Holbrooks Road Underdale. South Australia 5032.

Email: Pat.Thomson@unisa.edu.au

This paper is part of a long term project to investigate the spaces, opportunities, constraints and imperatives for school principals and their professional associations to act for social justice and with/against government policy. This particular paper is an exploration of texts that represent the work of principals. In it I mobilise Bourdieu's analytic of field, logic of practice and capitals .

It is, as well, an expression of my connections with principals associations. I have been a president of a state principals association (the South Australian Secondary Principals Association), an executive member of the national secondary principals association and an active participant in the international principals' organisation (the International Confederation of Principals) and am still involved with these associations in a support and occasional consultant role. I thus have as partial (in both senses of the word) 'habitus' - which Bourdieu describes as a way of being and acting in the world - a 'feel for the game', an embodied notion of the principalship as work, advocacy, knowledges, narratives, teleologies, bodies, events.

My current view is that the practice of principal-ling is culturally and socially produced in particular contexts and places and particular times. I suggest that there is a distinctive and often tacit 'expertise' and knowledge generated from/in/with principal practice which, as cultural capital, is largely ignored by educational administration disciplinary canon. On this basis I have criticised some in the educational administration academy for ignoring principals associations and their contribution to advancing professional knowledges . This paper however takes a somewhat different, and perhaps more critical, approach.

Because this is work in progress, this paper is necessarily tentative and underdone. In it, I take a few small steps. This timid choreography is in two parts. The first explains my approach to the texts that represent principals work, shows my discourse analytic workings and gives a summation of the commonalities and differences among the texts. The second moves to Bourdieu's theorisations of fields and I ask and partly answer the question – how can 'field's explain how the documents appear as they do? I posit that some of the differences lie in the differing 'interests' of employers and principals, but note the commonalities including a view that principal's work is congruent with school effects and measurable. I conclude with some tentative propositions about the limits for principals associations to act with/against the directions of government policy.

A: Representing principals' work

In May, 2001, I went to state system websites in order to find current documents about principals' work. I used the basic search engine from each site and typed in the words 'leadership', 'leadership education', 'principals' training ' and 'principals work'. I located six documents which were produced by state systems, leadership centres and principal associations. I have included here a seventh text given to me by a principals' association; it is now available on their website.

I asked of the seven documents:

- What was the agency that auspiced this document?
- Who was involved in producing this document?
- What is the stated purpose of this document?
- What is said about leaders and leadership?
- How is the work of leaders to be 'seen'?
- What are the dominant discourses in the text?
- What are the minority discourses in the text?
- What is omitted altogether from the text?
- What is surprising in the text?

These questions are informed methodologically by the literatures on discourse analysis . But, as Hine points out, in relation to the use of virtual texts

> *the text becomes ethnographically (and socially) meaningful once we have cultural context(s) in which to situate it.*

My analysis is thus also informed by pertinent contextual information.

My approach to the texts

My questions of the texts, and the resulting analysis, were also influenced by recent work on the dominant policy discourses that produce both representations and the material work of principals , and the debates about the development of 'standards' for principals work . These, together with broader policy analyses and policy trajectory studies , suggest that principals are increasingly made responsible for the implementation of conservative and neoliberal agendas. The consequences are that the work of principals is more focussed on management and marketing and less on pedagogies ; there is a growing rift between principals and their staffs , but some principals at least still find ways to pursue social justice and pedagogical agendas.

Some of the literature was particularly helpful in relation to this study. Anderson examines US standards for school administrators and argues that they are primarily about control, public relations, deficit theories of disadvantaged schools and students, avoidance of controversy, glibness and anti-intellectualism. Humes suggests that particular discursive forms, such as 'transformational leadership', 'learning communities' and 'participation' are used to hide the power dimensions of educational institutions, while a shift from rational to emotional language has occurred .

I also build on my study of principal job descriptions and professional publications in which I argued that principal work is framed by a combination of managerialist discourse (which emphasises coercion and compliance), "new management" rhetoric and theories and categories drawn from positivist educational administration. That study suggested that curriculum, innovation, policy production (rather than implementation) and pedagogy were sidelined and equity and social justice effectively contained within this assemblage. In this study I emphasised that the inherent contradictions between the discourse of democracy,

participation and equity and the overall press for compliance with state determined goals might become troubling and/or opportune for principals.

I carried all of this literature with me to this analysis of the collected texts, but ensured that I did not simply read off my pre–existing views by explicitly looking for what I did not expect to see.

Discourses

Any set of categories ascribed as discourses, and the allocation of segments of text to them, is an act of interpretation. My reading and analysis may differ from anothers'. I make explicit here the major categorisations I used.

After a number of readings of these documents, and informed by the literatures outlined previously I decided to use as the basis of analysis the following discourse categories:

1. corporate: ways in which the work of principals was determined by system goals, priorities, procedures, structures
2. audit: references to measurement, evaluation, quality assurance and data
3. risk management: references to management of organisation health and welfare, the wellbeing of staff and students legislatively framed, or stated as an avoidance of litigation or adverse attention
4. regulatory: references to the legal-administrative framing of education and public sector management. There is a clear relationship between the categories of audit, risk and regulation, and they should certainly be seen as discursive companions
5. new management: appropriations of ideas from popular management theorists such as Senge , Handy , Peters , Bennis and so on.
6. market: evidence of the effects of increased competition amongst schools
7. positivist educational administration/managerial: References to the orthodoxies of both the dominant educational administration literatures and their translation into professional development and system doxa: strategic planning, visions and missions, supervision, professional development as a means of organisational improvement
8. equity: references to 'all students', diversity, poverty, disadvantage, race, gender, distribution of resources, inclusive curriculum
9. educational: expressions relating to pedagogy, curriculum, assessment or learning environment. Because these varied in emphasis I attempted to further differentiate what kind of educational discourse was at work.
10. knowledge economy: terms that reflect current concerns with global changes and education as the formation of human capital deemed necessary for national success . These are often characterised by notions of speed and uncertainty and/or enterprise and creativity . The eponymous 'learning organisation' is sometimes framed up in this context: it can also be positioned as new management, and then the two are a powerful discursive formation

These became the categories through which most of this reading is made. However other discourses were also apparent, in particular that which speaks of politics and power and the relationships between local sites and government, and that which denotes professionalism.

Show and tell

The data in the following table is a summary of my textual analysis (individual text analysis appears as an appendix to this paper).

In the table I indicate the state and the type of agency, the potential use of the text, and then the discourses at work in the text. I have divided these discourses into three subcategories: those that were dominant in the text, those that were significant, and those that appeared, but were of minor significance.

State and agency type	Purpose	Dominant discourses	Significant discourses	Minor discourses
Education Queensland State system	Professional development	Corporate (key word alignment)	Audit Market Positivist educational administration/managerial Knowledge economy Democratic	Risk management Equity
New South Wales State system	Accountability	Educational Positivist educational administration/managerial Audit	Corporate Risk management Regulatory Equity Democratic	Public education Market
Tasmanian Leadership Centre	Professional development Accreditation	Positivist educational administration/managerial Educational Political/systemic and contextual	Democratic Audit Equity New management Ethics	Corporate Public relations
ACT State system	Professional development Self audit	New management Knowledge economy Corporate	Positivist educational administration/managerial Market Risk management Audit	Curriculum (one mention)
Western	Professional	New management	Market	Risk

Australia State system	development Selection and promotion Succession planning	Professional ie advocacy, practice, agency Positivist educational administration/managerial Political/contextual	Educational Equity Knowledge economy Democratic	management Audit Corporate Regulatory
South Australia Primary Principals Association	Professional accreditation	Democratic (including student voice) Equity Positivist educational administration/managerial Professional		
Victoria Leadership Centre	Professional accreditation	Educational New management Positivist educational administration/managerial Professional Ethics Political/contextual	Market Corporate	Regulatory Equity Knowledge economy Public education

It is apparent that there are some significant differences between the texts.

It is intriguing that the New South Wales state system has a far more 'educational' orientation that its ACT counterpart (there curriculum is mentioned only once in the entire text). There is also a singular absence of educational discourse in the Education Queensland text, which like the ACT, is heavy on corporate and new management discourses. In Western Australia, new management is tempered by educational concerns. But whereas the ACT takes up the discourse of the new knowledge economy and learning society, this is an absence in both the New South Wales and Education Queensland documents.

Positivist educational administration and managerial concerns feature in the Tasmanian Leadership Centre and the South Australian Principals Association documents. The Victorian Leadership Institute and South Australian Primary Principals documentss (intended as a framework for professional accreditation) also have a version of professional discourse – they both require principals to contribute to their professional associations and to the profession.

It is also worth noting that Tasmania, Western Australia and Victoria have an emphasis on power and the political: Victoria and New South Wales specifically refer to promotion of public education. Only the South Australian text has a strong equity/human rights discourse.

Reading and re-reading

As I was about half way through doing this discourse analysis I became acutely aware of how much 'the principal' and school effects were, in some cases, causally (and seemingly without the need of too many caveats) linked. The principal in me wondered whether if we went into classrooms and read off students effects as simply caused by teachers there would be a protest – and pondered why this simple equation of principal's work and what happens in the school has raised no opposition. Indeed, it seems to be taken for granted.

I decided to go back to the documents and re-question them, asking:

- Are the principal's work and school effects (dis)connected?
- What is said about school effects (outcomes) and principal practices (processes such as systems, structures, documents)?

This re-reading can be summarised as the following table:

Document source	Agency type	Principal-school connection	Evidence required
Education Queensland	State system	Combination of practice – operates within an ethical framework - and school effects – provides quality programs	Self audit linked to support from the 'alignment unit'
New South Wales	State system	Principal is (responsible for) school outcomes	Evidence via school and line management appraisal
Tasmanian Education Department	Leadership centre	Principal competencies are claimed to be different from the task. However, performance criteria are school effects	Evidence in the form of external or self audit, for professional development purposes
ACT Education Department	State system	Focuses on structures and practices eg build teams, media management	Evidence that quality practices and structures are in place. Self evaluation
Education Department Western Australia	State system	Uses indicators of principal competencies which are school effects	Self audit

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| South Australian Primary Principals Association | Professional association | Uses broad areas for which evidence must be supplied of school impact | Testimonials and personal submission to gain professional accreditation. Judgement by peers |
| Victorian Association of Secondary School Principals, Education Victoria | Leadership centre | Combines code of ethical practice with competencies which are systems and practices | Personal submission to gain professional accreditation. Judgement by peers. |

Two of the documents (NSW, WA) assume that principals can be simply judged by school effects. One (Tas) queries this but then proceeds as if this is the case. One (Ed Queensland) combines practices with school effects. Two (ACT, Vic) focus on practices and one (SA) looks at school 'impact'.

The simple elision, in four of the documents and four Australian states, of principal work and school effects flies in the face of evidence which suggests that change in schools is positioned and delimited by local circumstances, system policy context and operational practices, and broader policy and social/economic/cultural/political relations . The same is true for principal practice and school processes. The South Australian Primary Principals notion of 'impact' seems the most reasonable, since it acknowledges that power of principals without holding them totally responsible.

But how this conflation of principal and school comes to be then became part of this study.

A summary of 'findings'

It is important to recognise that these documents are not simply commensurate. They have been developed in differing state contexts for differing purposes by differing combinations of 'stakeholders'. Most reflect the prevailing state management framework. All have involved principals in development. However policy readers are rarely (and these document are no exception) made privy to the debates that occurred during policy development and so how much influence principals had in the development of some of these texts is unknown. Those that emanate from principals associations and leadership institutes are however obviously the work of some principals.

This is problematic. As English points out in relation to the development of 'best practice' standards in the US

> *the involvement of practitioners in determining 'best practice' and using their responses as norms… assumes that the practices they endorse represent the epitome of knowing and doing.*

However for the purposes of this analysis, assuming that at least some of this clutch of documents do represent what the elected spokespersons of principals associations consider to be what most principals do, does have some (if not total) veracity. It is on this basis that I proceed with a tentative discussion of the commonalities and difference mong the texts.

Regardless of the genesis or potential use of the document, or whether the focus is on school effects or principal practices, the overall common frame is a combination of what Ball and Blackmore and Sachs call the 'performativity' of postmodernity, with a profoundly modernist commitment to the 'verification' of truth' via method-ical observation and quantification. All the documents have in common this emphasis on the production of observable, measurable evidence.

Another commonality between the texts is that they (re)present a fragmented picture of principal work. Two texts (Victoria, Western Australia) do recognise that their construction of principal work is contrarily a deconstruction but continue anyway. Barth calls this kind of atomisation 'list logic'– sets of categories that in no way represent the messy and holistic everyday practice of school administration. The usefulness of the categories used – leadership and management being two key divides – are challenge-able , as are notions such as visioning and missioning , also ubiquitous in these texts. However these debates are nowhere reflected, or reflected on, in the documents.

A further commonality is that there is a notable lack of attention to the cultures and structures within which principals' work occurs. Even though a minority of the documents do state that context is important, this is hardly a substitute for a representation which takes seriously how:

1. particular (classed, raced and gendered) principal subject positions are made available in organisations – including through their textual practices - while others are disallowed
2. educational (e.g. funding, staffing, curriculum) and other government policies (e.g. public transport, health and welfare) differently affect different schools and the capacity of principals to meet specified outcomes or put in place particular kinds of processes and structures .

There is no simple way to separate out the texts from state systems, leadership institutes and professional associations. While there are some differences, such as the strong equity discourses at work in the South Australian Primary Principals Association document, and the overwhelming corporateness of the Queensland state system, there is also very significant congruence. All use a similar approach to categorising and measuring principals work regardless of whether they emanate from principals themselves, hybrid organisations or employers. Two of the state systems texts place no emphasis on the educational, and all documents emphasise combinations of corporate, new management, old managerial and risk discourses. The difference in required evidence (school effects or principal practice) does not fall into a neat system/profession binary. Professional associations do uniquely suggest that contributing to the profession is important. The Victorian Principals Leadership Institute document asserts that there is a fixed body of knowledge about leadership and management: presumably this is a way of asserting the claim to professionalism, but in so doing they opt for a version of canon. But they share their emphasis on curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and student welfare with other principals' centres and at least one state system.

How then are these significant similarities and lesser differences produced, despite the particularity of local policy context and purpose? And, if there is no simple difference between professional associations, leadership institutes and state systems, but some differences and much commonality, how is this to be explained?

Theories of discourse already provide one explanation for this, but in this instance I have decided to add Bourdieu to the theoretical mix.

B. Bringing Bourdieu to the analysis

Bourdieu's work on field, logic of practice and capitals offers one possible explanation for why it is that principals associations versions of principal work bear significant similarity to those produced by state systems, and by hybrid organisations such as leadership centres. I will summarise my interpretation of his ideas and then bring them to the document analysis.

Bourdieu in the field

Bourdieu argued that human societies could be seen as a series of overlapping and homologous 'fields', with each field 'defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions' . Each field has it own 'logic of practice': that is there are regularities which order what happens within it. Everyone in the field has a 'stake' in its practice. The position of agents (the name Bourdieu gives to people to show that they do exercise agency) in the field is always relational and competitive but the competition occurs within the regularities of the field. Agents have an 'investment' in following (or changing) the rules (the 'doxa') of competition in order to maintain or advance their position.

Fields are marked by continued negotiation of positions: at stake are the 'hierarchy of capitals' – social, economic, cultural and symbolic – which are 'efficacious', that is they allow those who posses them to wield power or influence. Those who occupy key (top) positions in the field embody and also act to maintain those capitals which count (pps. 97-99). Continued contestation becomes a way of being and acting that is embodied and apparently intuitive – Bourdieu refers to this as 'playing the game'. The longer one stays in the field, the more one becomes committed to either promoting or resisting and changing the game. The strategies employed by agents to adhere to or shift the game depend on the perception they have of the field: as Bourdieu puts it, the point of view they take *on* the field is a view taken from a point *in* the field (p. 101).

The characteristic of fields then is that they are beset by internal struggles: one involves ongoing strategies by agents to establish subfields in which some can attain a monopoly by virtue of the specific combination of capitals that they possess. Subfields operate within the general logic of the field, but also have their own particular and different modes/rules.

The education field is a large one. It is divided into various subfields, but for the sake of progressing this argument, I will refer to only three: schooling, universities and educational organisation administration.

These might be represented graphically as:

The logic of practice in the educational field and in its subfields is the promotion of particular cultural and symbolic capitals.

For example, schooling involves the production and reproduction of particular kinds of cultural and symbolic capitals . The logical game of schooling is one of sorting and sifting via the competitive academic curriculum , in which particular classed, gendered, raced knowledges and ways of being in the world are excluded . The subfield of schooling promotes the interests and capitals of, and inculcates and requires for success the habitus of, the privileged. It is possible for others not already positioned as privileged to acquire status and social elevation through the acquisition of the 'right' schooling credentials and the embodied 'taste' of the middle and upper social strata . In recent hard times there is increased competition in the schooling subfield and it has accentuated the logic of its practice. The equation of schooling with conservative curricular and uniform(ed) bodies (capitals and habitus) has been exacerbated by the market driven parent choice policies of the last decade .

Principals occupy a particular place in the educational field, and Bourdieu suggests one way to understand what it is.

Principal and field

Bourdieu argues that in order to empirically work with theories of field, logic of practice and capitals, one must

1. analyse the positions in the field of power and then
2. map out the objective structures of the relations between the agents in positions occupied in institutions who compete for legitimate forms of specific authority.

Following this, I propose that principals occupy the position at the top of the schooling subfield and the bottom of the organisational administration subfield. This can be represented as a visual metaphor (see below)

In addition, and taking up the literatures that suggest that both principals work and that of the senior system administrators has become both more ministerialised and restructured according to principles of New Public Management , I propose that we think of the educational organisation administration subfield, including principals at the bottom, as also being part of the public sector senior management subfield (one subfield of the political field). This can be metaphorically represented (see below).

The cultural, social and symbolic capitals that count in the education field are perhaps best understood as being both horizontal and vertical, with the horizontal axis at the top being a continuum: on the left side the cultural and symbolic capitals represented by the academy, with the cultural and symbolic capital of the doctorate now being required for admission into this elite subfield . At the top-right are the cultural and symbolic capitals required for elite system educational administration. While these include an academic qualification, what counts more are networks, socially dominant cultural capitals and practical management experience.

The following diagram shows the symbolic capitals dominant in each subfield:

In recent times, this executive management experience has also become the most valued in the university subfield, replacing the cultural and symbolic capital of the academic professoriate . The form of practitioner knowledge which is most rewarded in the educational field iis generally that of management.

What then does this positioning across subfields suggests about principals' work and individual and collective agency?

The logical practice of principal-agents

Straddling two subfields, principals mediate effects up and downwards. They 'lead and manage' the vexed and contested selective practices of schooling in ways that are in accord with both their local school and with the requirements of the educational organisation administration. They must act not only separately and together, at the individual site and as a band of employees. This activity is constrained because:

(1) the education field is self-replicating

One of the unique characteristics of the education field is that it uniquely produces its own elite. Bourdieu notes that one cannot become a teacher or a principal or a university academic without being successful at the game of education. Even public sector agents imported into the executive service of education systems as generic managers have been to school and were by definition successful. As Bourdieu puts it

> *one cannot enter this magic circle by an instantaneous decision of the will, but only by…a slow process of co-option and initiation which is equivalent to a second birth*.

Learning to be successful in the education game is a kind of apprenticeship in the field. This apprenticeship is a slow and lengthy process of acquiring, not only symbolic and cultural capitals necessary for participation in the field. It is also a process of investing in the game, accepting its doxa and its ways of being, learning the strategies of participation, and acquiring the habitus, that embodied sense of *being* educated.. then eventually one becomes an 'educator'. All of us are apprenticed in compulsory schooling and some are apprenticed to become school teachers. A select group of teachers then become apprenticed in the principalship through a hierarchy of middle management positions. By the time an agent becomes a principal, she is heavily invested in the field.

(2) maintaining position is an act of conservation

Since principals are not at the apex of the field, although they are at the top of the schooling subfield, the logic of contestation for position suggests they will both attempt to maintain their position in the schooling sub-field while at the same time asserting their position in the subfield of educational organisation administration, where they are in a subordinate position. This is inherently conservative; preservation of the status quo is, if you like, the bottom line of the game.

For example, at present, in order to simply maintain their position, individual principals and their representative organisations are required by the educational organisation administration (in accord with New Public Management and the mediated political field) to both act and represent themselves engaged in corporate, managerial practices. This equates, as the earlier document analysis showed, in atomised descriptors of work practices and school effects that are amenable to apparently neutral and scientific practices of measurement and which meet the (post)modern push for self managing performance .

To vary from this way of being, doing and representing principals' work would be to jeopardise standing in both the subfield and field. But a side effect of adopting the dominant acting and representation is to continue to act to produce (as well as reproduce) these practices and ways of being.

To be alterative could threaten principals' positions in two subfields and any contestation of the game must be highly strategic.

However there is a further complication that a reading with Bourdieu allows.

'Principal as school'

The documents in this analysis strongly connect principal and school. As I have demonstrated, they equate the actions of the principal with school effects or 'impact', and/or equate the effectiveness of the principal with school practices. These texts are also made

material through their application as professional development, accreditation, selection, appraisal and dismissal procedures.

This equation strongly ties the professional 'identity' of the principal to the school. The principal literally embodies the school. Good schools (as defined by current policy) and good principals are the same.

The resulting tangle of principal-school-dominant policy produces a particular kind of principal habitus that emerges as emotional stress during school reviews and evaluations, as hurt and fear during contractual renewals and as aggressive marketing and public relations if the school's viability is threatened (Blackmore, 1996).

Bourdieu's concept of 'interests' helps us to understand that those of the school and those of the principal have been/are made not just coterminous, but interdependent. When principals act in their school's interests, then they also act in their own. While this connection is glued together quite firmly, what this means as practice is not simple and clear.

'Being the school' can produce some predicaments and risks for principals. What constitutes their schools/self interest is not only systemically but also locally determined. What the local situation requires and wants and what the system requires and wants are sometimes very different. Principals must therefore continually negotiate their actions and their professional 'identity', depending on the specific circumstances. They must act as both the principal and the school. Sometimes it will be important to be the local principal, at another time it will be important to be a part of a state system, while in another situation, it might be important to be part of a collective layer of employees called principals. When the media come calling for comment it might pay to be part of a professional association. The professional 'identity' of principals is both multiple and continually in process and under negotiation.

The logic of this self-school construction is that there is little probability that principals will act singly or through their associations against the interests of their schools/selves. Another bottom line for principals is concerned with the welfare of their local school. But determining what that might be and how that might relate to the other bottom line of maintaining position in the field, is neither predictable nor always easily resolved.

Consider the following three examples:

- Principals are sometimes unprepared to act collectively since their local schools/selves have differing interests. Thus principals associations rarely make rules about the limits of school marketing.
- Principals might be unprepared to act singly counter to government policy since it may rebound badly on themselves and their schools, but could be prepared to act together when all local interests are in conflict with government policy. This has recently been the case in Australia with primary principals lobbying for greater resources for primary schools.
- Sometimes principals find that the interests of their schools conflict with the majority of their peers and with system priorities. In such instances system administrators and principals associations may ride over the interests of a minority: this is often the case with disadvantaged schools whose pleas for redistribution of resources work against the interests of all principals/schools for more.

These are just illustrations of how the agent must negotiate school-system-profession.

And if we consider how principals might act to change the rules of the game, there are yet another set of considerations.

Collective advancement in the field

The 'professional' identity of principals goes beyond individual career advancement. It is through their collective position which they seek to consolidate and advance in the subfield(s).

The logic of the field suggests that in order to advance their collective position and/or defend their interests, principals and their representative associations will adopt competitive strategies either of resistance or displacement. To illustrate this, principals collectively might:

1. seek to take on more of the tasks of the educational organisation administration subfield, by and this further legitimating their constellation of symbolic and social capitals. The support of particular principals and their associations for school self management can be seen in this light
2. utilise capitals from other subfields, such as the university, in order to advance their status and standing. This can be seen in the professional development programmes mounted by leadership centres, which often employ high profile academics and exclude system administrators and deal with the scholar-produced representations of principals work.
3. cross field borders and invoke agents and capitals from other fields to exert pressure on those above them. This can be seen in the lobbying undertaken by principals associations, as association leaders border cross to engage the political field and the media. It is also evidenced in the references in the documents examined in this paper to power, advocacy, and political leadership.
4. assert the uniqueness of their own capitals. The push by professional associations to develop their own accreditation process outside of universities, building up the body of practitioner knowledge as a new symbolic and cultural capital is one such move. In the UK, government leadership programmes have privileged such 'professional', as opposed to university based, projects , whereas in the US, universities and governments have worked together to refuse to elevate such practitioner professional knowledge .

An analysis such as this can appear to be a picture of inexorable, deterministic and mechanistic reproduction of the field, and indeed Bourdieu has been criticised for precisely this .

However, Bourdieu maintains that fields are marked by struggles over borders and capitals, over what counts, and over the logic of the field. He argues that fields *are* amenable to change, although his own activism suggests that he is only too aware of the limits of action within the logic of the educational field in which he is located, and he himself feels the need to go outside it on occasion.

What then of the possibilities for change, possibilities of counter actions against the dominant logic of the field?

Can there be any change?

In order to consider this I am going to focus particularly on equity and justice, because to act for equity and justice is to act against the selective logic of the educational field.

To simply abandon all managerial requirements and opt for 'democratic' and socially just practice, as some liberal humanist and critical commentators on the principalship seem to suggest, would likely lead in the current policy environment to some difficulties. Firstly it would divide principals on the basis of their schools. The interests of those 'leading and

managing' schools that serve those most disadvantaged in schooling is not the same of those 'leading and managing; schools that serve those families that are socially privileged. This is not to say that principals in privileged school cannot work for social justice, but that it is can be a very tricky business. However, the South Australian Primary Principals Association are a case for the possibility. One of their current platforms is reduced class size in the early years for those schools that are most disadvantaged. If this was to happen, however, it would only be matter of time before individual school principals in more privileged locations, pressured by their staffs and parents, would argue that they too needed such a reduction. Such is tussle in the field.

In some cases, acting for equity and justice could lead to counter action against principals from above, and subsequent loss of status and power. This is arguably the case in relation to the current principal campaign for better funding for public education. The most common response from system administrators to this campaign is that showing that public education is suffering because of funds directed to private schools encourages parents to send their children elsewhere. The system response is an act which keeps the executive in accord with the current formation of the political field. Principals' associations are told to be silent on the matter and are held in less regard. Nevertheless they persist, in the interests of their schools- selves.

These examples do suggest that utopian ideas are important, but that they should neither be seen as a blueprint for practical tactics, nor as a measure against which principals should be judged and inevitably found wanting.

Possibilities for change? What an idea

A Bourdieu informed view of the realpolitik of struggles in the education field suggests that ideas have a particular function in the field.

The utopian ideals of democratic communities and dialogic and collegial schools are *resources* which inform meaning making in the educational field . They are idealisations that inform strategic action. They are however not the only ideas in the game. There are also the dreams of school effectiveness, transformative leadership and learning organisations held as 'mission impossible' by contemporary policymakers. The discursive contests and negotiations within and between the various sub-fields in education are around such ideas (others such as the schooling subfield as supermarket chain (Tooley, 2000) fortunately have less purchase). Ideas become an important aspect of the game.

Principals and their associations are engaged in these semiotic and material contests whether they like it or not. They employ the tactics of displacement, compliance, and resistance. Principals associations can work to identify (by picking up minority discourses to work against the dominant) spaces and places through which they can act to further alternative ideas, agendas and interests. Contemporary policymakers' fetish for evidence and expertise creates an opening for principals and their associations through which to propose changes to education as it is presently arranged. Some associations have commissioned such work from academic colleagues, sometimes in the context of industrial negotiations and sometimes through inviting them to be critical friends to school reform projects

Principals associations not only lobby those in office but also those in waiting who have, perhaps, different ideas. As well, they can form strategic alliances with other like-minded organisations: this can be seen for example in coalitions against poverty, and in regional renewal programmes. Perhaps the major area in which principals have worked with agents in other fields to change education is in those projects for 'students at risk'. Concern for

individuals is a 'space' for action and these programmes can move from being marginal add on projects to challenge mainstream pedagogies

Principal associations can also choose to work with teachers and their organisations and with universities, to change ideas of the principalship. They can work to build up a body of practitioner/scholarly knowledge that represents principals' work as it actually is. In moving towards rich and robust pictures of practice in the field, principals stand somewhat protected by other subfields against the atomised scientised representations currently valued by those in educational system administration and in positivist university educational administration disciplines. They could thus stand against idealised exhortations from both school effectiveness and improvement advocates and from unthinking critical and progressive 'friends'. They could provide an educational focus for principal practice (Evans, 1999; Robertson, 1999).

There *are* possibilities for principals and their associations to act both with/against current policy directions.

But such counter moves are mitigated by possible losses of standing in both the educational subfield and field. Principals will ultimately not overturn the larger logic of practice in the field because it is not in their own interests, acquired habitus and investments in the field, borne of long apprenticeship. This is not 'self interests' as understood by neo-liberal advocates. Principals' interests are collective, institutionally embedded in their schools and institutionally required/mandated.

In order to play the game, principals and their associations must adhere to, even if and as they struggle against, the rules – but only until a time when conditions in the field and its context are such that it is possible to make a shift, a disruption .

Bourdieu, texts and principal associations: a conclusion

A discourse analysis of texts that claim to represent principals work can show the dominant frames which position and delimit that work. Bourdieu provides one way to explain and conjecture about these findings. This is of course not the only, nor indeed perhaps even the best explanation possible. Like all theorisations, a Bourdieu-ian reading allows some things and not others.

Some might argue that principals and their associations should simply reject the current managerial imposts. A use of the analytic of field, logic of practice and capitals suggests this is easier to say than do. The logic of the education field is one of continual negotiation of a hierarchy of capitals and agents who embody them. To act therefore against the selective promotion and (re)production of particular social, cultural and symbolic capitals, is to act against this logic – to attempt to impose another logic. And there are limits to changing the logic of the game of/in the field, since at some point change can threaten interests and positioning. But since any field is always one of struggle and context, the field is not static. Contest is continuous. Change can occur.

Reading with Bourdieu allows us to see the limitations on what principals might do. Because of the imbrication of principal identity, habitus and school effected by current policy, principals are positioned to always act in their own/school interests. Not only will they act to preserve their own position at the top of the subfield of schooling, while at the same time attempting to achieve greater status in the educational organisation administration, they will do this in ways that do not jeopardise their schools. They must often balance local needs and priorities against those of the system as they do so.

Bourdieu's analytic powerfully alerts us to both possibilities and constraints. It suggests that principals and their associations can exercise agency, can act, within the limits of preserving their place in the subfield and field, to ensure that counter ideas that speak of equity, democracy, community and justice for example, become part of ongoing semiotic struggles. There are indications in the textual analysis I have made that at least one principals association is working with these ideas and sees them as integral to professional development and accreditation. My analysis also suggests that some state systems also, often contradictorily, see democratic participation by staff, students and parents as a legitimate aspect of principals' work in the field. In some instances principals organisations will act counter to the system while at other times they singly and collectively may act in strong support of government policy. At other times they will not professionally agree because their interests will not coincide.

Bourdieu also makes it possible to explain how the actions of principals are always contextual, since their interests vary with issue, location, time, school mix, composition of staff and so on. This 'identity' perspective points to a different kind of research about principal practice: to understand the game and its logic requires an analysis of the situated everyday rather than abstractions that claim truth in all instances and places. How principals negotiate their identity-school/ self interests is my research in waiting.

But the textual representations and their discursive formations I have discussed in this paper are not just pointers to the workings of the field, and the representations of work. They are in themselves a potential site for debate, counter narrative, and action. As Bourdieu reminds us, fields are sites in which ideas are contested.

It is interesting to speculate how far principals associations could push counter ideas through resisting atomised and managerialist representations of their work, answering back with more nuanced, empirically based snapshots of their daily work in the field. It also interesting to speculate how my reading might itself work for/against current managerial and inequitable policy regimes.

Appendices: Data analysis by state

Standards

Document source	Agency type	Purpose	Definition	Theoretical position	Discourses	Other
Education **Queensland**	State system. Located within professional developop-	Used for training. *Could also be used for supervision and accountability*	Leaders are everywhere. Leaders ensure that system goals are met.	Competencies Best practice Outcomes Contextual	**Corporate**: (1)alignment of site with department plans and policies (2)annual and three year planning cycle (3)understand, develop local version of and operationalise	Sub discourse of **democracy and participation** *Parents are partners who must be*

| | ment sectio n, forme rly a leader -ship centre . *Conn ect- ion with profes s- ional associ at- ions uncle ar* | | *Positional power obscured . People compete ncies apply to those who use positional power* *Leaders coerce–* inform; deliver; seek leadershi p role; implemen t; use direct and tailored persuasio n; influencin g tactics and deliberat e influencin g strategies . Leaders live and breathe the vision and values. *T hey embody the system* | indicators Evidence Standard s *Principal work is knowable , observabl e and measurab le.* *List logic.* | system standards and frameworks **Audit**: data driven change accountability, monitoring **Risk management:** care for self and others **New management**: learning organisations teams, collaboration, organisational culture. Teams are responsible for outcomes. **Market:** Manage diversity to get satisfaction. Service standards **Positivist educational administration/ma nagerial**: vision, mission, effectiveness **Equity:** achieveme nt of state curriculum **Knowledge economy:** Lifelong learning, global picture, future thinking, change and innovation | *satisfied. Students and their welfare omitted.* *Democra cy is harnesse d to Ed Queensla nd goals. No notion that shared decision making may not produce the same goals as system.* *There is an 'alignmen t unit' in the Learning and Develop ment Foundatio n.* *QSLRS has argued that system is too focussed on manageri al issues not on education al role of leaders, dispersal of leadershi p and* |

						creating learning communities.

Leading and Managing the School

Document source	Agency type	Purpose	Definition	Theoretical position	Discourses	Other
New South Wales Education Dept	State system -with "wide consult-ation"	Accountability *Could be used for selection, performance management, discipline*	Principals lead and manage within a state system. They are responsible for school performance within constraints of budget and community context. There is a hierarchy of responsibility in the school. Principals are models for staff	Outcome statements within categories of educational leadership, programs, learning outcomes, students welfare, staff welfare, development and management, physical and financial management, school and community partnerships. *Work is able to be*	**Corporate**: accord with policies and priorities of NSW government and curriculum of Board of Studies **Audit:** evaluation aligned with assessment policy and practice. Data used to change school programs and diagnose individuals. Teachers maintain documentation. **Risk management**: financial audit, occupational health and safety, child protection **Regulatory**: comply with laws, inform staff of duties, supervise **New Management**: school culture that values learning, collaboration, collegial, collaborative,	Education and welfare of students come first in the list. **Market:** promote public education **Democratic**: community participation in developing school vision, open communication, acknowledge difference, school community help to evaluate, support school – parent organisations *Nothing about innovation,*

| | | | and students.

Principals translate official policies for local site. *This recognises the mediation of principals* | *divided into chunks. The work is knowable, observable and measurable.*

List logic | professional growth of staff

Positivist educational administration/managerial: vision, priorities and targets become explicit policies and practices, effectiveness. Target resources to quality outcomes/ Effective communication

Equity: Students are diverse. Individuals and groups. Natural justice and procedural fairness. Special needs

Educational:

(1) outcomes: meet needs of students and make curriculum relevant so they can produce learning outcomes.

Identify individual needs to maximise outcomes.

(2) safety: welfare and discipline policy, protection, safety, self esteem. Safe responsive and harmonious learning environment | *policy production, advocacy for school community, curriculum development.*

Knowledge economy missing. |

Principal Competency Profile

Document source	Agency type	Purpose	Definition	Theoretical position	Discourses	Other
Tasmani	Princip	Accreditat	Leadership	Competen	**Corporate**:	*This "Political*

an **Education Dept**	als Institute	ion Professional development	competence is applied in different contexts and at varying levels of seniority.	ce (what enables a person to do a task) and performance criteria (abilities, attitudes and knowledge).	Communicate Department policies to community	*leadership" is not in systems developed documents -* Recognises uniqueness of context, advocate for community, balance competing demands of staff, students and community, build alliances, balance system and local priorities.
			Equitable resources distribution underpins performance.	*List logic*	**Audit**: continuous improvement, data collected for accountability, individual and interpersonal accountability	
			Principals should work collaboratively with the community and within the school community.	*Principals' work is knowable, observable and measurable.*	**New management**: shared leadership, teams, collaborative processes to promote best practice in teaching. Long, medium and short term goals.	**Democratic:** school–community relations, wide collaboration, involved in decision making, school as a community resource, bridges built, conflict resolution. Agreed values
			Acknowledges delimiting factors on principals' performance	Educational leadership, planning and accountability, interpersonal relations, cultural and ethical leadership, political leadership, personal effectiveness.	**Positivist educational administration/ managerial**: vision, instructional leadership, stakeholders consulted and informed, planning and monitoring is ongoing, human, physical and financial resources, resources	*An idealised picture of democratic participation contradicted by aspects of political leadership* Personal competencies emphasise self knowledge, reflective practice, ongoing learning, personal health, organisation, ICT savvy and

						aligned to outcomes and priorities, work schedules identified to meet priorities, positive relationships and communication, help disparate groups align with school priorities, feedback, identify emerging leaders **Educational**: (1) pedagogical. Good practice in pedagogical approaches. Professional development program which supports and extends practice in teaching and learning, (2) change process. Risk taking, ideas stimulated, critical reflection, purposes and effects are monitored and communicated and (3) outcomes;	exercising sound judgement.

					monitor and review **Equity**: resources are allocated equitably Knowledge economy: global and national issues in local context **Ethics**: pastoral care of staff and students, counselling, strengths built on, inclusive, diversity of talents, confidentiality. **Public relations**: Promote positive image	

Leadership and Management Framework

Document source	Agency type	Purpose	Definition	Theoretical position	Discourses	Other
ACT Education Dept	State system	Professional development Self assessment inventory	Senior leaders (directors to principals), operational leaders (sections and school) and future	Evidence statements. Positional/ developmental levels of performanc	**Corporate:** each level supports achievement of corporate goals, strategic and business planning, harmonising community and organisational	*Nothing about equity.* *No trace of old democratic discourse.*

			leaders. Strategic management, self management, leading people, organisational management, communication	e. *Leadership is knowable, observable and measurable.* *It is able to be divided into chunks and is acquired incrementally.*	values **Audit:** continuous improvement, benchmarking, finance control, quality systems, performance management, supervision **Risk management**: personal wellbeing and health, injury prevention, manage difficult situations to achieve positive outcomes, **New Management**: develop workplace learning environment, best practice, organisational life cycles, advanced project management, teams, mentoring and coaching, leading change, collaborative, effective teams, learning circles, Human resource management, leading workplace diversity, change management, **Market:** quality customer service, manage client relationships,	*Curriculum and pedagogy mentioned once but unelaborated* *Alliance building framed within market discourse.* *The clearest model of the new enterprising public sector and the self managing worker-portfolio (cf du Gay).*

					community interaction, building alliances, media management, presentation skills **Positivist educational administration/ managerial:**achieve positive outcomes, create organisation vision, strategic priorities and directions, influencing and negotiating, influencing, conflict resolution **Knowledge economy**: facilitate and capitalise on change and innovation, total learning cultures, implementing ideas, creative thinking, personal-professional learning portfolios, enterprise culture, IT	

Competency Framework for Leaders

Document source	Agency type	Purpose	Definition	Theoretical position	Discourses	Other

Education Dept of Western Australia	State system . Collabor-ative partner-ship with Leader-ship Centre. Wide consultation with principals Murdoch Uni research, then Edith Cowan	Professional growth Selection and promotion Succession planning	Change requires teams. School leader a model. Test of leadership is improved student learning.	Generic values, knowledges, attributes and skills. One version of leadership. Competencies are interrelated: form a suite of dimensions that holistically work together. This is a deconstruction. Core values, six dimensions, competency descriptors, critical elements and indicators. *Work is knowable, observable and measurable.* *List logic :138 indicators in the six dimensions!*	**Corporate**: business orientation **Regulatory**: work within Acts, understand frameworks and guidelines **Audit**: monitor outcomes and programs **Risk management**: school is safe **New management**: change management, self managing, values-based leadership, solution oriented, critical reflection, cooperative team, clear strategic directions communicated, empowering others, performance management, professional growth, achievement rewarded, balance pressure	*Agency orientation:* School leader must challenge educational plans and proposals, debate and collegial networking focuses on pedagogy *Advocacy modality:* school leaders are creative, are courageous, use strength of their convictions in making judgements, decisive, thoughtful, consistent, fair and sensitive… *Use of practitioner knowledge*: Good judgement, balance, challenging and realistic goals, creative and pragmatic, patience and persistence *Industrial:* Workloads are carefully monitored *Student orientation:* Change strategies are opportunities for student learning. Students need a happy learning

					and support, resources managemen t	environment.
					Market: prof ile needs and interests of community used to decide on programs. Promote school as effective and performing	*Influence of Fullan and Hargreaves (change management literatures)*
					Positivist educational administrati on/ managerial: transform practice of staff, conflict managemen t, situational leadership, negotiating, vision and mission, stakeholders , communicati on	
					Educational : learning as key value, deep understandi ng of pedagogy, individual characteristi cs of learners	
					Equity: justice, respect and care, fair	

					and consistent, inclusive curriculum identify students at risk **Knowledge economy**: new technologies, intellectual capital, creativity, act decisively in time of uncertainty, global village, networks, **Democratic**: Parents and care givers in learning and decision-making, participation, ideas listened to and acted on	

SAPPA Leadership Domains

Docume nt source	Agen cy type	Purpose	Definition	Theoreti cal position	Discourses	Other
South Australia n primary Principal s	Profe ss-ional body	Accredita tion Professio nal recognitio	Professiona ls build on their knowledge, reflecting on their	Principal s' work is context depende nt but able to	The domains are largely drawn from **educational administration/man agerial discourse.**	This is the briefest of the texts. It leaves

| **Associat ion** | | n

Peer support and men- toring | practice, are future oriented, work to build the profession, challenge and support each other.

The domains are purpose, vision and planning; culture and ethos; learners, learning and care; professiona lism and teaching; community participatio n and decision making; accountabili ty; and resources and organisatio n. | be expresse d as professio nal standard s of practice.

It is possible for peers to judge whether standard s are met on the basis of written evidence (the portfolio).

Applicant s provide testimoni als, impact statemen ts, learning logs statemen ts of compete nce and evidence of involvem ent in SAPPA. | The impact statement exemplars given for candidates to use are (1) community participation and democratic decision making and (2) leadership.

The first example specifically mentions SRCS, protocols for handing complaints, decision making policy, assistance for non English speaking parents and their participation in decision making. These are drawn from **democratic, equity and rights discourses**

The second mentions situational leadership, divers consultation procedures, effective communication, utilising community resources, developing a shred vision, conflict resolution, effective teams and recognising the skills of others. It is drawn from **educational administration/man agerial discourse.** | the task of making meaning from the categori es to the applicant s, rather than try to specify everythin g.

The inclusion of teaching and student participat ion are unique. |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

Leadership Framework

Document source	Agency type	Purpose	Definition	Theoretical position	Discourses	Other
Australian Principals Centre	Joint dept and principal assoc. body	Certification Professional development Succession training	The principal responds to the changing social and education context - local management, competition and high expectations. Financial and personnel management and community relations are increasing. Diverse populations must be drawn together by the principal around shared values and common goals. Principal personal skills	Fixed body of knowledge and skills about educational leadership What counts as effectiveness varies according to context. It is not static but under revision. Not all aspects of leadership are quantifiable There is no quick way to learn leadership. Expressed as ethics, dimensions and competencies	**Corporate**: loyalty to employer, align school priorities with mandates and pressures (inside-outside metaphor) **Audit:** accountability to community *and* employer, performance standards, quality control systems **Regulatory:** resources managed within regulations **Market:** School judged on student success, public relations, school promoted to community and stakeholders **New Management**: teamwork, collegiality learning community, values led leadership, emotional dimensions, reflective, seeking feedback, self care and self managing, people centred leadership, managing diversity, change management,	*Code of ethics place students learning and welfare first.* Also includes commitment to the profession through professional organisations and to own professional development. *Public responsibility:* accept and respect obligations of school to broader society on whom it depends for support. *Acknowledges that the work involves the use of power, hence the emphasis on ethics* *Crafting* a vision Considers situations and events from multiple perspectives. *Influence of*

				include emotional, ethical – tolerance of ambiguity and paradox.		culture of achievement, systems thinking, promote professional growth &independence of staff, strategic thinking, project management	*Fullan and Hargreaves(change, ambiguity and paradox, emotional) and Leithwood et al (values lead leadership)*
						Positivist educational administration/ managerial:vision, mission, professional development, conflict resolution, effective management of resources, efficient daily operations, supervision, planning	
						Equity: all have capacity and right to learn	
						Educational: (1) pastoral: wellbeing	
						(2) parents are students' first teachers	
						(3) effective curriculum and teaching	
						(4) citizenship, character	
						(5) developmental: students develop capacities as fully functioning future citizens	
						Knowledge economy:	

					uncertain times, rapid change	

End Notes