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**The Changing Role of Administrators
in Ethnically Diverse Schools**

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THE CHANGING ROLE OF ADMINISTRATORS

IN ETHNICALLY DIVERSE SCHOOLS

by

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Background

Our search of the Canadian scholarly literature on educational norms, policies and practices that might affect student attainment in pluralistic contexts yielded little that was directly relevant. Literature from the 1970s and 1980s consists largely of policy documents on multiculturalism, descriptions of multicultural programs, and strategies for sensitizing educational leaders to multicultural issues (Hickcox and Lavender 1986; Lingard 1988; Murphy 1986; Murray 1976). While studies of this nature continue into the 1990s (e.g., Rykszynski 1995), the literature has become more diverse: studies of the implementation of district multicultural policies (e.g., Echols and Fisher 1992; Lam 1993); a focus on legal aspects and the impact of the Constitution (e.g., Black-Branch 1993; Foster and Peters 1993); and case studies of home–school relationships (Blendick 1996; Lauer 1992; Lawton 1994; Ryan, Wignall, and Moore 1994). One interesting and consistent conclusion of these studies is the importance of the school principal to the creation of an inclusive and respectful environment.

This conclusion is not surprising, in that a good deal of other research has found the principal to affect significantly many aspects of school life (Crow 1996). What is surprising is that so little attention has been paid to the changing role of the school administrator during periods of high immigration. In fact, we have found only two studies that deal specifically with school administrator response to changing demographics — a Masters thesis and a doctoral dissertation. Literature from the United States and other English-speaking countries is not much more helpful. We feel that this is a fruitful area of inquiry, from both academic and practical perspectives. On the one hand, it seems likely that the principal is influential with respect to changes in the school's culture, practices and policies as its demographics change. On the other hand, as Sleeter (1993) argues, it also seems likely that the principal — who is in a position of privilege with respect to position and education, and often gender and SES — might have neither the ability nor the inclination to challenge the *status quo* and create an inclusive and supportive environment for all members of the school community.

Literature Review

The Canadian literature on the principal's changing role in ethnically diverse schools is largely prescriptive, detailing what principals *ought* to do; few studies actually describe the complexity of the task from the principal's point of view. The principal is often seen as playing a key role in setting the tone for the whole school and ensuring that the school's mission is accomplished. Amidst conflicting priorities, some principals *do* create a positive school climate that is sensitive to the needs of diverse populations. Although other principals may be willing to make the needed changes which would create optimal learning climates for all students, there is evidence of a lack of support for their efforts to achieve this objective.

Prescriptive studies outline four main areas in which principals need to improve:

1. their attitudes to and understanding of multiculturalism and anti-racism (Elliston 1997; Cummins, Feuerverger, and Lopes 1996; Mushkat 1994). ESL specialists were especially critical of the "knowledge base and attitudes of administrators" (Cummins et al. 1996). Lingard (1988) suggests that even in schools without expanding immigrant populations, principals still need to be proactive in placing anti-racist education as a top priority. All these authors emphasize the importance of the principal's developing an in-depth knowledge of the cultures represented in the school.

2. ensuring that all staff understand and enact anti-racist practices (Elliston 1997). It is interesting to note that while there is a relatively large body of research on teachers' roles in improving cross-cultural communication, there is little recognition of the principal's role in supporting teacher development and in creating a climate where culturally sensitive curricula and instruction are expected.

3. improving home–school communication (Blendick 1996; Cummins et al 1996; Sullivan 1984). The emphasis in these studies is on ensuring that all communications between the home and school are translated into the language of the home, so that parents are kept informed of school activities and expectations. An exception is the Valentin

study, which suggests that the school culture would be enriched if parents were welcomed into the school and encouraged to share their talents and perspectives.

4. ensuring that curriculum is aligned with the school's general mission and that it facilitates cross-cultural communication (Sullivan 1984). In schools where diversity is respected and celebrated, curriculum and instruction tend to be culturally sensitive and an inclusive climate is pervasive (Batsis 1996). While the genesis of such a culture is often assemblies and special events on multicultural themes, in some schools commitment to diversity and inclusiveness gradually becomes woven into the fabric of daily practice. Two distinct policy issues appear to impinge on the development of an inclusive school culture — hiring, and the policy development and implementation process. Concerning the former, it has been argued that representation on staffs of people of colour contributes positively to cross-cultural commitment. Bascia (1996) has found that while the representation of minority teachers has improved, they are not being promoted into administrative positions. Concerning the latter, the lack of principal involvement in the policy development process (Carr 1977; Echols and Fisher 1992), the lack of implementation support (Lingard 1988) and the overwhelming set of priorities facing principals (Carr 1977; Lingard 1988) might account for the apparent resistance of principals to anti-racist and inclusive education

The literature we reviewed indicates that many groups of people are willing and eager to place responsibility for the implementation of anti-racist education onto the shoulders of principals. Implicit in this concern for inclusive schools is that it will help children of a minority background to be more successful in school. Many principals accept the aims of multicultural education, but need more support and discretionary authority to be responsive to local contexts and constituencies to bring about lasting and significant change (Carr 1977; Lingard 1988). To effect the profound normative changes that others see as necessary is a daunting task; the prescriptions offered do not seem to take into account the varied roles and responsibilities a principal must negotiate. In fact, principals were rarely asked what they understood multicultural education to mean and how they envisioned an ethnically diverse school, let alone how they see their role in this

regard—the voice of the principal is silent in most of these studies. That is the starting point of our study.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to describe and reflect on the findings of the early stages of a study of the changing role of the school administrator in ethnically diverse schools and its relationship with student attainment. The purpose of the study is two-fold: (a) to describe and critically reflect on the experiences of school administrators who serve communities that have undergone recent and rapid demographic changes due to immigration; and (b) to continue to work with interested participants who wish to further explore emerging issues and questions, particularly in ways which involve students and parents as well as staff. The focus of initial data collection included:

- administrator relationships with students, parents and teachers, with special attention to staff development and parent advisory councils;

- the identification and description of issues/dilemmas the administrators have encountered as a result of the changing ethnic composition of the school population;

- the development of the administrators' knowledge and understanding of multiculturalism and its attendant issues, particularly with respect to teaching and learning; and

- the conceptual, philosophical and ethical underpinnings of the administrators' approaches or orientations to administering a multicultural school.

Research Design

The research design is interpretive and narrative in orientation, with interviewing being the main data collecting method. The eight elementary school administrators — all from the same district who volunteered to participate in the study because of their interest in the issue — were asked to participate in two one-hour-long, open-ended, in-depth interviews,

which were conducted by graduate research assistants. The first explored how their role has changed and continues to change as a result of changing demographics. The specific questions that framed the interview were:

1. What is it like to be a principal in an ethnically diverse school?

2. What issues and challenges have you encountered and how have you responded to them?

3. What kinds of assistance/support/guidance have you been given or have access to in learning how to be the administrator of an ethnically diverse school?

The set of interview transcripts for all the participating administrators in the district was then analyzed for recurring and conflicting themes, issues, dilemmas, etc. The second interview sought participant response to the initial analysis. Participants received a copy of their interview transcript, accompanied by a researcher-prepared narrative of the main themes and patterns.

Both interview sessions were transcribed almost verbatim. We discussed, as a team, themes arising from the transcripts of the first session so that we could clarify and ask principals to elaborate on those responses in the second session. For example, one of the principals said that she felt she is "walking on eggshells." We used this quote to ask principals to elaborate on their experiences, where they may feel that they are walking on eggshells, and/or feel supported and comfortable when dealing with the existing challenges, and what this experience means for each of them. We also discussed the interview responses as a team so that we could identify interview questions that may have been misleading or biasing their responses. For example, we realized that some of our questions focused on the challenges principals faced, but none of the questions focused on how diversity was enriching. In the second interviews then, we asked whether and how diversity was enriching. The second set of interview questions were:

1. In the past interview, we focused on how diversity has been challenging to you. In reading the transcripts it seemed that principals also talked about diversity as enriching. We would now like to provide the opportunity for you to elaborate

on this aspect of diversity for us. Does embracing diversity in this way ever create a conflict for you?

2. From the data, we get a sense that the principal's experience with diversity is complex and multidimensional. On the one hand there are experiences of "walking on eggshells," while on the other hand, it is enriching, and there are lots of other experiences as well. How does this fit into your overall priorities for the school?

3. In the data there were many instances of conflict, not necessarily hostile, but sets of expectations that come head-to-head. For example, there are different ways of disciplining, or rituals and symbols which seem to conflict in some situations. It seems to us that this means principals have to learn about expectations parents hold in the area of academics, as well as about life in general. How do you find out about cultural expectations and prepare yourself for sensitive issues?

4. All the principal interviews showed that parent involvement is important. We were wondering why that is important; in what way you are thinking about involvement; and what strategies you are using to get parents involved?

5. Many principals questioned how we teach ESL, mostly with respect to "pull-out" versus integrated service. Another question has been about use of heritage language, but there may be other issues as well. Please tell us more about your thinking on these matters?

To analyze the data, we began by comparing the themes across the eight principals. However, we realized that when the responses are broken down to their parts, a lot of meaning was lost. Each principal brings his/her own background experience and knowledge to the job, which could best be captured as a profile. Thus, we adopted an emic approach in reporting the findings in order to convey what is salient to the participants in their past experiences and in their current situations.

In the next phase of the study, the participants will be invited to a focus group session to examine the themes, issues and dilemmas more deeply. A draft paper will be circulated prior to the session, which will serve as a catalyst for discussion if the participants wish. Also at this time, the future direction of the study will be considered.

Principal Practices — Commonalities and Differences

The participants focused on a number of common elements during their interviews, including:

1. ethnic diversity and school priorities.
2. past experiences shaping response to ethnic diversity.
3. language barriers/use of heritage language.
4. pull-out ESL programmes.
5. parental expectations.
6. multicultural celebrations.
7. social studies curriculum.
8. lack of professional development.

There was a distinctiveness and coherence of each participant's set of responses. Nevertheless, there were some common practices and beliefs across all eight principals regardless of the ethnic composition of the school or the percentage of students requiring ESL instruction. We have tried to portray these commonalities through a composite profile. While the composite profile conveys quite well how some of the principals are responding to the ethnic diversity of their communities, other principals are engaging in additional, unique practices. These are described separately in the following section. Together, the two sections lay the foundation for the discussion that follows.

Composite Principal Profile

Chris[2] feels that there are challenges to being a principal at an ethnically diverse school, challenges that are different from those of other schools but no greater or more difficult. In fact, the school's priorities do not centre around issues pertaining to ethnic diversity. It is important to accommodate the learning needs of all students, including but not limited to ESL students, and to provide the appropriate academic support. The main challenge is communication with ESL children and with their parents.[3] This entails overcoming the language barrier, and also raises the question of how best to offer ESL instruction.

Chris relies on interpreters to communicate with parents who do not speak English. Some parents bring in their own interpreters, but more often the school provides an interpreter from, for example, SUCCESS. On occasion, ESL students[4] act as interpreters. Translations of some documents are available from the district office, and occasionally the school will have a document translated.

Often ESL parents are deeply respectful of educators and highly value education, and thus contribute to an atmosphere in the school of high academic standards. Yet Chris has experienced the sense of "walking on eggshells" because of differences in cultural norms and expectations between Canadian and immigrant parents. For example, some ESL parents have unrealistically high expectations of the capabilities of children at a particular grade level; or Canadian parents fear that their traditions are being replaced by those of the newcomers — the Christmas concert being a particular case in point. The principal has to negotiate these differences and help the various participants understand each others' perspectives. To learn about cultural differences, Chris mainly relies on experience, on district resource personnel, on staff members of different ethnic backgrounds, and, to a lesser extent, on books. Training programmes have not prepared

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[2] This is a pseudonym.

[3] Occasionally it is a relative other than a parent who comes to the school on the child's behalf. In this paper, unless otherwise indicated, the term parent encompasses any relative who has the responsibility of dealing with the school concerning a particular child.

[4] In this district, as in many others, immigrant students who require instruction to learn English are referred to as ESL students, and their parents as ESL parents.

principals to work with ethnically diverse communities, nor has there been much in-service for administrators in this area, yet Chris believes there is a considerable need.

Chris wants all the children to be happy at school and to feel that they are part of the school community. This does not require anything special for ESL children — existing practices such as the buddy programme, recognition programmes, and extracurricular activities serve the purpose satisfactorily. Chris is not sure how best to offer ESL instruction to all the children who need it, but feels uneasy about the current pull-out approach. On the plus side, it encourages as much integration as possible. On the negative side, it is disruptive both to the ESL students and to the others remaining in the classroom. And not all classroom teachers have had training in working with ESL students and accommodating curriculum and instruction appropriately for them, although school ESL teachers and district resource personnel and materials are very helpful.

Overall, Chris enjoys being a principal at an ethnically diverse school and believes the enriching aspects outweigh the challenges. The ethnic diversity of the school helps the children to learn about other cultures firsthand, to develop a positive sense of being part of a multicultural community, and to think more globally about various issues. Ethnic diversity helps the social studies curriculum to come alive, as students from different backgrounds talk about their customs and beliefs. In addition, the social studies curriculum provides a forum for examining ethnic diversity and for dealing in a positive way with the similarities and differences of classmates. Multicultural events, where students and their families come together to celebrate their cultural heritage with food and perhaps music, are often a highlight of the school year.

Variations on the Composite Profile

The use of interpreters and the translation of documents are common practices, but some principals have other strategies to overcome the language barrier and to make ESL parents feel welcome. These include the translation of the principal's business card into several languages; the use of questionnaires to find out about ESL parents' interests; and the provision of information about SUCCESS to ESL parents. In one school, the ESL

teacher holds an open house for ESL parents to explain the basic structure of the school and the curriculum. Interpreters from SUCCESS are present so that parents can ask questions or raise concerns and have them responded to. In another school, the Parent Advisory Council has organized a six-week course for parents of ESL students in order to familiarize them with the Canadian school system and academic routines such as report cards, parent-teacher conferences, and field trips. In a third school, a list of the names and telephone numbers of parents who are willing to translate the newsletter into a particular language is available to parents who do not read English and wish to learn what is being said in the newsletter.

The participants differ in their views on the amount of time and effort they should expend on the translation of documents or the provision of interpreters, from utilizing numerous strategies to expecting parents to bring an interpreter with them of one is needed. One described the dilemma of accommodating ESL parents and compromising oneself as follows. Because the school serves a large Chinese community, the school newsletter is translated into Chinese. Now, at the request of members of the Korean community, the newsletter is also translated into that language. Recently, on a school survey, a parent whose first language is Japanese asked that simpler language be used in the newsletter so she could understand it. As someone who did not speak English when she started school, the principal has empathy for these parents, but she does not believe she should drop her vocabulary. Instead, she asked the people who translate the newsletter to summarize the main ideas in the newsletter and to use simpler language in expressing the ideas.

Interesting situations have arisen in efforts to communicate across languages. For example, one principal spoke of the awkwardness of having a student translate for a fellow student or for an adult about a disciplinary matter. Another described an instance in which it was necessary to explain to a parent the policy regarding students with head lice; a staff member and the parent, both of whom are multilingual, found a language other than English or either of their first languages in which to converse.

While many of the participants raised concerns about the unrealistic expectations of some immigrant parents with respect to their child's academic achievement, other differences in cultural norms and expectations have created situations which conflict. Many of these centre on disciplinary practices. For example, two young children had been fighting on the playground; as a consequence they were not allowed to go out for recess the next day. Instead, they sat in the main office, under the supervision of an adult. One of the children was Chinese; his grandfather had come to the school and happened to see him sitting there. The grandfather was incensed, not that the child was being punished, but the public nature of the punishment — what the educators saw as a safety issue, the grandparent saw as a loss of face, and he transferred his grandson to another school.

Another principal spoke of the Korean parents who see discipline as the concern of the school. Canadian educators believe it is important to involve the parents, the student and the teacher in working out a solution to behaviour problems; to the Korean parents, to be invited to the school because of your child's misbehaviour is a shameful thing, a loss of face. But other situations in which cultural norms were unwittingly violated have occurred as well. For example, one principal gave some white flowers as a thank you to a parent in whose culture white is a symbol of death. Another principal had a picture of a cross on the Remembrance Day newsletter, which prompted a letter from a Jewish parent who had been offended. It is difficult for school administrators to anticipate what actions might unintentionally cause offence, especially when the school serves a highly diverse community, but one principal believes "you must want to get that information." Others worry about the possibility of foregoing Canadian traditions in the effort not to offend people of other cultures.

One principal believes that it is important to respond to the needs of the whole family, and that all the staff should be involved. Parents are welcomed into the school; the secretary plays an important role in this respect. The school counselor responds to the parents' needs as much as the child's needs; the principal believes that this acknowledging the efforts of parents helps to reduce their anxiety and the extreme demands they place on their children. If an issue arises regarding the cultural differences in playing sports, the coach gets involved. The assistant principal is from an ethnic group and sensitizes the

principal and staff towards cultural differences. When the parent has an unreasonably high expectation of the child's grade, the teacher intervenes and talks to the parent on having a more reasonable expectation. The parents and child can choose not to participate in the prescribed curriculum for cultural reasons, although all must understand that the prescribed curriculum will be taught. For this principal, it is important for parents to trust the school. This means that sometimes you have to understand how a family from another country might view the western world — you have to be sensitive towards their frame of mind; you need to be sensitive to cultural differences, and to understand that treating everyone the same is not the same as treating everyone fairly. What is important is that families feel that they can discuss their issues, and that there is mutual respect between the parents and the school.

In order to help ESL students new to the school feel more comfortable, several of the schools match them with a buddy. One school makes an effort to find a buddy of the same ethnic background, and sees it as desirable if the buddy speaks the language of the new student. The peer counsellors at another school, many of whom speak a language in addition to English, help new students, first by taking them on a tour of the school and then by being available to answer questions. In the case of a school which serves a high-needs community, the principal talks of leaving the doors unlocked beyond the usual closing time so that students can avail themselves of the school's services. For example, one child who had been threatened with abduction sought safety in the school after school hours. That principal also argued for a summer school programme at the school, one which offered artistic and athletic activities as well as academics. With respect to the general routines of the school, one principal described how multi-age groupings (in which older children help or provide leadership to younger children) take place for a variety of activities — sports, celebrations of holidays, gym skills; not just reading and writing — so that older ESL students have opportunities to help younger children in ways not so dependent on language. Another described common 90-minute language arts periods during which those who need it receive intensive ESL instruction so that ESL students do not miss instruction and activities in other subject areas. Students at that school choose the peer counsellors, and appear to do so on the basis of someone they trust and can go

to. As a result, amongst the peer counsellors are students who speak Mandarin, Cantonese and Korean. Two of the teachers in that school speak Mandarin and are planning to offer a Mandarin programme for all students next year. As most of the Chinese students speak Cantonese, learning Mandarin will be a shared new experience for all the students.

Several of the principals feel that teachers need support and professional development to help them adjust their teaching for a class in which there are many children at different levels of proficiency in English. One principal did organize a multicultural professional development day for her staff during which they went to SUCCESS and to various ethnic communities for presentations, celebrations and food testing. Another invited a district ESL teacher for professional development day who suggested strategies for working with classes in which there are many ESL students at different levels and who also described for them the emotional process that many immigrants go through. Several participants believe that there should be more ethnic diversity amongst teachers and administrators, to reflect the communities they serve, although the first consideration has to be professional ability. One principal has had to respond to the combination of a highly transient community and contractual obligations in creative ways. According to the contract, the number of students in a class must be reduced if there are more than three special needs students; a student who speaks little or no English (ESL level 1) is considered to be a special needs student. There were 80 new registrants just before school opened, many in the ESL level 1 category. It would not have been possible to reduce all the classes by two students; thus all ESL time in the first three weeks of September went to instruction of these new students, so that they could then be placed in classrooms, with no support for other ESL students during that time. In addition, all the classes are split grades, so there is some flexibility in meeting class size limits as new students arrive throughout the year.

There are differing views amongst the participants concerning the use of heritage languages. In a couple of schools there is a rule requiring that English be spoken at all times, even on the playground, in order to help the ESL students learn English as quickly as possible. One principal believes that this rule also helps to prevent the formation of

ethnically based gangs. In another school, ESL students are allowed to speak English on the playground because the principal believes that it is exhausting for the students to communicate in an unfamiliar language all day, and that every effort must be made to help them feel at ease in their new environment. One incident conveys the complexity of this issue. There had been a dispute between several students about some of them speaking in Chinese, and the principal suggested that they all make an attempt to speak in English. A parent wrote to complain that her son now feels like a second-class citizen because some white boys were uncomfortable when he spoke in Chinese and now he was required to speak in English. In fact, the white boys to whom the mother was referring were of Chinese heritage but whose families had been in Canada for at least one generation — children within a particular ethnic group were making distinctions between recent and past immigrants.

The schools in which these eight principals work differ in the percentage of ESL students (from 20% to over 60%), in ethnic diversity (from one or two predominant ethnic groups to many different ethnic groups) and in socio-economic status (from poor to upper-middle class). Yet the school contexts do not seem to affect practice with respect to ethnic diversity as much as the philosophy and past experience of the principal.

Discussion

The issue of language looms large for these principals, which is understandable, given that immigrant children and their parents place a high value on the learning of English; that the only data readily available to schools about the demographics of the student population pertain to the first language of the home; and that funding is allocated according to number of ESL students and their levels of proficiency in English. There is strong support for constructing the impact of immigration as a problem of language, and the principals are reflecting the common wisdom of the times. As Anderson (1990) points out in another context, however, there may be unexpected drawbacks to this approach; for example:

- constraining or limiting school's responses to the provision of interpreters, translating services and English as a second language instruction, and thereby both

supporting, at least implicitly, a deficit model, and decreasing the salience of other cultural factors; and

- identifying school and district ESL resource personnel as the main providers of the services, thereby suggesting that it is not the responsibility of others.

Both of these drawbacks may have an impact on student attainment, especially to the extent that they deflect attention from intellectual development to the learning of English.

Cummins (1993; Cummins et al. 1996) has offered a framework for understanding the success or lack of success of minority students, which involves the place of the student in the school, the use of the heritage language and home-school relations. With respect to the first, there is considerable research evidence indicating that when students feel they are respected, cared for, and valued and when they are able to make meaningful contributions to life in the school, they are more likely to have positive attitudes toward school and learning and to be more successful (Battistich et al. 1995; Darling-Hammond 1996; Noblit 1993; Noddings 1992). Cummins (1993) argues that, for minority children, these notions are tied up with a cultural and linguistic incorporation in the school programme. If the students believe that learning English and learning to be a Canadian is complementing (i.e., adding to) their existing cultural and linguistic heritage rather than replacing (i.e., subtracting from) it, then are more likely to do better. From the principals' descriptions of school practices, there appear to be some which enhance cultural and linguistic heritage, and others which do not. The former include the welcoming of newcomers, and the bilingual/multilingual peer councillors and buddies; the latter, rules requiring the speaking of English. Although the presence in the school of children from many different countries is felt to be enriching, the specific contributions mentioned most frequently — deepening the discussion of culture in social studies classes and multicultural days — seem somewhat peripheral to the day-to-day routine of school life.

The use of heritage languages might affect student success somewhat indirectly, through a sense of belonging, but also more directly. Cummins has made a distinction between the use of language for interpersonal communication and the use of language for academic purposes. The former is more easily acquired by someone learning a new

language. The latter may take many years to develop, and until it does other provisions must be made to ensure that the children continue to grow and be challenged intellectually.

Interestingly, the principals talked about parents as much or more than they talked about students. Cummins (1993) underscores the importance of collaborative relationships between the school and minority parents. An important aspect of the work of the participating principals is ensuring that immigrant parents have information in their first language about the school system in general and about their child's experiences and performance in particular. Certainly the parents need this information if they are to be actively involved in their child's education, which is what Cummins sees as the purpose of the home–school collaboration. Collaboration, though, implies a mutuality and a reciprocity which goes beyond the provision of information. For example, Cheng Gorman and Balter argue that "if parent education is to be effective, it must be made not only available to all populations, but *relevant* and *acceptable* to all populations as well" (1997, 366), which has meant, for schools committed to multiculturalism, moving from practices that ensure linguistic acceptability (i.e., translations) to programmes targeted for specific cultural groups. Such practices can only be developed through dialogue.

There was less mention of regular, planned strategies to hear from immigrant parents, which may be explained by the way the impact of immigration has been framed, so that once the difference in language has been addressed — by the provision of interpreters or the translation of documents — there is no need to hear specifically from immigrant parents. Yet the principals recognize that that there are cultural differences other than language — differences in expectations for example — but they have not been helped by the universities or professional organizations in how to respond to these differences and to open up dialogue about them. In fact, they appear to be under some pressure not to make changes, at least not any that impinge on the *status quo*, on "Canadian identity and traditions."

Parental involvement has been found to be associated with student success in school. For example, Chrispeels concludes that "student achievement is enhanced when there is mutual collaboration and support among home, school, and community" (1996,

299). Others (Binkowski, Cordeiro, and Iwanicki 1995; Comer 1991) consider a broader notion of student success, and also find a strong relationship between that and meaningful parent participation. Swap holds that this relationship exists "across all populations" (1993, 1); ethnicity or socio-economic status is not so much a factor as is what Walberg terms "the curriculum of the home" (1984, 400), that is, how parents support their child's learning at home. Studies of Chinese-American parents (Kellaghan et al. 1993) and Mexican-American parents (Delgado-Gaitan 1992) have found that they value education and do what they can in the home to support their child's learning, but that they tend not be active as volunteers or in governance and thus sometimes are thought not to be interested in their child's schooling. These findings resonate with the experiences of the participating principals — their acknowledgment and appreciation of the support for education shown by the immigrant parents, and also their efforts to bring parents into the school to serve as volunteers or on governance committees. There is another non-linguistic cultural difference about which the principals express concern — that the immigrant parents might be setting unrealistic expectations for their children. Again they describe their efforts to help the parents understand the inappropriateness of their expectations, but say little about how these parents' views are contributing to discourse at the school on an important educational issue.

Conclusion

Decision making, especially in pluralistic contexts, is a complex undertaking for educational administrators (Begley 1996). The principals in this study would concur fully that their work is carried out "increasingly in the midst of competing and often conflicting professional and community expectations for their performance" (Greenfield 1995, 66). The need to overcome language barriers is so compelling that it seems to overshadow other considerations, including a broader discourse of the learning needs of ESL children. Yet the principals all recognize that there are broader issues of culture than simply language, and that these cultural differences both enrich the school community and create conflict. They all are willing to help newcomers to feel welcome in and to adapt to Canadian schools, but all also are grappling, to different degrees, with the question of how

much schools should change in response to their changing communities. They have framed the issue as one of Canadian identity and culture, with which the B.C. Advisory Council on Multiculturalism would agree: "[Multiculturalism] is not just about 'visible minorities.' It is not just about immigration. It is about Canadian identity. It is about all of us and how we choose to live together in ways that promote understanding, respect, and harmony in our society" (The B.C. Advisory Council on Multiculturalism 1998, 1).

The rapidly changing demographics of many schools presented a variety of challenges to educational administrators who had little time and guidance to respond. And yet, as Estrada and McLaren (1993) argue, these challenges can only be addressed by considering deeper structures and beliefs. In fact, we probably need to reconceptualize how we think about schools if they are to be truly inclusive of all who inhabit them. One promising direction is to think of schools as communities (Greene 1993; Sergiovanni 1994; Starrat 1991) or as a third space (Gosh and Vijh 1997). Such conceptualization emphasizes the valuing of all members through "comfortable, dynamic and prolific negotiation . . . exchange and transaction between partners of equal power" (Gosh and Vijh 1997, 8).

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