

Principal Meetings: Pressure Mechanisms That Shape Professional Knowledge

Gopal Midha
University of Virginia

Research suggests that principals spend between 50 and 85 percent of their time in meetings and principal meetings are frequently mentioned across educational literature, yet these daily interactions have been overlooked as research topics. This paper studies the relationship between principal meetings and the of professional knowledge. Qualitative data was gathered from an ethnographic case study of principal meetings across two schools. Data analysis shows that planned and unplanned principal meetings interconnect to serve as pressure mechanisms that emphasize and accomplish professional responsibilities. This paper calls for further attempts to develop theory and scholarship about principal meetings.

Keywords: principal meeting, educational leadership, professional knowledge, sensemaking, meeting science

INTRODUCTION

“I sure had tired butt this morning—we met at 8.15 for that committee on data processing and then we stayed for an elementary principals’ meeting that lasted till 12.15 p.m.”
- Ed, Elementary School Principal from the United States (Wolcott, 1973, p. 95).

“Meetings are necessary for progress. If there are no meetings, then only teaching, this—that and then there can’t be more focus that I have to reach this goal, I have to do...pressure, pressure is a big thing - give pressure from above and then only work get done, that’s the rule. Pressure from above that we have to complete this today. Today, my pressure on teachers is that I need records then the teacher and under pressure only, will they do quickly... no meetings, then no impact, no impact, no impact - Laxmi, Elementary School Principal from India (principal interview, 2/7/ 2019).

The meetings involving the elementary school principal or principal meetings, like the ones mentioned above by US school principals like Ed and the Indian school principals like Laxmi, often comprise between 50% to 85% of their day (Crisp, 2017; Morris, et al., 1984; Wolcott, 1973) and have various labels and ostensible purposes and yet, despite their ubiquity, meetings of the principal remain unnoticed in two significant ways. First, based on the existing educational literature, this paper shows that various meetings of the school principal remain largely overlooked in the research literature as constituents of educational leadership practice. Secondly, based on the findings from an ethnographic

study, this paper illustrates that principal meetings act as pressure mechanisms to shape school members' professional knowledge about professional responsibilities. The paper illuminates the significance of daily meeting practices of school principals to develop theory and generate an exchange of ideas between scholars, practitioners, and industry specialists on a relatively undertheorized phenomenon: principal meetings.

Despite the wide presence of references to school principal's meetings in academic literature and trade publications, the principal meeting itself has escaped much research attention (e.g., Boudett & City, 2014; Coburn, 2001; Datnow, et al., 2019; Honig, 2014). Table 1 presents an illustrative list of labels and descriptions provided by scholars and trade specialists about various kinds of principal meetings. These descriptions suggest that principal meetings are mostly considered as tools to accomplish principal's tasks like school administration (Gronn, 1983), school organization (Weldy, 1974; Wolcott, 1973), facilitating community relationships (Pena, 2000), school improvement (Chrispeels et al., 2008; Duke & Landahl, 2011), and achieving inter-organizational collaborations (Glazer & Peurach, 2012), wherein the focus is rarely on the meeting itself as a research topic of attention (Riehl, 1998; Schwartzman, 1989).

TABLE 1
ILLUSTRATIVE LIST OF PRINCIPAL MEETINGS IN LITERATURE

Reference	Principal meeting label	Principal meeting description
Chrispeels and Martin (2002)	School Leadership team meeting	Discussion and planning of school improvement with teacher-leaders
Duke & Landahl (2011)	School Review meeting; Goal-setting meeting	School-wide grade level meeting to present data on student progress; set professional learning goals
Fullan (2002)	Principal conference	Discussing administrative and instructional issues with other principals
Glazer & Peurach, (2012); Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, and Valentine (1999)	SIP conference; Faculty meetings; School Improvement Network meeting	Discussing research- based findings with other school leadership teams supported by university faculty/hub experts
Gronn (1983)	Administrative Planning meeting	A pre-meeting with the assistant principal to plan the staff meeting
Honig (2014)	Principal PLC meeting	Central office staff meeting with school principals on instructional issues
Pena (2000)	Parent Teacher Organization meeting	Meeting with parents and teachers on academic and administrative issues
Weldy (1974)	Various: (School government meeting; athletic director's meeting; football coach meeting)	Not described beyond the meeting label
Wolcott (1973)	Guidance Committee meeting;	Discussing pupil issues with school counselors and teachers

Research also indicates that principal meetings shape not only the professional knowledge of teachers but also that of the school principals (Coburn, 2005; Honig, 2014). Wolcott's (1973) description of the various principal meetings highlight them as settings that bring together multiple actors from different epistemic concentrations (e.g., school subjects in grade-level meetings), functional communities (e.g., school staff, teachers, experts in cross-school faculty meetings), and communities of practice (e.g., meetings of the principal association meetings) to provide an avenue to develop and refine professional knowledge. Principal meetings provide an avenue that not only reduces the dispersion of knowledge

(Hodgson, 2008) but also helps structure and define what counts as professional knowledge by structuring the unknown in the environment through enactment (Weick, 1995).

However, in the absence of rich, empirical descriptions of principal meetings, we do not yet know how elements of meetings and interconnections between various meetings influence the development and sharing of professional knowledge. The emerging literature on meetings as a topic of research, also called as meeting science, indicates a strong relationship between meeting elements (e.g., meeting talk, location, time) and the professional knowledge being developed (Allen et al., 2015, Yarrow, 2015). But educational leadership research has yet to provide insights into the role of principal meetings in shaping professional knowledge.

STUDY OBJECTIVE

Based on the arguments outlined so far, this paper considers principal meetings as a topic of research important to understanding the enactment of elementary school leadership and studies the relationship between principal meetings and the development and sharing of professional knowledge within the context of elementary public schools in Mumbai, India. The choice of a foreign country like India presents a different institutional and cultural context to observe principal meetings and therefore likely to help challenge taken-for-granted assumptions in the US-based literature around educational leadership, the conduct of principal meetings, and the shaping of professional knowledge in elementary schools.

Principal meetings, for this paper, are defined as deliberate, work-related interactions of the school principal and at least one more person linked to school functioning while professional knowledge is defined as a “justified personal belief” (King, 2009, p. 3) operating within an organizational context and comprising both tacit and explicit knowledge which flows through the school.

This paper addresses the following question: What role do principal meetings play in shaping professional knowledge?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Sensemaking theory (Weick, 1995) and meeting science-led systemic view of meetings (Duffy & O’Rourke, 2015) provide key conceptual frames to study how principal meetings are connected to principal and teacher professional knowledge. To answer the research question outlined earlier, principal meetings are conceptualized as interconnected sensemaking episodes.

Sensemaking theory (Weick, 1995) provides terms and processes to explore the meaning-making of participants during meeting interaction. Weick’s work has had a large influence on organizational studies (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015) and has been used in education literature to deconstruct and explain the social nature of teacher meaning-making (Coburn, 2005). Sensemaking (Weick, 1995) has also been used in research to signify the role of the school principal in shaping ideas that influence teacher interpretation and knowledge (Coburn, 2005), also referred to as “sensegiving” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 434).

The use of sensemaking as a conceptual lens for this study aligns well with a qualitative approach that emphasizes the interpretation of a phenomenon through a social negotiation of meaning-making in natural settings. Also, in the brief history of scholars considering meetings as a research topic, a qualitative approach to study workplace meetings has already established itself as a prominent methodological choice (e.g., Schwartzman, 1989).

The systemic view of meetings (Duffy & O’Rourke, 2015) as the second key conceptual frame provides terms and processes from meeting science to describe and analyze the interconnections between different kinds of principal meetings and across principal meetings over time. Meetings as sensemaking episodes are not isolated, rather Duffy and O’Rourke argue for a systemic model of interconnected meetings within an organization. This systemic model fits well with the “ongoing” nature of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Using sensemaking at the center of their systemic model, Duffy and O’Rourke describe three elements that connect time, space, relationships within and across meetings: (a) trans-participants, (b) immutable-artifacts, and (c) absent participants as described in the next paragraph.

Adapting the elements proposed by Duffy and O'Rourke (2015) to principal meetings provides key analytical constructs to investigate how principal meetings influence professional knowledge. First, the principals, as trans-participants, attend meetings of more than one group (e.g., teachers, central office, other principals). This trans-participant role, when combined with their relatively high status within the school, suggests that principals cross-pollinate sensemaking and influence what and how professional knowledge is developed and shared. Secondly, principal meetings often involve the use of immutable-artifacts or things which can be transported without being distorted and which often preserve meaning and knowledge across time (e.g., presentation slides, meeting minutes, memos). Finally, in referring to absent participants, principals are likely to use the words of participants from other meetings as a kind of ventriloquism (Cooren, 2012), to legitimize knowledge, actions, and decisions (Datnow et al., 2019; Schwartzman, 1989). Overall, the three elements combine within and across principal meetings to shape professional knowledge.

METHOD

A qualitative multiple-case study (Yin, 2009) was conducted across elementary public schools in Mumbai, India under the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM). MCGM provides free schooling and free materials (e.g., school bags, uniforms) for children from low-income households who attend its 1,192 primary-secondary schools in Mumbai in the state of Maharashtra. Similar to the practice of providing food to students in US schools, the MCGM schools also provide free lunch to their students. The two elementary schools for this paper were chosen after careful analysis and spending a day each shadowing school principals in eight schools which officials indicated were typical MCGM schools. These two schools served high-poverty student populations and had the same physical infrastructural constraints, similar pupil-teacher ratio, same reporting requirements, and had school principals having similar years of school leadership experience (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
SCHOOL AND PRINCIPAL DETAILS

Details	Red school	Blue school
<u>School-related</u>		
Grades	K-8	K-7
Student population	700	300
Teachers	18	8
Student-teacher ratio	39	38
Physical infrastructure	Poor	Poor
Reporting relationship	Beat Officer: Rajni B Admin Officer: Lata A	Beat Officer: Rajni B Admin Officer: Lata A
<u>Principal-related</u>		
Gender of principal	Female	Female
Years of experience at current school (total experience as principal)	5 (5)	4 (8)

The study used participant observation, interviews, and document reviews to collect data (see Table 3). Overall, more than 100 hours of everyday meetings of the school principal were observed within and outside the two schools (e.g., at the central office). Two principal meetings were video-recorded. Besides principal meetings, two interviews each were conducted with the school principals and one each with a teacher from each school, in addition to several informal conversations with school principals, teachers, and public-school officials.

TABLE 3
DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND TIME SPENT

Method	Description	Number	Time spent
Participant observation	Observation of planned meetings (Staff meeting and Ward meeting)	Staff meetings (1)	1 hours
	Observations of multiple unplanned meetings with teachers, MCGM officials, NGOs, and parents.	Ward meetings (2)	3 hours
		Unplanned meetings	85 hours
	Informal observations of and conversations with principals, teachers, and MCGM officials		35 hours
Interviews	Semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers	Principal interviews (4)	2.5 hours
		Teacher interviews (2)	1 hour
Documents	Review and analysis of documents used within and related to principal meetings: - Meeting agenda and minutes -Other documents (school registers, memos, circulars)		

Data analysis was done at the same time as data collection through multiple methods including iterative coding, memoing, vignettes, and monthly contact sheets (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data analysis under this study began at the same time as data collection by giving meaning to first impressions and continuing towards final compilations (Stake, 1995). Analysis of collected data was ongoing, often conducted through meta-commentary while writing the fieldnotes. An initial list of codes was drawn based on the literature on the elements of meetings relating to professional knowledge, the conceptual framework, and exploratory discussions with school principals. Subsequently, the list was redefined and supplemented with emic codes that were closer to participants' categories, especially using "in vivo" codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

FINDINGS

Findings show that principal meetings were pressure mechanisms to develop and share professional knowledge about professional responsibilities. The element of pressure was evident in participant descriptions of principal meetings as well as talk and action within principal meetings. The pressure was exercised in planned principal meetings to shape professional knowledge about what professional responsibilities were to be accomplished and by when. The pressure applied in planned meetings often resulted in unplanned principal meetings.

Principal Meetings and Pressure

The comment by principal Laxmi at the beginning of this paper captures the essence of principal meetings as pressure mechanisms. The comment is noteworthy when we highlight principal Laxmi's assumption that without principal meetings, the teachers are not going to focus on goals and professional tasks ("If there are no meetings, then only teaching, this-that and then there can't be more focus that I have to reach this goal"). Her repetition of the word "pressure" six times in the quote stresses how principal meetings bring an urgency towards goal and completion of professional responsibilities. In the quote, Laxmi emphasizes that her meetings are necessary to provide pressure that makes teachers complete their professional responsibility of submitting records today ("...I need records then the teacher and under pressure only, will they do quickly").

Principal Laxmi's perspective of principal meetings as pressure mechanisms was echoed by the other school principal (Mina) and a teacher (Habib) as may be observed in their comments quoted below. The quote from Mina suggests that principal meetings provide pressure through continual reminders of professional tasks until they are completed. In his comment about principal meetings, Teacher Habib reinforces the use of meetings as reminders for professional responsibilities ("If a meeting is taken every month, then it remains fit in the mind"). Further, Habib uses the verb "taken" repeatedly when referencing meetings and his elaboration suggests a similar meaning for the verb take as used in the phrase "to take stock of things". This was further confirmed during conversations with other study participants that meetings are "taken" to get information. Therefore, the continual reminders in principal meetings and the emphasis on taking stock of things suggests that meetings sustain the pressure to get professional responsibilities accomplished.

Principal Mina: Meetings are necessary...to do motivation. Because some points are repeated again (sic)- till they are completed, that's why. (Mina, personal communication, February 2, 2019)

Teacher Habib: Because here some people forget and it is important to revise [remind] them if there is no meeting taken on that point. If a meeting is taken and then not talked about it [the point] for 6 months then people also don't take it seriously.... If a meeting is taken every month, then it remains fit in the mind. (Habib, personal communication, February 28, 2019)

To summarize, principal meetings were considered necessary and "taken" to provide and receive pressure to accomplish professional responsibilities usually by reminding teachers and principals. Without meetings, it was felt, important professional responsibilities would not be focused upon by teachers and principals and are likely to remain unfinished.

Data analysis further revealed that this pressure centered around which professional responsibilities were to be accomplished and their due dates. Further, the key principal meeting elements that provided pressure were meeting talk (words spoken during the meeting), meeting participant-role (speaker's professional position in the institutional hierarchy), and the physical aspects of the meeting (e.g., location, body, gestures, and artifacts).

Pressure Through Meeting Talk and Participant Role

More than 90% of meeting talk during principal meetings related to the accomplishment of professional responsibilities through reminders and clarifications. Further, this talk was dominated through phrases that denoted pressure and these pressure phrases were used by those higher in institutional hierarchy. Often this pressure was repeated by participants in their other subsequent meetings. To see how meeting talk was primarily about reminding professional responsibilities, the monthly two-hour principal meeting at the central office (also called the Ward office) may be taken as an illustration. During this principal meeting, the senior MCGM officials spoke for more than an hour and fifty minutes reiterating and clarifying the various professional responsibilities of principals. The excerpt below is taken from the central office meeting and illustrates how the Administrative Officer (AO), who is hierarchically two levels above the MCGM school principal, uses talk to provide pressure that clarifies and reminds principals of their professional responsibilities about the newly implemented biometric attendance system at schools.

AO: ...you have to swipe in & out on proper time only...everyone please understand this... Everyone please understand this.

AO: So, because of this reason if your hours are cut...then who is responsible? Yourself and no one else. If there are genuine reasons, then Head Master [principal] should

decide...whether to cut or not. But...action will not be taken unless and until you inform this to Ward [central office]. So, if it gets missed then Head Master is responsible and not Ward.

In the meeting talk quote above, the AO reminds the principals that the school staff must fulfill their professional responsibility of signing in and signing out of the biometric system at the proper time. These reminders are often reiterated through phrases that suggest pressure (e.g., “Everyone please understand this” and “...who is responsible? You and no one else”). The pressure through “Everyone please understand this” is evident in the repetition of the phrase. The pressure is important because if this signing in and out is not performed correctly, then the staff’s attendance hours might get cut and lead to a deduction in salary. Subsequently, the AO clarifies that it is the principal’s responsibility to inform the central office (Ward) about any genuine reasons why signing-in and out could not happen at the appropriate times (e.g., biometric machine problems). It is here the principal’s responsibility is reiterated and given an element of pressure through the use of “You and no one else”. Overall, the AO’s talk is infused with pressure to address the specific professional responsibility of school principals that needs to be accomplished.

The AO, in the same meeting subsequently, uses repetitive talk again suggesting pressure to emphasize a timeline by which the professional responsibility must be accomplished (not included in the meeting quote above). The AO indicates that principals need to accomplish their professional responsibility of intimating the central office of biometric issues by the 13th of every month. This date of 13th is reiterated by the AO at least thrice during the central office meeting (“You should tell us before 13th”, “On every 13th, I get a list”). The repetition of the 13th as the day for informing issues with the biometric system was repeatedly stressed in the monthly central office meetings corroborating principal Mina’s and teacher Habib’s quotes earlier of how meetings are necessary to provide pressure through reminders and repetition of certain professional responsibilities (“some points are repeated again (sic)- till they are completed”).

Pressure Through Meeting Physicality

A key finding articulated by the study participants was that physicality makes principal meetings distinct and important affairs for pressure. In her interview, principal Laxmi emphasized that rapport and pressure can only be developed through a face-to-face meeting. In addition to talks with principals and teachers, conversations with senior MCGM officials like the school superintendent confirmed that “there is something about the physical body” which marks physical meetings as distinct events of significance. A senior MCGM official at the central office described how Administrative Officers would bring principals from their office to the central office for meetings to simply hear about specific mandates indicating that meeting location also might contribute to pressure. Although the same mandate could be shared through an email or an official document, the physicality of the meeting helped to provide pressure.

Fieldwork suggests that the pressure of the principal meeting is also complimented through physical artifacts (e.g., the Information Book) and this pressure is set into motion even before the principal meeting has officially started. Take for instance the *Soochna Vahi* (Information Book) which is circulated to teachers before each staff meeting at the school. The formal purpose of the *Soochna Vahi* (SV) is to describe the proposed meeting talk points and indicate the date of the meeting but the language used is in the third person (e.g. “Teachers are hereby informed...”) and such language is impossible to counter-argue. The SV is kept by the principal on her person during the entire duration of the staff meeting which gives her the power to make any modifications to meeting talk points based on what occurs during the staff meeting discussions. At the end of the staff meeting, the teachers affix their signatures to the SV indicating that they were physically present and understood the meeting talk points about their responsibilities: which serves as another pressure mechanism to ensure subsequent compliance. The physicality of the SV creates pressure that cannot be replicated in emails or cellphone texts.

Pressure and Unplanned Meetings

While the planned meetings were pressure mechanisms through talk which happened during principal meetings and through meeting physicality, the unplanned meetings often occurred as enactments of such pressure. Continuing the case of the biometric system discussed in the earlier paragraph which highlighted the important date of the 13th of every month, unplanned principal meetings often occurred on the evening of the 12th of every month. These meetings were not scheduled on any principal or teacher's calendar. However, teachers would walk into the principal's office on the evening of the 12th of every month to make sure that the principal had been notified of the teachers' problems with the biometric sign-in and sign-out in the previous month so that their salaries are not deducted unfairly. The teacher walk-ins often resulted in unplanned meetings during which the challenges of the biometric system were discussed and the professional responsibilities of submitting leave applications were accomplished using the desktop in the principal's office.

Unplanned meetings were sometimes initiated by the teachers when they visited the principal's office, without advance notice, to get urgent clarity on how certain professional tasks needed to be accomplished. The following excerpt from fieldnotes illustrated how a teacher Reshma initiates a principal meeting to fulfill her professional responsibility of conducting classroom observations, which are due for inspection the next day.

Principal Mina is seated on the principal's chair in her office and totaling up the number of school students vaccinated through the school in the past month in a register. Teacher Reshma walks in and tells Mina that she is having difficulty in understanding certain terms in the new classroom observation booklet. Mina, still sitting on her chair, takes the observation booklet from her. Reshma stands to Mina's left and for the next three minutes, points to certain terms in the observation booklet, and asks how they are translated in action to fill the observations. After each query, Mina softly responds to Reshma, often giving examples. Reshma nods vigorously at each clarification.

In the excerpt above, the unplanned meeting is a result of an earlier planned staff meeting conversation on the urgency of keeping classroom records ready for a possible inspection visit. The talk of a pending inspection visit emphasized in the staff meeting creates pressure for the teachers and principals to complete their documentation and serves as a reminder because incomplete or inaccurate documentation might lead to adverse remarks in the school visit and teacher inspection reports.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that principal meetings are "taken" to exercise pressure and influence action. However, mentions of principal meetings in literature rarely ascribe "pressure" as a key function or description of principal work interactions (e.g., Chrispeels et al., 2008; Coburn, 2005; Honig, 2014; Schildkamp & Poortman, 2015; Wolcott, 1973). During fieldwork, principal meetings were never described in conjunction with other verbs like held, facilitated, or conducted, rather they were "taken" so that teachers' or principal's work could be prioritized to reflect institutional demands. The verb "taken" correlates in the same way as to take stock of things and influence action. This unique usage of the verb "take" with principal meetings suggests the importance of pressure needed by principals and other educational leaders as part of their leadership practice and work interactions. Importantly, teachers and principals at MCGM found this pressure to be useful in prioritizing their work.

The findings also highlight the significance of talk and physicality in enacting pressure through principal meetings. Although educational literature mentions snippets of principal meeting talk, the emphasis is rarely on the use of reminders, responsibilities, and repetitions (e.g., Coburn, 2005; Datnow et al., 2019; Gronn, 1983; Riehl, 1998). To illustrate, Coburn's description of principal meetings emphasizes principal's talk during the meeting as akin to sense giving without describing, for instance, the presence of reminders or repetitions. Datnow's recent study drawing upon meetings as does not highlight meetings

as pressure mechanisms or how administrators use talk to put pressure on teachers to improve student scores. This is not a critique of the excellent scholarship by Coburn on implementing reforms or by Datnow on accountability, rather the point here is that such educational research lies at the tension of implementing reforms and reinforcing accountability and therefore likely to involve principal meetings as pressure mechanisms. Further, in educational literature, a description of the physical body, gestures, or use of material artifacts in principal meetings is extremely rare even though such work prominently acknowledges principal meetings as a methodological tool (e.g., Datnow et al., 2019; Riehl, 1998; Wolcott, 1973). Riehl's pathbreaking work as one of the few studies acknowledging principal meetings as a research topic also provides only descriptions of meeting talk as if the physicality of the meeting had little or no leadership impact; an idea which is contested by the embodied leadership literature (Bathurst & Cain, 2013; Ladkin, 2008; Sinclair, 2005).

The research findings also show that planned and unplanned principal meetings interconnect to sustain the pressure that accomplishes professional responsibilities. Most educational literature describes and emphasizes the planned meetings of the school principal (e.g., Chrispeels et al., 2008; Duke, 2006; Hagan, 2016; Wolcott, 1973) and does not explicitly connect planned and unplanned principal meetings. The findings suggest a deeper interconnection between planned meetings which used talk and artifacts as pressure mechanisms to elucidate which professional responsibilities to focus upon and their respective timelines: a pressure which led to unplanned meetings during which the responsibilities get accomplished.

Finally, the findings overall suggest the possible conceptualization of the principal meeting as authentic activities (Lave & Wenger, 1990) for three reasons. First, in terms of the portion of principal time, the 50%-85% of the time that principals spend in their planned and unplanned meetings based on literature (e.g., Crisp, 2017; Martin & Willower, 1981; Wolcott, 1973) and the fieldwork for this study makes them worthy of consideration as authentic activities. Secondly, fieldwork shows that meetings involving the principal are ordinary, yet valuable activities of principal practice during which principals perform key leadership tasks. Finally, the espoused necessity of principal meetings as necessary pressure mechanisms that provide crucial clarifications and reminders augments to maintain focus augments the claim that principal meetings are not something separate from leadership work, rather meetings are integral to the work the principal does and the professional knowledge of principalship lies within the act of principal meetings. Such a notion of the value of principal meetings as authentic activities might involve revisiting some of the educational leadership literature which labels principal meetings as a waste of time (e.g., Hedges, 1991; Weldy, 1974).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper takes an important step to draw attention to the crucial topic of principal meetings for scholars and practitioners. There has been little scholarly attention on principal meetings as a research topic (Riehl (1998) is a notable exception) and the practitioner-oriented literature focuses on improving principal meetings to take effective decisions rather than studying them (e.g., Boudett & City, 2014). Scant attention on principal meetings has led to an absence of capturing elements within and across principal meetings (e.g., meeting location, participant role, gestures, and artifacts) which are likely to shape professional knowledge (Bathurst & Cain, 2013; Goodwin, 2000; Schwartzman, 1989; Yarrow, 2017) and connect different meetings (Duffy & O'Rourke, 2015). Yarrow's study on meetings, for instance, shows how professional knowledge about a heritage site is constructed differently in meetings depending on whether meetings are conducted at the site or within an office building. Hence, this paper urges educational scholars and practitioners to capture and reflect upon elements of principal meetings beyond meeting talk.

This paper highlights the crucial role of meetings as "pressure mechanisms" providing theoretical and empirical evidence that principal meetings are essential to shaping professional knowledge. The extant educational literature has focused on the how principal meetings could shape the professional knowledge about specific topics like instructional reforms (e.g., Coburn, 2005) or increased accountability (e.g., Datnow et al., 2019) and the findings from this study suggest that principal meetings shape professional

knowledge about overall professional responsibilities of teachers and principals. This gains significance because, during times of school reform, it is quite likely that school principals and teachers are inundated with multiple (and possibly, conflicting) professional responsibilities. Therefore, pressure mechanisms, like principal meetings, are essential to develop and share professional knowledge of what professional tasks need to be focused upon and how to accomplish these tasks for enabling coherence across programmatic efforts. Hence, policymakers, educational scholars, and school principals might benefit from paying closer attention to the role of principal meetings as enablers of reform coherence.

Finally, the paper draws attention to the interconnection between planned and unplanned principal meetings in applying and sustaining pressure towards professional tasks. Current scholarship and practitioner-oriented literature have largely focused attention on planned principal meetings and considering meetings as isolated episodes (e.g., Duke, 2006; Honig, 2008; Wilsen, 2010; Wolcott, 1973). The findings of the study suggest that planned and unplanned principal meetings are interconnected through pressure. Scholars could collect data across planned and unplanned principal interactions to study in what other ways, besides pressure mechanisms, principal meetings might be connected and how, for instance, principal meetings shape the discourse and action in other school meetings.

CONCLUSION

Principal meetings have been mentioned in a diverse range of scholarly and practitioner-oriented literature dating back almost a century when planning was suggested as the key to conducting effective principal meetings (Smith, 1919). More recently, principal meetings have been mentioned in a diverse range of literature ranging from principal time-use (Camburn, et al., 2010; Grissom et al., 2015) and professional learning communities (DuFour, 2002; Scribner et al., 1999) to data-driven decision making (Schildkamp et al., 2017; Spillane et al., 2011). It is time we pay attention to the role of this ubiquitous and daily routine of the principal and the multiple roles these meetings fulfill including the development and sharing of professional knowledge.

Principal meetings are driven by choices made by the principals and other meeting participants. These choices include meeting elements like what points are talked, who does the talking, which gestures are used, where the meeting is held, and how artifacts are used; choices that influence participant professional knowledge about their professional responsibilities. Although practitioner-oriented literature suggests planning for such choices in staff meetings, paying close attention to the choices made during unplanned work interactions of the principal has implications for scholars and practitioners. Overall, since principal meetings are widely mentioned in the literature, shape professional knowledge and are a daily, ubiquitous activity for principals, studying principal meetings would further our understanding of educational leadership.

REFERENCES

- Bathurst, R., & Cain, T. (2013). Embodied leadership: The aesthetics of gesture. *Leadership, 9*(3), 358–377. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715013485851>
- Boudett, K. P., & City, E. (2014). *Meeting Wise*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Chrispeels, J. H., Burke, P. H., Johnson, P., & Daly, A. J. (2008). Aligning mental models of district and school leadership teams for reform coherence. *Education and Urban Society, 40*(6), 730–750. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124508319582>
- Chrispeels, J. H., & Martin, K. (2002). Four school leadership teams define their roles within organizational and political structures to improve student learning. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 13*(3), 327–365.
- Coburn, C. E. (2001). Collective sensemaking about reading: How teachers mediate reading policy in their professional communities. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 23*(2), 145–170. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737023002145>

- Coburn, C. E. (2005). Shaping teacher sensemaking: School leaders and the enactment of reading policy. *Educational Policy*, 19(3), 476. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904805276143>
- Crisp, S. (2017). *A day in the life of a principal*. Retrieved September 25, 2019, from <https://www.ed.gov/content/day-life-principal>
- Datnow, A., Lockton, M., & Weddle, H. (2019). Redefining or reinforcing accountability? An examination of meeting routines in schools. *Journal of Educational Change*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-019-09349-z>
- Duffy, M. F., & O'Rourke, B. K. (2015). A systemic view on meetings: Windows on organization collective minding. In J. A. Allen, N. Lehmann-Willenbrock, & S. G. Rogelberg (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Meeting Science* (pp. 223–246). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Duke, D. L. (2006). What we know and don't know about improving low-performing schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87(10), 729–734.
- Duke, D. L., & Landahl, M. (2011). "Raising tests scores was the easy part": A case study of the third year of school turnaround. *International Studies in Educational Administration (Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration & Management (CCEAM))*, 39(3), 91–114.
- Fullan, M. (2002). The role of leadership in the promotion of knowledge management in schools. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 8(3), 409–419. <https://doi.org/10.1080/135406002100000530>
- Glazer, J. L., & Peurach, D. J. (2012). School improvement networks as a strategy for large-scale education reform: The role of educational environments. *Educational Policy*, 27(4), 676–710. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904811429283>
- Goodwin, C. (2000). Action and embodiment within situated human interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 32(10), 1489–1522. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0378-2166\(99\)00096-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0378-2166(99)00096-x)
- Gronn, P. C. (1983). Talk as the work: The accomplishment of school administration. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 28(1), 22–39. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2392383>
- Hagan, D. C. (2016). Catholic School Faculty Meetings: A Case Study Linking Catholic Identity, School Improvement, and Teacher Engagement. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 20(1), 86–113. <https://doi.org/10.15365/joce.2001042016>
- Hedges, W. (1991). How do you waste time? *Principal*, 71(2). Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ434380>
- Hodgson, G. (2008). The concept of a routine. In M. C. Becker (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational routines* (pp. 15–28). Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Honig, M. (2008). Central offices as learning organizations: How sociocultural and organizational learning theories elaborate district central office administrators' participation in teaching. *American Journal of Education*, 114(4), 627–664. <https://doi.org/10.1086/589317>
- Honig, M. (2014, April). Central office leadership in Principal Professional Learning Communities: The practice beneath the policy. *Teachers College Record*, (116).
- Ladkin, D. (2008). Leading beautifully: How mastery, congruence and purpose create the aesthetic of embodied leadership practice. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 19(1), 31–41. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1990). *Situated learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815355.003>
- Martin, W. J., & Willower, D. J. (1981). The managerial behavior of high school principals. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 17(1), 69–90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X8101700105>
- Morris, V. C., Crowson, R. L., Porter-Gehrie, C., & Hurwitz, E. (1984). *Principals in action: The reality of managing schools*. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill.
- Pena, D. (2000). Parent involvement: Influencing factors and implications. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 94(1), 42–54.
- Riehl, C. (1998). We gather together: Work, discourse and constitutive action in elementary school faculty meetings. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 34(1), 91–125.

- Sandberg, J., & Tsoukas, H. (2015). Making sense of the sensemaking perspective: Its constituents, limitations, and opportunities for further development. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 36(S1), S6–S32. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1937>
- Schildkamp, K., Handelzalts, A., & Poortman, C. L. (2017). *The Data Team procedure: A systematic approach to school improvement*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58853-7>
- Schildkamp, K., & Poortman, C. (2015). Factors influencing the functioning of data teams. *Teachers College Record*. Retrieved from http://www.onderwijstraineeship.nl/uploads/tekstblok/factor_influencing_the_functioning_of_data_teams.pdf
- Schwartzman, H. B. (1989). *The meeting: Gatherings in organizations and communities*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2393283>
- Scribner, J. P., Cockrell, K. S., Cockrell, D. H., & Valentine, J. W. (1999). Creating professional communities in schools through organizational learning: An evaluation of a School Improvement Process. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(1), 130–160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X99351007>
- Sinclair, A. (2005). Body possibilities in leadership. *Leadership*, 1(4), 387–406. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715005057231>
- Spillane, J., Parise, L. M., & Sherer, J. Z. (2011). Organizational routines as coupling mechanisms: Policy, school administration, and the technical core. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(3), 586–619. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831210385102>
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. London: Sage.
- Weldy, G. (1974). *Time: A resource for the school administrator*. National Association of Secondary School Principals. Washington, DC.
- Wilsen, C. C. (2010). *Perfect phrases for school administrators: Hundreds of ready-to-use phrases for evaluations, meetings, contract negotiations, grievances and correspondences*. New Delhi: McGraw Hill.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1973). *The man in the principal's office: An ethnography*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Yarrow, T. (2017). Where knowledge meets: Heritage expertise at the intersection of people, perspective, and place. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 23, 95–109. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12596>