

Post–Apartheid South Africa: Creating Critically Leaderful Schools that Make a Difference

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Abstract

South Africa's struggle against racial discrimination has received international exposure. Focus on gender disenfranchisement was, however, eclipsed by the struggle for racial redress. In the current climate of redress, post Apartheid South Africa has pledged an unequivocal commitment to the promotion of a unitary, non-sexist, non-racist education system. Several enabling national policies have been legislated to promote equity and access to those previously excluded by virtue of race and gender from participating and assuming leadership roles in key public domains. Despite women's exclusion from other areas of public social engagement, teaching has remained a women-dominated profession. The affirmative action move, in South Africa, to appoint women to school leadership posts necessitates educating women to unlearn the myths about their lack of abilities and capabilities to ensure that they assume school leadership roles confidently and competently. Assuming leadership roles in educational contexts ravaged by the scourge of HIV/AIDS, poverty, gender violence, and other social maladies call for extraordinary leadership skills among educators.

As a point of entry into debates on educational leadership, my presentation surveys literature in the field and draws on anecdotes of resilient and dysfunctional schools from the South African context to explore the following questions:

- (i) What are some of the theories, images, and metaphors of leadership that have defined the field of educational leadership studies? How has critical scholarship, notably feminist sensibilities, reconfigured the field of educational leadership studies? What are the merits and demerits of creating *leaderful* practices in schools? Is leaderful practice sufficiently cognizant of power differentials mediated by race, gender, socio-economic status, age, language, etc?
- (ii) Does conceiving of school leadership as a conceptual narrative that is shaped by an interplay of biographical, cultural, contextual, and temporal, complexities demythologise *a priori* conceptions of the rights, roles, and responsibilities of the school leader, and significant others within the educational community of practice?
- (iii) What are some of the methodological considerations that need to be acknowledged when conducting research into educational leadership?
- (iv) What implications does new scholarship suggest for the development of educational leadership academic programmes?

During my time at the Center for the Education of Women, at Michigan University I reviewed literature related to school leadership in preparation for a proposed study that I will conduct with a group of principals who will be attending the Advanced Certificate in Education: Educational Management Course being offered by the Wits School of Education in Johannesburg, South Africa. Drawing on interviews and observations the proposed study will explore how women school principals navigate the complexities of educational leadership in institutions that historically relegated them to second-class citizenship.

Theories, Images, and Metaphors of Educational Leadership

When considering school leadership as a concept, it is useful to begin by clarifying its meaning in relation to associated concepts, namely, management and headship.¹

Some writers in educational leadership use the terms *management* and *leadership* interchangeably. Morris (1999) suggests that while the terms are not synonymous, they are inextricably linked. Morris' study differentiates between *leadership* as having a vision for the school and *managing* as the means to realise/operationalise that vision.

Conceptualizations of the principal's role have changed considerably over the past several decades from manager, to street-level bureaucrat, change agent, instructional leader, educational leader, and most recently to transformational leaders. Thus, not surprisingly, the diversity in views and definitions of school leadership are almost as many as the researchers engaged in its study. Notwithstanding the vast differentiation in definitions of leadership, both within and across cultures, since cultural plurality in large measure shapes how people define and conceive of leadership, Leithwood & Duke (1998:31-32) suggest that two distinctly different starting points are possible in such research on educational leadership. They differentiate between: *a grounded approach* and *a framework-dependent approach*. *A grounded approach* begins with the collection of evidence about some aspect(s) of leadership – for example - the practices of school leaders, or the qualities people associated with leadership possess. *A framework-dependent approach* begins with one or more existing conceptions of school leadership. But the goal of each approach is to develop a defensible conception of leadership, or some aspect of leadership, suitable to the context in which it is exercised. Emanating from various definitions and ideological perspectives of what educational leadership is, what educational leadership has been, and prospective views of what educational leadership should be many writers and researchers in the field have attempted to categorise and classify models of educational leadership.

¹ See Christie & Lingard (2001:2-3) for more elaborate differentiation between leadership, management and headship.

Models, Interpretations and Styles of School Leadership

Based on a literature survey of 121 journals in the English – Western speaking world, Leithwood & Duke (1998:32) reported that leadership concepts explicitly mentioned in literature on school leadership and administration included: instructional leadership, leadership styles, transformational leadership, moral leadership, managerial leadership, cultural leadership, collaborative relationships, organizational leadership (boundary-spanning activities). These leadership concepts may be clustered into the following epistemological stances:

Technical-Managerial-Rational

Much past research on leadership stems from this view about leadership in organizations, focusing on position, traits, and behaviour. From a rational perspective, leadership is viewed as the influence that individuals in higher positions exert through their demographic traits (e.g. experience, education, actions) on the culture and performance of the organization. The rational view of organizations is therefore consistent with the bureaucratic model of organizations, suggesting that the hierarchical structure of leadership functions to maintain the organization's stability over time through minimizing conflict. Other manifestations of this approach concern the focus on situational theory and contingency theory. Despite calls for greater flexibility in thinking about school leadership, the rational perspective has maintained a strong foothold in the field of educational leadership. (Heck 1998:59; Burlingame 1986; Grace 2000).

According to Raelin (2003:10-11; See also Balckmore 1989) the dominant technical-managerial approach to leadership is identifiable by the following four tenets:

- (i) Leadership is *serial*: Once one achieves the office of leadership, that position continues for the duration of the term of office. Only when one completes his/her term or vacates or is forced to leave the office does leadership transfer to the next leader, though it may at times return to the original person. Giving or sharing power with others would be seen as abdicating one's responsibility.
- (ii) Leadership is *individual*: An enterprise has only one leader and normally such a person is designated as the authority or position leader. It would dilute or at least confuse leadership to talk of having more than a single leader or to share leadership.
- (iii) Leadership is *controlling*: The conventional leader believes it is his/her ultimate duty to direct the enterprise and engender the commitment of community members. To ensure smooth coordination of functions, the leader acts as the spokesperson for the enterprise.
- (iv) Leadership is *dispassionate*: Although the leader may recognize that employees have feelings, the leader must make the tough decisions for the enterprise in a dispassionate manner. Tough decisions may result in not satisfying (or may even hurt) particular stakeholders, including employees, but accomplishing the mission of the enterprise trumps all other considerations.

The technical-managerial-rational approach to leadership is characterised by a positivist preoccupation which separates means from ends, and facts from values. It claims privilege to positivism as the scientific method in social science. Within this interpretation, gender, race, or class are treated unproblematically because the literature ignores all discussions of power and its implications for social relationships.

Role or political-conflict perspective

Another orientation toward leadership is concerned with power relations. A political-conflict perspective may be more useful in understanding the political turmoil surrounding efforts to reform or restructure schools. Studies conducted from this perspective, are less concerned with the effectiveness (or goals approach) and more with the processes through which leadership is expressed. These studies accept that schools are characterized by multiple goals, diverse instructional strategies, and relatively high degrees of teacher autonomy and proceed to understand how leaders function under such conditions. One model embedded in this framework is *transformational leadership* because of its focus on staff and leadership collaboration and commitment in improving school processes. (Heck 1998:60). Kuhnert & Lewis (1987:650) differentiate between transactional leadership which represents those exchanges in which both the leader and the led influence each other reciprocally so that each derives something of value. Transformational leadership, in contrast, originates in the personal values and beliefs of leaders, not in an exchange of commodities between leaders and followers. Transformational leaders operate out of a deeply held personal value system that includes such values as justice and integrity.

The political-conflict approach expresses important facets of current thinking about leadership. It accepts that the relationships between teachers and the principal are complex and multidirectional. It captures the fact that leaders are subordinate to teachers, in the sense that they serve teachers and facilitate pedagogic processes at the school level. The focus on role relationships within the school has been termed the *micropolitics* of the school. Proponents of this approach argue that the dominant rational-systems paradigm tends to ignore key political issues altogether. In contrast, the political-conflict approach begins with the assumptions that order inside the school is politically negotiated and that such negotiation is at the heart of what might be termed leadership. Studies of the micro-politics and psycho-politics of the school provide a new perspective on how control and legitimization of activities unfold at the school level. To date, however, there are few empirical examples of this approach. (Burlingame 1986; Grace 2000).

Meaning and sense making

This orientation toward leadership is concerned with meaning within the organizational context. Less well-established in the literature is the manner in which leadership is 'constructed' among the various participants in the school setting. The *meaning or sense making* perspective highlights how leaders and others in the organization construct meaning surrounding schooling activities. From a sense-making perspective, the study of leadership could also focus on how leaders make sense out of change or reform (improvement) processes. Such studies may draw our attention to norms and values related to teachers' efforts to resist change, the manner in which school principals and teachers implement change, how students construct metaphors of principal leadership, or differences in the ways that male and female principals may lead. Another perspective on sense-making involves how leaders solve important problems, that is, they research the relation of social cognition and values to administrative problem-solving and decision-making. (Heck 1998:61).

Critical constructivist, feminist, and related approaches

The *critical or emancipatory* approach to social analysis concerns a critique of existing social relationships and advancement toward desired ones. The critical or emancipatory approach encompasses a variety of perspectives such as feminist, neo-Marxist, gender studies, cultural studies, and participatory research. These approaches extend beyond the notion of sense making *within* schools into the surrounding society. The critical approach questions the often legitimating role that school leaders play in endorsing existing social arrangements within society. It urges researchers in educational leadership to find ways to study the invisible and unobtrusive forms of control exercised in schools to address the problems of the marginalized students and staff who attend them. Thus, this approach critiques the focus on visible administrators at the top of the structure, which inevitably tend towards male domination, and shifts focus into those issues suppressed and silenced in the area of school leadership issues, for example, issues such as gender, race, and class. This stance appears more concerned with social justice, moral and democratic processes, as opposed to specific actions and behaviour of school leaders. It examines existing social relationships and the role of leadership and research in defining and changing those relationships. (Heck 1998:61-62).

Postmodernism, Poststructuralism and Postcolonialism:

From this perspective, leadership is defined as more non-traditional, informal, and often interim. The postmodern perspective implies that there is no clear window into the inner life of those examined, because our attempts to understand are always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, class, and ethnicity. There is therefore no single method that can capture all the variations in human experience. In this sense, these various approaches provide a means of

examining more closely (by deconstructing) the manner in which scientific knowledge has been constructed in the past. These approaches have led to an examination of the research process and the role of the researcher in this process. This approach has privileged greater attention to both contextual issues surrounding leadership, as well as textual issues, including how research is conducted, analyzed (whether quantitative or qualitative), and how research is written and presented to practitioners. This concern has led to a variety of experiments with enlarging the range available for 'voice' in the research text. Studying leadership from a poststructuralist perspective, therefore, implies that the present diversity of approaches is encouraged because privilege should not be given to any particular approach, method, or overarching paradigm. (Heck 1998:63).

Leaderful Practice

Raelin (2003:5-16) proposes leaderful practice as an integrative model that has been in the making for some time but for its coherence. In other words, it contains historical traditions that, without integration, have not been able to supplant the dominant leadership paradigms. Raelin presents leadership approaches as a set of continua because, he contends that most of us are not completely settled in one approach or the other. We have heard of people refer to a team as leaderless, but Raelin introduces the term leaderful as a way to re-imagine leadership from a positive transformational perspective. He contends that leaderful practice is unique compared to empowerment models in that it does not merely present a consultative model wherein leaders in authority allow 'followers' to participate in their leadership; n or does it equate to stewardship approaches that see the leader step aside to allow others to take over when necessary. Instead, it offers a true mutual model that transforms leadership from an individual property into a collective practice. The following are the four tenets of leaderful practice:

- (i) Leadership is *concurrent*: This suggests that in any community, more than one leader can operate at the same time, so leaders willingly and naturally share power with others.
- (ii) Leadership is *collective*: This means that many people within the community may operate as leaders. Leadership may thus emerge from multiple members of the community – everyone participates in leadership.
- (iii) Leadership is *collaborative*: All members of the community, not just the position leader, are in control of and may speak for the entire community. Collaborative leaders realize that everyone counts; every opinion and contribution sincerely matter.
- (iv) Leadership is *compassionate*: By demonstrating compassion, one extends the commitment to preserving the dignity of others. Compassionate leaders recognize that values are intrinsically interconnected with leadership and that there is no higher value than democratic participation.

While I concur with Raelin (2003) that a leaderful approach to conceiving of and practising leadership is premised on a strong egalitarian ethic, and I think that the coinage of the

word *leaderful* is clever and creative especially when counterposed by the word *leaderless*, I want to argue for an explicitly critical conception of leaderful practice. I think that critical studies, in general and critical feminist educational leadership scholarship in particular, interrogates the complexities of identity politics – as they relate to the power differentials that emerge from race, gender, age, experience, ethnicity, language, etc. in a more robust and nuanced manner. Concurrent, collective, collaborative and caring are not unproblematic leadership practices. Their egalitarian impulse can be seriously sabotaged by the dynamics of identity politics thus potentially rendering power sharing a democratic ideal that works only at a theoretical and rhetorical level.

In the following discussion I return to critical feminist scholarship on educational leadership to examine recurring motifs that frame the discourse and to argue that leaderful practices may be enhanced by the insights that emerge from the discourse on critical feminist educational leadership.

Critical Feminist Interpretation of Educational Leadership

Feminist scholars have been spirited in their criticism of the gender-blindness and silence of scholarship in the field of educational leadership. They have critiqued earlier models of leadership for portraying andocentric versions of leadership that are characterised by assertiveness, independence, competitiveness, individuality, hierarchy, abstract rationality, and universal moral principles as being the blueprint for effective leadership. Such masculinist and essentialist notions of leadership which portray women as governed by emotionality, passivity, dependency, have cast women as 'deficit other'. Feminist theory challenges the dualisms implicit in the hierarchical gender binarism that elevates and celebrates masculinist leadership styles while devaluing women and their participation in leadership roles. Feminist scholarship considers such gendered binaries as stereotypical and reductionist for both men and women and as such they mask and hinder the potential for meaningful social transformation. Rather than accept patriarchal models, styles and preferences for leadership, feminists have agitated for valuing more relational leadership styles that are nested in a discourse and practice of emancipation. Unlike women's educational leadership which is women-centred feminist educational leaders are not concerned exclusively with women-related issues but are equally concerned with the intersection of race, class, sexuality and other differences that render individuals vulnerable to marginalisation and exploitation. As such, feminist educational leadership embraces a wider political and emancipatory agenda. (Strachan1999:309-310).

Feminist Literature and Focus of Studies

Although studies into feminist educational leadership are still relatively few, there is a range of feminist literature which is drawn upon in the analysis of educational leadership. There is work that focuses on:

- (i) female leaders whose career paths and attributes have been successful when judged against the male norm.
- (ii) life histories and life cycles that bring the personal and private into the public arena, and illustrate that male and female career models are different.
- (iii) feminist cultural studies have focused upon women's work culture and women's ways of organizing in predominantly female situations where community and cooperation are valued and validated.
- (iv) work has also focused on dominant notions of human rationality and morality which exclude women's experiences and deconstructs masculinist conceptions of rationality.
- (v) another body of literature concerned with women's ways of knowing, thinking, and making moral judgements which gives rise to the notion of an 'ethics of care' premised upon interdependence and communitarianism.

Recurrent Tenets of Feminist Educational Leadership

Despite the various perspectives from which critical feminist educational leadership is researched, discussion tends to revolve around the tents of identity politics; power differentials; caring and nurturance; the centrality of teaching and learning. In the ensuing discussion I briefly explore these recurrent tenets in critical feminist educational leadership.

Identity Politics and the Politics of Difference

Although the laden phrase 'identity politics' has served many different purposes, it has come to signify a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice to members of certain social groups. Thus, the question of identity politics, which is committed to agitating for marginalized rights, has also been taken up with rigor within feminist discourses. Feminist theories and perspectives attempt to describe women's oppression, explain its causes and consequences, and strategise towards women's liberation. The discourse of identity politics has fore-grounded the notion of multiple oppressions in place of the traditional conception of oppression as operating in terms of a simple binary: man/woman, and has introduced other binary oppositions which include White woman/woman of colour, rich/poor, heterosexuality/homosexuality, and all of the permutations of female and sexual identity that are interrelated. Discourses on identity politics have attempted to reclaim those groups in society who have been devalued and denied inalienable democratic and human rights because of their race, sex, physical ability, age, language, religion, etc.

Feminist Educational Leadership and the centrality of Power

The issue of power is central to the discourse of feminist educational leadership. Schooling has been administratively and procedurally patriarchal. Thus, feminist educational leadership agitates for the recognition and dismantling of gendered hierarchical power enclaves prevalent in the discourses on schooling. Several scholars point to the necessity to distinguish between the positive (enabling/creative) effects, and the oppressive (disabling/coercive/corrosive) effects of power. Attention needs to be given to the horizontal and vertical dimensions of power differentials and how power relations are configured by variables such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. all of which are not enacted or produced in identical ways in different school contexts. Feminist educational leadership is better understood as a political standpoint and personal practice that seeks to transform relations of domination and oppression, and aims at interrupting relations of dominance'. Feminist educational leadership is associated with the promotion of more egalitarian practices. This perspective, which acknowledges the multi-dimensionality of power clarifies that power is not simply the imposition of one will on another. Its subtleties and nuances need to be acknowledged in a way that transcends the mere imposition or reproduction of broader societal power relations. Colwill (1993 in Blackmore 1989) examined power from three perspectives: (1) personal power—the belief that one is powerful and is in control of one's environment; (2) interpersonal power—the ability to influence another; and (3) organisational power—the ability to mobilize resources, the ability to get things done. When harnessed in a constructive way these variants of power offer the potential to cumulatively enhance the effectiveness of both individual and institutional operations.

Caring and Nurturance in Feminist Educational Leadership

Since women have always dominated the teaching profession women teachers were exhorted to use their 'natural' talent for loving nurturance - an exhortation emanating from the traditional functions of woman as care-giver and nurturer. By definition to nurture, embodies the actions of feeding and protecting, supporting and encouraging, bringing up, or educating. It is therefore not surprising that as women begin to take up positions of school leadership, the ethic of care characterizes their leadership styles. A common theme running through the educational leadership literature, is that through regard and respect, nurturing and compassion a sense of community, of belonging, of being cared for, is built.

Gilligan (1982) posits that at the heart of feminist epistemology is a conception of *self-other relationship*. The notion of human interdependence based on an understanding of *self-in-relation* promotes independence in the context of relationships of interdependence. Such an approach combines an ethic of care and justice; promotes equality and difference while

acknowledging individual's diverse concerns. Noddings (1988) states that within an ethic of care the growth of those cared for is crucially important. Women leaders in, for example Blackmore's (1989); Strachan's (1999); Wyn et al's (2000); and Williamson et al's (2001) studies were motivated by doing what was best for the students and staff in their care. In regard to the students, the principals conceived of caring as a political, moral and ethical imperative and were committed to 'making a difference' in the lives of the children in their care. A caring relationship with teachers involved dealing with them as total human beings, whose personal and professional lives are intertwined. Most of the school leaders in these studies adopted collaborative and distributed leadership styles which stressed teamwork. A recognition that Gardner's (in Armstrong 1994)² theory of multiple intelligence is not only applicable when identifying student's abilities and capabilities, but is a useful tool in the division of labour among staff so as to capitalize and develop their strengths is one way to show care for teachers. In addition, in as much as the rights of children have to be protected, it is equally important to not just relate to teachers in terms of their roles and responsibilities but to acknowledge their democratic rights as well.

Furthermore, acknowledging the importance of the sensitive and responsible use of language in communications with all participants in the school's community of practice is crucial in fostering caring and respectful relations. Lincoln (1989:178) counsels:

Trivialize the language of caring and connectedness, trumpet the language of autonomy and power, and soon caring as an administrative trait is devalued and discipline and rationalism is prized in the school.

An ethic of care and collaboration facilitates the realization of the school's vision because it strengthens harmonious relationships among students, staff, parents, educational officials and the wider community in which the school is located.

Centrality of the Educative and Pedagogic Enterprise of Schooling

In an examination of high school principals, Martin & Willower (1981 in Wright 1991) found that only 7.6% of total tasks performed by principals concerned the academic programme. Performance of these tasks took 17.4 % of time of their time. The balance of time was devoted to tasks related to organizational maintenance (36.5%); pupil control (23.8%); extracurricular activities (14.7%) and matters unrelated to school affairs less than (8%). Even if we assume that principals' tasks concerning the academic programme consisted largely of instructional leadership tasks, relatively small amounts of time were spent in this area compared to other areas.

Studies repeatedly confirm that school has been administratively and procedurally administered by men, women's occupation in education has been defined by their teaching roles. Even as women move into educational leadership roles several studies report that women

² Gardner provides the following means of mapping the broad range of abilities that humans possess by grouping capabilities into seven categories of intelligences: these are: Linguistic Intelligence; Logical-Mathematical; Spatial Intelligence; Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence; Musical Intelligence; Interpersonal Intelligence; Intrapersonal Intelligence.

educational leaders continue to ensure that teaching and learning remain the central focus of the rhythms of the educational enterprise. Many women educators ensure that they remain part of the teaching cohort and draw on the combined leadership expertise of their staff and significant others in the school's community of practice to set goals; observe and conference with teachers; develop curriculum; provide in-service staff development, evaluate teachers and programmes; provide resources to teachers and plan for improvement. Pursuing leaderful practice/dispersal of leadership and distributed leadership philosophies are ways in which to ensure that instructional leadership remains central to the enterprise of education.

Cumulatively the insights and emancipatory impulse offered by the discussions on critical feminist leaderful practices signal ways in which schools can be steered into conceptions of leadership that are concurrent, collective; caring; collaborative; and non-hierarchical. While not discounting the positive effects of leadership practices that favour group or team work; are based on dialogical and consensual politics and power sharing there is also a need to highlight some of the challenges that emerge from practicing democratic leadership forms. These may include, among others:

- (i) Employees who resist everything regardless of the leadership style. Some employees who may resist include temporary workers, who may have little interest in leadership since they typically have only a casual relationship with the school/institution they are assigned to.
- (ii) **Consensus and consultative decision-making** could be viewed by some as indicative of weak leadership. The politics of consensus may actually deny, suppress or assimilate differences - all in the name of consensus. Consensus-reaching mechanisms may neglect to fully appreciate differences in values, gender, race, status and working styles.
- (iii) Although a feminist interpretation of **caring** may interrupt the systems and practices that oppress women, people of colour and the poor, feminism and caring in schools can be an uneasy alliance. Some feminists argue that women's caring for others (e.g. children and dependent adults) can reinforce women's oppression by patriarchal institutions such as schools. If caring is mainly provided by women and people of colour, then those with the power and status (usually men) may not only come to expect it but may not develop the capacity to care. This could perpetuate the exploitation of women.
- (iv) Discourses on **collaboration** favour collaborative/team work because given that many minds are grappling with the material at once, the mutual enterprise is believed to generate a unique intellectual and social synergy. What is essential to collaborative work, though, is positive interdependence among all participants, an outcome to which everyone contributes, and a sense of commitment and responsibility to the group's preparation, and the product. Differences in team workers' work ethic and commitment become fertile ground for sowing seeds of discontent. While collaborative learning is an effective enterprise the power differentials that emanate from race, gender, age, cultural beliefs, and differences in work ethic within groups could seriously sabotage the project.

Conceptualising of Critical Leaderful Practice as a Conceptual Narrative³

School leadership is enacted within particular socio-economic and political contexts and cultures. Even as various contextual variables, such as geographical, political, socio-economic factors reconfigure individuals in a myriad of complex, complementary and contradictory ways, these same variables also reconfigure the biographical identity of institutions and educational leadership practices are formed and transformed in relation to spatial and temporal variables. Personal, professional and institutional (schools') identities are embedded in time and space frameworks, thus a core conception of personal and institutional identity should include dimensions of time and space relationality so that identity can be understood as a conceptual narrativity. In this regard, the legacies of colonialism and post colonialism; apartheid and post apartheid, for example, serve as useful tropes for framing and reflecting on the temporal and contextual situatedness of education in general and the challenges of educational leadership in particular. Without suggesting that individuals or institutions (schools) located within particular temporal and spatial frameworks are inevitably predestined to be products of their time and space frameworks there may be connections between individual and institutional identity formation.

Rosenhead's (1998) description of complexity theory in conjunction with Bourdieu's (1986) theory regarding the interrelation of habitus, capital and field are useful in exploring the deep complexities that shape leadership as a complex conceptual narrative. According to Rosenhead (1998) complexity theory posits that :

... systems under certain conditions, perform in regular, predictable ways; under other conditions they exhibit behaviour in which regularity and predictability is lost. Almost undetectable differences in initial conditions lead to gradually diverging system reactions until eventually the evolution of behaviour is quite dissimilar.

Against the fluid contextuality of systems behaviour, individual and institutional scripts are further elucidated in the light of Bourdieu's (1986) interrelated concepts of *habitus, capital and field*. According to Bourdieu the *habitus* refers to the way we have developed and internalised ways of approaching, thinking about and acting upon our social world. Human beings' agentic potential allows them to endorse/legitimise/internalise their socialisation or to resist and rescript their social

³ Until 1991, South African law divided the population into four major racial categories: Africans (black), whites, coloreds, and Asians. Although this law has been abolished, many South Africans still view themselves and each other according to these categories. Black Africans comprise about 79% of the population and are divided into a number of different ethnic groups. Whites comprise about 10% of the population. They are primarily descendants of Dutch, French, English, and German settlers who began arriving at the Cape of Good Hope in the late 17th century. Coloreds are mixed-race people primarily descending from the earliest settlers and the indigenous peoples. They comprise about 9% of the total population. Asians descend from Indian workers brought to South Africa in the mid-19th century to work on the sugar estates in Natal. They constitute about 2.5% of the population and are concentrated in the KwaZulu-Natal Province.

GDP composition (2003): *Agriculture and mining* (primary sector) -11%; *industry* (secondary sector)--24%; *services* (tertiary sector) - 65%. World's largest producer of platinum, gold, and chromium; also significant coal production.

conditioning. *Capital* refers to scarce economic, cultural, social and symbolic goods and resources that individuals may or may not have at their disposal, and *field* may be understood as an arena of contesting stratified forces where skirmishes over limited capital resources occur. Only when the concept of *habitus* is contextualised in relation to the concepts of economic, cultural, social and symbolic *capital* and *field* (e.g. socio-political contexts) does the contingent, and reflexive nature of personal and institutional identity become apparent. The essence of the interrelationship of these concepts within the South African context means that school leaders, teachers, students and significant partners within the schooling community of practice can internalize and habitulise the negative scripts that Apartheid education attempted to impose upon Black South Africans or they can enact resistance identities that defy the debilitating and dehumanizing legacy of Apartheid. As reflexive social actors, they can rename, reconstruct and compose positive social scripts rather than appropriate negative subjectivities associated with signifiers of deficit, omission, and erasure.

The legacy of racial segregation in South African Schools

Through the legislative provisions contained in the Bantu Education Act of 1953, the Extension of University Education Act of 1959, the Coloured Persons Act of 1963, the Indian Education Act of 1965 and the National Education Act of 1967, education for black South Africans was explicitly linked to the political, economic and social domination of all black South Africans. Formal schooling in South Africa is rooted in both the mission and colonial systems of education. In the 1950s Verwoerd introduced the Bantu Education system of schooling for Africans, which replaced missionary control of education with that of Apartheid state control. The Apartheid regime was committed to white supremacy and the pursuit of these policies through education. It was also committed to schooling black South Africans so as to ensure that their education would destine them to be hewers of wood and bearers of water. As Verwoerd, the architect of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 conceived it: 'There is no place for [the African] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. It is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim, absorption in the European community.' (http://www.southafrica.info/ess_info_sa_glance/education/education.htm). Primary, secondary and higher education for Africans in the 1960s and 1970s occurred in the context of the development of bantustan policy, in which educational funds were allocated unequally to children administered under "white," "Indian," "Coloured," "African" and other bantustan education departments. But the expansion of poor quality education resulted in massive political resistance among youth, who resisted state-prescribed educational goals and regulation throughout the 1970s and 1980s (notably the Soweto Uprising). Reform efforts - the first of which was the 1981 de Lange Commission of Inquiry - recommended investment in an

education that would equip Blacks with technical skills so that they participate in the flagging economy. In 1986, a ten year plan to finance upgrading black education was announced. Thus, enrolments at primary and especially secondary levels increased sharply - this, in the face of scarce resources.

In the 1980s, the private provision of education grew in South Africa in response to the inability or unwillingness of state schools to admit black children. As a result private schools began opening their doors to increasing numbers of black children, but exorbitant school fees meant that they were restricted to children whose parents could afford the fees. In 1990, white schools were permitted to admit black students with the proviso that the school remain 51 percent white and that the "ethos and character" of the school be maintained.

In black schools, apartheid education meant minimal levels of resources, inadequately trained and few staff, poor quality of learning materials, shortages of classrooms, and the absence of laboratories and libraries. Besides these tangible deprivations, pedagogical practices were characterised by unquestioning conformity, rote learning, autocratic teaching, authoritarian management styles, racist and sexist syllabi, and antiquated forms of assessment and evaluation (Vally 1998).

Schools were fragmented into 19 different education departments and funding varied on the basis of race. In 1986 per capita subsidies for whites were R2365.00 compared with R572.00 for Africans in Department of Education and Training schools. Per capita subsidies in the homelands were even lower, with KwaZulu-Natal the lowest at R262.00. Although there was an increase in real spending per pupil between 1985 and 1992, which was an attempt to close racial gaps in funding, by 1992 spending for white pupils was still four times that of spending for African students. In 1993, average spending per pupil was R4700.00 for whites compared with R1440.00 for Africans.

The Ethos of Post-Apartheid Education⁴

The legacy of Apartheid which was a fortress that actively and systematically engendered and perpetuated racial, gender, sex, religious, ethnic and various other social fragmentation devices left behind a challenging social justice redress agenda. The effects of such social fragmentation continue to manifest in the high levels of illiteracy among especially Black South Africans; high rates of crime and violence (with women and children inevitably being the victims)⁵;

⁴ South Africa has 12.3-million learners, some 386 600 teachers and 26 292 schools, including 1 098 registered independent or private schools. Of all schools, roughly 6 000 are high schools (grade 7 to grade 12) and the rest primary (grade 0 to grade 6). In government-funded public schools, the average ratio of scholars (known as "learners" in terms of the country's outcomes-based education system) to teachers ("educators") is 32.6 to one, while private schools generally have one teacher for every 17.5 scholars. (http://www.southafrica.info/ess_info_sa_glance/education/education.htm).

⁵ **Violence:** The statistics show that one in every South African women or 25% are assaulted by their partner every week. The average age of girls who are sexually abused is 11 years old. (<http://www.tricky.org/POWA/stats.htm>).

At the gathering, organised jointly by the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa and ActionAid International in May 2006 to focus on the problem of gender violence in schools, it was reported that girls in African schools are three

unemployment; poverty⁶; substance abuse; and the scourge of HIV/AIDS⁷ and related opportunistic diseases fraying the fabric of large sections of South African society and manifest in the schools which are a microcosm of wider society.

The democratization of South Africa in 1994 heralded in a political dispensation that of necessity had to heal the inequities and inequalities of Apartheid. For the very first time the education system, which had previously been distinguished and differentiated under racial categories was expected to operate under a national education system. The introduction of an Outcomes Based Education system (which continues to weather harsh and sometimes justified criticism) – was adopted as an educational philosophy that would best service the massive educational needs of the country. Outcomes Based Education (OBE) strives for a holistic education of the child by focusing on the development of knowledge; skills, values and attitudes. Thus, OBE as defined, and intended for the South African context, has effected the following broad changes:

- a move from a content driven curriculum to one that promotes the teaching of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes
- a move from teacher-centred pedagogy to dialogic student-centred pedagogies. This is seen as one way to ensure that the tenets of democracy that are enshrined in the South African Constitution and other legislation (education or otherwise) enable a functional realization of democracy that can be practiced and experienced in the classroom rather than remain a theoretically abstract concept.
- A move from once-off examinations to continuous assessment.

times more likely to be abused than boys. Verbal and sexual abuse at the hands of male teachers who often collude with male students was one of the reasons for the high incidence of school dropouts, pregnancy and HIV infection among girls. ActionAid studies announced at a conference in 2006) across Africa and Asia found that girls' education was disrupted by the "physical and emotional trauma, low self-esteem, anger, depression, anxiety, guilt, and hopelessness" they felt. The findings also showed that girls were not encouraged to report abuse, and when they did they often experienced further victimisation by teachers and parents, or in many cases their allegations were dismissed. The dominance of a patriarchal system in the region was a major stumbling block. Rape is seen as illegitimate sex and depending on the age of the abused girl, the community would frequently encourage the abuser, if a teacher, to marry the complainant because they perceived rape as an expression of love for the abused child. (<http://www.mopane-tree.com>)

⁶ **Unemployment:** The level of unemployment in South Africa is 28% and approximately 60% of students who complete school cannot find jobs. Two out of every three South African women who are employed earn less than R500.00 (72USD) per month. In rural areas four out of every five South African women have no employment. (<http://www.tricky.org/POWA/stats.htm>)

⁷ **HIV/AIDS:** It was estimated that seven million South African are living with HIV in the middle of 2006 - with the highest prevalence rates among young people, especially teenage girls. This figure represents 11% of the national population of 48 million people. Since 1990, life expectancy in South Africa has fallen to below 50 years of age as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This life expectancy is 13 years lower than previously predicted for South Africa. Throughout South Africa, the AIDS epidemic is affecting large number of adolescents, leading to serious psychological, social, economic, and educational problems. When it is considered that 40% of the South African population is less than 15 years of age and that 15.64% of the South African youth between the ages of 15-24 is infected with HIV, one recognizes that HIV/AIDS represents a devastating pandemic among the youth of South Africa. There were 885 000 AIDS orphans as at 2002. (Coombe 2002).

After thirteen years of democracy, the introduction of a new curriculum which has undergone revision, with a healthy education budget that is approximately 20% of the total of government expenditure (in the 2006 Budget education received R92.1 billion, amounting to 17% of total spending) South African education for the most part has not been able to shake off the ravages of Apartheid. (http://www.southafrica.info/ess_info_sa_glance/education/education.htm). The following features which defined Apartheid education continue to define schools in post-apartheid South Africa – thus rendering them dysfunctional. On the other hand, there are resilient schools that have made a conscious and concerted effort to resist the negative script that Apartheid handed down to them and have embarked on ways to rewrite their destinies.

Anecdotes of Resilient and Dysfunctional Schools

Dysfunctional schools

In 2001-2003 I was involved in a research project conducted by the National Department of Education, South Africa. The research piloted the draft policy on Inclusive Education in South Africa. I worked with several rural schools in Rustenburg. One school in particular stood out as being dysfunctional. The school had a population of approximately 300 students. The extent to which the school had habituated to its breakdown and the lack of a sense of responsibility among principals, teachers and students was evident in the atmosphere and infrastructure of the school. One was immediately struck by the neglect of the school (from the principal's office to the staff room to classrooms broken windows, gaping holes in the ceilings; defaced chalkboards; broken doors; neglected gardens framed the identity of the school). Mindless rote learning that confused rather than challenged students to intellectual stimulation characterised the lessons. More often than not teachers would abandon their classrooms to sit outside in the sun reading a magazine. Teachers who had indicated that they would participate in the study were generally not at school on the day the researchers would arrive for the research project. Apathy, depression, lack of a sense of effectiveness, anxiety about physical safety and projection of blame onto others were the result. This, in an environment where poverty was rampant, female students (as young as 10 years) were lured by older men to cohabit with them in exchange for economic security – where the parents of these girls did not object because the arrangement was a source of income; where myths that sleeping with a virgin can cure HIV/AIDS see young girls becoming rape victims – the dysfunctional school had internalised the negative script that Apartheid education had destined it to.

Like the school in the above narrative, dysfunctional schools display the following features (See Hayes, et al 2004):

- poor physical and social facilities impacted negatively on teaching and learning

- There were serious organizational problems, including weak and unaccountable leadership, administrative dysfunction (for example difficulty in drawing up time tables), poor communication, and inadequate disciplinary and grievance procedures
- poor relationships with surrounding communities
- poor communications and interactions with education departments
- questionable pedagogic practices
- un/under qualified teaching staff

Resilient Schools

Sunshine Primary is located in inner city Johannesburg, South Africa. When it was first opened the school was a kindergarten and served White students. This was in the hey-day of Apartheid, when downtown Johannesburg was an affluent city that boasted the economic wealth of the *city of gold*. However, over the years inner city Johannesburg has fallen to deterioration and squalor, and the attendant maladies of – crime, domestic, sexual and gender violence, poverty, housing scarcity, HIV/AIDS - plague the community. Many of the children attending Sunshine Primary are refugees and illegal immigrants from across the African continent. While South Africa does have education legislation that informs the inclusion refugee and immigrant students into its schooling system, in a country that is itself battling its way towards redress for the Black South African majority, Sunshine Primary is among those schools that refuse to shun children who arrive at its door in search of education.

Today Sunshine Primary has graduated from being a kindergarten to a primary school. Despite the fact that it now services 400 primary school children – aged between five years and fifteen years old- the school has not been upgraded in terms of its categorization so as to qualify for more state funding. The increasing number of students seeking admission to the school poses the challenge of space. Cramped between rapidly dilapidating high rise apartments Sunshine Primary is battling to accommodate an increasing number of students. This presents added challenges to a school that already has several socio-economic challenges. Coupled with the infrastructural, financial and general resource shortages, the school has also deal with a teacher shortage and has to raise its own funds in order to hire additional staff.

Rather than habituate/endorse the negative script that Sunshine Primary could justifiably do, the principal and staff have chosen to be resilient in the face of daunting and mounting odds.

I became acquainted with Sunshine Primary through the professional volunteer programme that was initiated by non-profit organization Twenty30. In 2005 Twenty30 which comprises professional volunteers from all sectors was launched to work in collaborative teams with schools who applied to be a part of the initiative. Schools that were selected to be a part of the Twenty30 initiative qualified on the basis of the principal and staff member's vision for the school and

identified schools. Top on the school's list of priorities is the unflinching need to create more classroom space for the increasing number of students that are seeking admission at the school. Refusing to turn students away because of a lack of space, the principal had negotiated with the neighbouring high school across the road to use a portion of their property to erect two trailers that have been furnished to serve as classrooms. This means that the school can now accommodate eighty more students. Using her social contacts the principal was able to secure 30 computers from a law firm who donated the computers to the school when the firm replaced their computers. The principal, who has made it an integral part of her duty to engage in funding raising proposal-writing was able to secure a sizeable sum of money from Microsoft to use in the equipping of the infrastructural setup of the proposed computer laboratory. In partnership with the team from Twenty30, the principal, and teachers were able to extend its already growing network of community help. Some of the activities that the volunteer consultants were able to involve the school in included: engaging the staff in family and life counselling workshops so as to skill them in dealing with domestic violence, women and children abuse; offering computer training skills to teachers; securing help from READ Educational Foundation who donated books and curricula material to the school. READ also offered a two day workshop to the staff of the school on setting up a classroom box library. Since the school did not have a librarian or a dedicated library, skilling teachers on how to set up a portal box library served the dual purpose of encouraging reading as well as short circuiting complex book cataloguing processes.

Sunshine Primary also had the added partnership of four members from City Year. City Year is a non-profit organization comprising young, unemployed school graduates aged between 18-25, who during their period of unemployment attend training programmes which are intended to provide skills development in curriculum support; computer and technology; public relations; arts, crafts and drama. The CityYear members then partner with a school to help children with their homework; engage students in sport and recreational activities; help with fund raising, etc. A small cohort of parents, among them those who cannot afford to pay their children's or guardian's school fees contribute 'labour' (helping cover library books) to off-set their fees.

Sunshine Primary, like other resilient schools have a sense of agency and demonstrate characteristics of leaderful schools that draw on the help and expertise of people from the broader community to tackle at least some of their problems. As is characteristic of resilient leaderful schools, it displays:

- flexible and purposive leadership
- a focus on learning and teaching as the central activities of the school: the day revolves around the rhythms of teaching and learning
- teachers and students are in their classrooms
- the teaching staff is stable and teachers are motivated through the importance and satisfaction of their work

- a safe and organizationally functioning school environment
- a culture of concern within the school
- a functioning relationships with its surrounding communities drawing support from external sources close to the school.

What becomes evident from reflecting on poverty-stricken schools in post-apartheid South Africa is that the extremely harsh circumstances of poverty and deprivation do not inevitably produce dysfunctional schools. This suggests that leadership is a dynamic process involving individuals, organisations and broader contexts making a concerted and committed effort to resist negative scripts and to aspire to making a difference in the lives of students, staff and the community within which schools are located.

The discussion has shown that leadership is a complex interplay of different forces and fields that create a communitarian or a conflictual referential circle. The nature and degree of complexity of the forces acting upon leadership within particular time and space frameworks was elucidated by Bourdieu's (in Connolly 1997) insightful conceptualization of habitus operating as an interplay across a number of fields comprising differences in philosophies of power, authority and leadership; different notions of identity politics, and different visions and goals for the school. The interplay of habitus, capital and field confirms that educational leadership is better understood as a conceptual narrative that involves the combined narratives of individuals (staff, students and significant partners of the school); the micro and macro contexts of the school and the activities that happen and do not happen within this community of practice.

Implications for the Development of Educational Leadership Academic Programmes

There is consensus that continuous in-service and professional development is beneficial in ensuring that professionals stay abreast of development in their community of practice. There is also a need for these in-service and professional development programmes to provide courses that encompass the development of core knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are grounded in practice. Being cognizant of the repertoire of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that school leaders are called upon to play emphasizes the complexity of the leadership role; the importance of moral and ethical grounding; the value of working closely with parents and community; and the importance of teaching and learning as the primary functions of schools. The changing and demanding face of education is calling for the deconstruction and reconstruction of new professional and pedagogic identities (See Bernstein 1996) capable of realizing the full potential of educational experience for the pupils and for society.

In-service and professional development programmes would have to consider the following emergent challenges:

(i) the culture of performativity, which is entwined with economic rationalism and **corporate managerialism** exert pressure on school leadership to produce top of the league results. Wealthy schools may find this easier to achieve than less privileged and schools at risk. Working for school change as well as equity within this conception of effectiveness, efficiency and accountability poses real challenges for educational leadership and need to be addressed more robustly in educational leadership research and professional development programmes.

(ii) schools like the public sector, are increasingly becoming governed by a corporatist managerialist mentality. This is pushing school leaders towards being managers rather than educational leaders, or at least to prioritise management over educational functions. Evidence from resilient schools repeatedly confirm that a valuing of teaching and learning by those in leadership positions is central to good leadership in schools. How can school leadership manage multiple roles without marginalising **pedagogic leadership** is worthy of exploration, within educational leadership development and training programmes.

(iii) an emergent trend in school reform is the move towards **school self-management** or school-based management (SBM). While some argue that self-management engenders flatter power relations, more fluid boundaries between schools and their environments, and increased opportunities for multi-skilling of staff, critics argue that self-management reduces state funding and involvement in schools. Furthermore, SBM schools' responsibilities are further accentuated by the contradictory dynamic of greater state centralization in the form of national educational policies (for example, the introduction of the national curriculum policy; educator accreditation council, etc.), while de-centralising school self management. School leadership have thus to constantly negotiate centralization and decentralization.

(iv) another development that impacts school leadership is changes in **school governance**, which include new forms of school-community relations. Through both formal governance and more informal local conditions there is a reconfiguration of parental/community/school, corporate relationships, and the involvement of parents and communities in the governance of the school. Integrating the participation of parents, industry and the wider community (local and global) into the fabric of the school challenges school leadership in new ways.

(v) Hargreaves (1993) has succinctly captured ways in which teachers are being de-professionalised by the intensification of labour; tendencies to treat teachers as recovering alcoholics or as delinquent juveniles in need of a step-by-step recovery and rehabilitation programme. Perhaps, what is needed is teacher **professional development** that situates the purpose of learning in relation to its relevance and applicability in society - through, for example, curricula that incorporate the teaching of multiliteracies (new technologies), the use of multimedia as a pedagogical tool facilitates in making the medium – the message. In addition school leaders need to be competent in the use of new technologies to manage the information flow between schools and the education departments and other external agencies.

(vi) the discourse on identity politics, difference and diversity has become a defining feature of a globalised society. The complexity of race, gender, sex, ethnicity, multilingualism, multiculturalism need to be debated, discussed, dissected and dealt with at all levels of the school. School leaders need to be sensitized to the promise and perils of dealing with identity politics and diversity issues not just at the level of policy but as a real and substantive issue that affects all players in its community of practice. The creation of better leaders for our schools requires not only better preparation programmes, but a system for resisting socialization to old norms while simultaneously creating new ones. Especially pertinent in this regard is the issue of gender and educational leadership. Gender-related leadership styles and preferences are part of such a system. There is still a paucity of research on women in educational leadership. Without drawing distinct gender lines, leadership development programmes need to include discussion on leadership styles that advocate inclusive, democratic organizational cultures.

(vii) in addition to 'traditional' poverties and inequalities of race, class and gender, new marginalisations are emerging, relating to globalization, and new economic and social reconfigurations. The face of disadvantage is changing, for example, there is an increasing poor white population, and an increasing refugee population in South Africa. Brown et al (1997 in Christie, et al 2001) refer to this phenomenon as the 'new political arithmetic' of poverty and disadvantage. The associated malady of HIV/ AIDS, and gender violence pose ongoing challenges for school leadership and curriculum intervention that prepares school leaders to respond promptly and sensitively to these social demands.

(viii) Critical Language Awareness that interrogates communication styles and the impact these have on intercultural and interpersonal relationships should feature on school leadership development and training programmes. Sensitive and responsible language usage is an important factor in negotiating power differentials and discourses of inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, school leaders need to be sensitised to critical interrogation of and contextually appropriate engagement with education policies.

(ix) there is a need for internal and external evaluation and feedback. School leaders need to persistently test themselves and question whether they are impacting others positively. Feedback of this nature goes beyond the popular 360 degree process which helps reflect on the inner workings. There is need for a 720 degree feedback which is an outer feedback that may help leaders learn how to adjust their outward manifestations towards others.

(x) research components in school leadership programmes need to encourage a theory-practice dialogue which investigate conceptual and methodological issues in leadership processes and their impact across different settings.

In cataloguing some of the debates that academic programmes could/should address so as to remain relevant to the emerging and continuing challenges of school leadership equal

consideration needs to be given to the following two pertinent questions, namely: (i) who will these programmes be directed at (target audience)? and (ii) where would be the most appropriate site for these programmes to be taught at?

The first question is inextricably linked to reconceptualised notions of school leadership. Critical leaderful practices de-centre the school principal as the central leader in the school. Notions of collaborative, consultative, distributed leadership necessitates that teachers also assume leadership roles. How then should academic programmes be structured to ensure that the spirit of leaderful practice that pivots on the ethic of distributed leadership or the dispersal of leadership translates into practice? Cascade models of knowledge, skills, values and attitude development have been critiqued for distorting and watering down information to such extents that they dilute the intention, purpose and substance of the programme. What are the alternatives for the dispersal of educational leadership programmes?

The second question gestures to the need for academic programmes to be directed away from their tendency to be ivory-tower-type discourses that are decontextualised from the realities where the trials, tribulations, challenges and joys and triumphs of school leadership occur. Would, perhaps, relocating school leadership training to the school sites resolve the issue of who attends school leadership training, while also ensuring that academic programmes address the vernacular/local challenges experienced by specific schools in an action-research-type paradigm? What are the infrastructural prerequisites that school site-based professional leadership development programmes require? Under what conditions would school site-based leadership be feasible and pragmatic?

The issues addressed by critical leaderful practices are crucial and relevant to the pressing contemporary challenges of school leadership identity. The discourse and understanding of leadership must be matched by a discourse and understanding of ethics, morality and spirituality of humane educative principles, of the praxis of democratic education, of the power relations of class, race and gender in education and some historical sense of the place of schooling in the wider formation of society. In these ways, a critical scholarship of leaderful practice has the potential to meet the real needs for school leadership in contemporary society and not simply those of the university seminar.

Educational Leadership Research: Methodological Consideration

In my proposed research with the principals in the Advanced Certificate in Education: Educational Management Course, I will draw on the insights of feminist research methodologies. Feminist research methodologies have critiquing the restrictive standards of traditional social science research, which have hitherto, dehumanised and depersonalised both the researcher and the

researched. Feminist research methodologies wish to acknowledge the subjective, emotional, and biographic factors that shape the researcher and the researched. In so doing they attempt to democratise the research process through the establishment of non-hierarchical, dialogic, mutually educative encounters between the researcher and the researched. Some of the recurrent themes that inform feminist research methodologies include the motifs of *reflexivity*, *voice*, *difference*, and *power dynamics*.

In elaborating on the concept *voice*, it has been argued that educational research based on quantitative measurements usually encodes the 'voices' of its research subjects into statistical data. Thus, participants' voices become 'disembodied' when presented in research reports (Schatz 1993:1). Translated into the context of feminist research, the word 'voices' signals the need for researchers to redistribute the research field by investigating, and representing the expansive social reality of women, and other historically misrepresented/underrepresented groups so that their experiences, beliefs, personal and professional lives are understood as multiply constituted in terms of class, ethnicity, language, ability, sexual identity, age, etc.

The politics of *difference* is also a key concept many feminist researchers address in their discussion of research methodologies. Their concern is not restricted to interrogating the difference between genders, but also the politics of diversity among women. Women of colour, in particular, are resisting the universalising tendencies of feminist theorising. This means that researchers need to take cognisance of the gendered, contextual, and positional diversity of research participants and researchers where multiple fissures across race, class, ability, sexual identity, age, etc. are analysed (Reinharz 1992:4).

Acutely aware of the *power dynamics* that characterise social relations, feminist research methodologies express a commitment to confronting power differentials through the establishment of non-hierarchical researcher-researched relations (Reinharz 1992; Neuman 1997). In attempting to confront the power researchers have to exploit research participants as objects of scrutiny and manipulation, feminist researchers encourage research processes into which research participants can enter as active subjects. However, despite the emancipatory intent, this still poses ongoing contradictions. The act of analysing the data, summarising another's life, and linking the individual to processes outside his/her immediate social world, for example, is an act of objectification, and demonstrates researchers' power in data representation and interpretation. However, Measor & Sikes (1992:221) draw attention to the fact that research participants are not pathologically powerless – they wield power over what they choose to disclose about themselves, their experiences, about not participating in certain aspects of the research, and about how much time they will invest in the study. This tenuous power balance captures the dynamics of researcher-researched relationships.

An issue central to the discourse on feminist research methodologies is its stress on *reflexivity*, which involves a process of self-awareness and self-consciousness; of 'researching'

one's own position in the research process, in order to reflect the researcher's interaction with the process. Feminist researchers have stressed the importance of locating themselves within their research. By recognising who researchers are in terms of their race, class and sexuality, we can avoid self-obscuring methodologies because the reflexive stance exploits self-awareness as a source of personal insight and discovery. Essentially, reflexivity compels a revelation of self, with its frailties, passions, shortcomings, and biases.

The insights emerging from an exploration of the tenets of feminist methodologies highlight several issues. These include: attempting to democratise the research by negotiating the methodological moves and mechanics of the research process; accommodating flexibility and non-uniformity in the use of research techniques; keeping the research participants informed about developments in the research process after leaving the research field; being sensitive to the participants' voices in relation to their social realities beyond the school site; attending to the differences among the research participants in terms of race, sexual orientation, age, and ideologies, and being guided by these in critical interpretations; striving for empathetic connections with research participants, and being sensitive so as not to exploit research participants by using them merely as objects of research.

Issues that will be explored in my proposed research with the principals, will include, inter alia:

- how are female educational leaders' personal and professional lives intertwined and how does their race, age, class, ethnicity, qualifications, religious persuasions and gendered positions impact on their career choice, promotional opportunities and leadership practice?
- was teaching their first career choice?
- what selection, interview and application processes and procedures did they have to go through in their promotion to the post of principal?
- what is their professional practice like and what are the influences which have shaped their practice?
- how do their experiences relate to existing theories of educational leadership?
- did they aspire to educational leadership positions? If so, what attracted them to this position?
- how do they juggle work and home responsibilities? What is the biggest challenge in this regard?
- What values and beliefs do they bring to the task of leading their schools; which of these values stem from their family influences as well as their educational and life experiences?
- What does a critical leaderful practice look like when it is enacted? What do exchanges within critical leaderful practices look like? What are the defining features of critical leaderful practice?

Conclusion

As more and more women aspire to educational leadership positions, research has examined how women have fared in organisations, and what their career involvement has meant for their private lives and their personal development, as well as the ways in which they manage. The majority of these studies have documented the experiences of white women, especially women from the developed countries. However, the experience of women principals within the South African context remains largely un-researched. This is not an unusual phenomenon as the experiences of South African women in all spheres are still mapped on the blindspot of sociological investigation. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly for many women assuming educational leadership roles this is largely uncharted territory. While we do not know whether their experience is similar to or different from that of their counterparts in the developed world. We do not know whether different social contexts and cultural frameworks make their experience qualitatively different. As the socio-political context of South Africa changes the established educational leadership cultural practices will need to change. The critical question, is what will shape these new patterns and what forms will they take?

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