



Gerald Grace

School Leadership

Beyond Education
Management

An Essay in Policy
Scholarship



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Preface and Acknowledgments

Writing a book is an individual and solitary experience. Having something to say in a book is the result of collective and social experiences of support, dialogue, interaction and learning from other people. My greatest debt of obligation is to the eighty-eight headteachers who have been my co-researchers in this attempt to obtain a greater understanding of school leadership. With so many other pressures upon their time and thought it is a continuing tribute to the ethic of public service professional commitment that they 'made time' to help with this work. I hope that the result, as represented by this book, will not only interest them, and their colleagues, but have practical and professional relevance for their work.

The research, upon which this book is based, could not have been accomplished without the support of my colleagues in the University of Durham and in the University of Durham School of Education. The University gave crucial assistance in the form of research grants and the awarding of research leave. I thank those who provided the necessary institutional support and resources to make this inquiry possible, especially the Vice-Chancellor, Professor E.A.V. Ebsworth. My colleagues in the School of Education covered for my teaching and supervision responsibilities during the period of my research leave and I am very grateful to them. Particular thanks must go to Linda Burton, Mike Fleming, John McGuinness, Richard Smith and Linda Thompson, and to Susan Metcalf, my secretary, and Joyce Adams and her colleagues in the Education Library who kept me supplied with the materials and sources necessary for the project.

I learned much from my colleagues both in New Zealand and in Durham during my periods as Chairperson of the Department/School of Education about the dynamics and dilemmas of practical institutional responsibility, and reflecting upon these experiences has helped to shape this book in particular ways.

The Institute of Continuing and Professional Education at the University of Sussex provided a place for me to think and write. I am grateful to the Director, Dr Carolyn Miller, and to Professor Tony Becher for their assistance in obtaining for me the status of Visiting Fellow in 1993–94, and for the study facilities which helped me to be a reflective practitioner.

During the years in which this book has been in formation I have learned from the academic and theoretical work of Basil Bernstein that it is necessary

to try to go beyond the surface appearances of social and educational phenomena to make visible the deep structuring of that phenomena. For me, much of that deep structuring is the living force of historical cultural practice, still operative in contemporary educational settings.

It will be clear to the reader that my analysis has also been significantly and positively influenced by the work of Michael Apple, Stephen Ball, Richard Bates, Jillian Blackmore, Tony Bryk, Roger Dale, Rosemary Deem, Brian Fay, William Foster, Thomas Greenfield, Amy Gutmann, Christopher Hodgkinson, Richard Johnson and the Education Group writers, Marilyn Joyce, Jenny Ozga, Fazal Rizvi, Charol Shakeshaft, Brian Simon, John Smyth, Patricia White and Michael Young.

My thinking about the issues involved in the study of school leadership has benefited from discussions with Mike Byram, Frank Coffield and David Galloway, and from feedback on early draft material received from William Taylor, Tony Edwards, Colin Lacey and Jeannie Lum. I am grateful also to the participants in the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Conference at New Orleans in April 1994 for positive and stimulating input to the project. The papers and arguments presented at that conference, in particular by Patricia Broadfoot, Paul Croll, Valerie Hall, Andrew Pollard and Robert Chase (National Education Association, Washington) have shaped the analysis in important ways.

Valuable assistance has been received on the wider comparative aspects of this research, especially on emergent European experience, from Dr Sjoerd Karsten (Amsterdam) and from Dr Lourdes Montero (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela), and the writing of the book has been made easier by the hospitable encouragement of Malcolm Clarkson of The Falmer Press.

It would be wrong, of course, not to acknowledge the influence of those whose approaches to school leadership and governance are either explicitly or implicitly criticized in this book. Among such writers, the work of John Chubb and Terry Moe has probably been most influential in public debate in various settings. While acknowledging that their analysis of school governance and their prescriptions for its future are radical, this present work argues that they are radically limited and misconceived. The proposition that the constitutional, democratic governance of schools has been tried and has failed, and the proposition that educational salvation will be found in the application of market forces in education, cannot be sustained on the evidence of this book.

My experiences in New Zealand were deeply formative of much that appears in this book. It was there that I realized that education could not be a commodity in the market place and it was there also that I realized that active democratic involvement in school governance and educational decision making was a real and practical possibility.

My struggle with these ideas has been sustained by the encouragement and help of my family. June Grace has not only translated script to text with great efficiency but, more importantly, has critically evaluated and shaped

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what has finally been said. Claire Grace has warned against theory winning over practice. Helena Grace has had a significant effect upon the writing of Chapter 10 on women and educational leadership. Dominic Grace has made me think about what the 'field applications' of this project might be in various cultural and social settings.

Finally, the solitary writer must take responsibility for the final text. However, I hope that I have made it clear that this study of school leadership is the outcome of a collective enterprise.

Gerald Grace

August 1994

Introduction

The study of the culture and politics of educational leadership¹ is currently emerging as a major field of social and educational inquiry. As a particular sector of this academic and research enterprise, the study of school leadership is attracting much more attention internationally. In a field previously dominated by studies of educational organization, administration and management and described by Greenfield and Ribbins (1993, pp.164–65) as ‘unnecessarily bland and boring’, the culture of school leadership, true to its nature, is re-asserting itself. Texts such as John Smyth’s (1989) *Critical Perspectives on Educational Leadership* point to the possibilities for the construction of new directions in leadership studies which are informed by historical, cultural, socio-political and critical analysis. Reviewing recent work on leadership, Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1993) conclude that:

There is now a far richer body of knowledge winning the confidence of scholars and practitioners alike. This has been achieved with more expansive, multidisciplinary study of organizations and leaders . . . Leaders, aspiring leaders and others with an interest in leadership can now proceed with much greater confidence than was the case a decade before. (p.141)

What has caused this renaissance of interest and activity in the study of educational leadership? The answers to this question are as complex and as contradictory as the phenomenon of leadership itself. The existence of various forms of crisis in many societies—legitimation crisis, moral crisis, economic crisis and social and political uncertainties—generate the conditions in which salvationist leadership is looked for.

Hargreaves (1994) points to the effects of the post-modern paradoxes where ‘globalization can lead to ethnocentrism, decentralization to more centralization, flatter organizational structures to concealed hierarchical control’ (p.47). He notes that ‘the main educational response to this social crisis has been to resurrect old cultural certainties’ (p.54). Contemporary interest therefore in ‘strong’, ‘outstanding’ or ‘visionary’ educational and school leadership can be interpreted as a partial return to old cultural certainties. Schools need strong leadership.

Reinforcing old cultural certainties about the need for strong school

leadership are new ideological certainties that educational salvation is to be found in the application of market forces to schooling culture. Related to Chubb and Moe's (1992) view that 'the whole world is being swept by a realization that markets have tremendous advantages over central control and bureaucracy' (p.46), new constructs of educational leaders as market leaders and as school entrepreneurs are growing in prominence and power.

There are, therefore, paradoxes and contradictions in the constructs of school leadership currently held by different interest and ideological groups as they respond to various aspects of the post-modern crisis.² The ideal salvationist leader may be a traditional scholar, an expert professional, an organizational executive, a moral teacher or an educational entrepreneur. While contradictions exist as to the nature of the leadership required, the form remains strongly individualistic. Despite a weak rhetoric of shared governance or partnership in leadership, the political and ideological cultures of many societies continue to legitimate the 'need' for strong individual school leadership.

For those who wish to resist the assertion that strong and effective school leadership is inevitably the property of one person (or of a small, elite group) and therefore a continuing manifestation of necessary social hierarchy, the critical study of educational leadership becomes essential. If, as writers such as Smyth (1989), Foster (1989), Rizvi (1989), Blackmore (1989) and Bates (1992) suggest, educational leadership can be a shared, transforming, empowering and democratic enterprise, how is this to be achieved?

The question of what educational and school leadership could and should be is at the centre of political, ideological and educational debate in many contexts. Traditionalists—pedagogic, moral and cultural—are interested in school leadership and have traditional views about it. New Right marketeers in education are confident about what sort of leadership the 'new freedom' requires. Democrats and community educators, feminists and critical theorists construct scenarios for alternative forms in which educational leadership can be expressed. School boards, school governors, principals, headteachers, teachers, parents, community members and pupils (or students) all have their own constructs of what 'proper' school leadership should be. For all these reasons it is widely recognized that it is necessary to go beyond the study of education management to gain a greater understanding of what education leadership is, or might be.

This book is a contribution to that end. In describing it as an essay in policy scholarship, I am using 'essay' to imply 'an attempt' and 'policy scholarship' to imply a mode of analysis which goes beyond policy science. Policy science, a concept first used by Brian Fay in his influential book *Social Theory and Political Practice* (1975), is a form of social and educational analysis which attempts to extract a social phenomenon from its relational context in order to subject it to close analysis. Following the models of natural science from which it is derived, it is relatively uninterested in the history or cultural antecedents of the phenomenon under investigation. The concern of a policy science approach is to understand present phenomena (in particular, present

crisis phenomena) in order to formulate a rational and scientific prescription for action and future policy.

When applied to the study of education leadership, for instance, a policy science approach tends to exclude consideration of wider contextual relations by its sharply focused concern with the specifics of a particular set of leadership behaviours. This approach is seductive in its concreteness, its apparently value-free and objective scientific stance and in its obvious relation to policy formation. Policy science research has a high appeal to governments, state agencies and research foundations because it promises to 'deliver the goods' in a technical and usable form. As Chapter 1 of this book argues, Education Management Studies is a corpus of research and writing informed by a policy science approach, which is attempting to deliver, among other things, an *effective leadership package* which can be applied in a range of educational settings.

The perspectives of policy science are, however, very limited. What tends to be excluded in policy science research is the relation of surface social phenomena to the deep structure of historical, cultural, political, ideological and value issues. Many contemporary problems or crises in education are, in themselves, the surface manifestations of deeper historical, structural and ideological contradictions in education policy. There can be no fundamental appreciation of these problems and no effective policy resolution of them, unless they are properly contextualized by detailed scholarship.

Policy scholarship resists the tendency of policy science to abstract problems from their relational settings by insisting that the problem can only be understood in the complexity of those relations.³ In particular, it represents a view that a social-historical approach to research can illuminate the cultural and ideological struggles in which schooling is located. By these means it can make visible the regulative principles which have constituted the nature of leadership at different historical periods and it can demonstrate the constraining effects of wider social, economic and political relations.⁴

Whereas policy science excludes ideological and value conflicts as 'externalities'⁵ beyond its legitimate remit (producing what Greenfield, 1993, p.141 calls 'neutered science'), policy scholarship, in its necessary engagement with history, demonstrates that such conflicts and dilemmas have always been central to the experience of schooling. Policy scholarship brings back into the analysis of school leadership an historical and a contemporary sense of the ideological, power and value relations which shape and pattern school leadership in particular historical periods and in various cultural settings.

The term 'scholarship' can be used in various ways. It can stand for detailed but narrow preoccupations. It can stand for archaic, cultural pretentiousness. In the concept of policy scholarship it is used in neither of these senses. The aspiration to scholarship which is relevant here is a commitment to locate the matter under investigation in its historical, theoretical, cultural and socio-political setting and a commitment to integrate these wider relational features with contemporary fieldwork data. In this sense, policy scholarship is used as an essay in wider and deeper understanding.

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In the chapters which follow, some attempt has been made to realize these principles in the study of English school leadership, with special reference to the changing position of the headteacher.⁶ It is hoped that such a study will have both national and international relevance. English schooling culture is in a process of radical transformation. At the centre of these transformations is the position of the headteacher and questions to do with how headteachers, as school leaders, are responding to radical change. But the transformations of English schooling culture have their situational variants in many other cultural and national settings. The issues addressed by this book are some of the central issues which are being considered by education policy makers across the world. Such issues have their specific historical and cultural formation and are approached in each setting with a distinctive cultural repertoire, but it may be claimed that wherever there are school principals, school headteachers, school leaders, boards, governors or trustees, the power relations and the moral and professional dilemmas examined in this book will be recognized.⁷

Notes and References

- 1 Educational leadership is a term often used to describe leadership in a wide range of settings e.g., national and local education policy formation, community and adult education, higher education, etc. School leadership generally refers to leadership in a specific institutional setting i.e., an educational institution for children or young people. However, these distinctions are not strictly observed because difficulties arise when it is necessary to refer to educational leadership (relating to curriculum and pedagogy) in a school setting.
- 2 For a critical examination of notions of post-modern crisis see Harvey (1989).
- 3 In a political or policy-making culture in which rapid transformations are being looked for, such scholarly observations are regarded as unhelpful.
- 4 This is also regarded as unhelpful.
- 5 For a discussion of this in relation to economic science (as a branch of policy science) see Grace (1995).
- 6 The term 'English school leadership' has been used throughout to distinguish English schooling culture from the different traditions of Welsh and Scottish schooling culture.
- 7 It is hoped that, following recognition, culturally specific research and discussion will be stimulated.

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