



## Research and the Challenges of Contemporary School Leadership: The Contribution of Critical Scholarship

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## RESEARCH AND THE CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: THE CONTRIBUTION OF CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP

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*ABSTRACT: There is a widespread policy assumption that school leaders such as headteachers and governors need to have 'training courses' which are constituted by a growing corpus of Education Management Studies (EMS) if they are to achieve successfully current schooling goals of 'effectiveness', 'quality', 'excellence' and 'value for money'. Another body of work which attempts to address these issues in a wider cultural framework and which may be called Critical Leadership Studies (CLS) is regarded as interesting for those studying for higher graduate qualifications but hardly relevant for everyday school business. While EMS is constructed as 'practical' and therefore a necessary constituent of the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers and other training courses for school leaders, CLS is constructed as 'academic' and more suitable for the EdD seminar. It will be argued here that both cultural analysis and recent research shows this to be a simplistic and reductionist view with dangerous policy consequences. Critical scholarship in education has much to offer to those meeting the everyday challenges of school leadership. In particular, feminist critical scholarship offers oppositional models to both traditional and market forms of patriarchal school leadership.*

*Keywords: headteachers, Education Management Studies, Critical Leadership Studies*

### 1. INTRODUCTION: ENGLISH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMED?

At this historical juncture, English school leadership is at a major cultural turning point. The established cultural practices and existing concepts of educational leadership are breaking up and new patterns are emerging or being created. The critical question, not only for education but also for the socio-political context, is what will shape these new patterns and what forms will they take? Stephen

Ball (1994, p. 59) has expressed well the ideological strategy of previous governments in an attempted cultural transformation of education and of educational leadership:

The ethical and ideological position of the headteacher is seen as crucial. It seems undeniable that the government intended to capture and reconstruct the headteacher as the key actor in the process of reform and redefinition.

Historically, headteachers in English schools have been powerful definers of the culture, organisation and ethos of schooling and of its social relations. It is no surprise therefore to find that various political agencies who wish to change the culture and ethos of schooling realise the strategic importance of changing the consciousness, values and behaviour of headteachers and, more fundamentally, of changing ideas about the nature of the headship role itself. A significant contemporary cultural and political struggle now exists in England to change the consciousness of headteachers and to change radically the historically constituted nature of what it is to be a headteacher. This struggle has implications not only for the form of educational experience and social relations realised within schooling but also for wider socio-political relations, and for gender relations.

In the relatively autonomous contexts of English schooling before the 1980s and 1990s, men and women came to the position of school headship through a variety of educational routes and of professional formation experiences. They came with a plurality of views about the educational process, social relations within schooling, the spiritual, moral, personal and political purposes of education and with their conceptions of 'good headship'. Once appointed, they had, in comparative terms, a large degree of professional autonomy in which these conceptions could be realised. This culture of relatively autonomous headship was a particularly important professional space in which innovative women headteachers could realise their educational conceptions and views of leadership. As research has demonstrated (Grace, 1985; MacBeath 1998; Ozga, 1993), the outcomes of this situation were complex and contradictory and in political/democratic and accountability terms difficult to defend. A distinctive feature of English education in the decades before the 1980s was that, in practice, significant headteacher autonomy resulted in the generation of a rich array of schooling cultures and ethos, from the traditional/authoritarian, through the varieties of professional liberalism to the radical, democratic and innovative. This situation was celebrated by its defenders as one of relative and

desirable pluralism and of curriculum and pedagogic variety and attacked by its critics as irresponsible and tantamount to cultural anarchy. With the political empowerment of the latter group in England in the 1980s, a strategy for reform and transformation clearly targeted, as Ball (1994) has argued, the position of the headteacher as one for re-education and reformation. In the struggle between Culture and Anarchy (as some in Arnoldian terms viewed it), headteachers, along with a reconstituted inspectorate, were to be key agents in the construction of a brave new world of schooling.

The introduction of the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) as the required gateway to school leadership in England and Wales has to be located in this larger socio-political and cultural context. The NPQH is not simply a technical/professional programme for headteachers; it is also part of a strategy for cultural transformation. As such the content, values and assumptions of the programmes need to be analysed and scrutinised. John Beck (1999, p. 227) has argued that what is taking place is 'a restructuring of the formation of the "new professionals" who will service the need of the reformed institutions' and that this impetus is continuing under the New Labour government in Britain. Drawing upon the insights in Bernstein's (1996) text, *Pedagogy, Symbolic control and Identity*, Beck's thesis is that we are experiencing an attempted restructuring of professional and pedagogic identity and the marginalisation of concepts of professional education and formation by those of occupational trainability. As Bernstein (1996, p. 73) puts it:

The concept of trainability places the emphasis upon 'something' the actor must possess in order for that actor to be appropriately formed and re-formed according to technological, organizational and market contingencies.

In the struggle between conceptions of professional education and formation and those of occupational trainability at the level of headteachers, two cultural relays can be discerned. One is a body of writings and discourse to be called here Education Management Studies (EMS). The other, partly constructed in opposition to the dominance of EMS, may be called Critical Leadership Studies (CLS). In the attempted restructuring of leadership identities, consciousness and behaviour the relative cultural representation of these two forms of thinking, analysis and discourse is clearly a crucial issue. NPQH programmes draw heavily upon the first category because its outcomes are technical, logistical and relatively predictable.

## 2. EDUCATION MANAGEMENT STUDIES (EMS)

As part of the rising dominance of management and market culture in education during the 1980s, it is important to note the remarkable growth of Education Management Studies (EMS) within the wider field of Education Studies. As education has been recontextualised in the market place on the one hand and as notions of 'the self-managing school' and 'local management of schools' have become influential, the growth of EMS has been a predictable, cultural outcome. Education as commodity requires to be 'packaged', 'delivered' and 'marketed' as efficiently as possible in the new pedagogical regimes and EMS has risen to a position of potential dominance in order to facilitate these developments. Not only have texts on various aspects of education management begun to be a significant sector of educational publishing but, more pervasively, the discourse, assumptions and ideology of management has begun to dominate the language, consciousness and actions of many of those working within the education sector. The title of headteacher in English schooling culture has historically signalled the school leader's prime relation with knowledge and the curriculum and with pupils, teachers and pedagogy. Its potential replacement, in the discourse of EMS, by 'senior manager' or 'chief executive' indicates new priorities in the future operations of schools. The 'new managerialism' in the schools has involved more expert attention to budget control and forecasting, to public relations and market research, to the measurement of performance indicators and quality control and to 'human resource management'. Headteachers have been encouraged to undertake courses provided by local education authorities, management consultants and finance specialists which have been designed to upgrade their management skills but also, more fundamentally, to enhance their relation to modern management culture. In 1988, the culture of EMS was given a powerful impetus by the Department of Education/Coopers and Lybrand Report, 'Local Management of Schools' and explicitly by its observation that 'the changes require a new culture and philosophy of the organization of education at the school level' (p. 5). Influential international texts such as Caldwell and Spinks *The Self-Managing School* (1988) and *Leading the Self-Managing School* (1992) have been central to the constitution of the EMS field as have more technical texts such as Hardie, *Marketing the Primary School* (1991), Davies and Ellison, *Marketing the Secondary School* (1991), Barnes, *Practical Marketing for Schools* (1993) and Everard and Morris, *Effective School Management* (1996).

What have been the effects of this dominance of Education Management Studies in the 'in-service training' or professional development courses of existing headteachers? Are we witnessing, in Bernstein's (1996) terms, the restructuring of pedagogic and professional identities of school leaders as a necessary preliminary to wider transformations in the schooling system? The position of the headteacher in English schooling culture has historically had considerable symbolic power and influence in moral, spiritual and ethical terms and as the leading education professional within the school. Does the emergent 'senior manager' of the new order of schooling imply the colonisation of schools by marketing and managerial values to the detriment of those of liberal, educative professionalism? Beck (1999, pp. 226–227) reminds us that at its best:

The conception of a profession involved not simply a utilitarian business of acquiring technical skills but rather the shaping of humane practitioners, capable for example, of independent and informed ethical judgement and possessing a wider vision of the place of their expertise within the realm of a broader intellectual culture . . . educational institutions, at their best, creatively reproduced a relationship between knowledge and the self which was generative of a certain form of integrity – individual moral integrity but also a sense of collective responsibility for professional practice and standards.

As Durkheim (1977), Bernstein (1996) and others have reminded us, educational professionalism had its origins in the commitments of religious culture and subsequently of humane secular culture. It is now in the process of another major transformation. Ball (1994) and Blackmore *et al.* (1996) are among a number of writers who argue that the nature of educational professionalism is being reconstructed.

The critics of the dominance of Education Management Studies in the reformation of school headteachers believe that the colonisation of the life-world of school leaders is in process as a result of the imperialism of market culture in education and of the hegemony of the new managerialism. The effects of this colonisation, they believe, will be detrimental to humane and ethical values in education, to educative and pedagogic values, to social and professional relations within the school, to constructs of educational community and collegiality and to commitments to greater social equity and inclusiveness. Such critics believe that the dominance of EMS in the new training courses for teachers will, in their outcomes, be technicist and reductionist so that the 'wider vision' referred to by Beck

will be progressively weakened or marginalized. It must be made clear that this oppositional position is not based upon resistance to the insights and functional value of Education Management Studies *per se*, but rather upon their current constitution as a new hegemony in the formation of school leaders. The perceived problem is that school leadership which is a major agency of cultural, spiritual, moral, intellectual and political education in society is in danger of being reduced, in Wright Mills's (1973) terms, to a form of 'abstracted empiricism' and to a set of technical manoeuvres.

### 3. CRITICAL LEADERSHIP STUDIES (CLS)<sup>1</sup>

Critical Leadership Studies consist of a corpus of writing generated by writers in the UK, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere who have reacted, in various ways, against the perceived dominance of Education Management Studies. CLS does not represent a coordinated oppositional movement but is rather a set of critical responses to developments in a number of countries. However, it can be claimed that its intellectual and professional coherence is to be found in a number of unifying themes which constitute its alternative agenda for leadership study. A founding text of CLS is John Smyth's edited collection, *Critical Perspectives on Educational Leadership* (1989).<sup>2</sup> In this text, Smyth and others argued the limitations inherent in a self-managing school perspective and argued for a study and understanding of educational leadership informed by historical consciousness, socio-political awareness and the insight of critical theory.<sup>3</sup> From Smyth's perspective the intensification of local institutional preoccupations arising from the self-managing school initiative posed a considerable threat to the 'larger picture' in relation to which educational leadership needed to be realised. Similar ideas have been developed by Bates (1992) and by Greenfield (1993) and by a number of feminist writers.

Richard Bates has argued that educational leadership can only be understood in the context of its wider cultural setting. In other words there is always a school leadership-society relation which partly defines what it is to be an educational leader and which goes beyond the scope of EMS alone. The understanding of this leadership-culture relation requires insights from history, philosophy, religious and moral studies, political economy and cultural analysis. Leadership, in this sense, is a more complex, comprehensive and extensive concept than that of management and as such it requires the support of a wider range of scholarship. Bates points out that educational leadership often has to be exercised against a

background of 'culture battles' in society and school leaders must have an awareness of these battles and of the legitimate role of the school in relation to them. This is the larger vision which is to be expected from educational leaders in democratic societies.

The limitations of Education Management Studies as a form of policy science have been powerfully attacked by Greenfield (1993). Following Hodgkinson (1978, p. 272), Greenfield endorsed the view that 'the central questions of administration (management) are not scientific at all. They are philosophical'. Reviewing the impact first of administrative science and then of management science upon the field of educational leadership, Greenfield concluded that most existing studies were ahistorical, narrowly technical and mechanistic and that the dominant paradigm within the field was a form of 'neutered science' (Greenfield, 1993, p. 141). In setting out a new agenda for future enquiry, Greenfield called for greater use of interpretive and qualitative methods of enquiry, greater attention to power relations, conflicts and values and moral dilemmas in educational leadership and closer examination of the changing discourse of education management and of its implications.

In these ways, Critical Leadership Studies have been constituted as a new framework for the understanding of educational leadership. It is a framework partly constructed in reaction against the 'neutered science' of EMS, partly to move attention from the specifics of education management to the principles and dilemmas of educational leadership and partly to articulate new and emancipatory notions of what such leadership could be. An analysis of the emancipatory dimension of CLS shows that women academics and feminist writers have made a significant contribution to new ways of thinking about educational leadership.

While the field of Critical Leadership Studies is still in a process of formation, it is possible to discern at least four major themes in its writings and discourse and a brief outline of these will be attempted.

#### 4. EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AS ETHICAL PRACTICE: ASPIRING TO THE COMMON GOOD

The tendency of Education Management Studies either to ignore or to marginalize ethical issues<sup>4</sup> and dilemmas has been strongly criticised by Foster (1989). In his paper, 'Towards a critical practice of leadership', Foster argues that ethical considerations are a prime responsibility for educational leaders and that therefore they must



be a prime constituent of preparation programmes for such leadership. Foster's view is that:

Leadership in general must maintain an ethical focus which is oriented towards democratic values within a community. This has to do with the meaning of ethics historically – as a search for the good life of a community . . . Ethics here refers to a more comprehensive construct than just individual behaviour; rather it implicates us in how we as a moral community live our communal lives. (p. 55)

From this perspective, educational leadership should involve a critical, ethical practice which is committed to the transformation of undesirable features of schooling culture and life. These features might be the existence of racism, classism and sexism in educational practice; the existence of prejudice against particular religious or regional groups or against those with a range of disabilities and social and intellectual disadvantages. The leadership project here is to attempt, with others, to bring about a transformation of culture and social relations within the school not as an heroic act of individual charismatic leadership but as a shared enterprise of the teachers, the pupils and the wider community. To realise this form of critical, ethical leadership with a transformation purpose would require considerable social skills of advocacy, intergroup relations, team building and a quality of inspiration without domination. For Foster and for subsequent writers on this theme, e.g. Starrat (1991), Hodgkinson (1993) and Bottery (1993), formation and development programmes for school leaders would have to engage seriously with these issues in theory and in practice.

##### 5. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE: TRANSFORMING HIERARCHY

English schooling culture in the twentieth century has always had, as its centre, a major paradox and contradiction. Formally designated as the cultural agency for 'making democracy work' and involved, at specific periods, with citizenship education initiatives, its own practice has remained largely undemocratic. Among a complex of reasons for this lack of democratic practice in school life, the lasting influence of the English, hierarchical 'headmaster tradition' has been significant. While this tradition has been modified into more consultative forms, few examples exist of serious organisational democracy within schooling. English headteachers have historically constituted a leadership class in schooling and, against this tradition, the idea that schools could be run 'properly' by forms of organisational democracy has

always seemed far-fetched and improbable. Hierarchy is taken to be an inevitable feature of schools.

One of the perspectives of Critical Leadership Studies involves serious consideration of the possibilities for a more democratic school culture. Important contributions to critical thinking in this area have been made by Pat White (1982, 1983) and by Rizvi (1989) and yet this work is routinely ignored by EMS texts. Pat White's 1982 paper 'Democratic perspectives on the training of headteachers' argued that headteachers needed opportunities to reflect upon their role in relation to the enhancement of democratic values and democratic practice in schools. For White, if the political ideal of participatory democracy in English society was ever to move beyond the level of rhetoric, then a prior educational practice must lay the foundations for its active realisation. This would involve a new culture and ethos in English schools, to be generated by a new form of democratic, educational leadership:

In an institution run on democratic principles there should be increased opportunities for individuals to exercise genuine leadership . . . Clearly the organisation of the school on democratic lines will present ample opportunities for 'inspirational' leadership without tying it to a person or an office . . . The democratic head will be keen that pupils should take a more active role within the school . . . because for pupils such participation will be a part of their earliest formal political education. (pp. 75–77)

In seeking to explain why the powerful logic of this position has had relatively little impact on education practice, Rizvi (1989) recognises the power of the 'iron law of oligarchy' and of pervasive notions that hierarchical leadership is inevitable in complex organisations. Rizvi also notes that the advance of democratic ideas in schooling is closely dependent upon wider socio-political, ideological, and economic developments within a given society. For the English context of the 1980s and early 1990s, the dominating ideas were those of market competition and the new managerialism in education rather than the enhancement of the democratic culture of schools. However, critical scholarship insists that much can be learned from the more democratic school cultures of other societies.

## 6. BEYOND PATRIARCHAL LEADERSHIP: THE CONTRIBUTION OF FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP

An important constituent of Critical Leadership Studies is the recognition that the paradigms and discourse of educational leadership

have been dominated by patriarchal assumptions. Such assumptions have largely been recontextualised within the texts of Education Management Studies. However, the imperative for such texts to be 'up-to-date' is often realised by an add-on section or chapter devoted to 'women and educational management'.<sup>5</sup> Rejecting such tokenism, feminist writers and academics such as Blackmore (1989), Ozga (1993) and Adler *et al.* (1993) have insisted that educational leadership from a feminist perspective must be conceptualised within a radically different paradigm and with a different discourse. For Blackmore, a feminist reconstruction of the concept of an educational leader is necessary. Such leadership would involve a move away from notions of power and control over others, towards a leadership defined as the ability to act with others. Leadership would involve being at the centre of a group rather than at a hierarchical distance from others. Such forms of feminist, inclusive leadership, whose intention would be to make schooling culture more fully human and humane, would be in an oppositional stance to features of the 'new managerialism':

This would require going against the renewed push towards more masculinist notions of leadership embedded in corporate managerialism . . . which equates efficiency and effectiveness with organisational rationality and hierarchy. (1989, p. 124)

In these ways, a feminist discourse of school leadership provides a major challenge to the reconstitution of traditional male dominance in the new executive forms of 'line management', 'senior management' and 'chief executive' of Education plc.

In a recent major contribution to the field, Jill Blackmore (1999, p. 222) has called for the development of a feminist politics of educational leadership which will:

need to focus beyond the issue of women and leadership, to contextualize it and to politicize it by linking leadership more transparently to wider educational debates about social inequality, educational reform and issues of social justice.

Blackmore warns that contemporary forms of educational management which appear sympathetic to so-called female styles of management as technically 'effective' can represent a subtle form of incorporation. What a feminist scholarship of education leadership and a feminist practice of education leadership has to do is to question the fundamental principles and assumptions upon which the conventional wisdom of 'leadership' as a category is based. Feminist critical scholarship refuses to be incorporated in the

decontextualised discourse of education management and in doing so it provides a powerful resource for all those who wish to resist such incorporation in their own professional lives.

#### 7. EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: PHILOSOPHY, MORALITY AND SPIRITUALITY

Headteachers in England are the inheritors of a school leadership culture which for over a hundred years gave priority to spiritual, moral and pedagogical leadership in education. Mediated at various levels by the class cultures of English schooling, the position of the headteacher was associated with the articulation of spiritual and moral conceptions of the 'good life' and of the formation of 'good people'. Modern educational professionalism may itself be understood as a secular and mediated form of an earlier sacred conception of the responsibilities of educational leadership. In both its traditional/sacred and modern/professional manifestations, school leadership has articulated a discourse and a mission permeated, in varying degrees, by spiritual, moral and humanistic goals. One of the responsibilities of school headship was the guardianship of 'aspirations for a better world' expressed either in religious and transcendent discourse and imagery or in humanist and secular terms. In both cases, a vocational or 'service to others' ethic was encoded in the discourse of such leadership and in the constitution of school cultures.

Bernstein (1996) argues that this sacred/secular conception of education now faces a major cultural transformation into a totally secular, commodified and marketised form:

Today, throughout Europe, led by the USA and the UK there is a new principle guiding the latest transition of capitalism. The principles of the market and its managers are more and more the principles of the policy and practices of education. Market relevance is becoming the key orienting criterion for the selection of discourses . . . This movement has profound implications from the primary school to the university . . . There is a new concept of knowledge and of its relation to those who create it and use it. The new concept is a truly secular concept. Knowledge should flow like money to wherever it can create advantage and profit. Indeed knowledge is not like money; *it is* money. Knowledge is divorced from persons, their commitments, their personal dedications . . . Knowledge, after nearly a thousand years, is divorced from inwardness and literally dehumanised. (p. 87)

From this perspective, the educational leaders of this new age would need to learn a new mission, acquire a new discourse and become market entrepreneurs or at least market survivors.

Part of the project of Critical Leadership Studies is to keep alive other conceptions of educational leadership and other forms of education discourse in the face of this attempted transformation. Hodgkinson (1983, 1991) has continued to insist that educational leadership is an exercise in practical idealism and as such it requires an awareness of philosophical principles and of moral complexity as well as technical competence.

Sergiovanni (1992) believes that the prime responsibility of school leaders is that of moral leadership and its object should be the creation of the 'virtuous school'. Leadership in such a school would be a demonstration of stewardship and 'in the virtuous school, the leader would be seen as a servant' (p. 115). The religious discourse and imagery of Sergiovanni's thesis is very clear and his construct of 'the servant/leader' has been central to the cultures of faith-based schooling, at least in its formal rhetoric. In religious cultures of schooling, the expectation that school leaders will also be 'leaders in faith' is still strong (Grace, 2000).

Educational leadership as a 'vocation to serve' is not a concept or a discourse routinely found in the textbook of Education Management Studies. However, it is alive in the discourse of many religious-educational cultures realised in Christian, Jewish and Islamic schools and also in secular/humanist cultures of leadership. The extent to which these ideas are actually realised in practice is an empirical question of great interest. Nevertheless the very existence of the notion of the 'vocation' of leadership provides a sharp antithesis to contemporary constructs of school principals and head-teachers as chief executives of a schooling corporation.

#### 8. RESEARCH AND THE CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The hegemonic position of Education Management Studies in the formation and reformation of contemporary school leaders is premised on the assumption that this is what headteachers 'need' in order to meet effectively the many challenges which they face. As with many policy science<sup>7</sup> assumptions, the immediate plausibility of this position can hardly be denied. Faced with new financial responsibilities related to the local management of schools initiative; empowered school governing bodies to be accountable to; intensified market competition for pupils and resources; the enhanced

importance of public relations and of public reputation and intensified surveillance from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), it is hardly surprising that the textbooks and primers of EMS have met real professional needs among English headteachers. However, recent research indicates that the challenges of school leadership are more complex and far-reaching than is implied in EMS texts alone. Research by Walker (1995), Dymock (1996) and Dempster and Mahony (1998) has shown that ethical dilemmas have intensified for school leaders in a number of countries. These ethical dilemmas related to people, resource and power decisions where marketing or managerial interests appeared to be in conflict with humane, educative or moral principles. Headteachers and school principals felt that difficult ethical decisions were expected from them when their own professional and cultural resourcing to make such decisions was not adequate. Dempster and Mahony (1998, p. 137) conclude that: 'under new public sector management, there are emerging irreconcilable goals for schooling,' and they further argue that preparation for school leadership must engage with this as a major issue through: 'further research into the professional values on which heads base their leadership.'

In previous research (Grace, 1995), there were indications of the range of moral, ethical and professional dilemmas faced by some contemporary headteachers in both state and Catholic schools.<sup>8</sup> There were also indications that headteachers did not feel well prepared or well resourced to deal with such dilemmas. For Catholic headteachers, expectations for spiritual leadership in a pluralist and secular culture constituted a major challenge, as did Catholic social teaching or social justice and the common good in an era when individual success and competitive 'winning' was publicly celebrated as a goal for schooling. A minority of headteachers who had attempted to create a more democratic culture in the school realised that in doing so they were often working against the traditional expectations of colleagues, pupils and parents that a 'proper' headteacher would give strong, individual and dominating leadership. In trying to make these changes it was clear that headteachers needed more developmental support of a kind not available in education management programmes.

A current research project with the headteachers of 60 Catholic secondary schools in inner-city locations in London, Liverpool and Birmingham (Grace, 1999) is confirming the indicators of earlier studies. Catholic headteachers, in such locations, face intensified challenges to the spiritual and moral purposes of the school, to

historical commitments to the poor and the powerless, and to the integrity of the principles enshrined in their mission statements. They find themselves at the meeting point between Catholic values in education, with an emphasis upon community and conceptions of the common good, and market values in education with an emphasis on individualism and on private good.<sup>9</sup> In terms of their own needs for professional development and cultural support there is a clear recognition that resources beyond education management are required to help them with these challenges. There are professional needs for spiritual, ethical and intellectual renewal in the leadership role which will not be met in 'training' courses alone.

#### 9. THE PROFESSIONAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCING OF SCHOOL HEADSHIP

It is apparent from both cultural analysis and from recent research that if school leaders are to realise the full potential of educational experience for the pupils and for society then they themselves must be formed and reformed in more comprehensive and inclusive ways than at present. While Education Management Studies have their part to play in this developmental process, the issues addressed by Critical Leadership Studies are crucial and relevant to the pressing contemporary challenges of school leadership. Programmes of preparation for school headship must therefore be as comprehensive as are the challenges of this professional role. The discourse and understanding of management must be matched by a discourse and understanding of ethics, morality and spirituality,<sup>10</sup> 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 leadership will be meeting real needs for school leaders in the twenty-first century and not simply those of the university seminar.

#### 10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## 11. NOTES

1. For a more developed account of Critical Leadership Studies, see Grace (1997a). For a discussion of the relations between school leadership and democratic practice, see Grace (1997b).
2. Smyth has elaborated these perspectives in subsequent publications, see Smyth (1993) and (1996).
3. Critical theory involves an awareness of the pervasiveness of oppressive and dominating structures in society and is informed by the importance of historical analysis, the recognition of structural contradictions, the self understandings of participants and the raising of consciousness.
4. A classic example of this occurs in the introduction to Everard and Morris (1996 third edition). A formal recognition is given to the importance of ethics in managerial practice but this is immediately followed by the assertion that 'this is not a book about educational and managerial philosophy and ethics, it is about effective practice' (p. 10).
5. Everard and Morris can again be cited as exemplars of this tendency. In the 1996 third edition of their text, half a page has been added under this title, beginning with the words, 'One valuable resource which tends to be under-utilized in schools is women' (p. 197).
6. It is interesting to note how the concept of 'mission', originally part of a sacred/ecclesiastical discourse, has been appropriated into the secular discourse of corporations and other institutions.
7. For distinctions between policy science and policy scholarship as modes of analysis, see Grace (1995, 1998).
8. It must be noted, however, that the participating sample was small (88 headteachers) and largely located in the North-East of England.
9. Catholic secondary schools have been chosen as the focus for this research precisely because they represent a strong and explicit form of traditional/sacred conceptions of education. The particular challenges for Catholic headteachers are therefore how to maintain the integrity and distinctiveness of Catholic educational culture while, at the same time, surviving (and even being successful) in a larger context characterised by secularism, individualism and market materialism. For an earlier discussion, see Grace (1996).
10. Spirituality here implies 'that which transcends the mundane'. Such a sense of transcendence may be expressed through religious modes of experience or through secular modes of aesthetic encounters in the arts, music and poetry. (see Abbs, 1997).

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