Educational leadership and management - some thoughts from the field

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Abstract

Educational Leadership Management (ELM) is a relatively new field in South Africa, but it exhibits characteristics similar to those found in countries where the field is more established, notably the United Kingdom and United States of America. Chief of these characteristics is the academic-professional tension. Against the background of two decades in the 'professional' field, and 16 years in academia, the author draws on Bourdieu's notion of field forces to characterise the field in South Africa. Three forces are identified, and of these, the market and the state are identified as unduly dominant. The relatively weak force of academic pursuit has worked against the development of a vibrant community of scholarship. Drawing on his experience in national curriculum development and review processes, the author focuses on the Masters in ELM and develops a framework that attempts both to capture the complexity of the field and to militate against its debilitating eclecticism.

Introduction

The recent Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) national review of MEd programmes in Educational Leadership and Management (ELM) raised a number of key issues for higher education practitioners in the field of ELM. Indeed, the phrase 'in the field' highlights one of these, since it became apparent that some involved in the review process doubted that ELM was a 'field' at all. As a senior official put it: "But does it (ELM) really have the required gravitas…?" Another senior official asked: "When someone has a Masters degree in ELM what does it mean? What can one assume this person *knows*, or *can do*? How is this different from what an MBA graduate *knows* or *can do?*" A remark by a fellow academic (from another field) asks a similar question slightly differently: "But all you (ELM academics) seem to be doing is citing and teaching theories derived from other fields. . . like Maslow's hierarchy and Herzberg's motivation. . ." So there are two questions here: Does the field of ELM have sufficient academic, intellectual weight? And is ELM a distinct field or merely a conglomerate of theories drawn from other more established fields? And, since the context of these questions was the MEd in ELM, there is the related question of how Master's graduates in the field demonstrate their membership through what they know, do and value.

It is not surprising that questions like these are being asked. Indeed, I have been asking the same and many other related questions since I entered the field sixteen years ago. ELM is, after all, a young field, particularly in South Africa; all the more reason why fundamental questions about its *being* need to be debated and this paper is an attempt to do just that. For me these questions raise two issues which I address in two parts.

First, there is the question of 'the field of ELM'. Is it fair to suggest that the field is really about 'doing' and that it lacks a sense of being philosophically grounded and informed? Is the field dominated by pragmatic and utilitarian ends? In this part of the paper – *The nature of the field* – I explore the forces shaping the field to arrive at suggestions of what characterises ELM in South Africa. Second, there is the question of the distinctiveness of the field in terms of its theoretical framing. Is it true that ELM has no distinct body of theory, but that it draws from other fields in order to make sense of what ELM academics and practitioners do? Put differently, what is *educational* about educational leadership and management? And the related question: How does a Master's graduate demonstrate membership of this field? In this part of the paper I focus on the Masters degree, arguably the most ubiquitous manifestation of ELM, and work towards an understanding of what it may look like in South Africa.

Although the questions cited above also raise the issue of whether or nor ELM is a field at all I do *not* intend to address this question here. Viewed internationally there can be no question that ELM has long been a distinct area of interest and activity that has provided a 'space' for scholarly as well as professional activity over a sustained period of time. In both the United States of America (USA) and United Kingdom (UK) the 'history' of ELM (or 'educational administration' as it is called in the USA) has been well documented (see, for example, Murphy and Louis, 1999 and Bush, 1999). It is a history dating back well over a century, characterised by vigorous debate and scholarship. While South Africa has a less impressive history there are signs of growth. HEI courses in 'educational administration' have featured since the 1960s. Courses more seriously organised around key issues such as 'management', 'leadership, 'policy', 'education law' and 'organisation development' have proliferated over the past two decades. Research database searches throw up impressive numbers of Masters and PhD studies set in the field. Scholars have produced texts, sometimes in collaboration with 'big names' from overseas, but not always. It is a field in the making. So there is

not much to be gained from wondering whether or not the field exists, and it may be more fruitful to ask questions about the *nature* of the field.

The nature of the field

Gunter's (2004) interpretation of Bourdieu's notion of 'field' is helpful. Bourdieu provides a more nuanced reading of field which helps to lift some of the hidden dimensions out for our consideration. Bourdieu (in Gunter, 2004, p.34) sees a field as "a competitive arena where agents struggle for position and to position others". Gunter (2004, p.23) argues that this notion of field – which she calls "an arena of struggle" – is a useful "metaphor to describe and understand intellectual work". Since fields are characterized by the pursuit of specific goals, the metaphor "generates useful images of terrain, with boundaries, where activity is structured and entry is controlled" (Gunter, 2004, p.23). What such a 'terrain' may constitute and what its 'boundaries' may be is the subject of the second part of the paper. For now I want to pick up on the notions of controlled 'entry' and the forces which vie for dominance.

For many academics – and I am one of these – ELM is a 'borrowed' field superimposed onto a career launched on the back of initial education and training in a particular discipline (such as sociology in education) and, in South Africa, often in professional teacher training. This situation is not unique to South Africa. According to Gunter (2004, p.23) in the UK, "there is a strong commitment to understanding and improving practice, and the work of the practitioner. It is usual that field members in higher education tend to begin their careers in schools or local administration". In South Africa it is common for academics in the field to have been redirected in response to institutional re-orientation, in turn driven by market forces. I am a case in point. Trained as an English teacher I applied for a position in English education at a university, but was appointed on the strength of having been a school principal which dovetailed with the institution's need to develop ELM in response to the growing demand. In this way professional experience in the field (such as having been a principal) can play a significant role in allowing aspiring academics to gain entry to HEIs keen to capitalize on market trends. Since this feature of membership plays a significant role in shaping the terrain and possibly the boundaries of the field as well as impacting on field forces I need to explore it briefly here.

Internationally ELM as a field seems always[1] to have been characterised by the dual interests of the pursuit of academic ('theory') advancement, typically through research, and professional ('practice') development through training in generic management skills (Bush, 1999; Willower and Forsyth, 1999; Gunter and Ribbins, 2003). Given the essentially practical nature of management and leadership – consider, for example, that one can 'lead' and 'manage' in a way that one cannot 'psychologise' or 'sociologise' – it is hardly surprising that courses in the field usually incorporate professional (work-based) learning. Indeed, it would be surprising if such courses did *not* refer to and build on experience, and expect reflection on practice. In its attempts to develop South African post-graduate qualifications the Standards Generating Body (SGB) for ELM undertook a comparative international study of Masters qualifications. This is standard procedure when creating qualifications since international comparability is regarded as an indicator of quality. What the search revealed was that post-graduate courses routinely include a strong focus on practice or praxis. Phrases such as 'the improvement of research based management skills' and 'practical implications for the work of educational management' abound. Some programmes are specifically targeted at 'preparing professionals for entry-level administrative positions in schools, school districts, and educational agencies". Students are expected to 'master a core of professional and theoretical knowledge and demonstrate skills in applied research and the practice of leadership'. In other words, experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) is widely recognised as a strategy for post-graduate study in the field of ELM and this necessarily implies a focus on practice. As mentioned earlier, the theory's usefulness becomes apparent when one looks at the ACE in School Leadership which appropriately privileges practice-based learning over academic interests. The approach resonates with Schön's (1983) notions of reflexive practice, and has been shown to be useful in a range of contexts and levels (De Jong, 2007). It represents a resolution of the tension between theory and practice Lewin sought to resolve through his development of action research and the learning organisation (Weisbord 1987).

Against this background I move on to explore the forces at work in ELM in South Africa.

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[1]   Except for a brief period (1950–1960s) in the USA when 'professors' decided the field needed academic respectability and searched in vain for a 'grand theory' of educational administration.

Field forces in ELM

The market
There are, I argue, three forces shaping ELM in South Africa. The first I have already mentioned: the market. My experience has been that the demand for ELM has remained consistently high over the past decade. As a result ELM courses have proliferated – no doubt one of the reasons why the HEQC selected the MEd in ELM as its first 'target' in education – because HEIs need to remain economically viable. Hence increased numbers of students in the field is a common phenomenon. Importantly, Masters students' reasons for wanting a Masters in ELM are nearly always linked to improved professional practice and career advancement, often *out of* the school environment and *into* the 'system'; hardly ever the need *to learn* or *contribute* to our limited pool of knowledge and research. The unfortunate consequence of this imperative is that the post-graduate ELM degree may come to be regarded as a kind of 'service' degree, not actually *expected* to promote academic development either in its learners or the field.

My concern here is thus with the effect of market forces on the nature of the field, and on the quality of programmes developed for the field. Some of the programmes reviewed recently showed evidence of tendencies I would regard as problematic, such as being too accessible (intellectually) to many (if not 'all') comers, over-simplification of complex issues, and ease of duplication and delivery by remote control in distance modes. The measure of quality I have in mind here is less comprehensive than the daunting HEQC outcomes and criteria: in fact, there is only one criterion I use: the extent to which the programme is a 'level 8' qualification. Here I draw on SAQA's *Draft level descriptor document for levels 5–8* (Department of Education [DoE], 2000). These descriptors are not perfect but they go some way towards answering the question posed earlier (*What can a Masters graduate be expected to know, or do?*) and although they are generic and not specific to the field of ELM they are useful in indicating a *level* of intellectual as well as professional engagement.

The level descriptors are organised into three columns, and read as follows:

Level 8 (Masters)	Foundational competence	Practical competence	Reflexive competence
	Display mastery of a complex and specialized area of knowledge and skills. Ability to generate, evaluate and synthesize information and concepts at highly abstract levels. Demonstrate expertise in highly specialized and advanced technical, professional and/or research. (*sic)*	Operate in complex, advanced and highly specialized contexts. Select from complex and advanced procedures across a major discipline. Conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity. Design and apply research methods and communicate research to peers.	Complete accountability for determining, achieving and evaluating personal and group output.

What catches the eye are words like 'complex', 'synthesise', 'concepts' and 'abstract'. These indicate a level of intellectual engagement it was sometimes difficult to find in programmes that seemed to be loosely arranged around 'topics' – rather like 'syllabuses' – and where the expectation seemed to be that students should 'learn' appropriate 'content' seemingly ungrounded in any sense of philosophical underpinning. In these circumstances theory becomes something to be memorized rather than a tool which provides the conceptual language that enables us to talk about the field and critical engagement is unlikely to be fostered. These programmes seemed pre-occupied with an impoverished version of 'substance' and it was hard to see how the kind of engagement suggested in the Level 8 Descriptors could be attained when the complex practice of leadership and management, situated within the profoundly complex historical/political context that is South Africa, buckling under apparently contradictory forces of performativity and social justice is reduced to recipe-like 'theories' or the kinds of simplistic 'popular' rhetoric that abounds in 'airport' literature. One wonders how academic advancement is to be achieved through programmes that fail in this most crucial of criteria.

Equally important, the treatment of *any* kind of 'content' – usually the canonically celebrated stream of text from 'overseas' – as some kind of 'ideal'

ignores the crucial dimension of the cultural, historical, political and social *situatedness* of educational leadership and management practice and research. In South Africa that situatedness is of course unique, and it is characterised by crippling legacies of a divided past, legacies which play out throughout the education system. I would argue that the effects are nowhere more telling than in the practice and study of educational leadership and management. In summary, the lack of a language enabling critical thought and engagement, and the unproblematised embrace of apparently value-free text cannot lead to the kind of learning that may result in social justice and the kind of personal, organisational and societal transformation that ELM field members should be bringing about.

Intellectual/academic interest
Hence I argue that the second force I want to address – the need to advance knowledge, to contribute to healthy debate and *grow* the field into an intellectually vibrant one – is relatively weak in South Africa. There are few platforms for engagement. Apart from EMASA conferences and an EASA interest group, there have been few opportunities to forge a community of scholarship. In fact, South African academics in the field have not really 'talked' to each other (except through examination processes) and the fact that it has taken a government initiative (the HEQC review) to enable collegial engagement may be a significant pointer to what is 'wrong' in the field. Until recently there has been no South African journal dedicated to ELM (and the Education Management Association of South Africa's [EMASA] efforts are applauded here). The fact that two prominent journals (the *South African Journal of Education* and the *Journal of Education*) have both run special editions focusing on ELM will hopefully encourage the founding of more specialist journals.

Thus it may be fair to claim that in South Africa the field of ELM lacks the maturity to have grown into an *intellectual* space it clearly has become in the UK and elsewhere, notably the USA (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002). Perhaps it is this immaturity – a kind of 'academic' immaturity – that has allowed a third force, namely government-led initiatives in the field, to play so prominent a role.

The state
I refer here to two kinds of state agency: One, policy and quasi-policy guideline documents produced over the past decade or more with the express aim of providing coherence and direction to management development; and

two, policies which direct and shape practice, chiefly the practice of school principals and satellite officials such as EDOs.

It would be churlish of an academic in a field which is lacking in intellectual vibrancy to protest against innovation and advancement driven by other needs, in this case the instrumental needs of a state department which wants more qualified 'leaders' and 'managers' in the schooling system. I do not protest so much as simply point to a danger, the danger that if the strongest force in this field is the need of the state to develop professional capacity (as opposed to the need of academia to develop a robust and critical discourse) post-graduate qualifications may indeed come to be seen as 'service' degrees, the instrumental means to utilitarian ends. I would not wish to portray the two forces – academic interest and governmental needs – as being in conflict. The evolution of ELM as a field in South Africa has been characterised by a sense of cooperation and consultation between these two forces. But there is a tension because ultimately the state's needs are different from those of academics. In a field populated by academics rooted in practice these more instrumental needs could seem sensible and even seductive. But in a country still emerging from a paradigm of compliance and struggling to forge a transformative future these forces are unlikely to foster the kind of critical engagement that leads to growth.

That aside, the DoE 'arm' responsible for planning and bringing about management development has a particular view of educational leadership and management. It is a view which stresses participative, 'democratic' management, collegiality, collaboration, schools as open systems and learning organisations, and, importantly, site-based management. In short a view Willower and Forsyth (1999, p.2) have described as one of only "three unifying elements" in a vast and complex terrain (the other two being systematic research and professional/academic networking). The influential and oft-cited *Task Team Report on Education Management Development* (DoE, 1996) is driven by this philosophy, the theory that consultation and participation leads to increased ownership and thence to increased effort and productivity. Significantly, the more recent *Draft Policy Framework. Education Management and leadership development* (DoE, undated) picks up the *Report's* arguments and endorses its philosophy. It also, of course, maps out a strategy to bring about appropriate 'development' of school leaders and managers, a nettle this arm of the state has been keen to grasp. So, for example, the new Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) in School Leadership has come into being as a manifestation of this body's intent. This

programme is similarly infused with the philosophy outlined above and also, significantly, driven by experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), as discussed earlier.

But the DoE 'arm' responsible for assuring 'quality' through prescriptive policies like *IQMS* and *Whole-School Evaluation* (DoE, 2001) clearly has a different view of the business of school management. Here the emphasis has shifted to performance management and it is difficult to see how the 'line function' of ensuring that performance rubrics are properly completed can sit comfortably with participative and collegial management approaches. There is an obvious mismatch of interests here, to be expected perhaps considering their very different agendas, but nevertheless raising important questions about what counts as appropriate leadership and management, where the balance of 'power' lies and what counts as 'knowledge' in and of the field. This tension has been extensively noted and explored in other countries. Gunter (2004, p.29), for example, laments how in the UK educational leadership has been replaced with "performance leadership" where "knowing is increasingly about complying with central requirements to implement reform". Glatter (1999, p.254) traces the "growing power and influence of the central state" in a climate of "policy hysteria" in the UK, and cites Fullan pointing to similar tensions in the USA. Similarly Bush (1999, p.243) reports on the same concerns in Australia, citing Smyth's view that "the supposed decentralisation of power is illusory and the reality is an intensification of central control". We should not draw comfort from the fact that this may be a universal tension: rather we should be wondering why South Africa has not learned anything from the many international consultations we have heard so much about. The answer may be that when bureaucrats talk to bureaucrats they are likely to be pleased with what they are told.

The upshot of this clash of interests is that the good intentions of management development initiatives – in all likelihood enjoying the support of academia – are likely to be frustrated by an emphasis on performativity and compliance, where the simple act of filling in forms correctly can appear to be evidence of quality. At the same time, though, it has to be said that there is a sense of unease surrounding the expectation that HEIs will 'deliver' the ACE qualification referred to above, no doubt because it comes as a complete package but also because academics are loathe to think of themselves as 'trainers'. It is the classic professional/academic tension.

To conclude this section: in the arena of struggle that is ELM in South Africa I see three forces. Market forces and government needs for management development and regulating practice appear to be the dominant forces. The need to develop a community of scholarship is comparatively weak.

The terrain and boundaries

Characterising the field of ELM is a risky business since there are probably at least as many characterizations as there are field members. Hence I need to preface this next section with several disclaimers. First, I need to explain what I am *not* doing. I am *not* trying to develop a course or curriculum for a Masters in ELM, or any other qualification. I am also *not* suggesting that what is presented here is *the* answer. What I *am* trying to do is present a framework, a heuristic device to enable and perhaps encourage debate that I believe to be crucial to the field. In the process I incorporate a figure I have found useful in my own attempts at coming to grips with a field that is so complex and 'all-inclusive' in its interests, eclectic in its conceptual underpinnings, and wide-ranging in its contexts of application. The framework has helped to guide my work with post-graduate students, and there is evidence that it has helped my students 'find their feet' in often marshy territory. The framework appears as an Appendix.

ELM is concerned with leadership and management, but also with governance (which in South Africa has come to refer the role of the School Governing Bodies), and, some would argue, administration. In some countries these terms are difficult to distinguish. According to Gunter (2004) 'leadership' has gained ground in the UK, while in the USA 'administration' has long held sway. In South Africa 'administration' usually refers to support systems and structures that enable management and leadership to function, while the distinction between 'management' (as a process focused on maintenance and control) and leadership' (as a change-oriented, relational phenomenon) remains current. In the framework I use here (see Appendix) I retain these distinctions.

What follows is a brief explication of what is intended in the attached framework (see Appendix).

Environment

The framework presents the field as three areas of interest. The outer circle – *Environment* – characterises the context in which the field operates as a field of scholarship and practice. Here the focus is on society, community, culture, history, politics, national and provincial policy. There is an interest in trends in the history of Southern African education, and the implication of that history for education leadership, management and governance. Governance is viewed as a matter of implementing policy as well as managing the system and in South Africa the move towards *democratic* governance – the drive towards involving parents, learners and other representatives of the school environment in school governance – is an important one.

As argued earlier (page 7) the field cannot ignore its situatedness in a particular context and history. It would be impossible for workers in the field, whether they are professional knowledge workers or professional practitioners, to work to a transformative agenda in the absence of clear and present consciousness of the social structures that gave (and give) rise to current challenges. Moreover, if schools are to be regarded as 'open systems' it is in their very openness that social forces shape the cultures and structures of their organisational being. There is constant interplay between the environment and the school. Some of the 'labels' used here refer to specific forces – such as policy – while some refer to less tangible but equally significant influences, such as values and culture. And so the field, too, needs to be 'open' in this way. I agree with Ribbins and Gunter (2002, p.372) that

> the purpose of educational leadership is not just about particular tasks and behaviours, but is a social and socialising relationship. The scope of educational leadership is therefore wider than those who are formally designated leaders and so includes children and teachers, and reaches beyond the organisation to include parents and the wider community.

The outer circle thus serves as a reminder of the forces that lie beyond organisations' internal workings but are significant in shaping their practice; and also a reminder of how those forces shape and are shaped by research and scholarship.

Organisation

At the next level the focus is the organisation. The interest here is in understanding how organisations function, both in terms of factors identified in the environment as well as those which shape their internal functioning. An important tool here is theory. Few would quibble with the need for management and organisation theory in a post-graduate course in ELM. Theory represents social scientists' attempts to make sense of or account for behaviour and structural phenomena. In providing a theoretical language scientists make it possible to talk *about* the phenomena. While this may seem obvious and uncontentious, *how much* theory, or even *which theory*[2] are far more tricky questions. Some prefer getting to grips with 'current' issues; others prefer a historical approach, arguing that we need to know where current notions of these phenomena come from. Either way, it is possible and entirely necessary for a post-graduate course in ELM to point to trends in thinking and research in especially management, leadership and organisation theory.

Equally important, to my mind, is the need to recognise and engage with theory in terms of *what it is.* By this I mean taking cognisance of texts' production values: *Who produced the text? Based on what kind of research? For what purpose? In what country? What is valued in the text?* These questions help to focus attention on the text's cultural and political values, an important step because no text is value-free and uncritical alliance with what may simply be trendy militates against developing the competence suggested in Level 8 Descriptors.

Organisation Development (OD) is included in this area to point to the need for field members to develop organisational literacy. The ability to 'read' an organisation – in light of theory as well as more remote forces – goes some way towards countering the tendency of regarding theory as somehow universally applicable. ODs problem-solving approach looks at practice through the lens of theory, thus synthesising these 'uneasy bedfellows' in a way that the Level Descriptors referred to earlier (page 6) fail to do. Or, to be fair, it may be what was intended in the first entry under 'Practical competence': 'Operate in complex, highly advanced and highly specialised contexts.'

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2   *Which theory* is definitely not a question I want to answer here!

Person

The fact that leadership occupies the centre of the framework is perhaps the most telling symbolic indication of where I stand in the field, and will no doubt be contested. Recent trends in leadership theory de-emphasise the power of the person, though usually not to the benefit of the 'task'. Leadership as presented as relational (using words like 'distributed', 'shared', 'participative', and 'servant'). Leadership is increasingly viewed as a function of the group rather than the individual. However, if we are to retain our distinction between 'management' and 'leadership' – and there are good reasons for doing this – I believe the inner circle has a place, and not merely a symbolic one. I should add that I do not suggest here that there is anything positional about leadership; it can happen anywhere inside or outside the organisation. But I resist attempts to erode the notion that it is through acts of creativity and initiative that newness comes into being. Unfortunately this is precisely what I think is happening in the field. I come back to this point later.

At this level leadership theory is a key ingredient, for the same reasons presented above for management and organisation theory. The challenge here is perhaps greater though, for it is a fact that leadership is a far bigger 'industry' than management as a quick glance at any display of popular texts in book stores will show[3]. My experience is that quantity in this case is no indicator of quality, and the degree of unevenness in terms of quality of leadership texts can be bewildering. The truth is that leadership occupies at least two domains: it is a field of serious study where claims are based on sound research and are therefore reliable and of value; but it is also a field of popular, inspirational 'pop-lit'. Thus selecting suitable texts can be difficult. Here too – as with management – there are different approaches. Some believe that students need to have a sense of the broad trends in leadership thinking – perhaps over the past century – while other prefer to focus only on current trends in the field.

Some caveats and pointers

This framework suffers from the same problems that dog any attempt at classifying, patterning, ordering, or in any way distinguishing among facets of

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[3]   *The Seven Habits of . . . The Eighth Habit . . . Leadership Secrets of (Atilla, Hitler . . .)* and so on.

a multi-faceted phenomenon, namely the suggestion that these elements somehow exist independently of each other. This is not the case. Policy, for example, exerting pressure from the outer ring, permeates both the organisation and the individual levels. Leadership – though at the centre – exerts influence outwards through the levels of organisation and environment. The layers are permeable, and relationships among forces both dynamic and reciprocal.

Despite these and other caveats I have found it useful to contemplate the complexity of the field by working 'through' separate layers towards a holistic view. While the framework makes no explicit reference to research (excepting the practice-based OD component) it is understood that the MEd is a research degree, and, regardless of the size and shape of the research component, it is understood that this is where the degree is headed: the production of a research product. One important benefit has been the framework's ability to locate research interests. Each layer is a rich source of research questions, and indeed the 'layering' helps to bring these into clear focus, enabling researchers to grasp the context of their research while at the same time recognising the multiple forces at play.

Conclusion

Finally, I can suggest an answer to one of the key questions posed earlier: 'When someone has a Masters degree in ELM what does it mean? What can one assume this person knows, or can do? How is this different from what an MBA graduate knows or can do?'

An ELM Masters graduate is able to 'read' an organisation in the context of both external and internal forces which have shaped and continue to shape its being. The external forces are complex, since they are community and societal forces and the school is 'owned' by its communities. Internal forces are complex because people teach for different reasons, and the ultimate aim of the education project is notoriously difficult to articulate, let alone define. This ability to 'read' an organisation and its context grows from the combined influence of relevant practice and scholarship. Hence the graduate can identify problems and challenges that require research, either basic or applied. The graduate has the conceptual language to make sense of as well as to think and talk *about* what s/he observes. The graduate is aware of how addressing localized, site-based challenges through research feeds into the field as a

whole, and adds to what we know. The graduate is driven by values that commit her/him to practice – and the nurturing of practice in others – that is socially and morally just as well as transformative.

But what is it that needs transforming? As discussed earlier, it is not difficult in South Africa still to see evidence of past inequality. Internationally, too, increased awareness of social/economic imbalance has recently emerged as a strong theme for leadership in the new millennium.[4] The difficulty for me is that the lofty goal of transforming society, or even a community, can seem hard to attain. Cloaked in the discourse of society and even 'the country' it is difficult to see how a school principal's leadership can be transformative. In terms of the framework, the further one moves towards the outside circle the easier it becomes to relegate leadership to system maintenance and monitoring, as in 'performance' leadership. From this vantage point it is easy to lose touch with what it is that makes leadership important: the personal, human, 'being with' of leaders and those they lead. In this sense leading is not unlike teaching. In both phenomena there are groups of people. In both groups at least one member has the expressed goal of facilitating development in other group members. In both cases there is a range of technological and material support structures, as well as taken for granted social structures, such as the tacit 'willingness' to be led, or taught. And in both cases these structures are of little use if the leader/teacher does not acknowledge that everyone needs help, and that the most valuable help s/he is able to provide is to remind group members of what it is to be human; what it means to be fully present at this time in this place. To rephrase a question posed earlier – 'How is a Masters graduate in education different from, say an MBA student?' – an answer can emerge from posing the question a little differently: What is **educational** about educational leadership? Gunter (2004) has suggested that one of effects of the emphasis on performance and quality assurance is that educational leadership may simply mean leadership *in educational organisations*, rather than *educational* leadership. In her view, "Educational leadership focuses on the education system, is about education, is integral to learning processes and outcomes, and is of itself educative" (Gunter, 2004, p.32). ELM is clearly more than the application of theory and 'best practice' recipes drawn from a general management context. The key to how it is 'different' and 'more' is the central business of enabling the development of intellectual, moral and aesthetic discernment, and a sense of social justice.

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[4]   An entire edition of *Educational Administration Quarterly,* 2004, 40(1) was recently devoted to leadership for social justice.

This can only happen when people work with people, and this is the stuff of leadership.

ELM in South Africa is indeed a space; its size and shape will depend on who and what tries to occupy the space, with what kinds of interventions and to what ends. I have argued that the struggle for dominance of this space seems unequal at this point. Paying attention to arguably the most influential manifestation of this space – the Masters degree in ELM – can help to counter-balance the powerful forces of the market and the state. Policy tyranny can paralyse agency. Paying attention to the people-centredness and teacher-centredness of leadership can help leaders to see the state as a discourse, one of many, and to learn to mediate rather than merely comply.

Appendix: Framework for ELM approaches
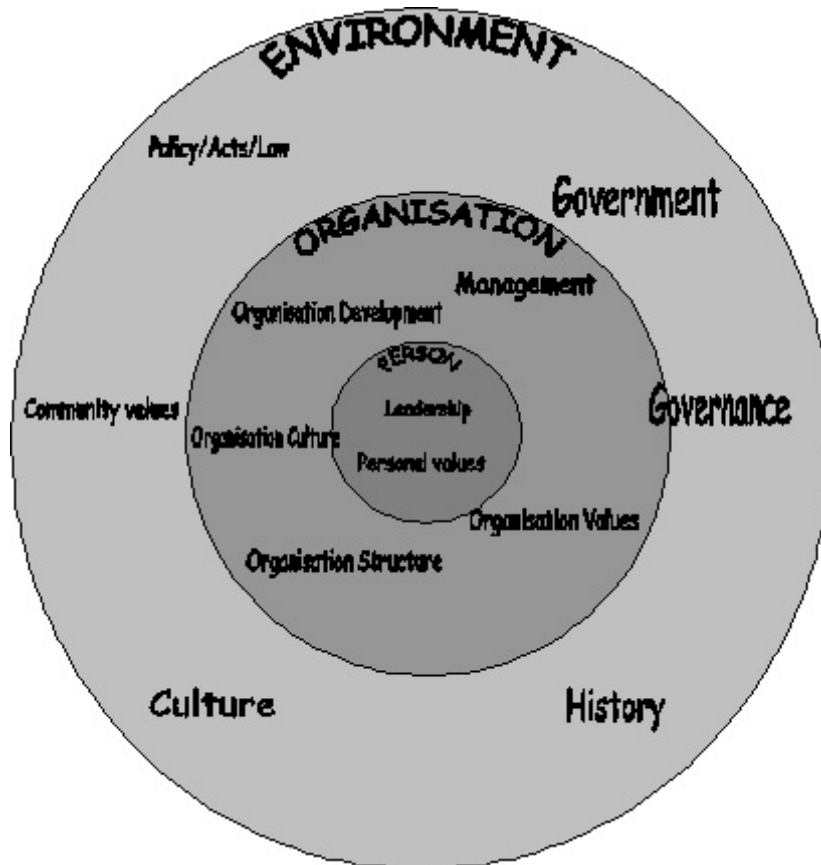
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