NEW METHODOLOGIES, CULTURAL ANALYSIS AND THE POLITICS OF RESEARCH: RE-VISITING THE LESSONS OF CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Lawrence Angus

There seems to have been a modest revival of cultural analysis in policy sociology and critical educational management work recently. In this chapter, I wish to critique the ways in which culture, and school culture in particular, is typically theorized and used as an explanatory conceptual tool in recent ethnographic analyses of the effects in education of globalization, managerialism and the interventionist policies of governments. The latter include policies of accountability (Hartley, 1999), market organization (Woods, 2000; Adnett & Davies, 1999), strengthening of the principalship (Hartley, 1999; Ball, 1994; Gewirtz & Ball, 2000), teacher professional development (Bottery & Wright, 2000), school self-management (Bottery, 2000; Grace, 1995, 2000), school inspection (Thrupp, 1998; Willmott, 1999), school effectiveness (Morley & Rassool, 2000; Nash, 2001) and other policies. Concepts of culture and discourse, often linked with notions of policy implementation, leadership, school culture, professional culture, new

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managerialism and globalization, seem to be directly or indirectly employed in such accounts of educational change.

With few exceptions, such writers about education policy and management ascribe to 'strong' globalization theories (which are used to explain apparent national commonality in policies) and 'strong' discourse theories (which are used to explain features of new managerialism such as subtle surveillance and self-imposed ideological control). Within this latter form of control, versions of school culture are represented as being especially powerful in broadly securing the consent of education professionals to the wider, globalized educational agenda. Overall, the process is generally said to emphasize the dominance of the global economy over national and international politics. There is a tendency to present globalization as economic determinism, homogeneous in its effects. In terms of education policy and management, there is often a sense of direct effects of globalization in particular contexts. In this chapter I argue that such approaches to globalization tend to be essentialist and reductionist as they imply a totalizing structure that imposes its will without much if any consideration of agency, cultural politics or resistance. As Wilding, (1997, p. 411) summarizes this point:

The term [globalization] is most commonly used to *describe* certain trends in economic, political, social and cultural development. The term is also used, however, to *explain* such trends – they are as they are, the argument runs, because of this force we call globalization.

Such conceptions of globalization pay little attention to ways in which global agendas might be asserted or resisted and played out in particular regions or sites, rather than simply being received and implemented. Globalization is typically presented as an external phenomenon that results, at the school level, in such neo-liberal features as managerialism, competition and market arrangements. The complex shifts between, say, cultures of 'welfarism' and of 'new managerialism' (Gewirtz & Ball, 2000) that may come about at the school level may be closely described and explored ethnographically in terms of 'discursive shifts' (Gewirtz & Ball, 2000) but seem to be rarely explained.

There is often a sense of linear effects of new managerialism on principal and teacher practice and subjectivity in such work. Concepts such as 'policy borrowing' (Dale, 1999), 'migrating' policy metaphors (Ball, 1997) and 'travelling policies' (Jones, 2001) have often been used to describe and explain the emergence of apparently common education policies across a range of countries. But, because so many writers reduce explanations to

strong, totalizing versions of globalization theory, these things are described more or less as if they simply 'are'; as if they are current features of the social and educational landscape that exist in the globalization era and which need to be mapped and described rather than explained in context. Their meanings are rarely analysed in sites of educational practice. Globalization and its accompanying change are typically presented as irresistible forces (Inglis, 2000). Even some of the best ethnographic accounts of education policy and management in England seem to compare the situation now (of globalization) with a past (pre-globalization) when education policy and professional educational values and entrenched thinking were localized, 'welfarist' (Gewirtz & Ball, 2000) and characterized by a sense of educational 'partnership' (Lawn, 2001). Such values and norms are often regarded as part of an historical framing of educational politics over which government benignly presided in the UK from about 1950 until the period of Thatcher intervention and assertion of control in the 1980s. Lawn (2001), for instance, is among those who refer to the 'powerful discourse of partnership' that 'gave meaning to teaching' during the post-war period (p. 175). He elaborates: 'Teachers were professionals, fostered by the state, partners in the deliberation of policy, able to influence the direction and control of the system' (p. 175). But Lawn's view seems too romantic and golden ageist. Surely, despite the pluralist rhetoric of partnership, things were never as neat and rosy as Lawn suggests, or else what was the point of all the critical sociological ethnographic work in education during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Willis, 1977; Whitty, 1977, 1985)? Any sense of partnership that might have existed by, say, around the late 1970s, was not just the result of the gift of government but the outcome of contested educational politics that were asserted and fought over by teachers and their unions (Bessant & Spaul, 1976).

As an interested reader of educational ethnographies, and particularly of critical policy sociology work, whose authors typically employ ethnographic research and who have taken seriously both issues of globalization and critical notions of culture and politics, there seems to me to often be a less than adequate account of the relationships among micro- and macro-politics of the educational practices the authors describe. In terms of education policy and implementation, the substantive policy concerns are quite wide and include the effects of new public management, the changing nation-state, markets, economic globalization, government compliance with internationally assertive capital and regimes of surveillance and their micro-effects. But often, generalized and distal accounts of such changes in education rely on the broad acceptance of generalized discourses of

globalization and cultural change, particularly changed professional cultures, to explain the self-disciplining effects of such 'new neo-liberal technologies of institutional control' (Beck, 1999) such as new managerialism. For example, in critiquing 'school effectiveness', Morley and Rassool (2000, p. 169) state as given that 'neo-liberal policy meanings have redefined not only the educational process but also teachers' consciousness as workers'. Their approach to the analysis of new managerialism assumes the successful realization of social and cultural outcomes that are envisaged in putative 'regimes of truth' that are seemingly imposed on schools, and within which participants are captured without demur. Or, as Bacchi (2000, p. 52) puts it: 'those who are deemed to "hold" power are portrayed as the ones making the discourse, whereas those who are seen as lacking power are described as constituted in the discourse'. Indeed, Bacchi (2000, p. 55) argues that 'policy-as-discourse analysts', in particular, 'need to spend more time theorizing the "space for challenge"'. Bacchi finds 'an overemphasis on the constraints imposed by discourse/s and a tendency to concentrate on some groups, those described as "having" power, as the makers and users of discourse'. I agree with Bacchi on this point, but would also argue that as well as theorizing 'space for challenge', critical ethnographic work and analysis is required also of the social action that enables and legitimates discourses, particularly dominant discourses. Moreover, although I agree with Bacchi's conclusion, I would apply it not just to discourse but also to a range of cultural concepts as discussed in this chapter.

I argue that analysis of culture conceptualizations is important in critical ethnographic work not only because they shape our analysis of how educational policies and organization work, but also because they constrain and/or enable us as organization participants in our ongoing enactment of processes of institutional life. I want to emphasize that such conceptions are not simply individualistic or voluntarist constructs. They are influenced in various ways by the social and cultural contexts within which education, and discourses of educational policy and management, and educational organization in general, are located. For these reasons I conduct below a brief and partial (given that the literature on culture is simply enormous) critique of the use of culture concepts in educational analysis, particularly of educational policy and management, and then suggest ways in which the conceptual tool of 'culture' might be better employed in education ethnography directed towards understanding the current politics of education. What follows is based on a fairly careful reading of but a fraction of the relevant literature in only several aspects of culture theory. Nonetheless, I think it is important to try to understand, and to argue about, the usage of

culture as a core concept in recent educational analysis because deconstructing such usage helps us deconstruct current educational discourses, including discourses of globalization, and to conceive of and assert alternative discourses.

CULTURE CONCEPTS IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT LITERATURE

Within current educational management literature, it could be argued that the cultural perspective that is generally articulated is one in which the social context of education policy, school culture and educational management is almost entirely overlooked (Angus, 1996). The emphasis is typically on individual school 'leaders' and an internally constructed organizational culture in which principals are expected to become manipulators of culture and belief. School principals, in this literature, and in current government policy in many countries, are expected to construct or impose corporate control within their institutions in the increasingly decentralized organizational form that is considered necessary for organizational efficiency and, most importantly, market success and legitimacy in the increasingly complex post-industrial society (Parker, 1992). My general argument is that this perspective misconceives culture as an internal aspect of organizations that may be manipulated by management in order to enhance organizational commitment and efficiency (Caldwell & Spinks, 1993, 1998; Deal & Peterson, 1999).

In this manager-oriented perspective, the organization and its leadership are conceptualized as generators of particular cultural attributes that are deemed necessary for corporate solidarity and the creation of a sense of mission or corporate vision. Such a perspective on school culture allows virtually no concern for culture as a shifting and contested notion that is continually being constructed and reconstructed, and which must be subjectively understood. Instead, the emphasis is upon managerial manipulation of, and/or intervention in, school culture to shape it in ways that are presumed to be conducive to the realization of organizational goals. In this conception, in which management is privileged, not only is there a lack of appreciation of the importance and complexity of social context and cultural dynamics, but also there is a taken-for-granted assumption that leader-determined organizational cultures will unproblematically reflect norms and goals that are internalized by organization members to form stable, integrated organizational structures.

This state of affairs in educational management literature seems to have followed directly from a limited kind of 'cultural turn' that occurred in the more general business management literature from the early 1980s. An interest in this literature in human relations and productive 'organizational climates' had evolved by the 1980s into a concern with symbolic management, values and 'strong' cultures that were promoted in popular management texts. Several best sellers at that time emphasized the importance of organizational culture. For instance, Ouchi's (1981) *Theory Z* presented a US version of Japanese enterprise culture and teamwork. Peters and Waterman (1982), in their best-selling *In search of excellence*, showed how the most profitable companies used symbolic management and cultures of excellence. And Deal and Kennedy (1982), in *Corporate cultures*, advised managers (whom they referred to as the 'high priests' of culture) that securing a strong culture characterized by conformity to appropriate organizational values would pay huge dividends: 'we estimate that a company can gain as much as one or two hours of productive work per employee per day' (p. 15).

These and many texts that followed in their wake, and the massive take-up of their ideas in the business journals internationally have had profound and long-lasting effects in the worlds of management. The messages were taken up enthusiastically beyond the business world; for example, in many of the best-selling education management texts of the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Smith & Peterson, 1988; Caldwell & Spinks, 1988, 1993; Deal & Peterson, 1990, 1999). The underlying principle that management can shape organizational culture and, therefore, worker commitment, became central to the so-called Quality Movement in education (Murgatroyd & Morgan, 1992). Very quickly, the combination of a narrowly functionalist cultural perspective and an obsession with management vision and leadership had the effect that organizational culture, in both academic and practitioner texts, became regarded virtually as a controllable variable. For instance, a book by Killman, Saxton, and Serpa (1985), *Gaining control of the corporate culture*, was a highly influential, no-nonsense primer about the manageability of culture and its importance in shaping organizations according to the will of managers in order to assure continuing profitability. In what the editors represented as the 'state of the art' in literature on corporate culture, this book urged managers to 'take charge' and self-consciously formulate and control organizational cultures. Various contributors emphasized that strong cultures could be *created* by management (Schein, 1985); that such cultures emanated from the beliefs, values and philosophies of senior management and served to unite lower level workers (Lorsch, 1985; Martin,

1985); and that workers, through rewards and sanctions, could be brought to internalize management wishes and directions (Allen, 1985).

All of the management authors mentioned above, including the ones writing in education management, treat culture as a dependent variable of leadership. This position can be summarized as conceptualizing organizational culture as 'the major beliefs and values as expressed by top management that provide organizational members with a frame of reference for action' (Goll & Zeitz, 1991, p. 191). Leaders, from this perspective, create their own organizational environments (Kirby, Paradise, & King, 1992, p. 303) and the leader's values *virtually are* the organization; or, as Bottery (1988, p. 342) parodies the key, simplistic message:

whoever is in charge of the organization has the right to dictate its aims; these aims can be relatively easily decided upon and implemented; as the organization's aims are more important than those of individuals within the organization, it is perfectly acceptable to treat people as means to the organization's ends.

Of course, the tone of voice used in most of the literature I have referred to so far is not generally as blunt and direct as I (or Bottery) have conveyed above. The management texts sustain an overwhelmingly positive, even cheery, message of cooperation as workers and managers are urged to unite in the quest for corporate efficiency and productivity. Indeed, throughout the 1980s and 1990s the discourse of management became replete with a language of 'sharing' and 'contrived collegiality' (Hargreaves, 1992) that implied that the nasty and negative aspects of capitalism of the past had been done away with in favour of mutual goals and values consensus between management and labour. We all win-win. This positive consensual message has been further strengthened during the 1990s and early 2000s through the incorporation of benign notions of autonomy, empowerment, teamwork and trust (Thompson & Ackroyd, 1995; Sewell, 1998). But the expectation that 'strong cultures' may result in productivity gains of up to 2 hours work 'per employee per day' (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 15), and the increasing emphasis on achieving quality by means of surveillance (including the monitoring of targets and benchmarks), indicates that the general approach has remained totally consistent with the long historical tradition of managerial reforms that have attempted to secure the consent of subordinates and build it into otherwise unchanged forms of management control.

One might go further and suggest that forms of management control have become more subtle and insidious through promotion of a discourse of organizational culture that amounts to a pro-management, pro-capital,

normative ideology. I say 'ideology' because the fluent stream of management discourse promulgates, and to some extent normalizes, assumptions about the social practices and objects that it names and purports to explain. The effect of the discourse, or at least its logical extension, is the normalization of what Barker (1993) calls 'concertive control'. In this form of control, to the extent that management *has* been able to influence corporate culture and establish consensual values, there may well be, as Barker puts it:

a key shift in the locus of control from management to the workers themselves, who collaborate to develop the means of their own control... This negotiated consensus creates and recreates a value-based discourse that workers use to infer "proper" behavioural premises: ideas, norms, or rules that enable them to act in ways functional for the organization. (Barker, 1993, pp. 411-412).

These concepts that emerged in United States management literature have been very influential in the world of education policy and management. Of particular note is the extension of concepts of 'new' leadership and school culture into the educational heartland of teaching and learning via the school effectiveness literature (e.g. Purkey & Smith, 1985; Mortimore, 1998; Thrupp, 2001) and the 're-enchantment of management' (Hartley, 1999). Indeed, the successful conjoining of management culture-speak and the school effectiveness movement was personified in the US partnership of one of the best-known advocates of 'corporate culture', Terrence Deal, and one of the best-known advocates of 'school effectiveness', Kent Peterson, in writing texts for school principals (Deal & Peterson, 1990, 1999). Equally influential on the social organization of education in Australia, the UK and New Zealand has been the dissemination of similar ideas in the works of Caldwell and Spinks (1988, 1993, 1998). Caldwell and Spinks were particularly influential in emphasising the so-called 'higher-order attributes of leadership; namely the capacity of education leaders to articulate and win commitment [of staff] to a vision for the school and ensure that vision is institutionalised in the structures, processes and procedures which shape everyday activities' (1988, p. 21). The elitist implication of this view, and of the successful assertion of such a limited concept of culture in notions of education management is that those in positions of leadership are more visionary than anyone else. And, as I have argued elsewhere (Angus, 1993, 1994), this view has precisely matched the education discourse and policy agendas of Thatcherite governments and their successors in various English-speaking countries and beyond.

I have analysed elsewhere (Angus, 1993) in some detail the serious limitations of the general approach to leadership and management in the

books of Caldwell and Spinks. The authors see themselves as being on the side of the leader and speak to the reified 'leader' rather than to the workforce or the profession more broadly. It is asserted in this literature that leaders of vision are able to bring about a negotiated order. Other organizational participants, such as teachers, parents and students, if mentioned at all, are generally viewed as essentially passive recipients of the leader's vision. By asserting and defending particular values, leaders are said to so strongly articulate and endorse their own vision that it becomes also the vision of followers and so bonds leader and followers together in a shared covenant, which then informs the non-negotiable core beliefs and values of the organization. This core, according to the argument, amounts to an organizational culture that effective leaders can manufacture and manipulate. The implications of such work for the ideological legitimization of managerial control are obvious.

CULTURE CONCEPTS IN EDUCATIONAL POLICY SOCIOLOGY

Sociological cultural analysts, working in various traditions, would generally agree that organizational 'leaders', such as principals, rightly seek to influence organizational arrangements, and that they are generally in a better position than most other organizational participants to do so. And because of power resources such as entrenched role expectations and assumptions, principals *are* to *some* extent 'managers of organizational meaning, the custodians of organizational legitimacy, and the definers of organizational and social reality' (Anderson, 1990, p. 43), just as the corporate culture theorists advocate. However, the managerial view, within what Hartley (1999) calls the 're-enchantment' of school management, and Morley and Rassool (2000) call the 'heroic formulation of leadership', goes much further and implies that 'leaders' have virtually unlimited management power. Yet, from an ethnographic perspective, it would seem basic that, although those with power resources are able to influence organizations in various ways, particularly because of their access to information, leaders have no monopoly on the development of organizational meaning. Critical and even interpretive ethnographic perspectives would assume that such accomplishments are social, political and cultural constructions in which all organizational members are active and complicit participants.

Such a view of cultural construction also follows directly from the crucial lessons of the 'cultural turn' in sociology (Chaney, 1994) that has become

pronounced within the 'postmodern turn' with which it largely coincided (Jordan & Weedon, 1995). Its most important effect has been the realization in mainstream sociology that all social life, including cultural construction and contestation, is political. It is through everyday life that identities, social relations and relations of power are enacted, legitimated and/or contested. For instance, in an insightful analysis of the 'cultural turn' in sociology that draws on the work of Giddens, Foucault and Laclau, Nash (2001, p. 85) concludes:

Cultural politics...is understood as potential in every social context in which power is at work, involving the contestation of normalised identities and social relations in which one individual or group is subordinate to another wherever they occur in the social field.

In short, culture is both constitutive and the site of politics.

If we get down to theoretical basics, I think it can be said that once the cultural turn convinced mainstream sociology to reject the structural-functional view of the world, educational ethnography generally accepted the alternative view; namely that if people have constructed the social world the way it is, and if we accept that such 'making' has something to do with the generation and effects of discourses and complicated interactions among agency and structures, then all aspects of our social life have to be considered as political and as capable of being remade. We are continually making or re-making or contesting both micro- and macro-relations of power. This point was strongly made a long time ago by Willis (1977) in *Learning to labour*, and the lesson was reinforced in his powerful article (Willis, 1981) that pointed out that 'cultural production is different from cultural reproduction is different from social reproduction is different from production'. The radical work of Willis and others in this era made it clear that schools as social institutions collaborated in the 'microtranslation of macrosociological patterns' (Collins, 1981, p. 13) by obscuring power relations and, although always imperfectly, stratifying, authorizing and embedding 'what counts' as knowledge and culture in mainstream consciousness. Such scholars threw light on the subtleties of agency and structures by arguing that we all are social actors who produce and reproduce social structures through our everyday practices in our work, families and lives. The key point is that to the extent they are socially asserted and generally accepted, structures have a pedagogical effect (Angus, 2004) and teach us how to behave 'appropriately' in certain circumstances and in social institutions (like the family, schools, society). So these structures heavily influence what we think and what we do, although our agency also gives us the capacity either to comply or to think and do things differently.

These points about everyday politics, and the relations between micro- and macro-politics, are extremely important for critical social researchers and are the essence of various forms of critical ethnography. As I have emphasized, within the cultural turn there is a rejection of the idea of society being self-regulating or systematically structured or amenable to linear effects of globalization or capitalism or managerialism. Indeed, ethnographic researchers like Ball (1994) and Blackmore (1999) have used versions of post-structural theorizing to demonstrate empirically that teacher, student and manager subjectivities are the outcomes of complicated and unstable discursive practices that generate, but only through contradictory and contested work practices, sets of narratives that influence everyday action. We shape discourses while the discourses shape us. We are all complicit, actively not passively, in the construction of discourses and of our own subjectivity. Indeed, sociologists from Berger and Luckmann to Foucault have argued that subjects cannot avoid being active 'participants in their own self-discipline whether that leads to consent, compliance or resistance' (Knights & McCabe, 2000, p. 426). For management (particularly in the form of new managerialism or new public management) the point has always been to align managerial and staff interpretations of organizational reality. In other words, it is extremely difficult for 'leaders' and school managers to accomplishing such alignment by any real or imagined processes of managing meaning or asserting distinctive organizational cultures.

The fact that this last point seems to be completely unrecognized by advocates of new leadership, school effectiveness and new public management is perhaps not surprising. More surprising, as Knights and McCabe (2000, p. 434) put it, is that some socially critical researchers also appear 'seduced by a belief that [management] control really works and that the new managerialism, with its colonization of subjectivity, is totalizing or exhaustive in its impact on labour'. On the contrary, the making of meaning requires agency, energy and struggle, and inevitably any meaning is made against other meanings, including possibly dominant or hegemonic meanings. So, although contemporary discourses of globalization, managerialism and leadership have been asserted with great vigour within various literatures, government policy and practitioner expectations, such discourses are unlikely ever to amount to a totalized 'regime of truth' in the dynamic world of complex humans who, to varying extents, share and contest overlapping multi-cultures, values and aspirations, and complex politics of everyday life. This is a critical point given that schools and educational policy have largely promoted the interests of capital and of dominant social groups, possibly more so than ever in the currently heavily globalized environment. In other

words, particular meanings can become widely accepted or may be vigorously negotiated and contested within school cultures. To the extent that such meanings are successfully asserted, they can give legitimacy to particular cultural, social and educational values. But the contingency and indeterminacy of cultural dynamics ensures that organizational culture, while powerful at any moment, is always to some extent provisional. The 'meaning' of organizational culture is therefore extraordinarily complex and cannot be taken for granted.

THE MEANING OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The interests that are served by current discourses of unitary and consensual organizational culture, and the social practices such discourses attempt to generate, are, most obviously, those that are aligned with management. But by privileging the current enchantment with business management in educational policy (Angus, 2004; Hartley, 1999; Angus & Seddon, 2000), 'business operations, management, and leadership are often used by administrators and scholars in education as models of success' (Kempner, 1992, p. 110). Corson (2000, p. 116) goes further and argues that:

Much of the problem these days is that education almost everywhere is set firmly within capitalist social relations whose discourses limit the freedom and action that schools need to reform themselves. Seen on so grand a scale, this tight coupling of capitalism with all aspects of social life is a relatively recent development. The pure, free-market economic arguments, so essential to capitalism, were limited in their effects so long as capitalism was kept a little separate from government.

Corson's point is that capitalism is now not distanced from government at all, and not from schooling either (Hatcher, 1998), which leads some critics to see school cultures and locally implemented education policy as evidence simply of an imposed global agenda on schooling. It is this view that I most want to challenge.

FROM BUREAUCRATIC TO IDEOLOGICAL CONTROL OF SCHOOLING

I have argued so far that the kind of managerial and cultural shift in education that is advocated in much recent management literature reflects the

kind of ideological control that has for some time been pursued in business (Barker, 1993; Sewell, 1998). The shift has been from bureaucratic control to ideological control under the guise of the seemingly benign concept of organizational culture (Angus, 1996). Regardless of rhetoric of self-management and decentralization, therefore, current policy moves to strengthen local management of schools and school cultures do not necessarily depart at all from traditional managerial concerns with organizational control (Angus, 1993; Smyth, 1993; Hartley, 1999). Indeed, Hartley (1999), in describing a 'shift from structure to culture' in education policy formulation in the UK, mentions that the chief executive of the Teacher Training Authority in the late 1990s commented that 'headship' should now be 'promoted [in education] as a profession in its own right' (Hartley, 1999, p. 310). Others have also argued that the strengthening of the principalship, as well as furthering the interests of some principals, has been a deliberate mechanism through which governments have attempted to bring about systematic change in education (Ball, 1994, p. 59). Certainly, in Australia, according to the Chief of Staff of the Minister of Education in the Kennett government in the State of Victoria (the most interventionist and 'reformist' in Australia during the 1990s), school principals were used as Trojan horses in an attempt by government to induce changes within the education profession. The Chief of Staff explained that one of the Kennett government's maxims for reform was to 'have "on-the-ground" allies' and that, in the case of education reform, 'these were the school principals' (1997 interview reported in Pascoe & Pascoe, 1998).

The political obsession with control of schools and teachers partly explains why management, leadership and cultural control have become so significant in educational policy. This particular cultural perspective, which involves the consolidation of principals as serious managers who distance themselves from the educational practices of teachers is, of course, hardly new (cf. Callahan, 1968). But it has in recent times been asserted in such a way as to renovate managerial traditions and marginalize alternative, previously asserted cultural traditions of negotiated and participative educational leadership. The social and educational practices of all education workers are influenced by the practices of management and conceptualizations of culture that prevail in education discourses. In fact, educational practice is influenced by the same contextual factors that shape management and leadership. It is therefore important that education researchers and analysts not be seduced into unintentionally accepting dominant discourses and looking at schools in terms defined by managerial policy interests that are articulated and shaped in currently prevailing educational narratives.

CULTURE, CONTEXT AND ORGANIZATIONAL POWER

From the discussion so far it can be concluded that, in institutions such as schools, despite the message of much education policy and management literature, rather than a uniform concept of organizational culture simply being imposed from above, or bequeathed from the past, contest occurs over the construction and assertion of cultural forms. Organization members, as active and knowing agents, have the capacity to influence organizational norms, culture and structure, while also simultaneously adapting to, and influencing to some extent, strongly institutionalized cultural expectations, both within institutions and in society more broadly. A focus on power relationships would therefore seem to help organization researchers illuminate the dynamics of organizational culture in action. And since power relationships extend beyond any single organization, such a focus would also encourages us to connect the organization in dynamic ways with other, larger social contexts and to explore relations between them. In this way, issues of culture, discourse and the legitimation of meaning systems become critical in understanding the apparent acceptance in education policy in various countries of what appears like a global education policy agenda (Angus, 2004).

When it comes to seemingly common global education policies, then, it is important to emphasize, as Dale (1999, 2000) does, the importance of investigating how and why a particular meaning system may have come to appear dominant. Dale insists that the effects of assertive capitalism on education, exerted either directly or indirectly through the impact of globalization on states, occur 'through mechanisms that can be *specified and traced*' (my emphasis). According to Dale, this means that:

while matters such as the place and value of a national curriculum [for example] have traditionally been largely determined at a national level, responses to them are becoming increasingly framed by agendas set by the global political economy rather than locally perceived problems; both the nature of the core problems and the means of addressing them are significantly altered by the changing nature of state supranational relations' (Dale, 2000, p. 441).

Dale's point that local agendas as much as global ones have indirect as well as direct effects on education is exceedingly important. Within its own norms of economic rationality, internationally asserted neo-liberalism enables nation-states to apparently withdraw from 'hands-on' policy direction in education and appear to devolve responsibility to schools and the

profession, and to appeal to the public (as a collection of individual consumers rather than responsible citizens) to exercise control over schooling through the mechanism of market. Thus, with public opinion partly shaped by government concern with the desires of the aspirational classes (which are taken up by enthusiastic media in talkback radio, current affairs, advertising and even game shows), notions of individualism, commodification and market have already been heavily 'marketed' (McCaig, 2000). School failure can then be represented as the responsibility of the schools and individuals, and as being related to the adequacy of the educational product rather than to the socio-political, cultural and economic factors that contribute to school performance and which sociologists have been attempting to unravel for decades. This individualistic perspective is intensified by discourses of school effectiveness that have no place for sociological considerations. As I have argued elsewhere:

Family background, social class, any notion of context, are typically regarded as "noise" [in school effectiveness research] – as outside background factors which must be controlled and then stripped away so that the researcher can concentrate on the important domain of school factors (Angus, 1994, p. 341).

The individualized, aspirational nature of the favoured voices in education, and the reinforcing of traditional notions of what counts as education through the market, as Whitty (2001, p. 288) points out, 'is usually justified in terms of all children having to succeed in terms of the "real world" in which we live rather than [an alternative] one we might want to live in'. This 'real world', just as much as any imagined alternative world, is, of course, a social and cultural product that is asserted within the dominant culture.

Within this constructed 'real' world, the dynamics of market and managerialism become transformative devices that conform to the classical logic of 'system-changing' policies and 'policy instruments' (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). The focus of system-changing policies is not so much on specific policy outcomes in relation to education as on changing the institutional structure of education and distribution of authority within it; for example, by removing authority and influence from certain parts of the education sector and groups within it, and shifting authority to other parts and groups in order to 'modernize' the system. In other words, specific policies (say, about student testing or market arrangements) may be directed mainly towards substantively changing institutions (rather than, say, enhancing student learning or school improvement) to make them more consistent with the broad direction of the ideological change that is envisaged to the way the whole education system should operate. That is, mechanisms of market and

leadership in education can be seen as transformative devices in the implementation of change as much as being outcomes of change in themselves; or, as Ball (1997, p. 327) puts it, when referring to the notion of 'quality' within school effectiveness discourse, such instruments act as 'relay devices' that link 'government "mentalities" and policies with everyday organizational realities'. The discourses that link market, quality and managerialism, to the extent that they become regularized into organizational thinking and practices in schools and their communities, have a profound effect on the nature of education and on the nature of the education profession for teachers and managers.

It is through analysing such processes and discourses, *through* which, not *by* which (Knights & McCabe, 2000), social relations and identities are constituted, that meanings and norms get challenged and asserted as a result of new articulations of interests and identities (Knights & McCabe, 2000). We may then begin to understand how politics gets 'accomplished' by cultural means. We may grasp a sense of the political mechanisms, 'that can be specified and traced' (Dale, 2000), through which rampant and mainly unchallenged capitalism affects global economic arrangements and provokes particular responses in various nation-states. These lead to intervention in education in particular ways. For example, the internal re-culturing of schools and education management, in this cultural politics perspective, is just part of the contested contemporary social processes through which broader cultural and political changes (and the assertion of interests) are imperfectly accomplished. As various critical scholars have emphasized, these everyday cultural politics in sites like schools are connected to the macro-politics of globalization, the weakening of the nation-state, the fragmentation of civil society, the assertion of alternative social, political and educational norms, the reduction of education to a site of economic planning, the control of schools and teachers and the like. The recent and current reconstruction of education as a social institution fits neatly into the neo-liberal cultural agenda that has been taken up remarkably successfully over recent decades in moves by capital and by rightist governments (Jessop, 1997).

In education, as in other spheres of social life, we can probably say that organizational culture, as part of the social world, must be continuously constituted. It is therefore always imperfectly reconstructed amongst contested discourses and subjectivities. Institutions like schools should therefore be seen as sites in which culture is constructed, contested and enacted. In the process, entrenched expectations and hegemonic understandings (of things like the purpose of schooling, global economic competition, preparation of students for 'flexible' work futures, etc.) become embedded in discourses

that act as background rules that influence the actions of organizational participants. And while a particular organizational culture may be associated with specific institutions, these institutions are also influenced by, and partly mediate, broader social structures and societal cultures.

Socially constructed organizational 'rules' (Clegg, 1981) and embedded discourses have a strong existence in the form of informal, institutionalized expectations and entrenched organizational features such as leadership and management. To the extent that they become taken for granted they amount to pervasive, but unrecognized, structures of power (Angus & Rizvi, 1989). They need not be hard and fast rules, and they may be mediated or broken, without much thought or quite deliberately, in different ways in different situations involving different people. Such 'rules' may be messy and confusing, indeterminate, partially understood, or understood in contradictory ways. Yet, despite such indeterminacy, schools, because they are expressly intended for the 'education' of young citizens, are, along with the media perhaps, particularly well placed to contribute to the production of macro-culture. And although they certainly possess a degree of autonomy, schools and the education system 'must still articulate with other sectors of the social formation' (Johnston, 1991, p. 32).

The upshot is that the current use of business discourse and metaphors, and the analogy of the market in particular, in educational policy and management have profound micro- as well as macro-cultural significance for, as Bowles (1991, p. 11) argues, 'markets are as much political and cultural institutions as they are economic'. This is because markets 'not only allocate resources and distribute income, they also shape our culture, foster or thwart desirable forms of human development, and support a well defined structure of power' (Bowles, 1991, p. 11). This is what all cultural institutions do in imperfect ways. In pointing out that the notion of market has become particularly widespread in all forms of public and private provision, Bowles is not claiming any original insight. As he reminds us, 'anthropologists have long stressed [that] how we regulate our exchanges and coordinate our disparate economic activities influences what kind of people we become' (Bowles, 1991, p. 12). The key point Bowles makes is that, because of current obsession with 'the market' in spheres like education, and because of the insidiousness of market arrangements throughout contemporary society, 'we learn to function in these environments, and in so doing become someone we might not have become in a different setting' (Bowles, 1991, p. 13). Market rationality, therefore, is but one example of how various politically asserted elements of culture serve particular interests over others and connect with global forms of social power and control.

That is to say, organizational cultures, in particular sites like education, reflect at least in part structural features of society at large and also contribute to those structural features. Institutions such as schools are created within, and exist in relationship with, the social formation of society. This implies that society, despite its diversity, is characterized by micro- and macro-cultures that are socially and historically constituted. The point I want to emphasize is that we are all complicit in their constitution. Their ongoing making and re-making is nonetheless always problematic and provisional, and occurs largely as a result of differential power relationships, cultural expectations and access to resources. Institutions such as schools contribute to macro-cultures in problematic ways because social relations in particular sites, as in society, cannot be simply assumed but must be continuously reconstituted as part of everyday life.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have tried to demonstrate that ongoing ethnographic critique of notions of culture that are employed in concepts of school culture, policy and management, and leadership in education is necessary. The focus of such critique should be upon the potential role of schools, as social, cultural and political institutions, to enhance the interests of all their members. It would not deny cultural contestation and negotiation in school sites, but would see all members as important participants in cultural politics. Indeed, principals and other education managers might recognize that participation is a cultural phenomenon, and that active participation is most likely to exist in a cultural milieu that accepts and encourages it – and sustains it in everyday practices – as an organizing principle of institutional life. Education professionals might assert that awareness that schools are cultural sites, which mediate 'outside' power linked to the social and political context, should be part and parcel of the professional understanding of teachers and principals. And if scholars and practitioners in the field were to embrace such a perspective, there are several traditions of cultural work that could inform their analyses. I have referred to the cultural turn in sociology that has been taken up in critical and post-structural ethnographic analyses of education policy and management. The feminist cultural tradition has also resulted in work that challenges hierarchical management and advocates relational forms of school organization and culture (Blackmore, 1999). A further tradition is that which has explored the nature of teachers' work and professional culture and investigated the emergence and assertion,

and institutionalization in some cases, of undemocratic school practices (Apple, 1991; Britzman, 1991; Gewirtz, 1997). An organizing problematic of all these approaches is that culture is always a social and political accomplishment within which the relationship between school culture and social power needs to be interrogated.

The implication is that more studies are needed of the dynamics of organizational life and micro-political activity that are linked to the current politics of social and economic reshaping and re-norming (Seddon & Angus, 2000; Angus, 2004). It would be especially important for such studies to investigate not only the ways in which administrators and other participants contribute to 'meaning-making' in schools, but also how management and school culture mediate wider social influences. It is these multiple dynamics that in complex ways shape school cultures. A focus on the internal production of micro-cultures of schools and organizations is therefore important, but such analysis must also examine the ways in which schools, like other social organizations, contribute to broader cultural production and legitimation of particular societal norms, and how inter-organizational dynamics influence wider power relations and widely shared social beliefs and practices. It is through such means that the politics of, for instance, globalization, the relationship between education and work, and the norming of society, is accomplished. In a nutshell, such a relational perspective on school culture would see schools as sites in which the construction and effects of cultural shaping are social and political processes. Rather than as a managerial device, organizational culture would then be conceptualized as a social construct that both constrains and enables organizational practices. In attempting to understand educational practices in schools, therefore, ethnographers would attempt to understand how educational culture, including professional norms and practices of management, reflect organizational dynamics and the social and cultural location of schooling within a complex social formation.

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