

**Rhodes University**

**Faculty of Education**

**Discursive space in the discourse of a woman school leader**

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**Masters in Education  
(Education Leadership and Management)**

by

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**January 2006**

## **Abstract**

Women in leadership has become an increasingly popular area of research within the field of Educational Leadership and Management. As women hold more leadership roles and responsibilities in education it is increasingly important this subject is researched to enrich our understanding and knowledge of an area in which there have been silences.

This research is a case study of a woman school leader in Namibia. The purpose was to explore the language she used and the impact of the discourses emerging from the text. The discourses are explained, described and interpreted through a critical discourse analysis to examine the discursive space and its relationship to the organisation. A feminist post-structural framework provided the basis for the critical orientation of this research.

The findings of this study indicate that the leader occupied a discursive space of multiple positions that perpetuated and reproduced the school's organizational structure and culture. The significance of this study lies in the possibilities for future research. The use of a post-structural framework to critically analyze discourses, combined with the use of leadership and management theory provided a means by which to explore and understand the multiple positions a woman leader takes up. By analyzing the discursive space in a discourse researchers are able to explore new ways of examining women and leadership in education.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the following people:

Professor Hennie van der Mescht my supervisor and academic mentor throughout this degree; whom I respect and trust. Thank you for challenging, questioning and leading me. I deeply appreciate the generous time and hospitality you have given me. I had the will.

Caroline van der Mescht for the discussions and the warm hospitality. Thank you for being so warm and welcoming every time we have met.

Dr. Joanna Kidman who introduced me to feminist post-structuralism during my Honours year at Victoria University of Wellington.

My parents, Dorothy Thawley and the Very Rt. Rev. Michael Thawley, who have always given me consistent and constant love and support. Thank you for teaching me all you have, so much of whom I am is you.

To all those friends and colleagues with whom I have had inspiring and challenging conversations, both intended and spontaneous. It is these discussions that have helped me make connections within this piece of research, and between it and life in general. They have enabled me to better understand the world, my place(s) within it and reactions to it.

Tim, So-Won and Leigh for their partnerships and love.

Schmitt and Erica for their life long friendships.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This research is located in the field of Education Leadership and Management. It is a case study of one school leader and her language; its relationship to its context; its usage; and its relationship with the organisation. The purpose of this research is to explore the discourse of a woman school leader, in the context of a school's culture and practiced norms (the wider social power), and to investigate possible discursive space and its relationship to the organisation in which she works.

### **1.1 Education Leadership, Management and Women**

Education leadership and management is a growing field of study and within this field the question of women and leadership has received increased attention in recent decades. Much of this research is based around notions of sameness and difference, masculine and feminine. Much of the purpose of this kind of research in the area of education is to examine what is effective and what is not in terms of leadership and its impact on organisations. Examples of this include Cryss Brunner (1998), Burke and Collins (2001), and the Gender Equity Task Team for the Department of Education in South Africa in 1997 (Wolpe, Quinian and Martinez 1997).

Issues of power are at the heart of much gender research and theorizing, and leadership and management research. Power is central to post-structural thought. Power can appear in many forms: status, position, authority, access to decision-making, the right to name, define and value (Waring 1988: 6). Working with power associated themes challenges leadership and management thought and practices. There are personal, political and epistemological challenges for the researcher examining often competing discourses. While reading in the area of Education Leadership and Management I found many studies reporting the absence of and marginalisation of women. Indeed andocentric male biased viewpoints limit educational management and leadership theories and research. There is an assumption in much of the literature that male and female experience are the same, and

that this is a satisfactory premise from which to explain leadership and management for both women and men.

Much current management and leadership encourages autonomy and empowerment, focuses on expectancy theory, which defines work effort as personal traits (such as self-confidence and imagination) and work outcomes as attitudes and feelings (such as personal growth and development). This stress on internal reactions to the external realities deflects an examination of the external realities. This places pressure on the individual to feel personal responsibility for their work practices and discourages an examination of the organisational structures, cultural norms and practices that affect and influence their work practices. This is particularly significant for women because there is a focus on the individual and self-development throughout women in management literature. This emphasis on individual perceptions of an organisational situation implies individual, not organisational responsibility to the situation.

The focus of this study is not just in the fields of education and leadership but draws from the fields of Women's Studies and Linguistics. The participant in this case study is a women school leader of a co-educational private school in Namibia. Feminist theory strongly informs the methodology of this study, specifically post-structural feminist theory. This body of theory lends itself to the discipline of Linguistics, especially Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is used as the method of analysis, explanation, interpretation and description. Both post-structural feminist theory and CDA are critical in their nature and so lend themselves to this case study.

## **1.2 Motivation for the Study**

The motivation for this research originated in my personal and academic interests in feminism and language, post-structuralism, and leadership and management theory. This case study is an intersection of these bodies of thought. It uses the language of a woman school leader in an independent private school in Namibia and examines the organisational context within which it is produced. In this research I examine how context (organisational

structure, norms, practices, and structural relations) is connected to language and the impact of gender on this. These are not inflexible categories to which an individual can be reduced but instead provide a framework for analysis and interpretation. The very act of interpretation requires one to choose from multiple identities and associations that shape ones life. By examining the role context plays in language we can achieve a deeper understanding from which to interpret language. It may also reveal a range of experiences and expectations within which the individual works, and provide a perspective from which to interpret women's ways of moving through, and working in the webs of relationships and structures, which make up her world.

### **1.3 Structure of the Study**

The research begins in chapter two by examining literature to date in the fields of:

- leadership and organisational theory;
- women leadership and organisational theory;
- post-structuralism in relation to organisations, women, power and language.
- 

The connections between these different bodies of thought and contextual variables lead to a need for a critical linguistic approach to the analysis of the data which is explained in chapter three. The text chosen for the analysis was selected for its typicality and ordinariness. This is important as a purpose of a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is to critically examine the ordinary; that which is usually unchallenged and unquestioned. Through CDA then one is able to revise and re-think unchecked dominant discourses of power.

Chapter four analyses the data in three ways: through explanation, description and interpretation. These three levels of analysis, which are intertwined and woven into each other, are taken from Janks (1997a). The focus of this study is not the data as such but the messages and meaning that inform the power relations behind the data.

The critical nature of this study sets it apart from other research in that it is not attempting to report findings from which we can generalise. On the contrary, it sets out to provide an example of how we can use alternative frameworks to analyse women leaders' discourse and so shed light on what are often competing and contradictory roles that women play in the field of management and leadership through a critical analysis of discourse.

Chapter five concludes the study looking at the findings of the study and linking them back to the purpose of the research. It includes discussions on the limitations and the significance of the research. It argues how post-structuralism provides us with a framework in which to analyse discursive space and so allow for new possibilities in ways we examine women and leadership in education.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

In this chapter I give an outline of leadership and organisational theory, historically, in regard to women and organisational theories, and post-structuralism and its use in organisational theory, women, power and language. These ideas will introduce key concepts and understandings that link to the purpose and field of research, namely an exploration of the discourse(s) of a woman school leader, in the context of a school's culture and practiced norms (the wider social power), and an investigation of possible discursive space and the relationships it has with the organisation.

### **2.1 Leadership and Organisational Theory**

#### **2.1.1 Introduction**

Organisational theory is needed in order to provide a contextual framework for this research. Hoy & Miskel (1996: 23) define four periods in the development of organisational thought over the last one hundred years. Firstly, classical organisational thought. This commenced with Taylor's scientific analysis of work which focused on formal organisational structure. The human relations approach followed this with the defining Hawthorne Studies focusing on the informal aspects of organisations and their management. Taylorism was criticised for its overly mechanical approach to organisational studies. The human relations approach was criticised for oversimplifying the complexity of the concept of organisations. The third approach, which in turn criticised the previous body of thought, was that of the social science approach, which tried to create an equilibrium of the previously formal and informal approaches. Lastly, it is post-structuralism, feminist theory and critical theory that are currently challenging and questioning the previous methods of analysing organisations, their culture and management. I draw heavily on these theories in this study.

## 2.1.2 Leadership

There has been a plethora of research in the area of leadership in the last twenty five years. During the 1970s much research was done on the value of leadership as a concept, by authors such as Lieberman and O'Connor, Salancik and Pfeffer, McCall and Lombardo, Kerr and Jermier, all cited in Hoy and Miskel (1996: 373). After the 1970s radical humanists such as Gemmil and Oakley (in Hoy and Miskel 1996: 373) called into question the findings of much previous research stating that leadership itself is a social myth that assumes its necessity within an organisation. Much of this early research was criticised as being flawed but its proponents saw leadership as a key to understanding and improving organisations. Hoy and Miskel point out that researchers such as Bass (in Hoy and Miskel 1996: 373) show that leadership is often regarded as the single most important influence in the success or failure of an organisation.

There have been many definitions over the years put forward for what is leadership. In many respects it remains largely indefinable. Leaders play a crucial role in an organisation: through educating and studying leaders we develop further understandings in the field of leadership.

Hoy and Miskel's (1996: 372) summary of leadership within the field of education suggests that there are four basic categories of leader behaviour: building personal relationships; motivating; deciding; and communicating. Further, a leader's effectiveness can be conceptualised as having three dimensions – personal, organisational, and individual. Research has found that personality, motivation and skill traits seem to be systematically related to leadership in schools (*Ibid.*: 372). Fiedler (in Hoy and Miskel 1996) believes that to be an effective leader there must be a good match between the organisation and the individual leader's style. Hoy and Miskel argue "the most influential theories of leadership are contingency models, which explain the interrelationships among traits, situations, behaviours, and effectiveness" (1996:372).

### **2.1.3 Organisations**

It is difficult to examine leadership without looking at organisational theory. What follows is a brief overview of some major trends in organisational thought over the last 30 years. Here I draw on the work of influential theorists such as Kanter, Senge and Schein whose thinking has been influential in shaping post-behaviourist organisation theory.

In 1977 Kanter suggested that uncertainty in the organisation makes homogeneity of the management group important to its members. Having studied corporate organisational structure, she concluded that the higher the level of management in the organisational hierarchy, the more discretion the occupants have in performing their job responsibilities and the more unclear the criteria for determining their successes. Therefore, management seeks to fill its ranks, particularly at the highest level of administration, with those persons who best fit the existing norms.

Senge's (1990) concern was to identify how interventions can be made to turn organisations into 'learning organisations'. The most appropriate question was whether it fostered praxis – informed, committed action on the part of those it was aimed at. This is an especially pertinent question as Senge looks to promote a more holistic vision of organisations and the lives of people within them. However, Senge's ideas fail to take into account a political or moral framework. There is no consideration of questions of social justice, democracy and exclusion. His approach largely operates at the level of organisational interests. No institution exists by itself and as an end in itself. Everyone is an organ of society and exists for the sake of society; but Senge fails to make a connection between the notion of the 'learning organisation' and the 'learning society'; neither does he pay attention to the political and social impact of organisational life.

Senge's notion of the learning organisation is culture and gender blind, as it does not take into account gender differences. This is typical of much of the writing and thought in this area, and so encourages research to illuminate what much mainstream thought ignores. This can be seen in the plethora of research surrounding the issue of women and

management and leadership, much of which is just trying to understand what has been previously ignored. It has a tendency to focus on similarities and differences between and of women and men. More recent literature has attempted to address this blindness by not focussing on the deficits or gaps in the area of gender, ethnicity and socio-economic class, but instead on the values and beliefs that are needed by leaders and managers in order to build healthy organisations (Bhindi & Duignan 1997, Russell 2000, Shields 2004). This will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

On the other hand, Senge (1990) in many ways encapsulates recent approaches in the discipline of leadership and organisational theory which are based on the tenet that for all people, self-confirmation and a supportive community are requisites for growth and development, success, and professional progress. Thus, the goal of an organisation must be to cultivate not only the intellectual and practical competence but also the affective dispositions including the moral, social, emotional, and aesthetic aspects of the personality. Doing so would help to develop within all members of the organisation the competencies, self-worth, and efficacy which would permit them to overcome earlier socialised dependencies and ideas of conformity. Where collaboration replaces competition, where community replaces isolation, where respect replaces distrust, and where there is room for all voices, traditional and alternative, there will exist the opportunity for all to be accepted, appreciated, and recognised for the contributions they bring to the organisation. The organisation and each individual within it can only be enriched and energised as a result. This approach to leadership and organisational management can be seen in the context of this study in a document written by a former Director of the school in this study in which he discusses the organisational culture and leadership within the school. He emphasises:

...a shared vision, on common goals and on collaborative planning and teaching in pursuit of those goals. Teachers take on shared responsibility and leadership for areas of learning previously seen as the responsibility of others. In so doing, they accept the need to learn new skills and they welcome the opportunity to do so (Bartlett 2000: 9).

Schein's (1992) "learning culture" is characterised by a faith in people and an assumption that human nature is basically good. A complex blend of individualism and groupism promotes diversity as desirable at the individual and subgroup level; subgroups are valued as resources for learning and innovation. Tasks and relationships are considered equally important. The prevailing logic of the organisation is non-linear, reflecting the complexity of the world as well as the difficulty with prediction and analysis. Information and communication are central to the organisation's well being. The goal of communication is to connect everyone in the organisation to everyone else. A high degree of trust, value in truth and belief in others' constructiveness of intent is integral to the philosophy of communication within the organisation.

The current emphasis on private sector economic and business management theory being used as Education Leadership and Management models (Brady & Hammet 1999) raises concerns about the emerging professional model of organisational leadership where values and skills of teachers and collegial, collaborative decision-making, can be undermined. Increasingly in education policy documents, such as *Towards Education for All* (Ministry of Education and Culture Namibia 1993) there exists rhetoric of partnership, collaboration, participation and equality. Such rhetoric discusses the implementation of management plans which deal with education, financial and human resource management. Human resource management models define staff roles and functions and lets them know what they are to do, but can also increase hierarchical control through the monitoring process of performance. It can be argued that these functions will set up an organisational culture that is hierarchical, competitive, individualistic and highly task orientated. It promotes a culture in which ends are separated from means and people are only valued for what they do, rather than their potential or who they are. A concern I have about policy documents that promote decentralisation is the tendency that managerial control may be cloaked by the use of more acceptable terms such as 'facilitating', 'motivating', 'persuading' and 'leading'.

I am increasingly doubtful about whether traditional (mainstream and critical) organisation theories will or can adequately address gender issues; and whether these theories can satisfactorily meet the needs of the education sector. Thus it is important to examine

leadership and management models that are derived from research in the realm of education and for the purpose of helping us better understand educational organisations.

### **2.1.4 Tony Bush's Models of Educational Management and Leadership**

This section is based upon Tony Bush's (1995) six models of educational management and leadership. Bush provides conceptual frameworks that reflect the practice of educational managers. Bush presents a complex body of theory in clear straightforward terms and illustrates the models with examples of management in educational institutions. The central features of the models are described below:

#### **2.1.4.1 Formal Models**

The basic features that underpin these models highlight the official and structural elements of organisations. The heart of the approach involves: following the organisational objectives through rational methods; organisations being considered as systems; departments of the organisation relating to each other and the organisations itself; official structures being give importance as they recognise and place the relationships between the members and the organisation itself; structures being inclined to be of a hierarchical nature; the organisation as goal seeking; rational processes being stressed, as decision-making is believed to be an objective and impartial practice; the authority of the leader is given importance as his/her power is seen to be positional; finally, there is an emphasis on the accountability of the organisation to its subsidising body (Bush 1995: 29-30).

#### **2.1.4.2 Collegial Models**

These models place great importance on the sharing of power and decision-making amongst some or all members of an organisation. The practices of values that form the basis of the organisation are based on the notion that the management of decision-making

should be based on agreement. It assumes that members of an organisation share a common set of values, this is in itself one of the major weaknesses of this model as the effectiveness of the organisation is dependent on the values and attitudes that the members hold. These models presume that decisions are reached through consensus, often making the decision making process slow. Management team members are accountable to the governing body and external groups. These same members have the authority to give staff opportunities to participate. In the collegial model both political power and power derived from expertise of knowledge exists. This can create a tension, which in the case of the school is resolved through the formal structure of the school (Bush 1995: 52-66).

#### **2.1.4.3 Political Models**

These models are based upon the premise that groups within an organisation have two types of interest, professional and personal. Decision-making is a process of negotiation and bargaining. Conflict is considered to be a normal element within the organisation and management's role is to control the political behaviour within the organisation. The goals of the organisation are contestable and often unclear. Interest groups represent individuals' welfare; group activity becomes a focal point of the institution rather than the organisation as a whole. Power is extremely important in these models. Power of the individuals in the organisation and their ability to mobilize resources of power to support their own interests determines the process of decision-making. The association between power, conflict and interests is the basis of these models (Bush 1995: 75-6).

#### **2.1.4.4 Subjective Models**

These models focus on the beliefs and perceptions of the individual. Much importance is given to the meanings that individuals place on events and situations. Meanings are a creation of the individual's background, values and experience. Structure is seen as a product of human interaction. They are not fixed; instead they are constantly in a state of flux. Attention is given to processes and behaviour. There is a renunciation of a

predetermination of organisational goals. The purpose of the organisation becomes whatever the individuals of the organisation need to do so that something may be achieved (Bush 1995: 93-7).

#### **2.1.4.5 Ambiguity Models**

These models apply to organisations where there is uncertainty and instability. Participation is fluid and decision-making transpires in both formal and informal settings. Decisions are often unplanned as it is assumed that as problems emerge solutions are formulated and appropriate action taken. Decentralisation is valued as decisions are devolved to groups within the organisation, with devolved power these groups or sub-units can adapt rapidly to a changing environment. In these models, there is often a lack of clearly defined goals, and so goals often lack consistency and are not transparent. The outcomes of an organisation are not necessarily apparent therefore, processes are based around the needs of the client. Fragmentation is a central feature of these models. The organisation is divided into groups based on shared values and goals; connections between these groups are scarce. The concept of an organisational structure is considered problematic and so ambiguity reigns. In a school setting the influence of the environment relies on parent and student participation. The extent of the participation in the organisation's community is changeable due to the fluidity of the members' participation (Bush 1995: 111-116).

#### **2.1.4.6 Cultural Models**

The central tenet of these models is the emphasis on informal, rather than formal elements of the organisation. The individual's values, beliefs and perceptions are consolidated into the organisations shared meanings. These meanings are reinforced through symbols and rituals. The values and beliefs of the members of the organisation underlie the behaviours and norms of the organisation. This takes precedence over the formal structures of the

organisation. These behaviours give rise to shared meanings. Those individuals who exemplify the values and beliefs of the organisation become the heroines and heroes of the institution. A leader who is aware of leading through example, and creating a culture based on her own values, can give rise to the heroine or hero (Bush 1995: 130-7).

#### **2.1.4.7 Models and Leadership**

More recently Bush (2003) has elaborated his models by incorporating leadership theory. He discusses the notion of managerial leadership and its close proximity to formal models. This type of leadership is characterised by a focus on leaders' tasks and functions. Bush (2003: 55) refers to Caldwell's list of managerial type functions of a school leader which includes: supervision; behaviour controls; goal setting; needs identification; priority setting; planning; budgeting; implementing and evaluating. The focus here is on managing not vision.

A leadership model that Bush associates with collegiality is participative leadership. This model emphasises group decision making processes. Sergiovanni (in Bush 2003: 78) is a proponent of this body of theory which is founded on the principle that if people are involved in making decision then they are more likely to accept the decisions; which in turn eases the burden of the leader as the leadership and its decisions are shared amongst the members of the staff.

Interpersonal leadership is another type of leadership Bush links to his collegial model. Interpersonal leadership is based on individual 'interpersonal intelligence' behaviours and skills. This model places value on personal and interpersonal skills. With these skills leaders in a school are able to develop positive collaborative relationships with stakeholders which is likely to result in a collegial approach to the schools management (Bush 2003: 79).

Bush (2003: 76-7) goes on to connect his collegial model of management to transformative leadership. Bush refers to Leithwood's conceptualisation of transformative leadership that includes:

- building school vision;
- establishing school goals;
- providing intellectual stimulation;
- offering individualised support;
- modelling best practices and important organisational values;
- demonstrating high performance expectations;
- creating a productive school culture;
- developing structure to foster participation in school decisions.

This model assumes that leaders and staff have shared values; but when a leader uses this model to exert her/his own values and beliefs then it becomes a political, not collegial process (Bush 2003: 78).

### **2.1.3 Beyond Transformative Leadership**

Bush (2003) notes that while transformative leadership is a comprehensive approach to school leadership, there are two major criticisms of it. Firstly, it provides a setting whereby a leader has control over staff and hence it runs the risk of appearing more attractive to the leader than the led (Bush 2003: 77). Secondly it has the ability to become "despotic" (Allix, as cited in Bush 2003: 77) due to the heroic and charismatic characteristics that transformative leaders are encouraged to display. Bush expresses his concerns about the power of the leader in this type of leadership and the threat that it places on democratic organisations.

Despite its popularity in the literature Bush (2003) raises concerns about how effective and applicable it can be in the current British school climate. He acknowledges that

transformative leadership can be very effective and powerful when all the stakeholders buy into the organisations' objectives, but he warns about the dangers of it being used as a 'cloak' for imposing the leaders values and beliefs (Bush 2003: 78).

In more recent literature there has been a move to go beyond transformational leadership towards a type of leadership that invokes morals and ethics, including social justice, fairness, and equity. Bhindi and Duignan (1997) discuss the need for this shift:

The emphasis was on goal achievement rather than on serving the customer; on productivity rather than on market needs and quality; on outcomes rather than on ethical and moral responsibility; on dependency rather than mutuality; on predictability rather than continuous change and improvement; on gamesmanship rather on leadership authenticity (Bhindi & Duignan 1997: 117).

They argue that the complexity of organisations have brought with them challenges which have lead to a more critical scrutiny of leadership, in particular "a re-examination of the concepts of power and authority and how they are exercised and legitimised" (Bhindi & Duignan 1997: 118). This has created a paradigm shift in the way in which we see our work, relationships and leadership. They argue for authentic leadership; a leadership that is based upon authenticity, intentionality, spirituality and sensibility. The belief that leadership in organisations needs to legitimate and reinforce visionary activity that draws upon peoples intellect, hearts, minds and souls, with a strength and energy being borne out of deep and meaningful relationships.

In similar vein, Russell (2000) identifies and discusses the role of both personal and organisational values in leadership. He argues that values have a significant impact and influence on leadership and organisational decision-making. He notes that the values that leaders have and demonstrate infuse into an organisation and goes as far to say "values serve as the foundational essence of leadership" (Russell 2001: 78). He discusses how the concept of servant leadership values equality and strives for the betterment of all members of the organisation. This notion of leadership is based on strong personal values such as honesty and integrity.

This idea of value-centred leadership is taken a step further by Shields (2004) who advocates an educational leadership that is “firmly grounded in a moral and purposeful approach to leadership” (Shields 2004: 109). She argues that leadership needs to be based on strong relationships and moral dialogue. She goes further by arguing that there has been a pathology of silence about inequities between ethnic groups and social classes, and provides social criteria that leaders can use to create a true transformative and dialogic leadership, that it leadership is rooted in moral and ethical values, and that we need to embrace difference and ask the questions such as: Who is being included and excluded? Whose reality is being marginalised? It is precisely these questions that post-structural feminism attempts to address.

No one is defined by a single factor or characteristic. Indeed, individual and group identities are formed by continuous and dynamic interplays of social, political, and cultural characteristics (Shields 2004: 127).

It is not until we grapple with these questions and issues of power, control and inequity that we can move towards meaningful leadership.

#### **2.1.4 Women Leadership and Organisational Theories**

An answer to the gender blindness of much leadership and management theory has been a mass of research being conducted in the area of gender and leadership and management. And so a popular area of research in the last decade in the area of Education Leadership and Management has been the position of women in leadership positions. The obvious reason for this is the under-representation of women in educational leadership roles (McLay & Brown 2002). Much research in the area of women and Education Leadership and Management traditionally reported the absence of women in educational leadership positions and the marginalising of women in this field. However, with the growing number of women leaders in the education sector, there is an increasing amount of literature on leadership styles and practices of women. Much of this research has been influenced by

liberal feminism that acknowledges and essentializes the differences between males and females (Brady & Hammett 1999:47). This is best summed up by Gosetti & Rusch (in Dunlap & Schmuck 1995: 20):

... what really counts as knowledge for educating school leaders is determined by powerful and privileged interests. Those interests, despite a decade of affirmative action laws and civil rights policies, remain predominately focused on traditional privileges and predominately white male perspectives. These perspectives result in actions by school administrators that frequently overlook real social phenomena.

Indeed, androcentric, or male-biased, viewpoints limits most educational management and leadership theories and research. Even though it is now recognised as an important factor influencing both teachers' work and students' learning, there remains this persistent assumption in education leadership theory that male and female experiences are the same, and that generalising from research on and by males is an adequate basis for explaining experiences for both women and men.

Early studies on women in management often set out to establish women's similarities to men in terms of leadership behaviour, motivation and the like, to earn them acceptance against the unquestioned norms of the successful good manager. Schein's (1976) study and title – "Think Manager - Think Male" - sums up the world in which women were meant to prove themselves.

Much of the gender leadership debate revolves around feminine and masculine styles of leadership. Cryss Brunner (1998) researched strategies for success that women school leaders in the United States used. She identified seven practices women leaders used that were unique, as they specifically related to gender as played out in their leadership roles. Burke and Collins' (2001) research concluded that leadership styles of women accountants differed from that of their male counterparts. Their findings indicate that women are more likely to use an interactive style of management associated with transformational leadership.

A report by the Gender Equity Task Team for the Department Education of South Africa in 1997 entitled 'Gender Equity in Education' discusses the issues surrounding gender and educational management. A pertinent quote from this report links transformative participatory styles of leadership to the goal of "attaining a critical mass of women in education management" (Wolpe, Quinian and Martinez 1997: 201). This idea is based on the assumption that women education leaders practise a transformative style of leadership and reinforces the notion of gender difference and leadership style. The underlying discourse of the report is that as we accept and embrace more transformative and participative styles of leadership it will open up the opportunity for more women to lead, as women lead according to these styles. Or to turn it on its head, and read it a different way, as more women lead, more transformative and participative styles of leadership become visible leading to wider acceptance of these styles and women leaders. Whatever way you read the discourse, it links gender to styles of leadership.

Another example of this line of thought is seen in research by Shakeshaft (1989) who devotes a whole chapter of her book to how women and men approach the job of school administrator differently. Shakeshaft (1989) discusses the issue of gender differences in the way women and men school administrators communicate. She finds gender differences in the type of communication used; choice of grammatical structure and vocabulary; listening behaviour; the value (or lack of value) placed on language; facial expressions; amount of talk time; politeness and stereotypes of male and female spoken language between men and women in leadership and management positions (Shakeshaft 1989: 179-186). While this may be useful in illuminating and giving value to differences in the way women and men in leadership positions communicate, it also perpetuates many myths and stereotypes about men and women leaders. More importantly, like much of the gender leadership debate, she dichotomises their behaviour according to their gender, and links it to the effectiveness of their leadership. Shakeshaft (1989) concludes at the end of her chapter:

...as a group, women tend to have a different administrative style than do men and that the effectiveness for a female may depend upon this altered approach (Shakeshaft 1989: 190).

As recently as 1997, Shum and Cheng researched how perceptions of women principals' leadership affected teachers work attitudes. From their quantitative study they found that, among other things, the sex role orientation of women principals was an outstanding predictor accounting for teachers' work attitudes. They go so far as to state:

Since women principals are predetermined feminine by their gender, such feminine traits are inherent human qualities, which enable them to achieve human leadership. It means women principals maintaining feminine traits may be perceived as consistent with their gender and may probably receive higher acceptance from teachers (Shum and Cheng 1997: 181).

There has been an attempt to break down this binary view of gender and leadership. This has been done through an analysis of power and the ways women lead. Fennell's (1999 & 2002) research in this area has been significant. In her research on women educational leaders' experiences of power, Fennell (1999) discusses varying ideas of power and how it can be used in the context of educational leadership. The emergent themes from her study of four women principals' experiences with power were empowerment and what she terms "positive power" (Fennell 1999: 43-6). The women in her study used their positional power as a means of "power through", as opposed to a more traditional approach of "power over" (*Ibid.*: 47). She argues that when we examine how women educational leaders use their positional power it opens the space for alternative ways for conceiving and identifying positional power within the school context.

Another challenge in the area of gender leadership styles research has come from Gold (1996), Hall (1996), and Epstein (1991) who all argue it is unhelpful to look at feminine and masculine leadership styles. The issue of difference/sameness is relevant here. The polarisation of 'male' and 'female' has legitimised exploring the feminine and encouraged a significant phase of articulating and valuing characteristics and possibilities - such as co-operation and intuition - which were not previously so available in dominant formulations of management and organization.

This question - of whether men and women are really different - will not be resolved until fundamental conceptions of management move beyond their foundations in male experience and sex role stereotypes. If 'male as norm' persists (or white as norm) however covertly, comparisons between groups, and the use of frames of difference/similarity, will have an inevitable attraction. Differences once 'found' are interpreted through values.

Pounder and Coleman (2002) researched women in education leadership roles, and concluded stereotyping pervades arguments for and against the leadership capabilities of women and men. They argue that those researchers who contend that women leaders have greater competencies in transformational styles of leadership than men are just as guilty of stereotyping as those who assume effective leadership resides with male characteristics. Their findings indicate factors that affect leadership style and effectiveness including national culture, socialisation of the workplace and society, nature of the organisation, and organisational demographics (Pounder and Coleman 2002: 129). They state:

The true value of the gender-leadership debate lies in its ability to reveal such factors rather than to reinforce gender stereotypes (Pounder and Coleman 2002: 129).

In a debate published in the *Harvard Business Review* Rosener (*Ways men and women lead* 1991) discusses assumptions about women leaders in private sector management roles. Rosener argues there is such a concept and practice as "feminine leadership". A rigorous and critical comment from Sonnenfeld (*Ibid.*: 1991) accuses Rosener of sex typing, which:

not only denies the legitimacy of women to differ in terms of style from one another but also presents an offensive and inaccurate profile of male leadership styles (1990:160).

This justifies the need to move beyond gender-difference research when investigating women in educational leadership. Gosetti and Rusch (in Dunlap & Schmuck, Eds.) wonder if:

This is indeed the dawning of a golden age of opportunity for women, or if the rise of transformational leadership is, instead, an act of appropriation by the dominant leadership culture? ... If we use the lens of feminism and take the position of the outsider looking in, we see that the literature on transformational leadership is still written primarily by men, for men. As leadership characteristics are described through the concepts and terms of this still predominately male discourse, they become genderless and are merged into a universal and privileged perspective that, once again, renders women and marginalized people invisible (Gosetti & Rusch in Dunlap & Schmuck, 19995 : 22-3).

One way to investigate and challenge the marginalized, gender and its relationship with femininity and masculinity and its place within educational leadership is through discourse. Discourse when bound in a post-structural paradigm can liberate the way we question ourselves and others' behaviour and language as gendered beings.

## **2.2 Post-structuralism**

### **2.2.1 Introduction**

Post-structuralism is based on the tenet of challenging and questioning the basis of structuralism. There is no unified self-identity; instead there are multiple subject positions and the continuous movement between order and disorder. A characteristic of post-structuralism is the end of large conceptions or generalisations. This raises questions about what constitutes boundaries of current knowledge and helps us understand how we may begin to construct what we think we know (Yeatman 1991). A post-structural analysis can intervene in practices and interrupt assumed and unquestioned discourses of power. The central idea of the post-structuralist perspective is its rejection of 'meta-narratives'. The fundamental belief is that knowledge is linked to power and is local, partial, discontinuous and in a constant state of flux (Connole 1993).

In the context of this research it is the meta-narrative of women leadership theory that is being challenged and re-routed. It is a challenge to intersect where leadership and

management theory meet feminism and linguistics. Post-structuralism is used as a paradigm from which assumptions from these three sometimes contradictory bodies of theory are used to analyse and discuss the research data.

### **2.2.2 Post-structuralism and Organisations**

To talk about post-structuralism and organisations in the education setting one must look at work in the area of organisational theory by Greenfield in the 1970s and 1980s. Greenfield challenged the way we looked at organisations, arguing that up until that time theories that sought to explain organisations and the behaviours within them were overly simplistic in how they dealt with the reality of organisations and so blinded us to their complexity (Greenfield in Bush 1995: 94). Greenfield is closely associated with Bush's (1995) subjective models whereby organisations are made up of different meanings of individuals based on their background, values and experiences. If everything is value ridden with competing interpretations of events and actions organisations are therefore filled with competing ideologies (Greenfield in Bush 1995).

Greenfield (in Bush 1995: 93-4) argues that organisational structure is not fixed or stable; instead it is a result of what people do and so it cannot be imposed on an organisation. Organisational structure is then simply a description of jobs and relationships. If people change their behaviour then the organisation is subject to change and so it is in a constant state of flux and movement. If the individual is at the heart of the organisation and individuals alter or modify their opinions to fit a particular situation then there can be no stability. Everything becomes contestable as nothing is fixed; instead all is open to a constant flux of movement and change.

Under these conditions leadership can be a powerful force as much credence is given to individuals, including leaders, who can then attempt to influence and impose their beliefs and goals upon the others. This creates a situation where leadership can become a source of power to compliance (Bush 1995). However, the unstable nature of the organisation ultimately creates a space for the leadership to be challenged and contested.

Post-structuralism entered organisational theory as a way of addressing the concerns of people who have traditionally been marginalised in organizations. If the modernist metaphor is a machine driven by a person, the post-structural metaphor is a runaway train (Parker 1992: 3). Obviously this fundamental difference has significant implications for how we understand organisations. Rather than being the outcome of human rationality, the organization tries to produce rationality (Cooper & Burrell 1988). It has been argued that, at least in organisation analysis, the post-structural approach of:

...showing the limits of human rationality... decentering the role of rational purpose are particularly valuable, although they are not really new (Tsoukas 1992: 647).

Tsoukas (1992) goes on to explain that this type of work was done by Mintzberg in the 1960s. Harvey (1989) asks whether post-structuralism is anything more than a fad restricted to hi-culture and having little or no impact on the day to day life of the masses, while Rajchman suggests that post-structuralism theory is:

the Toyota of thought: produced and assembled in several different places and then sold everywhere (Rajchman in Parker 1992: 14).

The post-structural view of multiple subject positions and the continuous movement between order and disorder has been applied to research on the nature of organizations. Boucher (1999) argues the need to change approaches to how we view organizations and quotes from Cooper and Burrell (1988) that a post-structural Foucauldian analysis of organisations would:

... focus on the multiplicity of factors involved in describing organization life and events. It would emphasize the complexity, contingency and fragility of organization forms as transitory manifestations of relationships of dominance, subordination and as mere embodiments of an underlying relationship of forces (Cooper and Burrell 1988: 231).

It can be argued that organisations are irrational, chaotic and unreasonable and that modernism explains how organisations *should be*; post-structuralism is the experience of how they *are* (Parker 1992: 11). Modernism is evident in the use of reason in organisation theory. An example of this is the metaphor of the machine used in organisation studies and the principles of scientific management as proposed by Taylor (Hoy and Miskel 1996) in the early twentieth century. The influence of romanticism is reflected in the impact of the human relations movement, and in various motivation theories that adopt an individual approach and focus on such issues as self-actualisation. If the modern approach to organisations depicts them as rational, intentional and systematic, the post-structuralist approach is exactly the opposite (Parker 1992:12).

Building on the work of Foucault, post-structuralists place subjects at the beginning of the organising process. Therefore, organizations do not exist, but are created in the minds of people as a defense against the uncertainty of the unknown (Cooper & Burrell 1988; Foucault 1973).

Organizations do not first pre-exist and then create their relationships: they occur in existential gaps which lie beyond knowledgeable discourse. Organized rationality, far from originating in beau-ideals and consummate logics of efficiency, is founded on sleight of hand, vicious agonism and *pudenda origo* (shameful origins). This is the revisionary lesson that post-modernism brings to organization analysis (Cooper & Burrell 1988: 108).

This represents a fundamental conceptual shift in the way we think about organisations. The basic challenge post-structuralism offers to organisation theorists is its rejection of any notion of rationality or reason in organisations. Thus it destroys the hope of discovering or creating a knowable order in organisations. Organisation theory is founded on the assumption that organisations have rational goals and act to attain them (Cooper & Burrell 1988: 103). If, as Foucault (1973) suggests, it is only from the site of the human body that the power of resistance (to the status quo) can be released, then we need to rethink the ways we approach organisation change, because all change is a form of resistance (Harvey 1989).

This points to the challenge of looking at organizations in different ways. This study does this by examining discourse in order to identify discursive space. Foucault (in Weedon 1987) addresses the issue of discourse and power and looks historically at discursive relations and social practices. This is an attempt to understand the relationships between language, institutions, subjectivity and power. Here the discursive field is important, as it is made up of competing ways of giving meaning to the world and of organising institutions, organisations, and processes. By analysing these fields one can then uncover the power systems and knowledge at play, and the effect this has on the continuation of existing power relations (Weedon 1987).

Discourses can be found in written, oral and physical forms as well as the social practices of our everyday lives. They exist in the culture of organisations. Powerful discourses in our society have strong institutional bases, including education and work. Boucher (1999) argues that the beginnings and development of organisational theory has been set in a structuralist framework, which views organisations as rational, intentional, systematic and reassuring in their existence (Boucher 1999: 6). She goes on to argue that post structuralism, in the study of organisations, addresses the disquiet of people who have been previously marginalized, such as women.

### **2.2.3 Post-structuralism and Leadership**

There is little literature in the area of post structuralism and educational leadership. This is not surprising as leadership and post-structuralism do not fit comfortably together. Bush (2003: 127) acknowledges this lack of literature by stating that to date there is no definition beyond loosely categorised features of post structural thought and how they might be relevant to leadership in an educational setting. It is this very lack of literature that can be liberating as it gives space for new ways of viewing women and leadership in education:

The post-modern model offers few clues to how leaders are expected to operate... the most useful point to emerge from such analysis is that

leaders should respect and give attention to, the diverse and individual perspectives of stakeholders. They should avoid reliance on hierarchy because this concept has little meaning in such a fluid organisation .... Instead of a compelling vision articulated by leaders, there are multiple visions and diverse cultural meanings (Bush 2003: 128).

Bush (2003: 128) does refer to Greenfield's early work by drawing close links between Greenfield's work on subjective models and post-modernism. It needs to be noted here that post-structuralism in the context of this study is being used as a theoretical underpinning: its purpose is not to make direct connections between itself and leadership because this would deny the very unstable and contradictory nature of post-structural thought. Post-structuralism cannot be bound by a model or a system of thought that requires the categorising of variables in order to pin down an explanation for behaviours and actions.

#### **2.2.4 Post-structuralism and Women**

The debate surrounding the use of post-structural theory to investigate power relations and gender in the field of educational leadership is beginning to open up. Fennel (2002) investigated women principals' lived experiences with power. This phenomenological study of six principals revealed how the research participants' sense of power closely resembled post-structural views and perspectives, while structuralist theories of organisation and power were the foundations of the very organisations they worked in. The participants placed an emphasis on language, and a recognition of power relations and subject positions throughout their organisations. They used these power relations in a positive way to fulfil the goals and missions of the schools (Fennel 2002: 95). She advocates the need for further studies in the area of power and gender and school leadership, and argues post-structural theory provides a platform from which one can investigate the role of gender in understanding power relations, in the context of educational leadership (Fennel 2002: 115).

Brady and Hammett (1999) argue that feminist post-structural theory provides a space for multiple positions for women school leaders and breaks down the binaries that have so

often defined feminist thought such as the oppositional of female/male, feminine/masculine and liberal/radical. Post-structural feminism not only allows for multiple positions but denies the notion that all positions are equal, or should strive to be. A critical feminist position questions forms of authority that seek acceptance, conformity and obedience.

A feminist post-modern perspective challenges the essentialist notion of describing gender differences, such as the 'natural' female experience which is often posited as oppositional to the masculine experience. It questions how the privilege of power is implicated in the construction of knowledge, values, desires, social and professional relations (Brady & Hammett 1999: 49). Feminist post-modern theory asserts that while women have some commonalities there are also many differences; there is no one voice: instead a multitude of voices from which we all speak. These voices can be contradictory and ambiguous.

While much research on women school leaders argues that feminine styles of leadership are more appropriate in a post-modern world, the essentialization of difference which much of the research is based on does not fit comfortably with the basic tenets of post-modern feminist research of multiple positions, difference, gaps, cracks and marginality. This calls for alternatives to dominant educational research and practice need to challenge the short-sightedness of such research.

### **2.2.5 Post-structuralism, Power and Gender**

Post-modern readings of leadership and organisation suggest that new understandings of concepts of power must be developed. No longer can power be understood as something that is possessed as a result of personality or position; something that is stable and continuous. New voices must be listened to including the minority voices of those whose experience of organisations has traditionally been silenced (Grosz 1990).

Issues of power are at the heart of much gender research and theorizing, both as content and politics. Power appears in its many forms. It may be about status, authority, position

and access to decision-making. Power also appears as associated with the right to name, define and value (Waring 1988: 88). Working with these power-associated themes significantly challenges academics and management practitioners. Intended organisational change may well, for example, be undermined because rights to define the world and sanction deviance are retained by previous power elites, reinforcing underlying assumptions and dominance relationships.

People who have power to define meanings and to generate theory are often quite happy not to complicate their lives by seeking to take gender into account is a persistent dilemma in the field, and in organizational life generally, not knowing whether there is sympathy, indifference or antipathy. So it is little wonder that issues of voice, language, and communication and power figure significantly in gender-related thought.

Power relations cannot always be understood in abstract and rigid hierarchies or dualisms. Jones and Guy (1992) have argued that one can try to understand power by looking at its operation in specific contexts. Power is a variable within the experience of the individual as well as between individuals. Women are subject to positions within definitions of gender. There are ranges of subject positions which women (within the 'individual' and within a 'group' of women) may engage (Jones and Guy 1992: 310). Biological sexual difference is a particularly intense site of discursive struggle in which our subjectivity is constituted for us in language and social practices which form and discipline our bodies, minds and emotions (Weedon 1987: 126).

Subjectivity is regulated by the individual. Weedon (1987) argues that subjectivity works most efficiently for the established hierarchy of power relations in a society where the subject position is fully identified by the individual with her interests. Here the hierarchy can be any organisational practice or norm. She goes on to state that:

... where there is a space between the position of the subject offered by a discourse and individual interest, a resistance to that subject position is produced (Weedon 1987: 113).

This is part of a wider social play for power.

Post-structuralism is often criticised in that it denies the validity of the woman experience that forms the basis of much radical and liberal feminist theory. What it does offer though as argued by Weedon (1987: 125) is a contextualization of experience and an analysis of its constitution and ideological power; as the subject in post-structural theory is socially constructed in discursive practices, she is a thinking, feeling subject and social agent capable of resistance produced through the tension and conflict of holding contradictory and multiple subject positions and practices. She is able to reflect upon her positions and practices and be a choosing agent from the choices available (*Ibid.*: 125). There are many roles and options available to women, while bearing in mind the power of the assumptions and power of institutional knowledge, practices and norms.

## **2.2.6 Post-structuralism and Language**

### **2.2.6.1 Language**

An assumption that post-structuralists challenge is the relationship between reality and language. Words do not represent reality; instead reality evades language, as language cannot be restricted by reality. The discursive structure of subjectivity can be integrated into a theory of language and social power, which attends to the institutional effects of discourse. The discourse can shed light on internal contradictions in seemingly perfectly logical systems of thought (Tong 1989: 218).

...where feminist discourses lack the social power to realize their versions of knowledge in institutional practices, they can offer the discursive space from which the individual can resist dominant subject position. The possibility of resistance is an effect of the processes whereby particular discourses become instruments and effects of power ... the degree to which marginal discourses can increase their social power is governed by the wider context of social interest and power within which challenges to the dominant are made (Weedon 1987: 111).

Kristeva (in Tong 1989) challenges the basis of femininity and masculinity through language. She argues that language has two moments, the symbolic, which is the capacity of language to represent and define, to be literal, and the semiotic, which are those elements of language that slip and move in ambiguities. For the most part language is repressed in Western culture in the symbolic, rational, legalistic discourses of rule. Kristeva (*Ibid.*) links the semiotic to femininity, and masculinity to symbolic language. Femininity and the semiotic have marginality in common. The feminine is marginal under patriarchy and the semiotic marginal to language. Both feminine and masculine aspects of language are open to individuals, irrespective of biological sex. This is an attempt to break the biological bias of gender. Thus, strengthening the semiotic leads to a weakening of traditional gender positions (Tong 1989: 230-1). One way of strengthening the semiotic is to validate the marginality of the discourse and the producing subject's position.

Kristeva's (in Tong 1989) notion of the subject as unstable, in process and constituted in language, is an important concept as it provides a framework for an understanding of the contradictory nature of individuals, and their place across a wide range of subject positions. Being able to acknowledge the semiotic and symbolic is important as it allows for the continuous flux between order and disorder.

There are no words, only a myriad of voices, which can be interpreted in any number of ways. This is a celebration of multiple positions. We can be many. The break in the binary structures which enables a break in silence, through speech or written word, can be seen in the carnivalesque structure Kristeva (1982) uses in *Desire and Language*. Kristeva writes in joyous, celebratory, and carnivalesque metaphors. She uses the carnival as a metaphor for transgression, the act of disguising oneself, for example in mask, and one can assume multiple positions.

### **2.2.6.2 Discourse**

This study recognises language as being the primary source from which discourse is realised, and if discourse is the means by which we can explain, interpret and describe the

power within and throughout an organisation, then we can use language as a means of evaluating whether leadership is a means by of perpetuating, informing and/or resisting the desired organisational behaviour and practices.

Discourse can reflect the reality of difference and complexity, and stress the centrality of gender in our lives. It is therefore critical to the (re)construction of knowledge in that it values difference in its very definition when placed in the post-structural feminist realm. The interpretation of discourse forces us to think about the division between objectivity and subjectivity. Inherent in this idea is a positive validation of the subjective. However, a discourse cannot merely be regarded as subjective, as truths are revealed from real positions in the world, through lived experience in social and professional relationships, and the context, with its values, norms and practices, surrounding them. The act of producing a discourse can be a political and rebellious act of opposition towards the power structure, and hence a form of resistance. The discourse the woman leader chooses is a result of professional, social and political relations within which she lives and acts within a given moment.

### **2.2.6.3 Meaning**

If post-structuralism has the goal of dismantling structuralism, post-colonialism is concerned with the dismantling of the colonial discourse. The crucial link between these two bodies of thought is deconstruction. Ashcroft (1995) writes from a post-colonial standpoint. He deconstructs the idea of objective meanings in the writing process and argues that meaning is a social fact that emerges within the written discourse of a culture which, in turn, leads to social facts and structures (Ashcroft 1995: 298). He discusses how the meaning of a word is meant by the person who articulates it, but it is also taken to mean something by the person who is listening to, or reading it. Therefore there are three relevant functions: the language; the speaker or writer; and the listener or reader. This competition creates a contest of the ownership of its meaning. All three functions are players in the social situation of the text, all three players creates meaning (Ashcroft 1995:

298). Furthermore, the distance created by the author and the reader/listener undermines the privilege of both the subject and the object, and opens up meaning to a relational dialectic, which liberates the text (Ashcroft 1995: 299).

This raises the issue of ownership of the meaning of the text. If all language is marginal, as argued by Kristeva, it cannot be constrained by a linguistic structure or code, as it is constantly changing and extremely complex. The place where language and meaning meet is what Face (in Ashcroft 1995: 300) terms the discursive site, and it is here that the importance of how language is used must be faced. Ashcroft (1995) argues that meaning cannot be taken for granted as a single word can demonstrate the cultural placing of the particular word. Therefore language cannot reflect or attempt to describe the world in any one particular way.

The central feature of the ways in which words mean things in spoken or written discourse is the situation of the word. The ranges of 'nuance, and connotation' which are sometimes held to be the key to the incommunicability of cultural experience are simply functions of that situation. This is particularly important for its dismantling of the claims that a particular language has an essential and exclusive capacity to convey cultural truth (Ashcroft 1995: 300). Understanding then becomes a "location of the word in the message event" (*Ibid.*:302). This is the time when the reader/listener and writer/speaker collide to produce meaning.

Ashcroft (1995) goes on to raise the question about whose responsibility it is to then employ methods which more accurately situate the word or phrase for the reader. Is it the responsibility of the author? He proposes that post-colonial writing attempts to bridge the often wide gap between the author and the reader as the reading of this kind of text requires continual contextualisation and adjustment, and this is precisely linked to the constitutive relations within the discursive field:

It is the situation of discourse then, rather than the linguistic system in the speaker's mind, in which the 'obligatory terms' of language are structured. The meaning and the nature of perceived reality are not determined within

the minds of the users, nor even within language itself, but within the use, within the multiplicity of relationships which operate in the system (Ashcroft 1995:301).

What an author (written or spoken) has in mind by way of his/her intended meaning is only retrospectively available. This is a direct challenge to the idea that we assume to hold a linguistic system in our mind. This system then, or categories of language, describes the world. Therefore:

... language is co-extensive with social reality, not because it causes perception of the world, but because it is inextricable from that perception . Language exists, therefore, neither before the fact nor after the fact but *in the fact* (Ashcroft 1995: 301).

People use language intentionally and unintentionally to construct meaning, accounts of events and to challenge or maintain power relations between individuals and organisation norms. Thus, there is always a state of tension, whether conscious or unconscious, within words, their construction, and their meaning (by author and listener/reader). This raises the issue of variability. Language varies depending on its function and purpose. This leads us to question the concept of claims to truth of language spoken or read/heard.

#### **2.2.6.4 Subjectivity and Truth**

When communicating one can lie, forget, exaggerate, become confused and get things wrong. Yet in a way you are revealing truths. These truths do not reveal the actuality of things, aspiring to a standard of objectivity. Instead they give us truths of our experiences/ unlike the reassuring truth of the objective ideal; the truth of communication is neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them through our own interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the worldview that informs them. Sometimes the truth we see in a discourse can shift us from our security as interpreters “outside” the text and make us aware that our own place in the world plays a part in the interpretation and shapes the meaning we derive from them.

Academic disciplines have, through evaluating some kinds of truth - the kinds that conform to the established criteria of validity over others - set benchmark criteria of verifiability, reliability, facticity all of which characterise the criteria of validity.

Examining discourse requires the exploration of the dimensions of plural truths, truths of experience, history (herstory?), and perceptions, which allows for multiple truths of text. Text does not always “speak for itself” nor does it provide direct access to other times, places, or cultures. Text does not always speak with clarity or precision, or even sincerity. The interpretation of a discourse may often entail a careful juxtaposition of alternative truths and calls for a revision of not merely the content of our knowledge, but the very criteria that guide our search for truths. It is here one can turn to post-structural assumptions about language to help understand language as a site of the social and political construction of text and the social world which it contradicts, contests and in which it creates paradoxes.

The discourse of a leader may serve the function of legitimising her power base, as well as provide insights in the area of management strategies and styles. The truths in a woman’s voice cannot necessarily be regarded as merely subjective, as truths are revealed from real positions in the world, through lived experiences in social and professional relationships. It may also reveal a range of experiences and expectations within which she lives, plays and works, and provide a perspective from which to interpret her way of moving through, and working in the webs of relationships and structures which make up her world. Critical awareness and understanding of these issues is crucial to the manner in which data is explained, described and interpreted, and the way in which the results are presented in this study.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter outlines the methodology of the research. This includes the paradigm and method. Feminist and post-structural thought discussed in the last chapter are relevant here. Both bodies of thought not only underlie much of the relevant literature but also provide a framework for the methodology of the research.

### **3.1 Paradigm**

This research is post-structural in its orientation. Lather (1992) places post-structuralism in the post-positivist paradigm of deconstruction, and this is where this research is placed. As discourse analysis is centrally concerned with power and the competition for it, it is inherently a critical methodology (Alvesson and Wilmont in Elliott 1996). A post-structuralist paradigm differs from a critical one in that it is not concerned with the goal of emancipation of the research participants. Instead, it focuses on the deconstruction of the power of the researcher and moves the spotlight onto the text, “which can itself be deconstructed into a multiplicity of meanings” (Connole 1993: 21).

Post-structural research is concerned with the power of the text given by the researcher and the participants, as well as the multiplicity of meanings and voices that comes from them. The interest is in the contradictions, the slips, and movement around and through the subject - in this case the language of a woman school leader.

### **3.2 Data Collection, Sampling and Interpretation**

The sampling approach is purposeful sampling (Cantrell 1993: 90). One woman was selected as a research participant. The sample size is small due to the nature of the study, which requires a focus on the depth of the discourse produced by the woman. The sample size is not an important factor in discourse analysis because the primary purpose of the research is an examination of the language not the people using it. It is the data (the

language) and the context of its production, which is crucial. The author becomes merely one of many contextual factors (Elliott 1996: 65-6). As the production of generalisations is contrary to the philosophical underpinnings of the study, the need for a larger sample is redundant.

The participant in this study is the coordinator of the Primary School curriculum, which is self developed by the classroom teachers under the guidance of this coordinator. This is a middle management leadership position in the hierarchy of a private, independent, co-educational Years KG – 13 school in Namibia. Other responsibilities of the coordinator include leading internal professional development workshops for the teachers under her auspice and the human, physical and financial resources allocation in the primary sector of the school.

The data collected for this research is written text of a public document. The discourse is from an official school document written by the participant. It is a weekly newsletter. The purpose of the newsletter is to provide a regular channel of communication from the coordinator to the teachers in the primary school. After reviewing a full year's worth of documents, this particular text was selected for reason of typicality. The text is typical in its structure, tone, length, content topics, form and function.

Permission was sought and obtained from the participant to use the text in this study. The purpose of the research is not the betterment of the participant or groups the participant belongs to; instead it is the extension of boundaries surrounding the use of CDA as a way of analysing how women leaders' voices are heard, understood and interpreted. It is important that methods, such as CDA, become more widely available to audiences and accepted as a valid means to extend the intersection of feminist and leadership theories.

Working with discourse raises questions about authorship: Whose story is to be told? Whose voice is to be heard? This raises the issue of power and authority involved in the production and ultimate use of discourse texts.

Much feminist scholarship such as Weedon (1987), Maynard (1994) and Jones (1992) has pointed to the distortions that result from an objective stance to research, and insists that the perspective of the researcher, in terms of gender, class, culture and disciplinary orientation, be taken into account and acknowledged. Thus the recognition and an assessment of the impact on the work of the researcher's own perspective and the quality of the relationship of the interpreter with the author of the discourse needs to be critically examined when using discourses (Jones, 1992). However, it is not always easy or realistically possible to reduce the power dynamic that is likely to be present in the research process, and it is unlikely that it can ever be eradicated completely. It is far too easy to deny the researcher has the knowledge and skills in order to minimise the differences between interpreter and author of the discourse. According to Maynard (1994) the researcher and the participant are positioned differently in relation to both the production of knowledge and the kinds and range of knowledge they possess. Interpretation therefore becomes a crucial part of the process. Reaching conclusions is a social process that can be a political, contested and unstable activity. She goes on to argue that there is no one technique of analysis that overcomes this (Maynard 1994: 7). Instead the researcher should explain her decision making, the process of interpretation and the rationale upon which these acts have been made. This involves acknowledging the contradictions, silences, and absences in the data.

Some of the glib ways in which 'empowerment' is used in discussions of feminist research with women can be a concern. They can represent an arrogance of viewpoint or a failure to think through what power in the particular situation may consist of. Simplistic notions of participation and empowerment may mask power and the responsibility of the researcher; for example, what one does when the researcher's interpretations and understandings of the data is not shared with the participant because it represents a challenge or threat to the participants' perceptions and choices. Reliance on simplistic models of empowerment disguises and denies these complexities. The actual and the appropriate relationship between the researcher and the text raises questions about power and privilege which can be an extremely complex relationship. Yet the complexity need not be limiting or paralysing. What is analysed may not be a single voice, intending a continuing dialogue

about possibilities. This entails acknowledging the complexity and contribution, which may be beyond the interpreter's experience, and recognising the possibility of silences and absences in the data.

Interpretation is structured at least in part by how the data enters into the research process. As an interpreter I need to be continually aware of how problematic interpretation is and will remain. Experience remains one essential and informative source of validity, which is open to reflective interpretation. The position that I wish to take is as such: to claim that there is some level of reality, which can be accessed through the text, but there is no precise solution as to how exactly this can be done. Interpretation then becomes revealed as the key methodological step in the process of attempting to link data and experiences, thoughts, opinions and values. This roots the data in lived experiences, which is key in feminist theory. A number of factors interact in unpredictable ways in any process of interpretation: feminist theory and political values; leadership and management theory; the standpoint and subjectivity of myself; the event of the analysis and the way in which I formulate an account of that occasion.

The interpreter is often actively involved in the shaping of the data; when this is explicitly acknowledged, the nature of the relationship between myself and the data affects the interpretation. This relationship reflects the individuality of both data and myself, which have their own agendas. Glucksmann (1994: 150-1) argues that the reflexivity process must be to include an appreciation of the limits of what can be achieved, and a realistic appraisal of this of the limits of the research. Lather (1992: 95) discusses the importance of radical reflection in how language constructs that which is being researched. Self-reflexivity - the explicit consciousness about one's shaping of the text - will be employed throughout the research process. The need to decentre myself will become crucial in order to avoid hiding myself within the text of the research. Haraway (1988) argues that partial sight and limited voice allow for others to enter the conversation of the text. Haraway advocates that the authority of the author breaks down the authority of the text. I am going to do this according to guidelines provided by Jones (1992: 31) including: making explicit

the process of construction of the text; juxtaposing interpretations/lines of thought; and decentring myself as narrator, explicitly positioning myself.

### **3.3 Validity**

#### **3.3.1 Validity, power, feminist research and subjectivity**

Validity in case study research can be problematic, as the subject is selected for reasons of typicality. Therefore, external validity becomes meaningless and internal validity relies on a fuzzy cause-and-effect relationship that is not applicable in this research (Bassey 1999: 75).

The criteria through which I would judge the validity of this research would be in relation to fulfilling the aims of the research question through an examination of it. The purpose of the research is not to objectively measure the data through a (supposedly) value-free form of data collection or analysis. By contrast there is more of a focus and validation of the subjective reading of the data and the meaning I as the researcher gain from it. Gelsthorpe (1990: 93) suggests that feminist research has been characterised by a concern to record the subjective interpretation of data in doing research. Stanley and Wise (1993) argue that the researcher is also the subject in her research and that her/story is part of the process through which understandings and findings are reached. This is done via the multiple positions that the researcher brings to the study. The positions are subjective and in a constant state of flux and movement. Some of the positions I bring to this study include:

- my gender;
- my professional relationship with the participant as a colleague;
- my role as researcher;
- my academic background in the area of education and women;
- my post-structural view of the world

A discourse analysis provides a route through which the inter-subjectivity of the researched and research can be incorporated and developed. Accepting a definition of feminist research involves recognising that the knowledge that is created and the process of its creation will and should always be contested as it begins from theoretical assumptions and has intended practical applications about which there is often little consensus. This then raises the questions of what is valid feminist knowledge. There seem to be two kinds of arguments: firstly, the concern of the role of experience in feminist research and secondly the process of interpretation.

Feminist research has generally been regarded as being grounded in women's experience. If our concern is to understand women's lives, then much feminist research rightly focuses on creating knowledge about women's experiences. Kelly, Burton and Regan (1994) argue that while initially experience was viewed as a starting point for feminist analysis it has now become an end in itself. The role of experience in feminist research arises when one tries to establish validity in feminist research, particularly in how one carries out the process of interpretation. Holland and Ramazanoglu (1994) suggest feminist researchers can only try to explain the grounds for making explicit the process of decision-making, which produces the interpretation, and the logic of method and which these decisions are based has made selective interpretations. This entails acknowledging the complexity and contradiction, which may be beyond the interpreter's experience, and in recognising the possibility of silences and absences in the data. Part of the reflexivity process of the feminist researcher must include an appreciation of the limits of what can be achieved given the context of the study. The researcher's self-awareness and reflection should include a realistic appraisal of the limits of the research as the locus for an authentic political activity (Glucksmann 1994).

It is clear that there is no one approach or research practice specific to feminist research; instead it embraces a number of theoretical positions and perspectives. Recurrent themes do appear throughout the literature. There is a focus on women's experiences, and concern for ethical questions, which guide research practice, and the role of the researcher within the research. Although these themes may not be specific to feminist work, the ways they

are treated, together with the manner in which they are combined, mean that it is possible to identify the epistemological positions of specific feminist research practices.

There is a problem however in linking some of the arguments made at an epistemological level with what happens, or should happen, in terms of research practice and the use of particular research techniques. Much literature continues to polarise approaches and so reproduce binary oppositions.

Feminist theory underpins this research and will inform the research in particular ways. Fonow and Cook (1991: 72-73) have identified five basic principles applying to feminist methodologies. These principles may be summarised as follows: continuously attending to the significance of gender as a basic feature of all social life, including research; the centrality of consciousness-raising both as a methodological tool and in creating a world view; challenging assumptions of scientific objectivity; identifying particular ethical concerns surrounding the exploitation of women as subjects of knowledge; and an emphasis on the empowerment of women and transformation of organisations through research. All of these principles except that relating to the use of consciousness-raising as a research tool are applied in this research. This is achieved through the use of a post-structural paradigm, and the use of a woman as the participant in this study.

By positioning myself here discourse analysis becomes the basis for a more complex set of analyses which helps make visible questions which constitute the boundaries of current knowledge and help me understand how we may begin to construct what we think we know. Feminist post-structural criticism can intervene in practice and interrupt discourse, through looking at text as a construction, not truth. Text is read in different ways for different meanings (Jones 1992). My role as researcher is to provide a critical reading of the text, but that is all it is: my reading of the text. The text is open to many other ways, both critical and non-critical, of reading and interpretation. The validity of my interpretation comes from my reading of the data.

For all its attractions, post-structuralism as a critique of western thought; or as Lather (1991:159) puts it “ the code name for the crisis in confidence in western conceptual systems” including notions of objectivity, authority, truth and progress, is hugely unsettling. Its celebration of instability unsettles traditional ideas of validity. As a researcher it provokes basic questions of how I construct my authority, and understand the power of the text being analysed. This argument turns critiques of the truth and authority, which characterise post-structural debates, back on feminist analysis itself. This results in more complex view of gender and power than is possible using a radical feminist framework of patriarchal power or liberal feminist framework of equality.

In combination post-structuralism and feminism seem to generate a tension. Post-structuralism celebrates diversity but has been accused of political ambivalence (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe and Cohen 1989). While much feminist research offers politics within which to frame and give validity to research, post-structuralism simultaneously disturbs that politics by placing feminism within a new set of meanings – a different discursive framework – and so destabilising some of its underlying concepts so that the construction of gender becomes the centre of the inquiry (Jones 1992). However, what counts as ‘women interests’ is problematic with the lack of homogeneity within this group, while at the same time this ideal participates in a discourse within which many women’s interests are submerged. A relevant example of this in research is the plethora of these ideals in gender, leadership and management literature.

Post-structuralism provides a language for talking about power and gender in more complex and self-reflexive ways. In arguing that there are no innocent positions, it provides a discourse, or set meanings, to reflect on the ways in which power circulates through the participant’s discourse. It enables us to write and to turn a critical eye upon practices. My role as researcher is to see the ways in which the participant is engaged in both contesting and maintaining existing power relations (Lather 1991: 89).

### 3.3.2 Asking different questions

Lather (1991) Walkerdine (1986) and Davis (1989) all use post-structuralist language in their research and analysis of educational practice. In their work they suggest reformulation of questions usually asked in feminist research is essential when using a post-structuralist framework in research. Examples of this related to this research would include:

- *not* how are women leaders disadvantaged *but* what subject positions are made possible for women by the available discursive practices in which they participate;
- *not* are the arguments true, *but* how is this truth constituted, how is it possible and what effects does it have?
- *not* how does this knowledge reproduce patriarchal relations, *but* how does power work through/in these knowledges and practices.
- 

The second questions open up gaps for exploration of the complexity of gender and power in educational settings. They avoid positioning women as victims and deny the assumption that women are disadvantaged as a result of attitude or patriarchal imposition. Rather women's positions are rooted in conceptual frameworks of western thought and the varying ideological possibilities offered to and taken up by women (Lather 1992).

It includes placing myself within the research; I am not just looking outward at oppressive powers of patriarchy. Discourses position us in particular ways. Similarly research constructs their subjects – authors and readers – within sets of possibilities. Most authors of research and theory position themselves and their research devoid of subjectivity, invisible voices that argue about the data as it 'is'. Readers are therefore positioned as receivers of these truths. Lather argues that:

We must abandon efforts to represent the object of our investigation as it 'really' is ... for a reflexive focus on how we construct that which we are investigating (Lather 1991: 108).

In other words, as all accounts are constructions, we must expose this. I must attempt to make transparent my own constructional moves. If neutrality is an impossible fiction (Haraway 1988), reflexivity about how we construct the world is the basis for establishing validity.

This is not only an epistemological necessity, it is also political. The visibly constructed account is one that deconstructs its own authority; it then becomes more accessible to critical readings than research bound in traditional objectivity. It positions the author as presenting one partial voice amongst others – including that of the reader. The goal here is for the reader to examine their own theoretical assumptions in response to those of the author (Jones 1992).

There are many ways in which to make visible one's constructions within the data. One way of doing this is writing the research in such a way as to assist in making visible how the data 'makes sense' to the researcher. If I locate myself visibly within the text it offers possibilities for the reader to offer a counter-account, a re-vision of the data, or the worldview of the text. The reader is positioned as powerful, as having a voice rather than being positioned as being in receipt of the truth.

However, as a researcher, I must be wary of the dangers that lie in visibly positioning myself within the research. The attempt to de-centre oneself as a researcher is fraught with paradoxes and contradictions. The unsettling of my authority as researcher in turn unsettles the findings of the research. So while I might be pleased to deconstruct and criticise the voices of traditional authority, when I self-reflexively expose my guiding interests I simultaneously open opportunities for traditional authority to de-bunk and disregard my work, in the name of objectivity. Self-reflexivity can be dangerously self-deflating when the requirements and rules support just the opposite.

### **3.3 Method**

#### **3.3.1 Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is connected to post-structuralism in how it attempts to link aspects of social semiotics and variability of meaning. It emphasises the social action aspects of meaning and how people make use of language in everyday situations to help them make sense of the world (Elliott 1996: 65). Language has a variety of functions; it not only represents the world. Foucault (1972) makes the point that we are only able to think within the constraints of discourse. Parker (1990) defines discourse as being "a systems of statements that constructs and object, supports institutions, reproduces power relations and has ideological effects" (Parker 1990: 201)

This idea of the constraints of discourse can be linked to radical feminist theory within organisational thought. Radical feminists believe that it is patriarchal power that forms the basis of organisation and the organisation's culture is dominated by patriarchal ideals of conformity, deference to authority, competition, aggressiveness and efficiency (Hoy and Miskel 1996: 19-20). Therefore by freeing up the constraining discourse of an organisation one can free the underlying and reproducing patriarchal ideals of the organisational culture. Deconstruction is one way of freeing up a discourse.

Deconstruction is supposed to reveal power relations, which are hidden. Deconstruction involves the discovery of the recognisable conceptual structures in every text. For Derrida all text contains its own undermining or subversion (Tong 1989: 222-3). The meaning of discourse is arbitrary by nature and is never fixed; it slips and moves giving way to continual redefinition, reinterpretation and reconstruction. Because of this, discourse is open to a discursive struggle within and between subjects (Angelil-Carter & Murray 1996: 16).

For Foucault (1979) discourse is less random; instead, discourse influences the subjectivity of an individual and is entrenched in historical context and the power and interests that

surround and are vested in its context. Following this discourse then determines implicit rules and constraints on social subjects. Deconstruction of discourse makes explicit the limitations placed upon individuals as social subjects.

Discourse analysis is not always a form of linguistic deconstruction. Researchers vary in their opinions of the purpose and outcomes of discourse analysis. Elliott (1996: 66) states: "Discourse Analysis is concerned with naturally occurring speech and its social, rather than linguistic organisation." It is concerned with the way in which a story may vary which may reveal the contextual and functional character of different stories. This varies from detailed studies of linguistic features found in such works as van Dijk (in Fairclough and Wodak 1997). Edwards and Potter's (1992) study focussed on analytic approaches to gender and employment and uses discourse analysis to focus on dominant themes in the participants' discourse. Potter and Wetherall propose in an earlier study (1987) an analytic approach to data analysis based on searching for patterns in the data and hypothesizing about the function and effects of these. The patterns may differ in consistency, content or form: what they look for are features shared by the different accounts. In this study contextual influence and function are analysed and function in relation to the discursive text. Functions are often hidden and therefore need to be predicted. These predictions often become the end-point of the analysis (Elliott 1996: 66). The predictions in this research are based around the subject's gender and management position within the organisation she works in. The contextual influence analysed is the organisation in relation to Bush's (1995 & 2003) Education Leadership and Management theories.

### **3.3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical Discourse Analysis has emerged from critical linguistic theories that see language as an integral part of social practice and the power relations within and between these practices. The method of critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be used in this research to analyse and interpret the data of written discourses. CDA is distinctive in its view of:

... the relationship between language and society, and the relationship between analysis and the practices analysed (Fairclough and Wodak 1997:1).

CDA can reveal power relationships within and between individuals, organisations and their culture and norms, as well as the wider society. CDA aims to uncover and unravel these power relations as expressed through discourse. The formal communication of one woman leader, within the organisational context, will be deconstructed to reveal how professional discourses are not neutral, but instead are bound by organisational norms, practices and the power relations that it supports.

The focus of power behind the discourse of the research participant and its relationship to the organisation will be investigated. A deconstructive reading of the discourse(s) will involve a critical discourse analysis of the text, which will illuminate the discursive space and practices and its relationship with the organisation. Discursive practices are symbolic constructions, which are mediated through language. They are often loaded with ideology which positions the subject and creates or imposes an identity in ways that reinforce the power relations (often unequal power relations) of the organisation, its structure and human resources. Through critical deconstruction of discourse the possibility of multiple positions becomes available and apparent (Weedon 1987: 76).

Pecheux (in Fairclough and Wodak 1997) was strongly influenced by Foucault. For Pecheux discourse is the intersection between language and ideology, and so:

discourse analysis is the analysis of the ideological dimensions of language use, and the materialization in language of ideology (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 4).

The result is what Pecheux calls 'discursive formation' namely, words used, and their meaning, act according to the position from which they are used. This results in the positioning of people as social subjects. This is not necessarily conscious, as individuals are often unaware of the sources and processes of power in their positioning.

Jager and Jager (in Fairclough and Wodak 1997) concern themselves with collective symbols which have a cohesive role in texts. Discourses are institutionalised and conventionalised speech modes which relate to behaviour and also to dominance (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 8). Collective symbols, metaphors and agentive structures are analysed to reveal the power relations, and its supporting ideology, in the text.

Janks (1997b) discusses CDA as a research tool. She draws mainly on the work of Fairclough (1989, 1995) and argues that the method of CDA provides different levels and dimensions of analysis that provides a means of producing research questions and analysing data (Janks 1997b: 341). Janks (1997b) goes on to discuss the concept of reading text and the various strategies CDA provides in throwing light on the variations of reading a text, and so often generating more questions than answers.

The idea of reading with and against a text as outlined by Janks (1997b: 330) is relevant to this research. She argues that it is easier to read a text critically when the reader feels estranged or alienated from the text, as opposed to critically reading a text that the reader agrees with in terms of the content and the underlying values and interests of the text. This raises the issues of the interests served by the text. There is a range of factors, textual and non-textual, that influence the reader's location of estrangement or engagement with the text, each of these factors are a form of entrapment. These factors may include: reading cooperatively with the text; reading to make sense of the text; the author deliberating writing in such a way so as to limit interpretation and the subjectivity of the reader. Cooperation and institutional power encourages the reader to read for engagement, therefore there is a need to read against the text to counterbalance reading with the text:

Engagement without estrangement is a form of submission to the power of the text regardless of the reader's own positions. Estrangement without engagement is a refusal to leave the confines of one's own subjectivity, a refusal to allow the otherness to enter (Janks 1997b: 331).

Fairclough (1995) argues that one must use the situational context and that the intertextual context is central to the method of interpreting text via the method of CDA. The situational context raises questions about time and place.

Janks (1997b) draws heavily on Fairclough's (1989 and 1995) models of CDA. Janks (1997b: 329) outlines Fairclough's processes of analysing discourse which are three interrelated dimensions: the object of analysis; the process by which the object is produced or received; the socio-historical conditions which dominate the processes. All three dimensions have a three part analytic model: Text (description); processing (interpretation); and social analysis (explanation). This means there are multiple points of entering the analytic process (Janks 1997b: 329).

I have used an analysis of the text using Janks (1997a) model that translates Fairclough's (1989) explanation of his different modes of analysis for CDA to analyse the participant's discourse from her dominant positional power and explore the discursive space. Janks' (1997a) model describes Fairclough's dimensions of discourse and discourse analysis by using three interlinking boxes (see below) within each other is to show how these three means of analysing the data overlap and are layered within each other, and how the movement of analysis can be interconnected at different points and occur simultaneously.

## **Social Analysis**

**(Explanation)** - The social-historical conditions which govern processes

### **Text Analysis**

**(Description)** – The language and the text

### **Processing Analysis**

**(Interpretation)** – The processes by which an object is produced and received.

(Janks, 1997a: 7).

The Social Analysis will focus on the organisational context of the research particularly a situational analysis according to Bush's (1995 & 2003) theories of educational management and leadership, and the organisation cultural norms and values. The Text Analysis will be an actual analysis of the text - both written and visual - used in the document. The Processing Analysis will investigate the idea of interpretation and how we make sense of what the author and reader both bring to the text and the tensions that can co-exist between them.

## Chapter 4: Discourse Analysis of a Staff Newsletter

For the purposes of this research the following model, taken from Janks (1997a) will be used to describe, interpret and explain the discourse. This chapter will follow the structure of the model outlined below:

### 4.1 Social Analysis

(Explanation) – context of the research

This is the organisational contextual framework within which this woman leader works including:

- 4.1.1 Introduction to socio-historical context
- 4.1.2 Organisational structure and goals of the school
- 4.1.3 Organisational culture and useful metaphors
- 4.1.4 Curriculum at the school
- 4.1.5. Roles and responsibilities of the participant

### 4.2 Text Analysis

(Description)

- 4.2.1 An analysis of the actual language used in the text.

### 4.3 Processing Analysis

(Interpretation)

- 4.3.1 Patterns within the text
- 4.3.2 The relationship between the author and the audience
- 4.3.3 Power of the meaning of the text, a discursive space

## **4.1 Social Analysis (Explanation)**

### **4.1.1 Introduction to Context of the Study**

If critical discourse analysis is concerned with the study of the relationship between language, power and its context, one cannot examine the text from which the discourse comes without looking at what is surrounding it – the context of both the author of the newsletter and the organisation in which she works.

While there may be problems with drawing a dichotomy between a discourse and its context, by fully examining the role context plays in a discourse one can achieve a deeper understanding from which to interpret the discourse. It may also reveal a range of positions and experiences within which the participant works, and provide a perspective from which to interpret the woman's way of moving through, and working in the webs of relationships and structures which makes up her professional world. The individual is connected to the world through social groups, structural relations, and identities. These are not inflexible categories to which an individual can be reduced. The very act of interpretation requires me to choose among the multiple identities and associations that shape a life. Furthermore, addressing context involves understanding the meaning of the participant's frame of reference and making sense of that life from the different and necessarily comparative frame of reference of a researcher.

The intersection of an individual life course and a specific moment in time is an aspect of context that needs to be analysed; as this intersection provides insight into the way a life takes the shape it does, and how a woman makes sense of her world. Context demonstrates the importance of frameworks of meaning through which an individual orientates herself in the world, and the exploration of ways in which the researcher's own context shapes both the formation and the interpretation of a discourse.

The participant in this research is employed at a school located in Windhoek, Namibia. It is a private, non-profit school registered with the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture. A board of directors governs the school. Membership of the Board consists of representative members of the school's community. It includes the school director, elected parents, co-opted individuals, a teacher representative, and a Parent Teacher Association representative.

The school offers education to students aged three to nineteen years. It is comprised of a diverse community with over forty-five nationalities represented in the student, parent and staff body. The school was founded in 1990. The school began with 150 students and 15 teachers, and moved into its own purpose-built facilities in 1994. It is designed as a village to reflect the concept of a learning community. In January 2005 the school had over 400 learners and 62 teaching and non-teaching staff members.

## **4.1.2 Organisational Structure and Goals of the School**

### **4.1.2.1 Theory informing the organisational structure**

Theory informs management practice in education by providing a basis for understanding the relationship between theoretical models of quality and the improvement of management and leadership in meeting the changing needs of all stakeholders in educational organisations.

People struggle to understand and predict the behaviour in complex organisations such as schools because so many different people and factors are involved, and it can feel as if it is impossible to take everything into account. In place of a comprehensive representation of the organisation, individuals develop theories or models to help understand the complex entity.

I have chosen to use Bush's (1995) six models of leadership and management theory to provide a framework to guide an analysis of the organisational framework of the context of the study. These models provide ways of looking at, and analysing educational institutions. Bush's models show significant insight into the way in which people think about management and leadership within an organisation. By using these models we are able to better understand how the organisational structure, culture and climate impact on the behaviours of the members within the organisation. The behaviour that is analysed in this study is language. Language does not stand alone; it is closely bound to its context. The context from which language is generated determines the form, function and patterns of interaction that are considered appropriate or not, within the space from which the language is generated and received, by the author and listener respectively. If we understand more fully the context from which the data originates then we can better comprehend the discursive spaces that the language creates. Bush's (1995) models are specific to not only educational organisations but also to the leadership and management practices within them; hence their selection as a tool with which to analyse the organisational context of this study.

#### **4.1.2.2 The Management Team**

The senior management team of the school consists of a director and two principals, one primary and one secondary. The director is accountable to the Board for the operation of the school. There are a number of co-ordinators who report to the principals. These co-ordinators are leaders of teams of staff within the school. Each team co-ordinator is accountable to members of the management team and, along with senior management personnel, is a member of the Educational Council. The Council's purpose is to ensure the maintenance and development of the mission, philosophy and objectives of the school. This Council is considered middle management of the school as the members have considerable accountability to people, and responsibilities for tasks.

The organisational structure of the school is typical of Bush's (1995) formal models in that it can be seen as an objective fact. The work of members of the organisation is defined in terms of their formal role within the structure (Bush 1995: 42). Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of members can be clearly outlined in relationship to each other (see Appendix A). However, the existence of an Education Council, which is a large decision-making committee concerning all educational matters relevant to the school, shows a move towards collegial models. While it does not allow all individuals in the organisation equal right to determine or influence policy decisions it does "represent a shift along the continuum towards collective working" (Bush 1995: 63).

The official organisational structure at the school gives formal leadership roles to both senior and middle management. This is characterised by formal models in Bush (1995). In these models the leader is situated at the top of the organisational structure, in the case of this school, the three senior management members. Middle management leaders require the consent of colleagues so that:

Policy initiatives can (sic) be carried through into departmental and classroom practice...Heads of self-managing schools and colleges have to share power with other staff in order to cope with the sheer volume of work arising from their enhanced responsibility for managing finance, staff and external relations... The hierarchy remains intact but the apex comprises a team rather than a single individual (Bush 1995: 44).

The organisational structure of the school, at a glance, appears to exemplify formal models in that there is a hierarchy of position, and within this hierarchy spheres of influence and power. However, upon closer examination, the meanings, values and beliefs that individuals bring to the organisation can give them influence. This is due to the collegial nature of the organisational culture developed through a sense of collectiveness amongst members of the community. An organisation that is willing to foster a sense of collectiveness needs to listen and acknowledge the meanings, values and beliefs that the members of the organisation bring to it. If the organisation considers these values and beliefs to be beneficial or conducive to the school and its culture then the individual will be provided with an opportunity to exert or implement these. This will be done via

appointment to a middle management position on the Educational Council at the school. This shows how the collegial nature of the school can support and legitimise the formal structure of the organisation.

#### **4.1.2.3 Organisational Goals**

The organisational goals of the school exhibit characteristics of both formal and collegial models in that it is a goal and objective orientated organisation. How these goals and objectives are achieved is typified by feature of collegial models. Collaborative decision-making and power sharing occurs in the middle-management structure of the school. Every staff member has a representative, namely a coordinator, on the school's Education Council where important educational matters are discussed and decided upon.

#### **4.1.2.4 External Environment**

The school is very sensitive to its external environment because it is a small private school that relies on membership for a large part of its funding. Being an educational institution with educational objectives there are aspects of the organisation that cannot be decided upon by the external environment, for example curriculum initiatives. However, as one of the objectives of the school is to maintain financial viability, it is required to be responsive to its funding source. Thus, the organisation epitomises an open formal model. The school is imbued with a spirit of internationalism and so is accountable to the needs of the international community in Windhoek, as well as responding to the local Namibian educational community. The school needs to be interdependent with both these external environments in order to continue operating.

In conclusion, the school is strongly influenced by formal - more open than closed-approaches to educational management. This is due to the need for a prescribed approach to be in place in order for the production of specified outputs and outcomes to be realised.

As a goal seeking institution it is very difficult to avoid this approach. The way in which the formal structure operates can be closely tied to collegial models. This is due to the size of the organisation and special nature of the school. People choose to be members of the organisation. This automatically develops a sense of collectiveness and shared meaning. This manifests itself, both administratively and educationally, in decision-making processes.

### **4.1.3 Organisational Culture and Useful Metaphors**

It is difficult to discuss the organisation of an institution without discussing its organisational culture. The structure of an organisation and the relationship the members have with both the organisation itself and other members of the organisation are critical to the functioning of the organisation. An organisation is not just a physical structure with members, but an entity composed of the norms, values and beliefs of the individuals within the structure, and how these are contested, negotiated, learned and lived.

Hoy and Miskel define organisational culture as “manifest in norms, shared values, and basic assumptions” (Hoy and Miskel 1996: 126) They go on to state that school cultures can be explained by analysing their symbols, artefacts, rites and ceremonies, icons, heroes, myths, rituals and legends. Organisational climate is seen to be the manifestation of teachers’ collective perceptions of organisational behaviour.

It has been proposed effective organisational cultures are ones where there is a good match amid strategy, environment, and culture (Dennison, in Hoy and Miskel 1996: 135). Four kinds of organisational culture are put forward. The first is called the adaptability culture. In this culture there is a strong emphasis on the external environment with change and flexibility being a central feature. The mission culture serves the external environment; stability and direction are given significance. This culture is marked by a shared vision whereby employees go beyond requirements and leaders shape the mission of the organisation. The third type of culture described is the involvement culture. It is in this culture that members’ sense of responsibility and commitment to the organisation is a key

to its success. Membership involvement and participation is crucial in a rapidly changing external environment. The fourth culture described by Dennison is that of a consistency culture. This is a culture characterized by a stable external environment, with an internal focus. Dependability and reliability are the hallmarks of this model.

Adaptability, mission and involvement culture are applicable to this school. The viability of the school is dependent on its external culture. Members of the organisation go beyond the requirements of their terms of employment due to the nature of the school's philosophy and objectives. It is this philosophy that shapes its culture, which is used to market the school to its external environment and so ensuring its financial viability.

Four metaphors have been proposed to explain school culture: *the family*; *the machine*; *the cabaret*; and *the little shop of horrors* (Steinoff and Owens in Hoy and Miskel 1996: 138) Parallels can be drawn between these metaphors and Bush's models. *The family* can be seen in collegial models. *The machine* can be compared to formal models. *The cabaret* corresponds with elements of cultural models. Finally, *the little shop of horrors* describes aspects of ambiguity models. In relation to the school there are connections to *the machine*. A school as an organisation is required to produce some kind of output. This is set against its goals and objectives. How the school does this is defined by the organisation's culture. Here there is a tension between *the machine*, as a productive device and *the family*, a team of players who work together under a common vision of the coach, the leader.

#### **4.1.4 Curriculum at the school**

In order to understand the context from which the data is generated one needs to understand the leadership and management roles and responsibilities the participant has within the school.

The participant in the research is the coordinator of the Primary Years Programme (PYP) at the school. The International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO), whose headquarters are in Cardiff Wales, offers three programmes of international education that span the primary,

middle and secondary school years. The Primary Years Programme (PYP) is designed for students aged 3-12, the Middle Years Programme (MYP) for students' aged 11-16, and the Diploma Programme (DP) for students aged 16-19. The school implements both the PYP and the DP programmes.

The PYP provides an opportunity for students to construct meaning, principally through concept-driven inquiry. Traditional academic subjects are part of the programme but it emphasizes the interrelatedness of knowledge and skills through a multi-disciplinary programme of inquiry. The PYP focuses on the heart as well as the mind and addresses social, physical, emotional and cultural needs as well as academic ones. The PYP focuses on the development of the whole child, in the classroom but also in the world outside, through other environments where children learn. It offers a framework that meets the academic, social, physical, emotional and cultural needs of the students. The programme is a comprehensive approach to teaching and learning with an international curriculum model that provides: guidelines for what students should learn; a teaching methodology; and assessment strategies. At the heart of the PYP is a commitment to structured inquiry as a vehicle for learning.

#### **4.1.5 Participant's Roles and Responsibilities**

The Primary Principal retains overall responsibility for the Primary school, and the PYP Coordinator reports directly to her. The PYP Coordinator is responsible for the implementation and coordination of the Primary Years Programme (PYP). The responsibilities include:

- working with the Principal on all matters relating to the development of the PYP Programme within the Primary School;
- coordinating and leading planning meetings to facilitate the development of the Programme of Inquiry, promote team planning and a spirit of professional collaboration;
- working with all the Primary staff (teachers and assistants) in order to promote effective inquiry-based teaching practices;

- working with the Primary Principal and the Primary staff to further develop and improve assessment practices appropriate for the Programme of Inquiry and the PYP in the Primary School;
- working with all Primary Coordinators and library staff to encourage and ensure appropriate, meaningful, and manageable links across the curriculum;
- ensuring that all the Primary staff have and are familiar with all curriculum documents and policies pertaining to the PYP;
- organising a periodic and systematic review of curriculum documents and policies pertaining to the PYP;
- working with the Primary Principal on the planning and development of appropriate in-service opportunities;
- working with both the Primary and Secondary Principals and all coordinators in the Primary and Secondary School to provide a fully articulated, written curriculum from Pre-School to Year 13;
- working with the Primary Principal to develop, deliver and ensure distribution of information materials for parents with regard to the PYP;
- developing and maintaining professional links with PYP Coordinators in other international and national school around the world;
- dealing with the IBO office on all matters related to the development and implementation of the PYP;
- reporting on an annual basis to the Primary staff about the major developments and achievements of the PYP (McGough 1999: 1-2).

This job description involves transactional type activities that support the school's goals and objectives. The role of PYP Coordinator in the organisation is an example of formal model of leadership according in Bush (1995). The role description highlights the official and structural elements of the organisation in that she is required to work with other leaders in the school and follow the organisations rational objectives through rational methods, for example deliver and ensure distribution of information materials. Importance

is given to the recognition of others within the organisation itself, for example working with Principals to ensure there is a written curriculum.

It is under this formal model that the leader is expected to play a central role in policy-making, and innovations follow (Bush: 1995: 43). Opposition or resistance to this is not acknowledged. The information flows from the top down and it is expected to be accepted and even embraced by staff members. The discourse shows that these are common sense assumptions that underlie the text. It is taken for granted that the leadership will not be opposed, that her voice is that of authority: this is presented as natural.

As explained earlier, the text is from a newsletter written by the Primary Years Programme (PYP) Coordinator to the primary staff members, homeroom teachers, teaching assistants and specialist subject teachers such in the areas of Art, Music, ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) and Learning Support. The newsletter is distributed to 16 staff members on a weekly basis throughout the school term. The author is the Primary School PYP Coordinator. The Primary School Principal also writes a newsletter, often though not always jointly, with the PYP Coordinator. This is not the case with the text used in this research. The PYP Coordinator was the sole author.

Typical issues that the PYP Coordinator's newsletter deals with are: staff meeting schedules; staff professional development programmes, both internal and external; school community events such as parent-teacher conferences and seminars; and general administrative matters, such as ordering of stationary. Both the PYP Coordinators' and Principals' newsletters are for internal circulation only and the purpose is to keep teachers informed and aware of relevant issues and upcoming events, as well as being a tool for exercising and informing the staff of their leadership and management practices. The PYP Coordinator's newsletter's primary focus is on curriculum practices, development, and planning. The purpose of the newsletter reflects the traits of formal leadership as outlined by Bush (1995) as it highlights the hierarchical relationship between members of the organisation and stresses the rational process of decision making, and so giving the appearance of objectivity and impartiality being at play.

## **4.2 Text Analysis (Description)**

### **4.2.1 Text used for analysis**

Following is a copy of the original text used in the Critical Discourse Analysis. The text is referenced as Cross 2004:1 from this point.

## From the PYP Coordinator

14<sup>th</sup> June 2004

### Trial of New IBPYP Planner Template

We are one of the 40 schools who have been selected to trial the new PYP planner next year. On the downside, this means more changes in unit planning, but on the upside we will be able to have some influence on the way the new planner looks. It also builds on our relationship with the IB in Cardiff, and our involvement with the development of the PYP in general, which must be good! I will be receiving the draft revised planner this week. If you would like a sneak preview, let me know: otherwise I will save it till August. Then we will be able to decide whether or not we all want to use the new planner, or just selected year levels.

### Mini-meetings

I would like to have one last chance to check that documents and resource banks are in place for August. I will come to your rooms as follows:



Wed 16<sup>th</sup> period 3 Y1  
period 5 Y4  
period 6 Y5

Thu 17<sup>th</sup> period 4 Y2 + KG  
period 6 Y3  
Fri 18<sup>th</sup> period 5 Y6

### That Was The Year That Was

It says in my job description that I should 'publish an annual report informing staff of major developments in our implementation of the PYP'. So, here is a summary of the main goals from this year's PYP action plan that we achieved this year:

- Improved the generation, recording and use of student questions
- Improved assessment (policy, planning and practices) - including implementation of portfolios, preparation for student-led conferences and setting up assessment goals and records
- Implemented Computers4Kids
  - Built our understanding and delivery of inquiry in the classroom
  - Put in place year overviews for integrated and stand-alone planning
  - Improved integration of single subjects in the PYP
  - Held parent workshops on supporting inquiry and reading at home
  - Held a special focus week which underscores the transdisciplinary nature of the PYP
  - Held a Year 6 Exhibition which fulfills the IB requirements
  - Started revision of the Mathematics and Language scope and sequence documents
- Shared strategies for teaching research skills and reading non-fiction
- Improved classroom environments
- Introduced and investigated Organising Themes in class
- Reviewed use of textbooks and worksheets
- Set up resource banks for units of inquiry



Of course, many of these tasks are ongoing, and we can never really cross anything off our 'To do' list, but I think it's worth acknowledging how far we've come in such a short space of time - especial considering this is all in addition to teaching the kids, taking them on field trips, writing reports...!

We all deserve a pat on the back and a year off, but I suppose we can make do with a couple of parties and a six-week break! I would just like to give my personal thanks to all of you for another productive and professionally supportive year. Have a great holiday, and to those of you who are leaving, we will miss you and wish you all the best in your new endeavours. For those who are still going to be with us next year, I look forward to working with you more closely as a full-time coordinator. For those who are going to Martigny, *au revoir / à bien tôt!*

*Jeanette*

#### 4.2.2 An analysis of the language used in the text

The analysis of the following discourse will reveal how the power of the participant is socially constructed within an organisation, how she is constructed as a social subject and how her social relations and knowledge perpetuate the hidden power relations to the intended audience of her writing. If language is the primary substance from which the discourse is realised who does it include and exclude? How does the discourse regulate and constrain the subjects, both the author and the audience? What are the desired social practices that emerge from the discourse? Who are the active and passive agents within the discourse? Who has access to certain forms of knowledge and power in order to gain intended (or unintended) meaning from the text? All of the above questions lead to the primary research question of: where are the discursive struggles and spaces within the discourse?

In the study of linguistics the distinction between form and function is important. When analysing discourse factors such as different ways of opening and closing the encounter, different role relationships, different purposes and settings are all a part of the discourse functions. Language forms within discourse may include grammatical, lexical and phonological forms. In the following data analysis I am more concerned with the discourse functions than their forms, though the form may strongly influence the function of the discourse. I am as less concerned about what the author is *doing* with the language as what she is *saying*. Namely, function over form. Context is crucial in understanding function. Therefore Critical Discourse Analysis is fundamentally concerned with the relationship between language, power and the contexts of its use. To understand a discourse's context is to understand the purpose of the discourse, its message, meaning and the underlying power relationships.

What follows is a critical discourse analysis of the actual language used in the text. This is not an attempt to analyse the text in the detail usually required from conventional discourse analysis. In a more traditional approach the text would be analysed in more detail. In this

study the text analysis is one of the three parts of the overriding method of critical discourse analysis according to Janks' (1997a) model. It is the meaning behind, under and between the messages produced by the language that is critical. Therefore the actual text analysis of the language need not be complex. What the text analysis is looking for are the messages. The messages are then analysed and interpreted according to the contextual conditions from which they come.

### 4.2.3 Text Analysis (Description)

Original Text	Text Analysis (Description) <i>Messages</i>
Image of the IBO Logo	Reinforces positional legitimacy of author as the PYP Coordinator
We are one of the 40 schools who have been <u>selected</u> to trial the new PYP planner next year.	Elitism?
but on the <u>upside we will</u> be able	Use of 'we' reinforces organisational identity reinforced with the image of the IBO logo. Use of the modal 'will' is a directive.
<u>to have some influence</u> on the way planner looks.	The <u>trade off</u> for the downside is having 'influence' – influence is a form of power?
It also <u>builds on</u>	Implies 'develop'/'further' – an active verb
<u>our relationship</u> with	Personalises the readers attachment to organisation – the 'family metaphor'

**Comment [ST1]:** 'Of the chosen'

**Comment [ST2]:**

**Comment [ST3]:** Trade off for the downside is having 'influence' as a form of power

**Comment [ST4]:** Implies 'develop'/'further'

**Comment [ST5]:**

the IB in Cardiff, and	Naming the wider global organisation -	<b>Comment [ST6]:</b>
our	'our' as a personal pronoun is used either side of the naming of the organisational attachment – creates a sense of organisational identity?	<b>Comment [ST7]:</b> Personal pronoun of joint ownership
involvement with the development of the PYP in general, which	The reader is made aware of their personal contribution to changes in the school programme (PYP). A valued member of the organisation?	<b>Comment [ST8]:</b> Reader is made aware of their personal contribution to changes in the curriculum, namely PYP.
must be good!	The use of “!” as an engagement signal and the use of the modal 'must' indicates certainty	<b>Comment [ST9]:</b> Use of “!” as an engagement signal and the use of the modal 'must' – persuasive commercial language – selling an idea to the reader
I will be receiving the draft revised planner this week.	extensive use of personal pronouns indicating positional authority – I am the gatekeeper of this document?	<b>Comment [ST10]:</b> Personal pronoun indicates positional authority
If you would like a sneak preview, let me know:	indicates that the author is prepared to assist or help the reader - serving the audience (servant leadership)	<b>Comment [ST11]:</b> Underlying message is that "I am the gatekeeper of this document"
otherwise I will save it to August.	“Save” implies the object has much value – a treasure to relish	<b>Comment [ST12]:</b> The conditional <b>Comment [ST13]:</b> Serving the audience
Then we will be able decide whether or not	Indicates collaborative decision making – the 'family' metaphor	<b>Comment [ST14]:</b> “Save” implies it has much value – a treasure to relish <b>Comment [ST15]:</b> Indicates collaborative decision making

<p><u>we</u> want to use <u>the new planner</u>, or just selected year levels.</p>	<p>Personal pronoun 'we' implies collaboration  - in actuality it is the reader who uses these planners</p> <p>Note the use of "I" and "we" throughout the previous paragraph – I initially to show the author has ownership of the document and "we" more frequently later in the paragraph show the notion of joint decision making over the use of the document and collaboration- the metaphor of the ‘family’  Underlying message = 'I' own the document – it is in my safe keeping but 'we' will decide and use</p>
<p><u>I would like</u> to have one last chance</p>	<p>Polite request – formal positional authority</p>
<p><u>to check documents</u> and resource banks <u>are in place</u> for August.</p>	<p>Positional power – supervisor checking the readers work is completed – the metaphor of the ‘machine’</p>
<p><u>I will come</u> to your rooms as follows:</p>	<p>Not a request after all - use of the modal will indicates this checking is a certainty/requirement</p>
<p>It says in my job description that <u>I should</u> ‘publish an annual report informing staff of major developments in</p>	<p>Author showing she is obligated to follow administrative practices – indicates positional authority and task orientated behaviour – the ‘machine’ metaphor</p>

**Comment [ST16]:** Personal pronoun 'we' implies joint use by the author and reader - in actuality it is the reader who uses these planners

**Comment [ST17]:** Polite request

**Comment [ST18]:** Positional power – supervisor checking work

**Comment [ST19]:** are completed ?

**Comment [ST20]:** Not a request after all - use of the modal will indicates this checking is a certainty.

**Comment [ST21]:**

<p><u>our</u> implementation of the PYP’.</p>	<p>Pronoun indicates joint responsibility of the implementation – implies a team</p>
<p>So, here is a summary of the main goals from this year’s PYP action plan that <u>we achieved</u> this year:</p>	<p>Team achievement of the below points – on the surface the purpose could be to synthesise goals attained throughout the year and underneath the surface to validate the author’s role in the readers’ professional lives. Task orientated success</p>
<p>Image of people climbing a rock</p>	<p>symbolising the up-hill battle/struggle? Or a sense of achievement once the climbers have reached the top – are the teachers the climbers?</p>
<p>Image of someone sitting at their desk working at night.</p>	<p>reinforcing the value of administrative roles in the author or readers job – valued organisational behaviour</p>
<p>Of course, <u>many of these tasks</u> are ongoing, and we can never really cross anything off our “To do’ list, but I think it’s worth acknowledging <u>how far we’ve come</u> in such a short space of time –</p>	<p>indicates task orientated behaviour</p>
<p>especially considering this is all in addition to teaching the kids, taking them on field trips, writing reports ...!</p>	<p>Inducing comradeship and collegiality through the use of congratulations to progress made – metaphor of the ‘family’</p>
<p></p>	<p>Acknowledgment of readers role outside of issues documented here – note the readers, and not the author, fulfil these obligations, as it is not part of the author's job description</p>

**Comment [ST22]:** Pronoun indicates joint ownership of author and reader

**Comment [ST23]:** Joint achievement of the below points – on the surface the purpose could be to synthesise goals attained throughout the year and underneath the surface to validate the author’s role in the readers’ professional lives.

**Comment [ST24]:** Inducing comradeship through the use of congratulations

**Comment [ST25]:** Acknowledgment of readers role outside of issues documented here – note the readers, and not the author, fulfil these obligations, as it is not part of the author's job description

<p><u>We all deserve a pat on the back</u> and a year off, but I suppose we can make do with a couple of parties and a six-week break!</p>	<p>Congratulatory- celebratory – a ‘happy family’ metaphor</p> <p>a personal link with the reader – we celebrate in the same way?</p>
<p>I would like to <u>give my personal thanks to all of you</u> for</p>	<p>“personal thanks to all of you” yet no-one is named</p>
<p>another <u>productive</u> and professionally supportive year.</p>	<p>A valued professional trait – task orientated with support – the ‘machine’ surrounded by the ‘family’ metaphor</p>
<p>Have a great holiday, and to <u>those of you</u> who are leaving,</p>	<p>Group of people not individual names – informal indicating collegiality</p>
<p><u>we</u> will miss you and wish you all the best in your new endeavours.</p>	<p>Who is we? Administration? Who is the author speaking on behalf of? Positional power gives her authority to speak on behalf of others</p>
<p>For those who are still going to be with us next year, I look forward to <u>working with you more closely</u> as a full-time coordinator.</p>	<p>Outlining structure of future relationship – use of the preposition with – to work with implies collegial leadership (as opposed to work for (servant leadership), or work under (directive leadership))</p>

**Comment [ST26]:** Self-congratulatory

**Comment [ST27]:** “personal thanks” yet no-one is named

**Comment [ST28]:** Highly valued professional trait

**Comment [ST29]:** Group of people not individual names

**Comment [ST30]:** Who is we? Administration? returning teachers? – Who is the author speaking on behalf of?

**Comment [ST31]:** Outlining structure of future relationship

<p>For those who are going to Martigny, au revoir / a bien tot!</p>	<p>A reference to an upcoming professional development course in Martigny in</p>
<p>Signed – first name</p>	<p>Switzerland – use of French language reinforces the international nature of the organisation.</p> <p>Use of first name only is informal – indicating collegiality – the ‘family’</p>

**Comment [ST32]:** A reference to an upcoming professional development course in Martigny in Switzerland – use of French reinforces the international nature of the organisation.

Key linguistic features work to position the readers/listeners through the speech act of requests, instructions, and exclamations - “!” - as an engagement signal lead to a pattern of positional power through:

- ownership of administrative documents;
- checking on staff’s management of administrative tasks.

This pull in the direction of hierarchical downward gaze as typified in Bush’s (1995) formal models of leadership.

The overall construction of the text has logical reasoning, and sequencing, as shown in following written organisational structure:

- looking ahead to next year;
- final year check on teachers;
- achievements of the year;
- celebrations and upcoming professional development overseas.

The visual selection and organisation of images used reinforce meaning behind the text. There are three visual images within the text:

- the IBO logo which reinforces organisational membership and positional authority of author as PYP coordinator (a mandatory organisational position in order to be authorised to provide the PYP at the school);
- a filing cabinet which reinforces the authors authority through the checking of teachers administrative duties;
- rock climbers climbing a steep cliff, this gives a message of joint annual achievement, but the task is yet to be completed, which in turn validates the existence and continuation of the author's job and its description.

The general interaction pattern between author and reader is an active/passive interaction. The author is active the reader is passive. As a reader you have a sense of being spoken to or being spoken at.

The major internal contradictions that exist in the text are the use of informal language and colloquial language being used such as "pat on the back" yet there is an over-riding message of power through the confirming topics of the content of the text, such as checking administrative documents. This demonstrates how the use of register, which in this data is informal, is used to disguise the authoritative message and positional power.

This discourse of leadership - formal and authoritative - is based on positional power. It ensures there is a reproduction of relationships, which works to sustain existing relations of power and social practice. It is through what the leader chooses to congratulate "productive and supportive" (Cross 2004: 1) that these personal and professional values that are being validated and reinforced are reproduced through the organisational norms and social practices.

The language the leader uses creates a discourse that regulates the subjects as readers by positioning the leader as the gatekeeper of knowledge and documents. The desired social practice that emerges from the discourse is conformity to the leader's authority. The author of the discourse is an active agent through the language she uses, by writing in the active first person, and positions the readers as passive agents who are required to digest the

information given in order to be able to complete their job tasks and conform to the organisational practices and norms. While the leader has access to certain forms of knowledge (the new PYP Planners) and power (coming to check documents), because the staff members are aware of this, they are able to understand the unintended meaning of the text, being positional formal leadership power.

### **4.3 Processing Analysis (Interpretation)**

#### **4.3.1 Patterns within the text**

Making sense of a text is an act of interpretation which depends on what the reader brings to the text, and what the author places in the text. Relevant linguistic features of the language and how they influence or reflect the social context in which it is produced is discussed in this section. The speech acts or forms that are asked of the reader are requests, instructions, and exemplifications. Markers are linguistically signals of semiotic and discourse functions (e.g. *-ed* on the end of a verb indicates the past tense). In other words the language is performing these particular kinds of acts.

There is less spontaneity in written discourse compared to spoken discourse, which leads to the question what rules or norms do people stick to when creating written texts. The idea that written text is somehow more contextually free than spoken text is criticized as being oversimplified by McCarthy (1991: 168).

The sentence is the most obvious grammatical unit of writing. Larger patterns, which have a cause-relational approach to text, include: situation/problem; response/evaluation; problem/solution; and question/answer patterns of interaction (McCarthy 1991: 30-1).

According to McCarthy (1991: 31) the problem-solution pattern is often culturally ingrained, and often seen in texts in sequences such as situation-problem-response-evaluation which may vary. But all these elements will occur in well-formed text (*Ibid.*). Problem-solution pattern are common in texts, and can be seen in the data as:

**Situation:** the school is selected to trail the new PYP planner  
**Problem:** there will be more changes in unit planning  
**Response:** but we have influence on the development of the PYP  
**Evaluation:** our involvement builds relationship with IBO in Cardiff.

The evaluation response here reinforces the leader's connection with the wider organisational identity which is the IBO. This is important as not only does the text open with this pattern but it also defines the author's authority as a leader at the very beginning of the text.

#### **4.3.2 The relationship between the author and the audience**

When discussing text interpretation one needs to consider who is speaking to whom? When? Where? On what occasion? In this case it is a woman school leader speaking to teachers at the end of the academic year. It is a weekly internal document within the organisation that is distributed through staff members' pigeon holes, placing further emphasis on the actual text as it is never verbalised or spoken to; instead the purpose of the text is for the staff members to read. While the register is informal, the voice and tone of the message send a clear signal to the audience that there is a hierarchical power relationship from the leader to the teachers. This can be linked to Ashcroft's (1995:302) idea of the *message event*, the point at which language, the writer and the reader coincide to produce meaning. The distance created in this event is not a result of actual language used but how the language reads as a result of strategies of language variance. This is where post-structuralism can also play an important role as the slips, discontinuities and contradictions begin to become apparent. This can be seen in the text:

"I would like to have one last chance to check that documents and resource banks are in place for August" (Cross 2004: 1). The intention of the author may be just that – to check the documents. However, the message the reader may receive is *'I would like to come and check that you have your documents and that resource banks are in place.'* There is a gap

here between writer and reader. If the message event for the reader is: She is coming to check *I have my documents ... in place (sic)*. While according to both the author and reader this would fit with Bush's (1995) formal model of leadership highlighting the official and structural elements of the organisation, and where importance is given to positional power, the message gap could create a situation where the reader would view the leadership style as authoritarian and suspicious due to the use of positional power. In this example the positional power means the author can come and check, but the message gap is created when the reader interprets this as being a check on them. The text is demonstrating how discourse can create a message gap between the author and reader but within the same leadership model.

The relations that exist between the writer and reader include the following:

- compliance "I will come to your rooms" (Cross 2004: 1);
- personal through the use of 'voice' by writing in the first person "It says in my job description..." and "I would like to give my personal thanks" (Cross 2004: 1);
- positional authority by speaking on behalf of others " and to those of you who are leaving, we will miss you" (Cross 2004: 1). Here it is not clear who she is speaking on behalf of, either the schools management team or the remaining staff.
- Positioning herself as a non-active agent "It says in my job description..." (Cross 2004: 1) which implies the motivation for listing the accomplishments is because it is a requirement from higher authorities. Here she is able to demonstrate to the staff how she must comply with others. The message the reader may receive is '*I should comply to others demands (through the hierarchical chain) you (reader) should comply to my (author) requests*'.

One purpose of the content of the text is to disseminate information to staff:

Kinds include:

- What staff should know as it will affect their future workload;
- What need to know as it will affect their schedules the following week;

- What the author would like them to know as it acknowledges what the staff and the leader have achieved this year;
- A message of thanks best wishes to all the staff for the future.

Each of these serves as a different function be it to disseminate information, instructional, or best intentions. The author's use of the first person gives a clear and strong voice of authority to the text.

Another purpose of the content is to use language to construct a representation of the world through the connection to organisational identity to the IBO through the validation of the PYP and its development. This connection reinforces and affirms the organisational culture and practices that in turn support the author's positional authority.

The ideal reader of this text is a compliant employee who relies on instructions, organisational affiliations, and who values group achievements. Assumptions about what the reader knows and values enable us to work out who the ideal reader is through the references to:

- mini meetings (instructions);
- PYP (organisational affiliation);
- achievement for the year "we achieved" (values group achievements).

This last point would indicate, despite the obvious value given to a formal model of management, a desire to appear collegial as outlined in Bush's (1995) models.

### **4.3.3 The power and meaning of the text: a discursive space**

When I examine the power and meaning of the text, it sets the stage for contradictions. It is important to note I am not examining differences or mismatch between the message intended by the author of the text and the message received by the reader of the text.

Instead what is examined are the positions the author takes up in transmitting the messages to the readers and the power and discursive spaces surrounding them.

Bush (2003) links collegial models of management to transformative, participative and interpersonal leadership. Transformative dimensions that the participant brings to the text as outlined by Bush (2003: 77) include:

- offering individualized support: “if you would like a sneak preview, let me know” and “I would like to give my personal thanks”
- modeling best practices and important organizational values: “here is a summary of the main goals from this year’s PYP action plan that we achieved this year”
- demonstrating high performance expectations: “it also builds on our relationship with the IB in Cardiff, and our involvement with the development of the PYP in general”
- attempting to create a productive school culture: “I think it is worth acknowledging how far we have come in such a space of time – especially considering this is all in addition to teaching the kids, taking them on field trips, writing reports ...!”
- Interpersonal leadership: characteristics are seen the attempt to stress the importance of collaboration and interpersonal relationships “For those of you who are leaving, we will miss you and wish all the best in your new endeavors. For those of you who are still going to be with us next year, I look forward to working with you more closely”.

Bush (2003: 54) discusses what Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach describe as managerial leadership being closely tied to formal models of management:

Managerial leadership assumes that the focus of leaders ought to be on functions, tasks and behaviours and if these functions are carried out competently the work of others in the organization will be facilitated ... authority and influence are allocated to formal positions in proportion to the status of those positions in the organization (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach in Bush 2003: 54).

Bush (2003: 55) goes on to connect his formal models to leadership to managerial functions including:

- supervision: I would like one last chance to check that documents and resource banks are in place for August. I will come to rooms”
- behaviour controls: “Of course, many of these tasks are ongoing, and we can never cross anything off our “to do” list”
- needs identification and priority setting: “we will then decide whether or not we all want to use the new planner, or just selected year levels”
- goal setting, planning, implementing and evaluating, “so here is a summary of the main goals we achieved this year:
  - Improved the generation, recording and use of student questions
  - Improved assessment (policy, planning and practices) – including implementation of portfolios, preparation for student-led conferences and setting up assessment goals and records
  - Implemented Computer4Kids
  - Built our understanding and delivery of inquiry in the classroom
  - Put in place year overviews for integrated and stand-alone planning
  - Improved integration of single subjects in the PYP
  - Held parent workshops on supporting inquiry and reading at home
  - Held a special focus week which underscores the transdisciplinary nature of the PYP
  - Held a Year 6 Exhibition which fulfils IB requirements
  - Started revision of the Mathematics and Language scope and sequence documents
  - Shared strategies for teaching research skills and reading non-fiction
  - Improved classroom environments
  - Introduced and investigated Organising Themes in class
  - Reviewed use of textbooks and worksheets
  - Set up resource banks for units of inquiry”

Bush (2003) makes the important point that this type of leadership does not include the concept of vision, instead “It is focuses on managing existing activities successfully rather than visioning a better future for the school” (Bush 2003:55).

When analysing the text it is clear that the author intended for the text to be collegial, through the use of humour and informal expressions to demonstrate her leadership:

We all deserve a pat on the back and a year off, but I suppose we can make do with a couple of parties and a six week break!

In the same text she uses a more traditional approach, not unlike Bush’s (1995) open formal models, where she draws on her positional authority to exert her leadership:

I would like to have one last chance to check that documents and resource banks are in place for August. I will come to your rooms as follows: ...

The power of the text lies in the author’s intended message, which is collegial, and at the same time a message that legitimizes her formal positional authority. This is a contradiction. It shows how she brings two positions to her leadership role in this text, namely a collegial and participatory leader, and the position of her structural authority to ensure practices are being adhered to. Both these positions support the organisational structure of the school.

This raises the question of why she brings multiple positions to her leadership. The collegial manner of the text indicates what Burke and Collins (2001) would call the interactive style of management as outlined in the review of literature earlier. This view of women leadership is supported by Wolpe, Quinian & Martinez (1997) who link women educational leaders to transformative participatory styles of leadership.

The more formal instructional approach in the text indicates the leader’s need to assert her positional power, which focuses on her role within the formal organisational structure. It can be read that the participatory and collegial manner of parts of the text disguise this

more traditional approach that supports classical organisational thought and a structuralist view of power is characterised by rigidity close adherence to the rules and procedures (Fennell 2002: 96). Task orientated behaviour and influence through positional authority is clearly demonstrated in the text when the author instructed the staff that she would like to check the documents (*task*) and go to their rooms to do so (*positional authority*). This is an example of legitimate or positional power *over* the staff.

The question of why this women leader uses a formal classical approach to her leadership arises. Fennell (1999) proposes that we need to examine how women leaders use their positional power to open up space for alternative ways of conceiving and identifying positional power. With the two positions that the author holds within the text one could simply view the attempt at a collegial participatory approach to leadership as serving the purpose of sugar-coating the exertion of hierarchical positional authority. I believe that this analysis is too simplistic. It does not acknowledge the complexity of an individual's multiple positions, both intended and unintended, that they can bring to a context.

If we take this situation where a woman leader has brought two competing and contradictory messages to the text this has created a discursive space, as according to Weedon (1997: 34-5), they are competing ways of giving meaning to the context within which the text was written. We then need to ask why these competing discourses are vying for power and status. Both give rise to the dominant position that the author holds: firstly being a woman leader and so being expected to lead in a participatory and collegial manner, secondly as a leader with positional power and authority in a formal organisational structure. For the author of the text both these discourses are real even if they appear competing and contradictory. The contradictory nature of the discourses gives rise to a discursive space. Fennell refers to Foucault's work to describe discursive fields as being:

competing ways of giving meaning to the world and of organising social institutions and processes (Fennell 2002: 98).

Thus discursive spaces help us understand the meaning of the apparent subjective nature of these competing discourses. Fennell (2002: 98) notes that within discursive fields not all discourse carries equal weight. The meaning and acceptance given to the discourse within the discursive field depends upon the extent to which the author is seen as holding power within the field (Fennell 2002: 96). It follows from this that the dominant forces within the discourses will then have the greater acceptance. If the meanings explain lived experiences then what are the forces behind the discourses in this discursive field and where do they come from?

The forces behind this discursive field of competing discourses are the very nature of organisational structure of institution she works in. The text's author's leadership is a reflection of the competing ideologies of collegial and open formal models in the school's organisational structure. The author does not resist the school's organisational culture and structure but instead reproduces it. The collaborative nature of the middle management's decision making process and power sharing of roles and responsibilities are all examples that are characteristic of a transformative style of leadership; while the goal and objective orientated nature of the school that is susceptible to the demands of its external environment, and its hierarchy of position and with it spheres of influence, set the stage for a more classical transactional styles of leadership. While a transformative style of leadership is often associated with women school leaders, transactional leadership is not. Yet it is necessary to ensure the organisational goals and objectives are met, which is required to stabilise its external environment.

This mix of both transactional and transformative leadership that is exhibited in the discourse demonstrates the power of an organisation's culture, structure and practiced norms to influence its leader's styles, and vice versa. If the external environment funds the organisation then the organisation needs to be responsive to this environment, which in turn affects the style of its leadership. Quite simply, capital market forces are at play. The producer (the school) is dependent on the consumer's needs and demands (a caring yet goal and objective orientated organisation) and is in turn responsive to them (through a mix of transactional and transformative leadership). Leadership here is not about an

individual's ideals, beliefs, or even personal style; instead it is about providing what is necessary in order to satisfy the dominant forces and major stakeholders of the organisation.

This brings to the fore the issue of power. According to Fennell,

Foucault conceptualises power as disciplinary power, used to bring about or force compliance (Fennell 2002: 99).

For Foucault power is always shifting, slipping, moving. It is unstable and contestable. Weedon (1987) argues that power structures relationships of individuals within discourses (Fennell 2002: 99). For Foucault power does not emanate from one source; instead it is located in discursive fields. So in this sense power is unstable and able to move freely; on the other hand it is bound by dominant forces; in this state power does not move freely. It is the first state of power that post-structural feminists embrace in leadership and management theory, as this shifting unstable sense of power is closely linked to transformative leadership characteristics such as giving credence to inter-personal relationships, giving, caring, responsibility and sensitivity to others.

Many women in school administration view power as being multi-dimensional and multi-directional, and encourage empowerment of all organisational members through the development of communities based on collective values and actions (Fennell 2002: 100).

Fennell goes on to argue that post-structural analyses of power better help us understand how these multi-dimensional and multi-directional views of women's power can both empower and constrain. I would take this a step further and argue that it helps us understand multi-positional aspects of women school leaders. Post-structuralism invites us to give voice to a greater range of resistant subject positions for women while at the same time recognise the complex and deep configurations of power in the sets of meanings at the heart of the organisational and social practices within which we all participate.

In the case of this research the multi-positions that the woman school leader holds perpetuate and reproduce the school's organisational structure, culture and practiced norms. They are not liberating or empowering. However the positions she holds and perpetuates can be considered successful in that that by leading in a way that supports the school's organisational structure and culture she provides the stability and continuity that the external environment, a dominating force and influence in the school, demands. The discursive space is the multi-positional and contradictory stance of her leadership.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **5.1 Findings**

The purpose of the research was to explore the discourse(s) of a woman school leader, in the context of a school's culture and practiced norms (the wider social power), and to investigate the discursive space and its relationship with the organisation she works for. Discourse was analysed to reveal power relations of a woman school leader and show how the discourse reproduces, perpetuates, challenges, contradicts, and disrupts the power relations within the organisation.

In examining the power relations - social, institutional and situational - that shape the discourse and its discursive space, one needs to closely examine the context in which the discourse is produced to determine what power relations the discourse is serving to reproduce. In order to do this several bodies of theory needed to be examined to form the basis of the research. This included: educational management and leadership theory; research on women and leadership; feminist post structural theory, to establish the paradigm of the study; and critical discourse analysis, a research tool in the linguistics realm, as the method of the study. These do not fit into a neat or necessarily tight framework and this is not their purpose in this research: the purpose is to inform and build a basis from which a woman school leader's discourse can be analysed.

Critical discourse analysis is distinctive from other forms of discourse analysis for its stance on the relationship between language and society: namely discourse is a social practice. If discourse is a social practice then the context from which the discourses is lived becomes crucial to the analysis of the text. One does not analyse the text alone – instead this can become secondary to the wider play of the words; it is not what the words represent but the environment and context in which the words were produced and how the message is given and received. Therefore, context is crucial.

There is much that we can analyse when looking at written language: notions of coherence, clause relations, textual patterns, cohesion, theme, tense and aspect, lexical cohesion, and text-organising vocabulary, with listener/reader engagement processes. When analysing this data I have borne in mind two important standpoints: firstly; the research realm of this paper is in the field of management and leadership, not linguistics; secondly; not everything described in a discourse analysis is relevant to or may have any immediate applications of leadership practices. Having said this, the more we can learn from how critical discourse analysis may come to shed light in the field of gender, language and its impact in the field of Education Leadership and Management, the wider the scope for future studies.

The organisation in which the discourse resides resembles Bush's (1995) open formal systems models of educational management and leadership. The organisation is sensitive to its environment, both human and organisational. In such an organisation the leader is expected to play an active role in policy making and the decision-making and implementation processes that follow this. The leader becomes a focal point in the institution that symbolises the schools organisational culture, values and norms. The fundamental characteristic of this model is the organisation as a "hierarchical system in which managers use rational means to pursue agreed goals" (Bush 1995:29). This is seen through the research participant's use of positional authority to attain her goals and reinforce the hierarchical nature of formal models. The text places importance on the official structure and value given to the systems of the organisation, emphasising the goal-seeking nature of the organisation with importance given to rationality. Yet collegiality is at play as well.

There is a tension and contradiction in the discourse, it appears collegial but at the same time reinforces the above characteristics of an open formal models. This tension can also be seen in relating the context of the discourse to the organisational culture and values in the conflicting metaphors of *the family* and *the machine*. The desire is the *family* of collegiality but the reality is that the discourse perpetuates the formal model. This can be clearly seen in the metaphor of the machine where rational goal seeking, and attainment

along with deference to positional authority to ensure the official structure of the organisation and its culture are reproduced.

If the purpose of feminist theory is to enable liberatory practice (liberal feminism), confront the existing oppressive patriarchal systems (radical feminism) or to challenge structuralism to allow for subjectivity of contradictions (poststructuralist feminism) one is forced to question where this research fits. It has been argued that this research lies within the feminist post-structural realm, as it is the tensions or formal versus collegial models of leadership that the text represents that leads to the contradictions that a post-structuralist space not only allows but celebrates. It enables a dual and contradictory discourse of collegiality and a metaphor of *the family* to exist and function with formal models and a metaphor of *the machine*. This is indeed the very contradiction upon which the organisational culture, values and practices are founded and so it is the discourse that is reproducing these underlying organisational power relationships. This contradiction creates the multiple positional and contradictory stance of her leadership.

## **5.2 Limitations of the research**

The critical nature of this research suggests a wonderful richness of how leadership and language are bound to each other and yet are difficult to incorporate alongside each other. It is the very critical nature of the research itself that, while creating depth, constricts and limits it at the same time. The intersection of the bodies of theory of post-structuralism, feminism, the method of critical discourse analysis and the contextual analysis of models of Education Leadership and Management intersect each other, and are interwoven at different levels throughout the research.

A larger sample size of documents, not participants, would add value and greater depth to this kind of research. However due to the size of this study it was not feasible.

Caution is needed against simplistic notions of women being able to choose between a range of options. For women leaders it is not simply a false consciousness, which can be

altered with some feminist education; it is not a choice about being liberated or oppressed. Rather it is a choice between being 'okay' and being 'weird', between being on the margins or in the centres – albeit the marginalised centres reserved for women.

This then leads to the question whether a feminist post-structural focus on the discursive is any less pessimistic and deterministic than a radical or liberal feminist concern with the social structures and the roles that come with it/them. Post-structuralism does however suggest that a focus on the discursive production of subjectivities does offer possibilities for how as researchers we can construct new subject positions which resist the dominant subject positions. In that we understand women as variously positioned, the possibilities for resistance are multiplied as we reconsider women as powerful. Once we construct women as powerful in the ways in which we talk about them, we enlarge the possible discourses on women and thus the range of subject positions available to them in practice (Jones 1992). While much literature on women school leaders positions them as powerless it is possible that such positioning has had two contradictory outcomes. Firstly they have alerted readers to the oppressive reality of being a woman school leader while at the same time contributed to the ongoing conceptualisation of women as 'victims' of the suggested patriarchal nature of organisational leadership. They have also maintained the dualism of masculine and feminine differences as well as unwittingly perpetuating the silences of women's experiences as school leaders.

### **5.3 Significance of the research**

The significance of this research lies not so much in the findings as in the possibilities for future research in this field. The use of a post-structural stance to frame an analysis of language and the use of leadership and management theory to analyse the context from which the language is derived is a way of better understanding the many positions women leaders hold and negotiate in their professional lives. With a more informed and intelligent understanding of how multiple positions of leader's impact on the organisational culture and practiced norms we can better understand how discursive space can create or

perpetuate resistance and result in a critical organisational culture creating the space for self and organisational improvement.

The methodological significance of this research is to show how a woman's discourse can be analysed to gain deeper understanding of how discursive spaces in leadership and management theory in an illuminating way. Thus, a critical point in the research process involves acknowledging and validating the many different ways of knowing and making sense of an organisation, its context and how it impacts on the language used by leaders.

One of the intentions behind this study was to better understand the way in which we create meaning and value in our lives from the use of language. While organisations may not be transformed through this research, the process of carrying it out, of paying attention to a woman leader's language, contains the potential to empower leaders to analyse the way in which language is used to create intended and unintended meanings.

The purpose of this research was not to produce a set of findings from which generalisations could be generated. On the contrary, it is a small case study that demonstrates how one women school leader negotiates and occupies the discursive space and its relationship to the wider school context.

According to Walkerdine (1991: 4) women are not:

Unitary subjects uniquely positioned, but produced as a nexus of subjectivities, in relations of power which are constantly shifting, rendering, then at one moment powerful and at another powerless.

If we begin to look at women leaders beyond just being socialised into their appropriate gender roles and instead how they position themselves and how they are positioned, it makes it hard for them to be pinned down as one thing or another: as powerful or powerless, as passive or active. While this may seem contradictory it does offer a set of meanings for understanding/construction as gendered subjects. There are various discourses operating on

women and leadership at a particular point in time which open up conceptual and material possibilities within the available discourse and discursive spaces.

What are these discursive positions that are available and taken up by the participant of this research? The participant establishes her positional authority through the identification and knowledge of the organisation's culture and practiced norms. It is important to acknowledge here that while the participant can take up the multiple subject positions available to her they are still inevitably inflected with the wider organisational power relations as positional authority. Hence the dominant organisational leadership position is not interrupted, instead perpetuated. However the social order within which organisational leadership roles are discursively constructed is not consistent. It is the gaps – the discursive spaces - that let the possibilities for developing new ways of seeing and understanding how women lead. Davis (1989) argues how subjectivity is not simply a cognitive choice from a range of possibilities (although it might be). She notes that many times individuals are unlikely to take up alternative subject positions to the prevailing ones. This is because the dominant subject positions are embedded in sets of meanings which define what is 'acceptable ' and 'ordinary' and what we might take for granted. The alternative or oppositional positions are not usually seen as desirable – or even possible alternatives. This research has been about attempting to open up such spaces by offering a wider range of possibilities of how we examine women leaders in education.

Post-structuralists question how power is looked at. Power is something uneven and is understood to produce as well as impose conditions of experience. To post-structuralists patriarchy is not a structure whose primary expression is repressive power, instead it is reconceptualised as something more fragmented, decentralised and unstable (Cocks 1989:209). Women are not seen as passive agents in the patriarchal order, instead they are subjects through engagement in/of various discourses which constitutes their particular lived context. Therefore it is the discourses, as sets of meanings, which operate in particular context through text, images, practices, and institutional structures, which constitute the possibilities for practice. Discursive space is the various ways in which

people live these possibilities. Post-structuralism offers us a way of examining something in a less fixed and non-rigid way. It opens up new possibilities.

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## Appendix A

