Reflecting on principals as managers or moulded leaders in a managerialistic school system

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I contend that South African school leaders perform their functions within a managerialistic school system that focuses strongly on prescribed standards, quality, and outcomes. The aim is to draw attention to the conceptual contradiction inherent in the labelling of the school principal as a leader rather than as a manager. In practice, school principals are expected to perform within a framework of control systems and performitivity, which are the core features of managerialism. The argument will be that the functions performed by school principals are essentially managerial rather than being true leadership functions, in spite of the practice of labelling principals as leaders. In consequence, the expected managerialistic performance of principals inevitably has specific implications for the training of educational leaders. The training is therefore characterised as leadership moulding rather than leadership training.

Keywords: *leadership; management; managerialism; neoliberalism; principal training*

Introduction

This special issue focuses on leadership issues and on the various programmes in this field offered at the various tertiary institutions in South Africa. In this article I discuss the label of 'leader' or 'manager' attached to the principal of a school and also refer to the current training of educators occupying the position of school principal in the format of an Advanced Certificate (ACE) in education leadership. I contextualise the discussion of the labelling and the training of school leaders in the South African school system, but indicate the possible influence of global trends on the leadership practice and leadership training of school leaders.

The most important international trends or analytical lenses offered here in support of my arguments are the perspectives that can be labelled loosely as (a) managerialism, representing a critical view regarding an over-emphasis on managerial processes, and (b) neoliberalism, representing a generally critical view of the perceived shift in the late 20th century towards allowing economic efficiency or market forces to dominate public policy choices. These trends will be discussed in detail later.

In line with the theme for this issue, then, this article focuses on the discourse centred on management and leadership, as the labels frequently and interchangeably used for the function of heading a school. Although there is no clear distinction between the two concepts from most of the authors, there is a tendency in the literature from the UK to prefer the label of leader and to refer to leadership with respect to the person who acts as the head teacher of a school (Bush, 1999; Gunter & Ribbins, 2003). The Education Reform Act of

1988 in the UK introduced many programmes focusing on training for head teachers, from Headlamp to the establishment of the National College for School Leadership. The emphasis will be on the ironic, if not paradoxical, conceptualisation of school principals as leaders who function in a manageri-alistic education system (Bush, 1999).

In general, South Africa was strongly influenced by trends in the UK and followed suit, both in the establishment of Departments of Education Management in education faculties at many tertiary institutions and in the way that, in most provincial education departments, leadership training programmes for principals were introduced. An example is the induction programme for new principals of the Transvaal Department of Education (Heystek, 1994). More recently, as a national initiative, the most recent development in the training of school leaders in South Africa is the establishment of an Advanced Certificate (ACE) in educational leadership for principals, with the first intake of principals for the programme at universities in the second semester of 2007.

This possible influence of managerialism and neoliberalism on the leadership functioning in the school can best be understood when one observes how closely the function of school management is linked with the policy focus on quality of education and school improvement (Hopkins, 2001). Similarly, parental choice of schools, educator assessment and standardisation through control can be regarded as related issues justifying the central focus on leadership labelling as being strongly influenced by managerialism and neoliberalism.

The article is concluded with specific reference to the current proposed training programme for principals in South Africa. The argument is that this form of leadership training should rather be labelled as leadership *moulding* than leadership *training*. For the purposes of this article, the term 'educational leader' or 'leader' refers to the person who acts in the position of head of the school, or principal.

My purpose is to provide some critical reflections about the leadership and leadership training debate in South Africa. Therefore, I do not provide detailed discussion about the concepts of leadership, management, managerialism, and neoliberalism but rather use some conceptualisations about these terms as the framework for the discussion of leadership training in the South African context.

The article is a conceptual argument which is not based on any specific primary empirical research but uses inductive reasoning for certain generalisations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2002:4). It is rather a conceptual argument founded on the available literature on this specific field as part of the discourse about leadership, management, and the training of school leaders. An inductive and implicit reasoning approach will be conducted. De Vos (2001:91) indicates that inductive reasoning comes to conclusions which are tentative generalisations and that new thoughts are added in the argument "which is not necessarily contained in the premise". Mouton (1998:77) added

that "genuine supporting evidence can only lead to highly probable conclusions".

Leadership or management labelling for principals

The purpose of this section is not to explore different conceptions of leadership and management in detail, but rather to provide a brief introduction to the discourse on these terms. This is useful in order to be able to link the question of school leadership with the wider discourses on managerialism and neoliberalism. The discourse is centred on the label of management and leadership as the labels applicable to the person heading a school (Bottery, 2005; Bush & Glover, 2003; Earley & Weindling, 2004; Gunter, 2004; Harris, 2006; Lingard & Christie, 2003; and Simkins, 2005). In England, during the 1990s in particular there was a movement away from the concepts of management and manager towards leader and leadership (Bush, 1999:240; Gunter, 2004:24). This perceived "advancement" of the concept of leadership from management occurred simultaneously with the rise of managerialism in the UK following on the heels of the 1988 Education Reform Act (Earley & Weindling, 2004:14).

There is therefore a considerable overlap and shared meaning between these concepts of leadership and management in the way they have been used and incorporated into discourses about school quality and improvement and authors still use the two concepts as if meaning the same thing and not necessarily making a clear distinction between them (Mulford, 2005; Hoyle & Wallace, 2005). For the purposes of my argument here, I want to distinguish clearly between management and leadership as functions, although I would also argue that the two concepts and practices are not separable. Leadership is therefore conceptualised, according to Earley and Weindling (2004) as well as Bush and Glover (2003:10), as the activity of leading people, that is, of getting things done through people with an emphasis on relations, communication, motivation, and an approach based on emotional intelligence. The leader is more inclined to open communication and to risk-taking, while being less restricted by prescribed policies. The terms 'management' and 'managers' refer to the more structured role or approach of working within the confines of the rules, regulations, and boundaries provided in a school situation (Earley & Weindling, 2004:5; Ofsted, 2003).

In relation to this question of operating within the confines of rules, Simkins (2005) shows that context is an important issue in considering the 'new' perspectives on leadership. In this discourse, management is therefore linked to the managerialistic approach, where challenges to the predetermined boundaries are less likely for the incumbent as the head of a school, as will be indicated in more detail in the next section.

Although Hoyle and Wallace (2005:68) take management and leadership as referring to the same activity, they clearly distinguish both concepts from managerialism. According to them, managerialism proposes that everything falling under the authority of the manager or leader can and should be con-

trolled with management tools and techniques. For them, the solution for any management problem is entrenched in management techniques. From this perspective, managerialism can be understood as an overemphasis or exclusive emphasis on management, at the expense of other factors. My argument here is that managerialism has less consideration for other important factors, such as people or the context, and considers measurable outcomes according to predetermined standards (Case, Case & Castling, 2000; Meyer, 2002; Morley & Rassool, 2000). Managerialism therefore negates the importance of a leader being someone who may have significant influence on other people or who has the abilities to respond uniquely to a given context, but instead focuses only on management techniques, which are strongly related to administration or management concerns and not necessarily to leadership behaviour.

According to Bottery (2005:86), it may be ironic or paradoxical that this 'advancement' or shift in conceptualisation from management to leadership is accepted at a rhetorical level while in practice the emphasis of a principal's work is almost contrary to the rhetorical position, i.e. the principal's work is increasingly focused on managerial tasks, within the framework of performitivity and control. This new label denoting a shift to leadership is supposed to be suggestive of a political empowering of principals (Gunter, 2004:21), but in actual practice they remain bound by the centralised directives through policies, guidelines, accountability measures, and public expectations.

An example of the supposed empowerment is that school leaders are supposed to determine the vision, mission, and aims for their schools because on the face of it schools have received self-managing status as a result of the decentralising approach associated with neoliberalism, as indicated later. But, according to Hoyle and Wallace (2005), this is not real empowerment at all. Instead, they see it as a form of indirect managerialistic control because the visions and aims have already been determined by the education departments. On examination, one finds that these visions and aims translate into measurable outcomes, for example, the required pass rate (Angus, 2004:25), and therefore that these 'leaders' do not have much of a choice at all — they have to accomplish the education department's aims, which are to achieve the best measurable academic performance (Gewirtz & Ball, 2000:255).

The following perspective may provide some insight into the presumed power and authority of leaders in a managerialistic, decentralised, and democratic education system. Autocratic and charismatic leadership were both popular as leadership styles at different stages in the earlier parts of the 20th century (Earley & Weindling, 2004:9). Paradoxically, the contemporary popular democratic, participative, or distributive leadership styles that are currently fashionable experience more government initiated control than their counterparts at the beginning of the previous century. Democratic leadership styles are, if anything, relatively more restricted in the modern era by governmental policies and control, while more autocratic and charismatic forms of leadership may in an earlier era have been evidence of more authentic leaders

with less direct and even indirect control from governments.

Ironically, fewer restrictions and less control through policies 50 or a 100 years ago provided both autocratic and charismatic leaders with more authentic opportunities to lead their schools with their own vision and objectives. In their day, these autocratic and charismatic leaders would have been able to be more willing and daring to take chances or risks, as well as to challenge the system and lead their schools into new directions.

It is readily acknowledged that there was always the risk that both autocratic and charismatic leadership might have resulted in schools producing less favourable or even catastrophic academic standards, but these people were acknowledged as leaders with their own sense of direction and not just as figureheads who inevitably had to follow the mainstream of pursuing predetermined outcomes.

It may therefore be argued that 'leaders' in the current managerialistic context should more accurately be labelled as managers or even administrators than as leaders, which is in line with the American and Australasian conceptualisation of the lower-order management functions performed by principals (Earley & Weindling, 2004:5). This labelling of principals resonates with the views of Harris (2006:415) when she distinguishes between an educational leader and a school leader. The implication is that school leadership would be a managerial function, while educational leadership is associated with "meaning and the activity of doing leading and experiencing leadership" (Gunter, 2005:6). This implies that a real leader has more freedom and is less restricted than a manager or moulded leader.

Managerialism, neoliberalism, and leadership

It has been suggested so far that school leadership may be influenced by managerialism and neo-liberalism. Although managerialism and neoliberalism are not necessarily in themselves exact or readily defined concepts, they do relate to a growing discourse that attempts to offer specific conceptualisations and critique of combinations of activities and philosophies that produce a logic leading to particular types of policies and legislation.

In this section, I give an indication of the possible connection between these concepts in more detail. Just as in the case of describing any ideology that singles out one key value as its defining objective (communal values in communism, freedom in liberalism, national identity in nationalism, etc.) the –ism in each of the two concepts indicates an overemphasis, respectively, of management and of liberal ideas or practices.

Neoliberalism, or the market place, as Gewirtz and Ball (2000) and Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown (2007) label it, is founded on the business principles of a free market and the freedom of individuals to make decisions that will be in their best interests (Apple, 2004). Bottery (2005:84) indicates that, in terms of neo-liberal economic policies, governments aim to separate themselves from having a direct financial influence on education and prefer to make use of a free-market principle. This tendency has culminated in self-managing schools

that are less financially dependent on government funding and that acquire more decentralised decision-making powers. Critics argue that in this process, governments are actually shedding their social (and financial) responsibility of providing equal educational opportunities for all (Gewirtz, 2002; Streak, 2004).

The argument is that managerialism is established on the principles of control, performitivity, and assessment. Managerialism is seen to move the focus away from the learner's need to the organisational needs (Gewirtz & Ball, 2000:254). Management seen from a functional, structuralistic perspective is a process of planning, organising, leading, and controlling to ensure effectiveness within an organisation (Robbins, 1980). Although critical thinking has long since drawn attention to the limitations of such a view, Wright (2001:281) suggests that this perspective is still found in managerialism and that managerialism is in fact a set of beliefs, or an ideology, as well as just a set of management practices. The point made by these writers is that the overriding emphasis on basic management structures, functions, and activities (Robbins, 1980) has become an ideology in as far as this approach harbours the certainty or belief that, through better management, a better world can be created.

An underlying claim or assumption underpinning a managerialist confidence is that the world will have better social conditions when it is managed according to economic principles. This ideology advocates that managers have the right to manage and that the role of workers should be to become a disciplined workforce striving for productivity to benefit the economy. However, in practice, the 'right' of managers to manage has created a social divide instead of improved social conditions (Weeks, 1999; Wright, 2001) which may have unintended consequences for South Africa, as I will discuss in the next section.

Apple (1999; 2004) connected neoliberalism and neo-conservatism as major constituents embodied in managerialism. According to Apple (2004), the neo-conservatives (the white middle class in the US) were afraid of declining educational standards in a neoliberal education system, hence they wanted to ensure what they perceived as quality or traditional education through control processes, which resulted in the managerialistic style of governance in schools that emerged in the 1980s. This relationship between the market driven economic policy and the managerialistic control measures globalised to England, Europe, and Australasia (Boyd & Lugg, 1998; Gewirtz, 2002; Angus, 2004; Codd 2005) and has now also spread to South Africa.

Apple (2004) argued convincingly that the initial expectation in America was that the free-market principles would ensure high-quality education. McMeekin (2003) agreed with Apple but pointed out that over the longer term these goals have not been achieved. According to Apple, the neo-conservatives used their political power to persuade the US government that the prevailing education standards were not acceptable under neoliberalism, with the result that the government initiated managerialistic control processes.

The rationale of these processes was that they had to ensure that evidence was present in the form of standardised tests to provide indicators that citizens' money was sufficiently accounted for by the government. Thus, the primary objective became standardised and quality education achieved by means of control (managerialism) in spite of the reduction in financial support (neoliberalism) for education by governments.

My argument here is that *this is why governments may find control as the cornerstone for quality education and a convenient counter-balance for the freedom of neoliberalism. Governments create the illusion that they empower lower levels of decision-makers through neoliberal free-market principles, but these governments retain control through the standardisation and control mechanisms built into the State's educational policies.* In this power-balancing process, educational leaders inescapably become the hub, but also the drivers, of governments' attempts to balance the free market with the demand for quality in the education system.

According to Bates (1996:5), the neoliberal ideology has had only limited success in changing social diversity, while managerialism transforms or reduces social, cultural, and political problems to technical and managerial problems that can be managed without, or with only limited, concern about the human dimension.

Accepting neoliberalism and managerialism as influential forces of globalisation presents a dilemma for the South African government and education system. The government wants high-quality education, but they do not have sufficient funding, structures, and mechanisms to ensure the achievement of the quality criteria. Hence, it becomes the responsibility of the school leader as government representative to ensure quality and improvement (Department of Education, 2007, clause 7) in spite of the reductions in State support resulting from neoliberal financial constraints. Despite the fact that, according to social contract theory, governments have the responsibility to provide education (Hall, 2005) the contract does not stipulate the quality and standard of such education. This leaves a significant ethical loophole in debating the meaning and measurement of quality education.

Some implications of neoliberalism and managerialism for school leadership
In this section two examples will be discussed to indicate the possible influence of managerialism and neoliberalism on school leaders and quality education. The possible implications discussed in this section must be understood in the South African context. The features of neoliberalism originated, however, in developed western, capitalistic countries while South Africa is a developing country with a wide socio-economic diversity.

1.   Freedom of choice and quality education
The democratic principles and the core value, of no unfair discrimination, embedded in the South African Constitution and South African Schools Act provide parents with the choice in which school they can enrol their children. These democratic principles are associated with the market-driven principles

typical of the western countries in which the ideas about neoliberalism and managerialism originated.

The implications of adopting market driven and managerialistic principles from business into education may be explained by means of the following simplistic comparison. Freedom of choice (neoliberalism) associated with standardisation and control (managerialism) in a business environment may be something totally different when these principles are applied in the context of education. In cities and towns, people have a choice in deciding from which shop or business they want to purchase their goods (neoliberalism). Their choice is determined, among other things, by the quality of the products and the service from the business (managerialism). This business has to improve or will have to close because it is not 'producing' the required standard of product. Another business may open with the same product, if there is a demand for the product, but the product will have to be provided according to the requirements of the customer. This freedom of choice is acceptable in the market-driven business world but what are the implications for education?

This approach is similar to some of the charter schools established in partnership with a for-profit business in the US. When these do not perform on levels acceptable to the for-profit business, they close the school (Brown, Henig, Lacireno-Paquet & Holyoke, 2004:1038). However, it is less acceptable to apply these principles to education in South Africa. The public need and have a right to accessible quality education and the government, even in the neoliberal ideology of less direct financial involvement, still has the social responsibility to provide equal educational opportunities. The government cannot allow a school to close because of low academic standards because doing so may be equivalent to an acknowledgement that the government has failed to provide quality education. Conversely, parents with limited choice of schools, as in rural areas or in lower socio-economic areas, have to accept the standard of education as they find it, because there are not other schools near enough to provide them with the option of any alternative or better school. These parents' democratic right to choose the best school is limited by the resources and facilities available. Although the current policy of designating certain schools as non fee-paying schools applies to many rural schools, the quality of education in many of these schools is still not comparable with schools in higher socio-economic areas.

If we follow free-market principles, the staff in the unacceptably low-performing schools must realise that the school will close and they will lose their jobs if they do not improve their standards. After the matriculation results for 2006, the Director General of the National Department of Education made a comment that failing schools (as indicated by matriculation results) would be closed, while the Minister of Education said that schools whose matriculation results were not good enough would be placed under administration (Rademeyer, 2006). This is an indication of the dilemma faced by school leaders. The poorly performing schools are predominantly those with limited equipment and fewer facilities. At the same time, the school leaders do not have any control over input, i.e. the learners that enrol at their

school. Nevertheless, these leaders are expected to conform to the expected performance criteria (e.g. matriculation results or pass rate) in spite of the limitations affecting their school.

In accordance with the neoliberal approach, the government has decentralised decision-making power to school governing bodies to support schools in improving education standards (Republic of South Africa, 1996: Section 20 (1)d; Karlsson, 2002). The current legislation in SASA indicates that the government accepts the ability and authority of school governing bodies to make recommendations about the appointment of teachers. Is it therefore not possible to extrapolate that these governing bodies have authority to make recommendations about disciplinary actions against gross negligence or against non-performing or low-performing teachers, powers which would logically be in line with the decentralised principles of democracy and local decision-making? This might make the governing bodies stronger allies in the process of school improvement.

Although all teachers, even low-performing and non-performing teachers, are assessed according to globally accepted standards and criteria, such assessment does not necessarily contribute to improved quality in education, as indicators such as the matriculation results, pass rates, and Grade 6 literacy assessments demonstrate (Republic of South Africa, 2005). The assessment processes and tools that are aimed, for example, at Whole School Evaluation and at school development, as well as the recently implemented Integrated Quality Measurement System (IQMS) therefore seem less likely to be efficient enough to stimulate improvement and educator development. Hence, the effect is that parents will feel that they have to use their democratic right to exercise their freedom to choose the school with the best quality.

In spite of the unacceptable educational levels, teachers in South Africa are unintentionally protected by what amounts to an unwritten social and political contract with the government preventing serious action against them. The social contract determines that the government must provide equal education opportunities to every child in the country to redress the imbalances of the past, but with the shortage of teachers in the country (Fredericks, 2007), this is as good as an unspoken guarantee to teachers that they cannot be dismissed, even if they under-perform. The political contract protects the educators because the biggest teachers' union will not be pressurised into acting against their under-performing members because this union is a member of the conglomerate of unions that are important political allies of the ruling majority party. Hence, the government will not be able politically to put unnecessary pressure on their own political allies with demands that low- or under-performing teachers be disciplined or even de-registered as teachers. Such a demand runs the risk, for government, of producing negative political consequences at the next election, hence the 'guarantee' that there will not be too much political pressure to dismiss under-performing teachers.

2. Leadership training or leadership moulding

Leadership training has become an important component in the quest for

standardisation and quality control. It has become a basic departure point that leaders must be trained to be able to perform as expected. Training has thus become an important prerequisite to becoming a principal, especially in the US (Levine, 2005). In England, a similar emphasis has led to the establishment of the government-initiated National College for School Leadership (Earley & Weindling, 2004).

Thrupp and Willmott (2003:237) provide a strongly critical reflection on the influence that they believe managerialism has had on the training of heads of schools. They argue that the primary purpose of leadership training in managerialistic terms is to equip people with tools and techniques to manage a certain situation better in order to achieve the aims determined by policy more efficiently, within the financial constraints determined by national budgets. This coincides closely with Thomson's (2002) conception of principals as the 'new' managers, trained to concur with externally determined outcomes for their schools.

In the South African context, the National Department of Education (DoE) recently initiated a new Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) in Educational Leadership to suit the specific requirement of the government to set a national standard, notwithstanding the fact that there were already many other ACE programmes available at various universities. This initiative may be an indication of the importance to the South African government of maintaining power and control over leadership training for principals. It is a positive indication of their political will to improve quality education, in spite of the restricted accountability and involvement in education as a result of the neoliberal market approach.

The government clearly has significant control over leadership training for school leaders because the DoE was the leading role player in determining or suggesting the outcomes of the ACE programme and played an important role in predetermining the content because the DoE appointed and funded a non-governmental organisation to write the core content which each university must use. These levels of control are not untypical of a managerialistic approach from a government because control over a programme such as the new ACE may make it easier for the government to achieve the predetermined performance outcomes and therefore demonstrate that their education initiatives are a success as a whole. This is why I suggest that a label of *moulding*, rather than *training*, may be more applicable for the model of leadership training proposed and driven by the DoE. The moulding effect becomes even more apparent if the ACE training is compared with the initial educator training through universities. Each university determines its own content and methodology of training for initial educator training, within the prescribed outcomes and standards. The ACE is a much stricter and more tightly structured programme, which provides the DoE with greater control to achieve the standards and eliminate the inequalities in educational standards.

Simkins (2005:14) has raised the challenging contention that a managerialistic approach does not in fact allow for 'leadership' in an organisation. He implies that this format of 'leadership' training — for example, the ACE in

South Africa — should rather be seen as a governmental training model to enhance the capacity of school managers to implement departmental policies instead of being portrayed as a leadership development programme that enhances educational leadership to ensure more successful schools (Thrupp & Willmott, 2003:230).

The importance of the power used by governments to influence and shape leadership training, and therefore also moulded leaders in schools, may be explained in terms of Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and *field*. Bourdieu (in Lingard & Christie, 2003:322) conceptualised field as a structured social space where force is important, where people are influenced by domination, where there are permanent inequalities and where there is a permanent struggle for dominance in the field. If Bourdieu's analysis is applied to this discussion, the concept of field here is the education field and specifically the training of leaders. The role players in the field are, amongst others, the DoE and the principals, who bring their power into the field. This power determines the position and strategies of each person or party in the field. In the case of the training given and received, the government has the most power because it is the employer.

Closely related to Bourdieu's field is his concept of habitus. According to Lingard and Christie (2003:320) and Gunter (2003:344-345), Bourdieu explained habitus as the way people internalise social structures and the world. The habitus is an "acquired and socially constituted disposition" of the leader in a school (Lingard & Christie, 2003:230). It is therefore a personal construction of the field (the school or the training) in terms of which the aim for the person is to make the social world seem natural and its practices taken for granted. By this analysis, the values and skills acquired at training become internalised for principals, hence they are able to influence their field (school).

Training is therefore an important social constituting factor for the habitus of school leaders. Socially constituted carries the implication that agents outside the person as leader — e.g. the departmental training programmes themselves — have an impact on the habitus of the leader. The internalised structures of this habitus "constrain thoughts and direct actions" (Lingard & Christie, 2003:230) of one who is trained, hence the importance of the predetermined outcomes and content by the government.

Seen from this perspective, this form of training would therefore rather imply leadership 'moulding', which indicates a model of training within very specific formats and for clearly defined outcomes. This relates back to the main focus of this article, namely, the suggestion that there is significant tension, and even contradiction, between notions of leadership and management in educational contexts. This suggestion is in line with the argument of Thrupp and Willmottt (2003:237) that education management should be more critical and not only focus on managerialistic tools and techniques as 'solutions'. Similarly, this focus is also supported by Gunter's (2005) concern that in being forced to become more accountable, principals narrow their vision to the externally determined outcomes.

In the same vein, Hoyle and Wallace (2005:102) refer to government-led

and institutionalised training as instrumentalist training. This kind of training differs from the university programmes, especially at postgraduate level, because the university qualifications tend to provide development over a broader theoretical field. For example, during discussion among second-year Masters' degree students in the Education Management and Policy Study Programme at the University of Stellenbosch (3 February 2007), students claimed that the theoretical teaching they had received encouraged them to think in a new and independent way. They robustly expressed their realisation that the Master's programme was likely to have the effect of causing participants, such as principals and other school leaders, to challenge and critique many aspects of the current educational approach.

This critical format of development found in some postgraduate programmes may not be what the government expects from 'leadership' training with managerial aims. Critical thinking and leadership as conceptualised by Bush and Glover (2003), where the leader determines the visions and is willing to challenge the current situation, may be less acceptable in a managerialistic, controlled environment, hence the stricter control over leadership training. If one is to judge by the second draft of the South African Standard for Principalship (Department of Education, 2005), the focus of leadership training is currently to maintain the prevailing controlled performitivity system, because the document reveals that government-influenced training is largely managerialistic in orientation. One concludes that the overall approach is managerialistic because the most important outcomes refer to the provision of evidence that the student can perform the predetermined outcomes.

Final remarks
In this discussion it must also be readily acknowledged that all principals are not visionary leaders and cannot be forced to become leaders who take their schools to new heights by means of their own ability and motivation. There may be many more principals who are better suited to being effective managers or even just administrators, able and effective when it comes to implementing what is prescribed and delegated to them. The moulded leadership training may therefore serve the purpose of ensuring that at least most principals have the minimum ability to keep their schools at the required educational standards.

The form of leadership moulding described here, as distinct from leadership training, therefore serves the departmental aims of achieving a more standardised quality education. This moulding may lead to leaders with less diversity of style or approach in their management and leadership skills as school leaders but also to leaders who are willing and able to comply with the required standards.

Although some authors like Levačić (2005), Heck and Hallinger (2005) and Gorard (2005) do not agree on the empirical research evidence that leadership training and leaders are able to improve and sustain school improvement and quality education, in the face of the challenge for school improvement in South Africa, scepticism is not the answer. Despite the arguments for a criti-

cal and constructive interrogation sounded in this article, this ACE in School Leadership should be welcomed as a positive attempt for large-scale school improvement.

Managerialism and neoliberalism cannot be wished away as global patterns influencing educational practice, however, and they require careful consideration as important components of the field for educational leaders. The discourse about the conceptualisation and labelling of principals as either leaders and/or managers is far from being resolved. I hope this contribution to the discourse serves as stimulation for more and deeper discourse and research. The conclusions offered here about the managerialistic form of training and creating moulded leaders are derived from a particular critical perspective. The argument has focused on a labelling process (Gunter, 2004: 21) and is not intended as a conclusive attempt to discredit or promote the form of training. Training remains an important issue in the discourse; the format and result of the training leads to a further debate — with the attempt to improve quality education as an elusive vision.

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