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## EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# A logic of “linking learning”: Leadership practices across schools, subject departments and classrooms

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**Abstract:** This article considers the roles of school leaders, a departmental-level leader and a teacher in implementing a reform within a school, and the nature of the relations between the groups and individuals that attended this process. Drawing upon Bourdieu’s “thinking tools”, the article analyses the nature of the leadership practices surrounding the implementation of a single-sex mathematics class from the perspective of key participants in the change process: two school-level leaders, one departmental chair, and the teacher charged with teaching the class. By considering a secondary school and one of its constituent departments as a field and sub-field, respectively, we argue that even as there is evidence of contestation over the nature of the practices that influence or potentially influence the leadership practices at play within the field and sub-field as a whole, there are also significant learnings in relation to student learning on the part of those involved which serve as “links” between the leadership practices at the school and department levels, and the leadership of learning of the teacher implementing the reform. In this way, a logic of “linking learning”, guided by an ethic of concern for students’ success, was evident across school, department and classroom.

**Subjects:** School Leadership, Management & Administration, Secondary Education, Sociology of Education

**Keywords:** Bourdieu, change, field, habitus, subject departments

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This article considers the roles of school leaders, subject department chairs and teachers in the implementation of a reform within a school, and the nature of the relationships between different administrative levels within a school and the individuals involved in the reform. By looking at these relationships within schools, we highlight the potential for contestation between the leadership practices at the different levels and individuals. Furthermore, there appears to be different understandings in relation to student learning on the part of those involved which serve as “links” between the leadership practices at the school and department levels, and the leadership of learning of the teacher implementing the reform. In this way, a logic of “linking learning”, guided by an ethic of concern for students’ success, was evident across school, department and classroom.



## 1. Introduction

Subjects departments occupy an important position in secondary schools, as both an administrative unit, and as the source of a great deal of political and cultural power in the relationships between schools as a whole, and classroom teachers. This article considers the roles of school administrators, a department chair and a teacher in implementing a classroom-level reform by mobilizing Bourdieu's "thinking tools" of "fields", "habitus" and "capitals" to understand the nature of the practices of reform (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This is an important focus, adding a more critical perspective to the work of more traditional scholars such as Brundrett and Terrell (2004) who note the growing understanding of the significance of departmental-level leadership, especially in relation to the implementation of school-based changes. The change that this article focuses on is the nature of the implementation and maintenance of a single-sex mathematics class in the first year of its instigation in a large (1,200 student) co-educational public secondary school in a Canadian provincial city.

Traditionally, studies of educational leadership have focused strongly on the processes, administrative structure, roles and initiatives necessary to undertake educational change. What is not so well understood is the nature of the political practices that influence how school leaders enact change. Understanding these political practices, and their productive possibilities, is important, and undeveloped within the literature. Some authors do provide glimpses into such practices; Evetts (2009) distinguishes between "organizational professionalism", dominated by concerns about standardization of work practices, managerial control and external evaluation (such as target-setting and performance review), and "occupational professionalism", with its emphasis upon greater autonomy, collegial authority, and accountability to professional ethics determined and enacted by professional bodies and associations. For Evetts (2009), there is evidence that these influences coexist, producing a heterodoxy of practices, especially in areas such as professional learning and school leadership. This coexistence of (sometimes contradictory) practices requires leadership that can negotiate between the politics of the wider school and departments that are both simultaneously organizations and professional communities (Melville & Wallace, 2007).

The use of Bourdieu's "thinking tools" allows us to develop deeper insights into the relations which attend educational leadership practices, including the nature of the relations that exist between school, department and classroom, and the specificity of the practices which subsequently arise. For Bourdieu (1990a, 1990b), fields are "structured spaces" characterized by contestation over the practices of most value, and subject to broader (typically economic and political) pressures (described as the broader "field of power"). At the same time, the logics that structure any given field are always embodied—taken up by those who occupy the field. In this way, broader structures become a part of the dispositions, the "habitus", of those who constitute the field, even as these individuals and groups may contest the nature of some of the practices that come to characterize the field. In relation to leadership, this means that:

Habitus enables us to talk about the person of the leader ... in relation to specific social structures and embodied dispositions. Field enables us to talk about the context of leadership, in this case the school, as "structured social space" with its own properties and power relations, overlapping and interrelating with economic, power, political and other fields. (Lingard & Christie, 2003, p. 319)

Given that Bourdieu, and Bourdieuan-inspired research, affords us the opportunity to consider the work of leaders within schools as an interplay between their leadership habitus and the different sub-fields that constitute secondary schools, our research is guided by the question: "what are the political practices which characterise the interplay of leadership habitus across the field of the school and sub-field of the subject department during the implementation of an educational change, and what are the implications of such practices at the level of the classroom?"

To explore these relationships, the article is presented in six sections. In Section 2, we discuss the theoretical underpinning of our work: the notion of fields and leadership habitus, particularly as these apply to schools and subject departments, and the agentic work of leadership in these settings.

Section 3 provides an overview of the educational change that we are considering, followed by an account (Section 4) of how this change can be analysed from a Bourdieuan perspective. Section 5 presents the findings and preliminary analysis of our data. Section 6 provides a more detailed discussion of this analysis, and how our research provides new insights to augment and perhaps challenge existing theorizing, while Section 7 highlights important implications of our work.

## 2. Fields, schools, leadership and agency

### 2.1. Fields and schools

In this article, we are concerned with the relations that exist between leadership practices within the school as a field and the department as a constituent “sub-field”, and subsequent effects at the classroom level. This necessitates an understanding of notions of fields more generally, how this might apply to how schools are organized, and the leadership practices which attend these organizational structures.

Bourdieu considered social worlds as comprising particular social spaces or “fields”. Fields are specific social environments “with explicit and specific rules, strictly delimited in extra-ordinary time and space” (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 67). Through their specific characteristics, or “logics”, fields exert structuring effects upon those within their influence, and subsequent practices. The result is a considerable degree of autonomy between different fields, relative to each other. As a result, fields are relational constructs comprising individuals (occupying particular “positions”) who share a common belief, engage in similar practices and openly compete for and accumulate the symbolic and material products, or “capitals”, of greatest value within that field (Bourdieu, 1984, 1985). These capitals may exist in varied economic, social and cultural forms: economic capitals include material and economic resources; social capitals are those associations and social ties which accrue between groups and individuals as they interrelate with one another, and; cultural capital are specific objects, qualifications and other culturally defined resources which are construed as valuable and meaningful by particular groups and individuals (Bourdieu, 1986). These capitals help constitute particular individual and collective dispositions, or “habitus”, which in turn influence (and are influenced by) the fields within which they are located.

Lingard and Christie (2003) argue that schools may be construed as fields as they are socially constituted, sharing a common belief in Bernstein’s (1971) three messages systems of schooling (curriculum, pedagogy and assessment), and developing their own characteristics through processes of contestation and competition over the practices of most value. Subject departments may be construed as “sub-fields” within the broader field of schools, as they exhibit many of the characteristics of the field of the school, but also have their own practices and varying levels of autonomy, making them distinguishable within this broader field by virtue of their own invariant logics of practice. The relationships between schools and subject departments are intimated in how Brundrett and Terrell (2004) note how departments influence how broader school policies and initiatives are operationalized:

[school administrators] may set the agenda for school development but this can only be enacted successfully if those who work with children on a day-to-day, minute-by-minute basis are informed, consulted and empowered to do so. The subject leader is frequently the figure who interprets, negotiates and enacts the policy and may, indeed, write the relevant policy document for the initiative for their subject or subjects. In this way, middle managers are the glue that holds together schools since they are frequently the ones to turn policy into action (p. 10).

Given the primacy of the subject in shaping subject teachers’ identities and teaching (c.f. Siskin, 1994), school level concerns can often be seen as tangential to the work of the department, even as the department may be construed as important for implementing reform. Consequently, although operating within the school field, the department sub-field is a powerful force within the school,

exerting influence over the practices of the school and creating a potential “space of conflict and competition” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 17). This is in keeping with Bourdieu’s (1984) point that within any field, the participants “have points of view on this objective space which depend on their position within it and in which their will to transform or conserve it is often expressed” (p. 169).

Secondary teachers naturally belong to a number of groups within a school, but they may identify themselves strongly as teachers of their subject, and tend to develop their strongest personal and professional relationships within their department; departments are administrative units within schools that powerfully influence “what and how teachers teach” (Siskin, 1994, p. 5). Recognizing schools as fields, and their departments as sub-fields, raises questions as to the relationships which exist between them, and the implications of these relationships for subsequent classroom practices. Leadership within a school, then, requires the capacity to negotiate the political relations that arise between schools and departments, and their different “power structures, hierarchies of influence, and logics of practice” (Lingard & Christie, 2003, p. 320).

## 2.2. Leadership and agency

In the light of the complex nature of the field of secondary schools with sub-fields of subject departments, leadership in schools requires an understanding of the logics that characterize the school field and department sub-field. It might also be anticipated that because of the invariant nature of fields, there is relatively little room for more agentic position-taking, including in relation to leadership practices. The specific “capitals” which come to occupy fields may seem to preclude change. However, for Bourdieu (2005), a field is always a field of struggles. Capitals do not simply maintain the status quo; they are deployed “in order to gain access to exchange and to preserve or transform the currently prevailing relation of forces” (p. 199; emphasis added). The potential for transformation is evident in Fowler’s (2000) argument that Bourdieu takes an anti-essentialist stance that makes it possible to bring forth alternative positions within the cultural domain. Similarly, in his argument for the “generative possibilities” (p. 11) that characterize Bourdieu’s work, and in the context of literacy studies, Albright (2008) argues that Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology helps us to move away from a reproductionist stance. Through his mobilization of the notion of a “radical habitus”, Crossley (2003) also points to the possibilities of employing Bourdieu to make sense of social movement activism. Finally, Wilkinson and Eacott (2013) take a critical approach to interrogating the field of educational administration, arguing a need for a more actively reflexive stance that seeks to critique more dominant, technicist stances to educational administration, and use their own biographies as instances of more agentic position-taking. Consequently, the capitals evident in a field not only provide insights into how the field *is*, but how it might come to be *different* from how it is. Such leadership studies have shown that while habitus is the “largely internalized subconscious battery of dispositions that orientate a person’s actions in any situation” (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004, p. 175), it is also subject to change through an active process of reflexivity on the part of agents. Through a process of “socio-analysis”, agents are able to make sense of their circumstances, so as to alter these circumstances, even as they are influenced by the conditions that created these circumstances in the first place (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

In keeping with such an agentic interpretation of Bourdieu’s work, Lingard and Christie (2003) describe three elements of successful school-wide leadership habitus: reflexivity, values and the capacity to deal with the wholeness of the school. Reflexivity is a critically reflective disposition by which a leader may challenge and change their habitus (Bourdieu, 1990b). In terms of leadership, reflexivity makes it possible to develop a:

... real feel for the game through readings of the various logics of practice that inform and define the educational field and its various sub-fields. Formal leaders in schools, particularly the principal, need to be able to read these logics of practice ... in terms of keeping their eye on the central purposes of schooling. Such self-reflexivity would also allow leadership in schools to retain its focus on enhancing learning for all within a politically viable yet ethical set of practices. (Lingard & Christie, 2003, pp. 328–329)

Understanding, and the capacity to work with, the different logics of practice that operate within and across schools, including their constituent departments, is vital if the school is to fulfil its purposes. Reflexivity is vital for leadership to “be connected to defining, defending and enabling a viable educational philosophy throughout the school” (Lingard & Christie, 2003, p. 329). At the same time, the capacity to foreground the democratic values of the school and the common good while concomitantly relying on evidence to justify or challenge practice is crucial; Lingard and Christie (2003) succinctly state this as doing “the most good and cause the right change” (p. 329).

The third element of leadership is the capacity and inclination to work across the school, including with the different logics that characterize educational and administrative practices, to maintain a focus upon learning as the *raison d’être* of the school:

This demands a recognition of the synergy and interrelationships of the component parts and differing logics of practice of the school [administrative] and educational fields. The leadership habitus of formal leadership positions recognises competing agendas, while being able to locate them within the whole, yet retaining leading learning as its core. Indeed, the purpose of a productive leadership habitus is to lead learning in the school in all its senses. (Lingard & Christie, 2003, p. 329)

These elements are important for an understanding of school-wide leadership in general terms, but what of *specific* leaders within schools, and how can we make sense of the specific connections/relations between different leaders occupying different institutional positions within the school in relation to reform? As part of this process, department chairs have a crucial role within departments as instructional leaders (“leading learning”) and in operationalizing policy and curriculum decisions made elsewhere (Brundrett & Terrell, 2004). These qualities are built over time, and also require that the leadership logics of the school and department are complementary. A school leadership habitus may establish opportunities for professional conversations around teaching and learning, and a culture of concern for student learning. Similarly, a departmental leadership habitus may work to promote an environment in which teachers can experiment with their practice and develop pedagogies that promote student learning in their area of study. However, we cannot simply assume that this is what actually occurs in practice. A Bourdieuan perspective helps us understand the practices operating between school, department and teacher—always existing in schools as sites of constant and intensive interaction—and the agentic position-taking under such circumstances, and how these influence the nature of the leadership enacted.

The significance of this work lies in its acknowledgement of the role of a department in operationalizing carefully targeted school reforms in a subject-specific manner. While the need for the reform was first identified at the school level, it was within the department that the reform was planned, initiated, enacted and sustained, hence the focus of the research here upon the practices relating to the department. In this article, we mobilize Bourdieu’s understandings of practice, and Bourdieuan-inspired conceptualizations of leadership, including the possibilities for transformation, to make sense of a specific educational change *inspired* by a provincial policy, *taken up* at the school level, *supported* at the departmental level and *implemented* by a teacher. In doing so, we aim to gain perspectives on the interplay—the political practices—between leadership habitus and the school field and department sub-field in a time of change, and the agentic logics which enabled this process. At the same time, we also acknowledge that leadership practices are not simply the prerogative of those in formal positions, but may be distributed throughout schools. However, we also argue that formal positions are important, and that such positions are still required “to create the cultural conditions and structural opportunities where distributed leadership can operate and can flourish” (Harris, 2008, p. 184).

### 3. The change: introducing a single-sex mathematics class

The educational change in this article was the establishment of a Grade 9 single-sex mathematics class within a Canadian co-educational secondary school, one of four public secondary schools operated by the school board in a provincial city of 110,000 people. Situated in a largely middle class

residential area of the city, the school has approximately 1,200 students from Grades 9 to 12, and serves a relatively wide range of socio-economic groups, given its location. Within the student body, 7% of students are in the essential/workplace stream, 26% of students are in the applied/college level stream and 67% of students are in the academic/university level stream (based on 2010 figures). The level of enrolment in the applied/college stream has been steadily increasing in recent years, including the proportion of Aboriginal students. The organizational structure consists of traditional subject-based departments and a school-wide administration team consisting of the principal, two vice-principals and the head of student services—the latter of whom coordinates enrolments, student subject selections, compliance with provincial mandates and any issue that may affect student success.

The first and fourth authors of this article have worked extensively with the administration and mathematics department. In 2008, we were asked by the chair to work with administrators and the teachers as they developed a single-sex boys' mathematics class in Grade 9. In this section, we outline the legislative background for this change, and how the school and department moved to implement the change.

The key Ontario provincial policy to impact on the change is *The Student Success Strategy*. This is the latest iteration of a broad, province-wide programme, begun in 2004 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004), and designed to guarantee that students are successful in their secondary schooling and equipped to move on to their chosen post-secondary destination. Significantly, the reasons for implementing the *Student Success Strategy* are described in largely administrative and economic terms:

Nearly a third of students were not completing their high school education in 2003–04.

... on the cost of dropping out of high school:

- Labour and employment: A student who drops out can expect an income loss of more than \$100,000 over their lifetime, compared to individuals with a high school diploma (and no postsecondary education).
- Social assistance: The average public cost of providing social assistance is estimated at over \$4,000 per year per student who drops out.
- Crime: Students who drop out are overly represented in the prison population.
- Health: A student who drops out enjoys fewer years at a reasonable quality of life. This is because there are strong associations between education and health across a range of illnesses (e.g. cancer, diabetes). Combining morbidity and mortality costs, there is an estimated cost to the student who drops out of more than \$8,000 per year (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013).

Components of the *Student Success Strategy* include: *Think Literacy* and *Leading Math Success*, which aim to ensure that teachers have the resources to help students build a solid foundation in reading, writing and math; credit rescue programmes that intervene prior to students experiencing failure in a course; and credit recovery programmes that allow students who have failed a course to only repeat expectations where they have been unsuccessful, rather than redoing the whole course (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013).

In terms of measuring the efficacy of the *Student Success Strategy*, one major measure is the goal of having 85% of students graduate secondary school. Other measures, known as student success indicators, measure and evaluate student progress and are also employed for evaluative purposes. These indicators include credit accumulation rates, compulsory course pass rates and Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) test results.

In the context of this policy push for measurable improvements, the head of student services, “Janet”,<sup>1</sup> with the support of the principal at the time, initiated the idea of a single-sex boys’ mathematics class in Year 9. The first conversations about the change began in 2007, and involved Janet, the chair of science and mathematics, “Anthea”, and the school principal at the time. The current principal, “Milton”, was appointed principal in 2009, and has been an active participant in these discussions. Starting in 2008, the conversations began on how to respond to data on student success from sources such as the provincially administered EQAO testing regime (see <http://www.eqao.com>) and published research on single-sex classes. The discussions culminated in a decision to implement a single-sex boys’ class in the 2009 school year. This class contained 23 students, a third of whom had been assessed as reaching the provincially mandated standard in mathematics. An important part of the implementation was the recognition that some pedagogical strategies had been shown to be more effective in single-sex classes (Younger & Warrington, 2002). These strategies were to become the focus of professional learning opportunities within the department. In the 2010 school year, the single-sex class was retained into Grade 10, for both mathematics and science, and a new single-sex class was formed in Grade 9 with another teacher.

The EQAO results for the first year (2009) indicated that the implementation was successful in terms of mathematical achievement, with every student reaching the provincially mandated standard. These results were replicated in the three school years since 2009. Other potential indicators of success included: class attendance across the three years ranging from 90 to 95%, compared with typical values for males in mixed classes of 70%; fewer referrals to the front office for discipline related issues; a more positive attitude to mathematics (highlighted in journals that the students kept throughout the year); and a gradual increase in students choosing mathematics courses in Grade 11. The maintenance and expansion of the change indicates that the implementation of the change has been successful. What were the logics which informed this success?

#### **4. Methodological implications: theory in practice**

Adkins (2011, p. 362) reminds us that the work of Bourdieu should not be simply applied to recent events, for to do so is to “leave the received terms of those events intact”. Instead, the thinking tools of Bourdieu should be mobilized in order to understand the events in new ways. In this article, we are seeking to understand the nuances that characterize the interplay of leadership habitus across the school field, department sub-field and classroom as key participants worked to implement a school reform. To develop this understanding, we have used the implementation of the single-sex class as a critical incident through which to generate data about leadership habitus and to shed light on the nature of the practices that characterize the interaction of different individuals occupying different institutional positions within the school. Critical incidents are those incidents that are seen as “being indicative of underlying trends, motives and structures” (Tripp, 1994, p. 69). We believe that there is a synergy between the critical incident strategy and the mobilization of Bourdieu’s thinking tools. The critical incident strategy allows us to move beyond a description of the event to a consideration of the “social and material conditions of our practice” (Tripp, 1994, p. 72). The use of Bourdieu’s thinking tools also allows us to understand the specificity of practice and the “conditions” and participants’ responses.

To understand the implementation of the single-sex class, the article draws upon the insights of four main participants involved in the initiative: the principal (“Milton”); the head of student services (“Janet”); the departmental chair (“Anthea”); and the teacher (“Clark”), who taught the first class of boys. The selection of these four participants reflects the key individuals involved, and how their activities, instigated in response to the provincial policy, cascaded through to the school, to the departmental level and to the classroom teacher. While we acknowledge that working with four participants could be viewed as a limitation, we would argue that this more fine-grained analysis of key participants’ responses provides important insights into the specific practices that accompanied the particular reform. This includes those associated with personnel in formal leadership positions, and, as relevant, those engaged in more “distributed” forms of leadership.

To generate data, we have relied principally on individual, semi-structured interviews with these personnel. The use of semi-structured interviews provided us with a strategy for understanding the participants' practices, both "personal—reflecting a person's life history—[and] social—reflecting the milieu, the contexts in which teachers live" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 2). The key interview questions were developed in the light of Bourdieu's notion of practice as contested, and are reproduced in Appendix A. The questions were supplied to each of the four participants before the interviews to give them time to consider their responses and the meanings that they attached to those responses. Each interview was conducted at the school by the first and fourth authors and lasted approximately 40 min. This was in addition to the opportunities for the participants to study the questions, ask clarifying questions and to check the transcripts produced as part of the research process. The completed transcripts were returned to the participants for member checking, clarification as necessary and their approval. Other data were generated through the audio recording of planning meetings and field notes of conversations, both formal and informal, with the participants.

Bourdieu's notions of field, habitus and capitals, as well as the leadership literature gesturing towards more agentic possibilities within the field, informed the analysis of the interplay between the various leaders within the school field and department sub-field, and the teacher (who was himself, we would argue, a leader of learning). In this work, we recognize that some participants may be more strategic in their positioning within and across the field and sub-field, and that all are influenced by a broader field of power. This is in keeping with Bourdieu's call for how to study a field:

First, one must analyze the position of the field vis-à-vis the field of power ... Second, one must map the objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions who compete for the legitimate form of specific authority of which this field is the site. And, third, one must analyze the habitus of agents, the different systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalizing a determinate type of social and economic condition, and which find in a definite trajectory within the field under consideration a more or less favorable opportunity to become actualized. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 104–105)

Such an approach is attuned to Bourdieu's epistemological approach of understanding practices *in situ*, and in relation to other possible practices, rather than construing practice as able to be understood in terms of some sort of a priori (such as a more structuralist) notion of understanding, or through various construals of subjects' articulations of their practice alone. While agents' perspectives alone cannot account for the nature of the practices in which they participate and of which they are a part, reliance upon more "objective" accounts of practice also fails to grasp the complexity of the interplay between actors and the spaces they occupy (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, & Passeron, 1991).

## 5. Findings

Our analysis of the data provides not only insights into evidence of a normative form of leadership, as outlined by Lingard and Christie (2003), but also more nuanced understandings of the nature of the emergence of alternative practices, even as political tensions and ties between the school field, department sub-field and classroom teacher may typically favour traditional practices more generally.

What is interesting is not only the extent to which the school field and department sub-field appear to operate in overlapping but also parallel ways, together and yet apart—but the nature of these active ties—what we describe as "links"—between those involved. While there is evidence of cross-field effects (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004) on the influence of the field of schooling upon the sub-field of the department, this seems to be too broad a rendering of what is actually occurring, and downplays the active linkages between those occupying different organizational positions. The principal, Milton, expends considerable capital in response to provincial pressure for the development of a school ethos of student success, but is also mindful of the role of department chairs, and "ties" his work into the more disciplinary departmental matters in "loose" but tangible ways. The head of student services, Janet, operates across the boundary of the school field and department sub-field and relies heavily on mobilizing social and cultural capital in relation to the department chair in

developing and supporting the change. The chair, Anthea, is heavily invested in the logics of practice of her department and how to refine those practices to the benefit of teaching and learning in her subject, and cultivates “links” with the classroom teacher responsible for teaching the boys’ mathematics class. At all times, we argue, these links are a product of these individuals’ learnings, focused upon student learning, including in moral and ethical ways; and it is these individuals’ efforts to learn from their circumstances (reflexivity), which enables these links to be forged. With this overview in mind, this section provides evidence to support these claims, and to reveal the nature of relevant leadership practices, and the autonomy and heteronomy, that characterize these practices as they apply to this particular reform as it played out in the school.

### **5.1. Leading as linking learning of provincial policy to subject chairs**

Reflecting the principal’s position relative to the school board/district and provincial Ministry of Education, Milton, the principal, very explicitly defined his role as implementing the provincial *Student Success Strategy*, aimed at increasing high school graduation rates (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004, 2013), but in relation to his own students’ needs. As he stated:

... we have a Student Success strategic timetable so that students have good experiences and the best opportunities to succeed academically. That fits in with our goal of credit accumulation [which] is one of the indicators by which we measure our success. Grade Nine applied [math] is an area of focus in our school improvement plan where we’d like to see credit accumulation increase, so the student services department is strategically timetabling kids into classrooms like this one where we think that they’re more likely to be more successful.

In this work of “credit accumulation”, the principal acknowledged that having to work across various levels—the school board, the Ministry of Education, parents, teachers and students—was intensely political, and required learning how to maintain a strong focus upon student learning as the key priority:

The role of the principal is to ensure that the students are getting every opportunity to succeed and the best opportunities to succeed. All the domains overlap and intersect over my desk—it is highly politicized, and my job is to be aware of what we’re doing, why we’re doing it, and to be able to articulate that to all the different levels—to students, parents, staff, administrators, the Board and trustees. I need to be supportive of student learning and to be able to articulate how we shape instructional practice to that end. That is a very important message and it needs to be a consistent message.

This focus upon students’ learning revealed a leadership habitus oriented towards, and productive of, a focus upon students’ needs even as there were strong economic and administrative forces opposing such a focus; this included both positive school experiences and opportunities to progress academically. This leadership habitus was evident through two main strategies. We are using the term strategies here in the Bourdieuan sense that they reflect a mastery of, and feel for, the game that is “embodied and turned into a second nature” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 63). The first was working to engage the school in the ongoing dialogue around the concept of student success—a concept that will always be productive of a range of responses. This dialogue, according to Milton, was to encourage teachers to internalize the educative aspects of the policy’s ideal of student success, and then develop strategies that promoted it in their classrooms, but not in directive ways. The focus of attention at the school level involved a discursive logic which foregrounded the work of teachers in operationalizing this success on the part of students:

[The ongoing dialogue around the concept of student success] makes sense to teachers and administrators, and doesn’t change with the principal. It is a dialogue with the board, chairs, parents and students ... that process maintains the integrity of the school ethos. While the principal shapes it a little bit and gives it direction, the principal stays out of the way of the good things that are happening and encourages those things to keep going. It is the initiative of the teachers that is the ethos of the school, as long as the ethos is focusing on student achievement and best practice in the classroom.

The second strategy entailed encouraging teachers, working within departments, to operationalize the school ethos of student success. This included recognizing that the pedagogies, standards and evaluation of student success varied across departments, and that chairs were the key figures for achieving the goals of the school:

... [O]ur leadership philosophy is that we believe that the only thing that we actually shape is teacher behavior and instructional practice. The importance of this change lies in the teacher engagement with something that is rich in dialogue, rich in professional conversation and rich in opportunities to shape professional practice.

In our leadership structure, the role of the department chair is as an instructional leader. As instructional leaders, chairs receive lots of support through our forums where they all get together and receive professional development to move best practices for instructional practice. Every six weeks in their subjects they discuss those practices and continue to shape them. There is an essential role for taking the learning and experience of the classroom teacher and evaluating and implementing the distilled best practices across each department.

Reflecting a habitus forged from decision-making at a whole-school level, as well as contestation within the school field more broadly, Milton also learned, and acknowledged, that not all departments had the same capacity for supporting the school ethos, and in large part this was due to the leadership of the chair. The chairs were seen as operationalizing the school ethos at the departmental level:

... at this time, the math department is very well established as being a high-functioning, cohesive, articulate, and committed department. We are making this change for the right reasons, and we're all willing to engage in the dialogue of what's happening and why. There are other departments that would not be ready to stride forward into this level of engagement and [professional] discomfort. I think we have an outstanding instructional leader in mathematics who is very comfortable having professional conversations. I would say that in this change, the role of the chair is crucial in moving forward instructional practice in a very careful, but directed, way that aligns with the school ethos.

Here is an example of two areas of contestation between the provincial policy and the practices of the school. First, in translating the policy to the school, the principal is pursuing an educative stance towards the reform, eschewing the more economic logics of the Ministry of Education. Second, there are conflicting departmental practices that shaped the school response to the reforms: "There are other departments that would not be ready". Milton's leadership habitus reveals the political tensions (in relation to both broader provincial policies, and the micro-politics of fostering change at the subject and classroom level) that characterize the relationship between the school field and department sub-field in general terms, but more specifically, it also reveals a process of strategizing on his part which is attempting to seamlessly tie broader provincial policy expectations with subject chairs. His disposition appears to reflect the normative concept of leadership habitus in part—particularly the capacity to deal with the whole school (Lingard & Christie, 2003)—but the values espoused and reflexive stance taken also foregrounds his work as a connector, a "link" for learning between the provincial policy, and the role of the chair. He was concerned to ensure that the ethos of the school articulated with the demands of the Ministry, whose policy seemed to foreground student success for administrative and economic reasons. However, he rearticulated this into a focus on setting very broad conditions for learning within the school, with a considerable focus upon the work of the subject chairs, and in particular in relation to this reform, the mathematics chair. This leadership habitus was productive of foregrounding the leadership practices of chairs, even as these appeared to be at very different levels. This included strategizing the consistent mobilization of capital in the form of a discursive prioritizing of instructional capacity, evidenced in the establishment of fora for chairs to discuss changes to practice, and in recognition of teachers as having the responsibility to operationalize the concern for student success. Such fora were themselves a possible vehicle to help "link learning" between the school and subject departments, and perhaps individual teachers.

### **5.2. Leading as linking learning between school and department**

As the head of student services, Janet occupied a school leadership position concerned with operationalizing and supporting the ethos of student success. Janet worked on the boundaries between the school field and department sub-fields, a site of considerable potential contestation, particularly between more established and emergent/alternative practices. Her role required the capacity to identify school-level problems, and collate evidence to validate a chosen course of action, with a focus upon the teachers in departments best positioned to deliver successful outcomes:

I collect profiles of at-risk students coming into the school—kids who might struggle with high school. I noticed that there were a lot of boys being identified as at-risk. I was interested in seeing a class focused on boys and working with their strengths and interests. We also read up on the effects of single-sex classes, both the positives and the negatives. So, did it have to be math? For me it probably didn't matter if it was math, but math worked out with Anthea as the chair and having a great teacher.

The possession of social capital enabled recognition of Anthea's capacities, while Janet's social and cultural capitals were also evident in her close work with Milton to ensure that all the necessary administrative supports were put in place to connect the policy, school and department contexts. As part of this process, various other forms of social capital were mobilized, including relations with members of the Board, parents, students and teachers:

Milton talked to people in the Board office, so we have their support. We sent letters to parents and students, we were supportive of the teachers and their practical needs, and organizing the time that we take from classes to allow these meetings to take place ... and giving Anthea the time to put into trying to figure out what would work.

Janet also worked to build support for the change, being proactive in looking at potential administrative issues:

Everybody was very supportive [and when] we had to change timetables for various reasons, they were on board with that. It would have been tough if a female student had to leave a Grade Nine academic math class because they weren't able to keep up ... we might have had a really tough time wondering where we're going to put her. If we had to, we would have juggled the timetable, and that will be something in the future if there's going to be an expansion in the single-sex classes.

Along with Milton, Janet was aware that these are teachers who must commit to, and enact, the change if it was to be successful. This learning again reflects the development of particular forms of cultural and social capital in her capacity to recognize that Anthea and Clark—the teacher who implemented the change in the classroom—would be a particularly good team for this work:

Clark is probably the most important player as the teacher, the person who meets with the boys every day; he is the key factor in their success right now. Clark's strategies, his willingness to adapt, his willingness to have people come into his classroom and observe them is paramount. He works closely with Anthea, and is willing to share what's working and what's not working with other people. I don't know how many teachers would feel as comfortable as Clark obviously feels with public teaching. Anthea is outstanding; she's very professional and when she commits to something, she really commits to it. Anthea has also taken a lead by working as a math coach with Clark, and going into the class and working and talking math with the students as well. I mean, she's definitely a key person to have ... when you see Anthea and Clark in action, I'm really glad that it's Anthea and Clark.

This data highlights an area of contestation in operationalizing the change from the school to the department. Janet's comment that "I'm really glad that it's Anthea and Clark" gestures towards contestation between other potential participants in the reform agenda. From the school perspective, and reflecting a distinctive socio-analysis of circumstances on the part of Janet, only some departments were ready to implement reforms, and within those departments, it was only a specific

selection of teachers who were felt to be capable of engaging fully with reforms. Such a perspective may reflect recognition of the more conservative approaches of other possible participants in comparison to Clarks' classroom practices, and to the social capital that was productively associated with the relationship that existed between Clark and Anthea (and Janet). That Janet made the explicit reference to Clark and Anthea indicates knowledge of more dominant practices within other subject departments in the school, and how these can be challenged (over time).

Janet's habitus was grounded in an understanding of which departments and individuals were most likely to be able to translate articulations of student success from the school field to the department sub-field, and into the classroom. In making such a decision, Janet was making a political judgement regarding the capacity of not only the mathematics department but also all departments within the school. It was the mathematics department which she felt could "handle" the changes required, and it is the nature of the leadership practices which attended this work which is of particular interest here. Janet's work was critical in ensuring that political and administrative supports were in place to initiate, nurture and sustain the change through its first two years. Her involvement and learning represented a form of social capital as a link between the school administration and department in supporting the change, which enabled the more educative effects of the broader provincial policy to be taken up.

### **5.3. Leading as linking learning between department and teacher practices**

The success of the change was clearly related to the capitals accrued (learnings) within the mathematics department, and how these were deployed in relation to teacher practices. The chair's habitus reflected a logic of substantive teaching and learning within her department, but which was simultaneously allied with the more educative aspects of provincial policies as articulated through the school ethos:

Student success is what I am always interested in ... the students are the ones that are going to drive what we do and how we're going to change instruction, to get a better understanding of how students operate. Even more so with a group of boys, and they need to move forward in a better social atmosphere.

This broader ethos was construed as in keeping with the chair's own habitus. This habitus was forged from a moral concern for both the students and the teachers in the department that she had chaired for six years, including her experiences of students' struggles to appreciate mathematics in the transition from primary to secondary school. This moral logic was reflected in her concern that students should have an experience in mathematics characterized by at least some success:

Their attitude and the fact that all can come to a math class knowing that they will succeed in some way ... they are going to move ahead just that little bit and not feel defeated and have another semester of math anxiety. That's what happens with these kids; they come in from elementary school and they bring that anxiety with them. We're not looking for them to love math, I'm just looking to find a way for them to learn at a higher level, for them to actually show that they can do some math. With that attitude, and some success, we provide a safe, welcoming environment where all the kids can equally participate.

This moral logic of developing successful learners was also evident in building her students' confidence through her commitment to argumentation as a teaching strategy:

[Referring to argumentation as a teaching strategy] ... they take their position and justify to their partner, or the teacher, to show what they know. I've had the privilege of doing that in some classes as the kids have moved along far enough to have confidence to do that. Why not have them take a firm stance on why they believe something and then have to defend that position? That's also how student relationships can be built.

The concern that Anthea had for her students was also seen in her conceptualization of the role of the chair and her relations with teachers. Given her location closer to the instructional core of the school, Anthea had a more classroom-centric disposition than Milton or Janet—more closely focused

on specific practices of teaching and learning, and a desire to ensure that students experienced success. These pedagogical logics were exemplified in her work helping teachers to constantly refine their teaching practices, and not just as individuals, but also as a department:

I have been working alongside Clark ... he just came from that one professional development session and brought back some good ideas that both of us would benefit from. You need to be aware of anything that is being researched out there so that you feel current and a little more prepared ... those kids will benefit from it. They can only learn from us if we keep ourselves current.

Such associations also reflect contestation between the more collegial relationship of Clark and Anthea, and the social and cultural capital accrued through their work together (and opportunities it afforded for professional learning), and the more dominant individualistic approaches to teaching practice more generally. The cultural capital accrued during the professional development sessions was actualized through the social capital evident in the relationship between Clark and Anthea. The commitment to improve teaching practice clearly reveals significant learnings on the part of members of a highly functioning departmental sub-field focused upon a logic of collaboration for genuine student success/learning. Through the social capital accrued by members of the department, Anthea appeared as a teacher, a colleague and a moral leader who worked alongside and supported teachers—a vehicle for cultivating their learning—in order to improve teaching and learning in the department:

I will be there to ensure that, as a colleague and Chair, I support Clark. I can't be in the class every day, and that wouldn't be my role, but it would absolutely be beneficial for Clark to be able to come and just vent, let me know what's going on, or, I need this could you get this for me, am I doing this right, or any kind of support. I had to be willing to be available for that at any given time, and take those risks for those kids and accept that this may not go the way we want it to go, and to be able to be flexible enough that we could change it up if we needed to.

When Anthea spoke of her six years as a chair, it was clear that a logic of learning through collaboration was key to her work:

I think I've always been there for staff in times of need, no matter what it is that they're bringing to the table, that if they want to try something I'll support them, if it's a new lesson, if they want me to go in and watch, or if they need some help or direction. I don't think I've shifted in my practice as the chair.

Anthea's caring disposition ensured that she was attuned to the potential negative impact of any change, such as the effects of the student success policy on students' actual success (or otherwise). Again, this consideration reflects a contest between an instrumental approach to education and more moral logics: "It is not easy at times—it is a risk I am willing to take in terms of the actual success for those kids. I don't want to see kids fail, and it is a worry for me". Such a disposition was also evident in a willingness to back the professionalism of her teachers: "I'm allowing Clark to take these kids for the good or the bad ... any situation could be good or bad, but I am not going to stop his class from succeeding". This was not a risk-free venture, and at the same time, a logic of accountability was also evident as she accepted the responsibility for implementing the change. Furthermore, in mobilizing social capital, and recognizing the cultural capital of her teachers, and taking responsibility for teaching and learning, Anthea built further departmental social and cultural capital. The end result appeared to be a much more robust culture in which teachers learned to take risk for the potential benefit of their students:

Clark: There just seems to be a willingness to do that kind of experimentation that I haven't really seen in other schools. With the change, we'll look at the results. We'll see what worked, what didn't, and we're going to move forward. I've always felt like I didn't have to knock it out of the park the first time, otherwise the program was going to fail. That was very liberating. That was very free.

Interviewer: So Anthea has basically given you freedom to fail, but if it does fail, then she's going to take the responsibility for it?

Clark: You know I think, yes, I think we're going to share the responsibility. Inside the department when we have the meetings, it's really interesting ... we have to sit back and look at it neutrally. You can't take it personally; you have to look at it and say, okay, what worked? ... It wasn't going to be the blame game. It wasn't going to be pointing fingers. It was how can we move forward from this? What have we learnt from it?

Clark's comments were evidence of learning arising from a particular social (and cultural) capital accumulation process, including how broader policy and school concerns about student success were rearticulated in relevant ways at the level of the department and classroom. Clark had benefited from Anthea's caring disposition, and her leadership was characterized by a strong pedagogical/instructional logic. Under Anthea, the department was characterized by a logic that encouraged the grounding of teaching and learning, rather than simply aligning with more generic policy concerns for student success. This was made possible by a political decision to support a particular approach to learning within the field of the subject department, a particular departmental logic, characterized by an explicit moral concern for both students and teachers, and a broader understanding by key personnel within the school that a "light-touch" approach to supporting the mathematics department and its chair, and the boys' mathematics classroom, and its teacher, were clearly appropriate. The result was substantive teaching practice, and a process of ongoing capital accumulation oriented towards improving the teaching and learning of mathematics, resulting in actual student success.

## 6. Discussion: a logic of linking learning

Our analysis of the school field and departmental sub-field indicates that the leadership practices that transpired reveal a complex logic of "links" of learnings by those occupying different levels within the educational enterprise of this school as it operationalized this particular change/reform. On the one hand, and in keeping with Bourdieu's understanding of fields as contested, there was clear evidence of the broader field of power seeking to exert influence upon the field of schooling practices, including in problematic ways, dominated by more economic logics, as foregrounded in the original *Student Success Strategy* policy. At a discursive level, the capitals most valued were those associated with immediate economic growth and improvement. The "cost" of dropping out at high school was not simply a well-worn metaphor, but instead gestured towards a broader field of power dominated by more economic logics, and administrative logics to effect a change in these circumstances.

However, the way in which the principal responded to these provincial policy concerns, and "learned" that their success depended on rearticulation in relation to specific students' needs in his school, constituted a more student-centric approach. Necessarily, though, this approach was articulated very broadly and in fairly general terms. In his own words, his world was often "very political", and necessitated juggling across a range of individuals and groups' priorities and beliefs ("students, parents, staff, administrators, the Board and trustees"). In this context, "leading learning" (Lingard & Chrtistie, 2003) seemed somewhat challenging, but was also in keeping with the tensions and contestation that characterizes principals' work. As part of this process, and through the social capital he had accrued, he came to construe the subject chairs in the school as vital conduits for changed practice and improved learning for some of the most marginalized students in his school. In his decision-making—arguably a form of socio-analysis of the circumstances in which he worked—he also highlighted the contestation that can occur between school leadership practices, and practices of different departments. As a result, his learnings resulted in establishing "links" to connect the work of the mathematics chair with the needs of these students; again highlighting the agentic responses of the chair. Such strategizing entailed acting reflexively in his relations with the Board, Ministry, teachers and students (amongst others), as he sought to cultivate the conditions for a school-wide focus upon student success within the school, and not just more administrative logics (although these logics certainly did impinge upon his work and relations). It is these practices which,

we would argue, serve as alternatives to more typical, dominant practices within the fields of schools and sub-fields, and the more conservative relations which characterize interactions between people occupying specific roles within/across these organizational units.

The principal's leadership practices in this regard were not solely responsible for such strategizing. The head of the student services department was clearly integral to the establishment of further "links" to cultivate learning, and provided another form of "linking learning" within the school. These links were enabled by a willingness to act on her caring disposition; an action clearly evident in her advocacy for a single-sex class for the boys whom she had learned struggled so much with schooling, and further evident in her support of the chair of mathematics to be involved with working with these students. This support for the work of the chair of mathematics was a clear reflection of the social capital existing within the school, and evident in the overt political support for the chair's work, and the classroom teacher: "I'm really glad its Anthea and Clark". In part, it was also evidence of how the relations within and between this department and the school as a whole were more productive than those which existed terms of other departments. In terms of the specific interplay between the leadership habitus of the school and department, the learning in evidence reflected a logic of care associated with cultivating and "tying together" broader policy, school and departmental sites. Janet worked across the contested boundary between the school field and department sub-fields (evident in the way not all departments were ready to take on the challenges at hand) to investigate and pursue the concept of how single-sex classes could promote student success, and to help establish the conditions that allowed the change to occur. From the initial conception, through the collection of evidence and planning, to the decision to implement the change, Janet relied heavily on both her sense of responsibility to the at-risk students and the social capital that she had built up through her association with Anthea.

This further consolidation of support across the school, department and classroom was evident in the chair's advocacy for efforts to promote student success for these struggling students. A moral logic was clearly at play which served as a guide to ensure the success of the initiative. For the chair, these students' success (or failure) was something about which she had been intimately acquainted and to which she wished to offer an alternative. It was this search for alternatives as a result of these experiences that helped foster her support for the work of the classroom teacher. The personal commitment to student success seemed to be a key disposition of the chair. Her departmental leadership revealed a moral logic that provided opportunities for professional learning but one which worked to align more substantive articulations of the school success ethos, and how that ethos might be practised in the teaching and learning of mathematics. Her leadership also marked the department as having markedly different practices in relation to other departments (and, in a way, as a "winner" in relation to the competing practices which characterized other departments)—differences that could be articulated by school administrators. In this way, her work revealed a field of schooling practices as contested through the way in which this work contrasted with other, perhaps more dominant, logics within the field (as evident at this particular school site).

Finally, this logic of "linking learning" across the school site was evident at the classroom level in the way the teacher described how he learned he felt supported to make mistakes, that everything didn't depend upon immediate and initial success: "I didn't have to knock it out of the park the first time, otherwise the program was going to fail. That was very liberating. That was very free". Clearly a high level of trust was in evidence between the teacher and his subject head, and this was reciprocated in her support of his work. At the same time, these "links" were further supported at the level of the school through the endorsement of the work of the chair and the teacher by the head of student services, and the endorsement of the chair by the principal. In this way, there was a contiguous process of elaboration and support for an initiative which was expressed in a systematic way—processes and practices not typically characterizing the field of schools/field of schooling.

This logic of "linking learning" between the field of the school, and sub-field of the subject department, and to the classroom level, is not so overtly expressed in much of the leadership literature which explores inter- or intra-field relations. These learnings did not "cascade" through the school in

a simple, linear fashion, given the different roles and subsequent dispositions of the key people involved, and the more dominant practices within schools which make it difficult to enact substantive reform of the type referred to in the research presented. The broader remit of the principal necessitated that his focus was not upon the specificity of departmental and classroom practices. The chair's focus upon developing a professional culture within her subject department also differed from the head of Student Services' focus upon students' needs more broadly within the school. However, what is perhaps more significant is how the learnings of these individuals seemed to work across, "link", to cultivate improved student learning within the boys mathematics class. The research reveals a clear capacity for those in leadership positions at different points in a school to develop leadership dispositions that allow them to "link" their learnings in ways which enhance student learning.

Lingard and Christie (2003) reiterate that the real influence that principals have is bound up in their leadership habitus, and how this can be mobilized to establish a collective responsibility for improving teaching and learning. Such a collective responsibility must be based on values that foreground the educational, democratic and social justice purposes of the school. In the change that we have considered here, such a leadership habitus was evident in the more educative disposition of not just the principal but also the head of student services, the chair and the teacher as they elaborated (albeit differently) an ethos of student success. Their work seemed more oriented towards educational goals, rather than the broader administrative and economic goals evident in the initial *Student Success* policies. An educative disposition on the part of key teachers and lead teachers (subject chairs) can enable ties between more educative understandings of policies, and their take-up at various sites within the school. Such concerns were informed in considerable part by an ethic of care and sense of moral responsibility amongst those involved. However, it is the way that the learnings of these individuals "link" together which seems really critical for understanding the nature of the interconnected practices which support improvements in students' learning in school settings. School leadership requires the capacity to cultivate such ties—across the boundaries between policies, school field and department sub-field, and in relation to teachers' practices.

Arguably, and in keeping with the work of other researchers advocating and exemplifying the agentic potential of Bourdieu's concepts (Albright, 2008; Crossley, 2003; Fowler, 2000; Wilkinson & Eacott, 2013), this article provides at least some evidence of the value of a constantly reflexive approach to schooling practices, and a valuing of the capacity to not only reflect upon but act upon these understandings. However, it also suggests, from a normative position, that such reflexivity also implies the need for a leadership habitus which values the nature of the learnings of key personnel at different institutional locations, and how "linking" such learnings, informed by an ethic of care and concern for genuine student success, can improve teaching practice and subsequent student learning. That not every department was able to participate equally productively also indicates that this work is not straightforward, and a site of contestation, even as it is clearly valued and valuable for cultivating substantive teacher and student learning.

## 7. Summary and implications

This article has sought to explore the nature of the leadership practices within and across school fields and department sub-fields in response to policy support for improved student engagement in schools in Ontario. A Bourdieuan perspective reveals a leadership habitus productive of "linking" learning, based upon an ethic of care and concern for disengaged students, and how such a habitus needs to be cultivated across the school as a field, and subject department as a sub-field, and in relation to classroom practice. That is, across these various contexts, it was a reasonably consistent political willingness to challenge the power of externally imposed administrative and economic logics, or to at least background them, while working within an ethics of care, which helped to promote more educative logics for student success. As part of this process, there was also recognition, and support for departments to interpret and enact changes they construed most beneficial for their students' learning, even as it was acknowledged that not all departments were able to do so equally effectively. The research raises questions about the extent to which such synergies within the field of the school and sub-field of subject departments might be cultivated in sites where they appear to be lacking.

From a normative perspective, not all chairs will be effective instructional leaders capable of promoting more educative logics, for example. And, the principal is ultimately responsible to the wider community for the conduct of the school, potentially challenging the autonomy that a department could be granted. However, seeking ways to encourage various “links for learning”, focused upon more educative practices as expressed discursively in policy, and school and departmental practices, and at the level of the classroom teacher, would seem a valuable means of responding to the varied logics which characterize schooling practices, and as a way to overcome concerns about the autonomy or otherwise of various organizational units in schooling settings. Exploring the nature of such links is an area for further investigation, and has the potential to challenge more dominant, conservative schooling practices. Cultivating a school, departmental and teacher leadership habitus responsive to such learnings is an important task for professional growth and development for all in schools.

For change to have a realistic chance of success, we believe that the values that underpin change must also be interpreted and understood by school leaders in ways that foster active and productive learning. Such a process may require subject-specific learnings characterized by ongoing school and departmental-level conversations around what constitutes productive educational practice and values. Leadership at the school level has the responsibility for initiating and monitoring those conversations around practice and values at the school level, and also providing opportunities for departments to explore how such practices and values may be cultivated in the department. However, this work cannot be achieved by principals and school administrators acting alone, but instead involves a commitment to personal and professional relationships at all levels, for fields operate “at the scale of individual interactions, as well as at the more macro-scales with which Bourdieu was primarily concerned” (Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2008, p. 38). How more learning-focused practices (discursively at the level of policy, through to more embodied forms at the level of practice) are enabled—“linked” together—between different groups and individuals occupying different institutional positions, and differently positioned in relation to more dominant schooling practices, seems particularly important for fostering improved, ethical practice in schools.

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#### Note

1. All names are pseudonyms.

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## Appendix A: Interview questions

- (1) How would you describe the genesis of the single-sex initiative?
- (2) Why have you been willing to entertain the idea of a single-sex mathematics class?
- (3) Who, in your opinion, are the most important players? Why do you believe this?
- (4) What physical resources do you believe will be necessary to implement the reform?
- (5) How do you believe the school's ethos and administration will support the reform?
- (6) How supportive do you believe teachers at the department level are of the reform?
- (7) What professional learning do you believe will be needed to help you implement the reform?
- (8) Are there any changes in your own professional practice that may need to be made to implement the reform?
- (9) What do you hope the outcome of the single-sex initiative to be?



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