

# **An Epistemology of Leadership Perspective**

## **Examining the Fit for a Critical Pragmatic Approach**

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### **Abstract**

In this article the author examines the meaning of epistemology in relation to educational leadership. Argued is the position that generalizing the intent and tendencies of modernistic and postmodernistic approaches to educational reform and leadership preparation makes space for a critical pragmatic approach. Critical pragmatists as scholar-practitioners fill this space. The author examines then nature of a critical pragmatic approach to leadership, elaborating in her discussion the nature of scholar-practitioner leadership. It is further argued that through examination of the interconnectedness of scholarship and practice, the critical pragmatist as scholar-practitioner emerges as a connector of opposing perspectives.

### **Introduction**

The desire, need, and drive to explain the world around us is innate to human beings. The construction of knowledge giving meaning to life and its processes is historically based on scientific inquiry and/or grounded in philosophical and theoretical conceptualizations in efforts to establish the legitimacy of an explanation formulated to more fully understand and function in the world. Epistemological investigations, or the examination of “the origin, nature, methods, and limits of human knowledge” (*Webster’s*, 2003, p. 654), through multiple lenses has broad application and finds its reach touching issues of educational leadership, giving rise to pedagogical considerations. Sifting through opposing epistemological

methods of explaining the world around us, a “New Science” emerges as a frame that gives structure and meaning to effective leadership practice manifesting itself as a “new scholarship” known as scholar–practitioner leadership (Jenlink, 2001; Wheatley, 1999). By applying a scientific realist perspective that borrows “general parameters derived from positivism” (Scheurich, 1994, p. 18) or modernistic thought, and by making use of theoretical knowledge grounded in historicity and time essential to a postmodernistic perspective known as social relativism, a “new scholarship” conceptualized applying quantum logic (Jenlink, 2001; Wheatley, 1999) “develops new ways of thinking and acting” (Johnston, 1994, p. 117). Moreover, Wheatley’s (1999) examination of the world’s “layers of complexity” (p. 5) as this relates to epistemological considerations establishes space for a natural order of leadership and positions it in an interconnected web of life. “Unseen connections” or an implicate order of reality known as the “New Science” presents itself as a leadership perspective gaining currency and space between modernistic and postmodernistic approaches (Wheatley, 1999, p. 11).

## Epistemology

Driven to give meaning and purpose to life and its processes, social scientists employ a variety of systems of reason to produce knowledge in disciplined study: “Epistemology is the study of how we know or what the rules for knowing are” (Scheurich, 1994, p. 18). By the nature of coming to “know,” the formulation and acceptance of knowledge is inherently a matter of perspective. Scheurich (1994) identifies opposing frames from which knowledge as it relates to educational administration is believed to be generated. The positivistic approach “derives rigorous scientific rules for creating” knowledge with the claim that objective and unbiased observation “mirror reality” (p. 17). Representing a view in direct opposition to positivism, “[s]ocial or postmodern relativism is the unabashed recognition that all epistemology . . . are socially conditioned and historically relative or contextual” (Scheurich, 1994, p. 21). In other words, from this perspective, knowing is relative. As a final point, scientific realism represents an approach that situates itself in the middle ground, “adjust[s] the epistemology of science in terms of the criticisms that have been made of positivism” to find space for reflection, criticality, and theory (Scheurich, 1994, p. 19).

## Positivistic or Modern Perspective

“Positivism” can be accurately described as a social-scientific approach relying exclusively on quantitative research data as a source of knowledge production. The reason for research from a positivistic perspective is “to discover and document universal laws of human behavior” and “to learn about how the world works so that people can control or predict events” (Neuman, 2003, p. 71). Social scientists who take up this approach view reality as “stable preexisting

patterns or order that can be discovered” using empirical objectivism (Neuman, 2003, p. 91).

### ***Knowledge***

Positivist’s failure to recognize subjectivity of human beings and dismissing common sense as legitimate sources of knowledge production places ultimate value on facts and natural laws to explain worldly events. “For positivists the rules for knowing (the positivist epistemology) guarantee or warrant the fact that the research representation of reality truly re-present reality” (Scheurich, 1994, p. 18). Foster’s (1984) study of positivism and rationality offers a philosophical script that brings clarity to this construct.

All (synthetic) knowledge is founded in sensory experience. Meaning is grounded in observation. Concepts and generalizations only represent the particulars from which they have been abstracted. Conceptual entities don’t exist in themselves: they are mere names; positivism is (normally) associated with nominalism. Sciences are unified according to the methodology of the natural sciences. The ideal pursued is knowledge “in the form of mathematically formulated universal science deducible from the smallest possible number of axioms, a system which assures the calculation of the probable occurrence of all events.” Values are not facts, and hence values cannot be given as such in sense experience. Because all knowledge is based on sensory experience, value judgments cannot be accorded the status of knowledge claims (Held, 1980, pp. 163–164, quoting in part Horkheimer, 1972, p. 138, as cited in Foster, 1984, p. 241).

Bates (1994) acknowledges the use of scientific methodology by “mainstream theorists of educational administration” and the pursuit to “develop generalizable laws and principles which explain the structure and dynamics of organizations” (p. 260). McKinney and Garrison (1994) support the assertion of the prevalence of positivism in educational administration, stating “it has been well documented that public education in the Western democracies is managed according to the dictates of Taylorist scientific management, expert system analysis, and technocratic rationality (also see Callahan, 1962; House, 1978; Lyotard, 1984; Wise, 1979) (p. 71).

As a tool to control the social world and predict events, scientifically grounded knowledge offers a means of altering and improving life in the view of positivists (Neuman, 2003). “Acceptance of a Cartesian-Newtonian mechanistic worldview that is caught in a cause-effect, hypothetical-deductive system of reasoning” places modernistic or positivistic approaches at the forefront, framing educational leadership as a managerial practice (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1999, p. 56). This practice rests on the belief that the world can be known through a “logical, deductive system of interconnected definitions, axioms, and laws” (Neuman, 2003, p. 91). Along this system of reason, “the universe that Sir Isaac Newton described was a seductive place. For three centuries, we’ve been planning, predicting, and analyzing the world. We’ve held on to an intense belief in cause and effect” (Wheatley, 1999, p. 28). Illuminating this perspective, Wheatley (1999) stresses:

As the Earth circled the sun (just like clockwork), we grew assured of the role of determinism and prediction. We absorbed expectations of regularity into our very beings. And we organized work and knowledge based on our beliefs about this predictable universe. (p. 28)

In this regard, a mechanistic view of the world and position as to what constitutes knowledge becomes translated through the educational leader's approach to his or her practice.

### ***Practice***

This is exemplified most recently by the positivistic reaction to an economic crisis as identified "by such national reports as *A Nation at Risk, Action for Excellence, Making the Grade, and Academic Preparation for College*" (Johnston, 1994, p. 115). During the early 1980s, educational leaders, as well as policy makers, hurried to restructure schools in a way that responded to this crisis by emphasizing "academic standards, accountability, standardization, and leadership" (Johnston, 1994, p. 115). In this scheme, administrative personnel were empowered to assertively manage the organization in efforts to "achieve maximum efficiency and productivity" (McKinney & Garrison, 1994, p. 71). For the educational leader, on-the-job training influenced by positivism became a dominating force over scholarly knowledge and theory.

Under modernistic influence or positivism, education itself became subject to bureaucratic control whose aim was the creation "of schools that provide the skills necessary for increasing domestic productivity" (McKinney & Garrison, 1994, p. 71). This type of education was implemented with a strict adherence to instructions; it is policy driven, highly ordered, efficient, and marginalizing. With consideration of the aim and results of this approach, the logic system of this structuralist view must be clarified as well. "Structuralism is grounded in the belief that individual human reasoning, conditioned by values, is fundamentally inconsistent with the idea of a rational self-regulating world. . . . Social order and symmetry are privileged over the desires of the individual" (Fazzaro, Walter, & McKerrow, 1994, p. 87). Ultimately resulting from the workings within this paradigm, individuals became faceless people performing very specific tasks in order to keep the organizational machine called education functioning to maintain the status quo.

The effectiveness of this approach will unquestionably differ depending on the perspective of the respondent. Bloom offers a conservative perspective, asserting that "public education contributes to a pervasive cultural illiteracy" (1987, cited in Kaminsky, 2000, p. 201). A critical perspective might see public education as "responsible for moral unconsciousness that contributes to the continued exclusion, oppression, and subordination of those who are different" (Kaminsky, 2000, pp. 201–202). And there are those like Rorty who argue that contemporary education is not necessarily hopeless (1989, as cited in Kaminsky, 2000).

The graduates of the nation's educational system are anything but immoralists. The schools have produced a generation of caring young men and women who have made it much more difficult to be brutal and spiteful to the poor, disoppressed, and different. (p. 204)

Moreover, "public schools and their administrators have established a long history of effective performance and public service that extends beyond objective measures of academic achievement alone" (Kaminsky, 2000, p. 205).

The measure of effectiveness of the modernistic approach to public education is difficult to judge considering all perspectives and its history. From any perspective, the notion largely goes unchallenged that schools are inundated with dilemmas and questions of social justice, social equity, ethics of care, and democratic practices. But the fact remains, administrative management as a structuralist approach "has survived and prospered as a practice in education" (Fazzaro et al., 1994, p. 91). In timely fashion and according to Wheatley (1999), "scientists in many different disciplines are questioning whether we can adequately explain how the world works by using the machine imagery emphasized in the seventeenth century by such great geniuses as Sir Isaac Newton and René Descartes" (p. 10).

### **Social or Postmodern Relativistic Perspective**

Social or postmodern relativism holds that there are no absolutes and knowing is relative. Expounding on this point, Neuman (2003) explains that what is true is a matter of interpretation: "No one explanation is more true; all are true for those who accept them" (p. 91). The purpose for research, then, is "to express the subjective self" (Neuman, 2003, p. 91) while maintaining that knowledge production will accordingly take on "numerous forms as unique to particular people or specific locales" (p. 89). Following this logic, postmodernistic social reality is "chaotic and fluid without any real patterns or master plan," and the nature of humans is seen as "creative, dynamic beings with unrealized potential" (Neuman, 2003, p. 91).

### ***Knowledge***

Responding to positivism and interrogation of modernistic perspectives, the postmodern approach dismisses science as a legitimate center of organizational structure and positions the educational leader equal to community members by promoting emancipation for all those marginalized by the Newtonian science approach (Kaminsky, 2000; Ryan, 1998). The work of the postmodern thinker concerned with end-values and complete discharge of science is to "attempt to rethink the meaning of human self-direction or emancipation, to develop theory of non-dogmatic social transformation," and "to expose the hidden social relationships of the everyday world" (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1999, p. 57). Moreover, Kincheloe and Steinberg (1999) assert that "postmodern analysis, though diverse

in the ways it is conceptualized has consistently laid bare the assumptions of Cartesian logic by exposing the ways that the structure of traditional science constructs imaginary worlds” (p. 55).

Adopting a social-relativist view, antimodernists recognize “ways of knowing are inherently culture-bound and perspectival” (Lather, 1988, p. 570, as cited in Scheurich, 1994, p. 21). In this sense, there are no established “kinds of criteria, standards, procedures, decision rules, or rationality that rises above the relativity of history” (Scheurich, 1994, p. 22). Educational leadership under post-modernistic and social relativist influence claims knowledge is relative to time and place and provides no clear guidance for pedagogical practice, though it addresses issues of social justice and social equity (Scheurich, 1994).

## **Practice**

Fazzaro et al. (1994) admit to the success of modernism if only through its prolonged existence. However, decision makers’ perspectives may be shifting. As societal and economic needs in America begin to change and new demands are placed on educators, postmodern theorists are hopeful to have an opportunity to rewrite inequitable traditional school practices. Giroux (1994) sees imminent change in the way we do school. He proclaims “the signs pointing to dismantling of public education are everywhere” (p. 35). And according to Fazzaro et al. (1994), “the broader public has grown increasingly skeptical of the claims made by the proponents of technoscience knowledge. That technical judgment can actually improve education practice is now more widely doubted” (p. 91). Within the context of this discourse, technoscience can be understood to mean managerial or traditional approaches. Whereas modernism adopts a type of scientific approach, or technoscience, to address organizational structure and leadership practices, postmodernism as previously mentioned rejects Cartesian-Newtonian logic as a valid source of knowing and situates the educational leader equal to community members by championing liberation for the oppressed (Kaminsky, 2000; Ryan, 1998). From this perspective, leadership is essentially deconstructed from an authoritarian function to resemble a communal practice where everyone becomes a self-regulating individual.

Foster (1984) describes the replacement of technocratic models “incapable of dealing with the practical problems of human existence” (p. 244) with a critical-theory model as a type of emancipation proclamation of economic, social, and political strongholds. This aspect of criticality is perhaps the most significant difference between managerial perspectives and “the notion of teachers and administrators as transformative intellectuals and engaged critics” (Giroux, 1994, p. 36). Postmodern approaches to leadership are, in a sense, revolutionary as compared to traditional administrative functions.

It is noteworthy that liberation by way of postmodern approaches is not without criticism. Critical analysis of democratic practice, equity, and justice

are noble and necessary, but Kaminsky (2000) questions the practicality of this exercise in the school system: “On a practical level postmodernism seems committed to inaction, as a matter of principle” (p. 212). Rephrasing a written commentary by Rosenau (1992) on the topic of postmodern theory-practice for school administration, Kaminsky (2000) states that “there is no justifiable path of action, although any of a myriad of alternative paths is equally acceptable” (p. 212). Furthermore, postmodern failure to provide hard answers to problems facing practitioners, in effect, “paralyzes decision-making and trivializes the idea of consistent practice” (Kaminsky, 2000, p. 214).

How effective is the postmodernist position on education and educational leadership as a reform initiative? It just depends. As a tool to address social equity, social justice, democratic practices, and an ethic of care, it might be said that it hits the mark (Ryan, 1998). Modernistic weaknesses become postmodernistic strengths. In this sense, “postmodern perspectives reflect a reconsideration of the role of research and inquiry in the knowledge-practice relationship” (Jenkins, 2001, p. 3). The applicability of postmodern “high theory” is an important question that should be addressed as well. Kaminsky (2000) reports problems with its concept of power, dismissal of science, nihilistic tendencies, excessive seriousness, and cultural usefulness. Framed in this manner, practicality becomes postmodernistic weaknesses and modernistic strengths.

## **Social Realistic or Critical Pragmatic Perspective**

The fundamental nature of social reality through the lens of the critical pragmatists as identified by Neuman (2003) includes a realist position in which “social reality is out there to be discovered” (p. 82). This is a departure from “positivism in that it is historical realism in which reality is seen as constantly shaped by social, political, cultural, and similar factors” (Neuman, 2003, p. 82). Put simply, knowledge is seen as situational: what is known today from a critical pragmatic view depends on the time, space, and conditions of a given subject. By studying the history, power relations, and cultural characteristics of societies, alternative and emancipatory ways of organizing social life become clear. Moreover, “a critical approach notes that social change and conflict are not always apparent” and acknowledges that “the social world is full of illusion, myth, and distortion” that cannot be examined fragmentally (Neuman, 2003, p. 82). The purpose or reason, then, “of critical research is to change the world” through “critique and transformation of social relations” (Neuman, 2003, p. 81).

### ***Knowledge***

The “New Science” subscribes to the “quantum mechanical view of reality” that “startles us out of common notions of what is real” (Wheatley, 1999, p. 11). Knowledge explaining the world around us based on

quantum physics paints a strange yet enticing view of a world that, as Heisenberg characterized it, “appears as a complicated tissue of events, in which connections of different kinds alternate or overlap or combine and thereby determine the texture of the whole.” (Wheatley, 1999, p. 11)

Assisting in the conceptualization of quantum logic, Wheatley (1999) states:

There are no familiar ways to think about the levels of interconnectedness that seem to characterize the quantum universe. Instead of a lonely void, with isolated particles moving through it, space appears filled with connections. This is why the metaphors turn to webs and weaving, or to the world as a great thought. (p. 43)

From this perspective, educational leaders are positioned in a web of interconnected, dynamic processes of ecological influence. Chaos, change, stability, and renewal are as inherent and apparent to the living world as the desire, need, and drive to explain the world around us is to human beings. Furthermore, the “New Science” approach finds its epistemological grounding in scientific realism, taking modernistic determinations of “what is knowledge” and “what is real” a step further by investigating the “underlying schemes and proclivities” of phenomenological events critical to postmodern (Scheurich, 1994, p. 19).

Embracing the theoretical perspective of social realism, the educational leader “recognizes that, even in the natural sciences, facts are always theory-laden because ‘something’ can only become a fact due to the theory that makes it recognizable as a fact” (Scheurich, 1994, p. 19). Therefore for the social realist, a fundamental principle in practice is the notion of “the theory dependency on facts. Theory in this scientific view never mirrors reality” (Scheurich, 1999, p. 19). Wheatley (1999) speaking of the “New Science” reveals “there is no objective reality; the environment we experience does not exist ‘out there.’ It is co-created through our acts of observation, what we choose to notice and worry about” (p. 37). Explicating the aforementioned point, quantum physics offers a “very different story” than that of traditional Newtonian logic, a story that “does not describe a clock-like universe” (Wheatley, 1999, p. 32). It is a story that presents a “vision of the inherent orderliness of the universe, of creative processes and dynamic, continuous change that still maintained order” (Wheatley, 1999, p. 4). Wheatley (1999) adds “This was a world where order and change, autonomy and control were not the great opposites that we had thought them to be. It was a world where change and constant creation were ways of sustaining order and capacity” (p. 4).

### *Practice*

With consideration of the strengths and weakness of modernism and postmodernism as approaches to develop effective educational reform initiatives, critical pragmatists approach their practice by drawing upon strengths from both.



Whereas traditional practice offers an embedded organizational structure to build upon and practical knowledge of how to do schooling, this “new scholarship,” or critical pragmatic approach, “does not necessarily accept the status quo of social relations, but investigates the nature of established realities and educates actors about this relationship” (Foster, 1994, p. 41). This is something like thinking about how to go beyond an existing design, creating a product to address all stakeholders’ liberties, and implementing what is thought to be most accommodating. In this way, knowledge and practice are united to produce a new type of education reform focusing on the educational leader as a scholar-practitioner. Jenlink (2001) articulates the rationale for a “new scholarship” or the integration of scholarly knowledge with practical knowledge.

The ideal of scholar-practitioner leadership envisions a “new scholarship” wherein the practitioner as a scholar of practice, seeks to mediate professional practice and formal knowledge and theory through disciplined inquiry and practice to guide decisions on all levels of educational activity. (p. 7)

Jenlink (2001) further suggests that the more important task of the scholar-practitioner is to activate the traditional static leadership posture of educators so that leadership becomes a dynamic, “authentic position of value and utilization in the practice of teaching, learning, and leading” (p. 8).

Activation of a leadership stance that is static by the nature of modernism and is unmindful of issues dealing with social equity, social justice, and democratic practices requires assistance from the postmodern approach. Postmodernism provides for the scholar-practitioner a rich understanding of criticality that can be applied to strengthen the relationship between theory and practice (Ryan, 1998). According to Jenlink (2001),

the scholar-practitioner leader, as a criticalist, seeks to examine and explore, through social critique and scholarly inquiry, the social and cultural patterns of the educational system and community in which the system is situated. The scholar-practitioner leader, as criticalist, works to disallow the political issues of Whiteness that hold children, teachers, schools, and society hostage in a civilized system that all too often disregards diversity. Criticality shapes the leadership praxis, bringing into play a critical philosophical and theoretical lens, thus shaping the leader’s actions in the context of her or his practice. (p. 12)

Jenlink’s (2001) response represents an integration of postmodern theory and modern practice into a critical pragmatic approach referred to as *local theory*. To better appreciate local theory in this context, Larson (2000) offers the terms “practical scholarship, practical knowledge, situated knowledge, craft knowledge and tacit knowledge” (p. 309, as cited in Jenlink, 2001, p. 7). It is

the incorporation of practical knowledge, or local theory, that shapes scholarship into a suitable fit in the pragmatic scheme of education, thus defining the scholar-practitioner's approach to practice. In an effort to conceptualize the scholar-practitioner, it is important to recognize that modernistic tendencies made way for the application of local theory.

Traditional reliance on practice as the guiding force shaping educational leadership fostered concerns with the emergence of postmodernistic *high theory* as an alternative approach to education. High theory in this respect is referring to what Cochran-Smith and Lytle equate to as "knowledge-*for*-practice" developed as scholarly knowledge and research in relation to the profession (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, as cited in Jenlink, 2001, p. 10). Lacking practical application in the field, this type of knowledge becomes problematic for educational practitioners. Not entirely without value, "knowledge-*for*-practice, representing a formal or codified knowledge base" can be modified to suit practical purposes (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, as cited in Jenlink, 2001, p. 10). If you add an element of critical reflection borrowed from knowledge-*for*-practice to the knowledge embedded in personal and social practice, the heaviness of high theory begins to lighten, resulting in knowledge-*in*-practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, as cited in Jenlink, 2001). By including a broader scope to critical reflection, still a more useful alternative in the field of education takes form. What results is a knowledge-*of*-practice style, "represented by knowledge and theory acting as generative material for interpretation and examination of practice, as well as knowledge constructed in local communities of inquiry" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, as cited in Jenlink, 2001, p. 10).

Diluting, not disregarding high theory or knowledge-*for*-practice in the end satisfies requirements of both modernistic and postmodernistic approaches. It addresses the criticality component so significant to postmodern philosophy and packages it in a form that is practical to use by modernistic standards. It is knowledge-*of*-practice, or local theory, that defines the scholar-practitioner, "wherein the leader as scholar and her/his practice are inseparable from scholarly and critically oriented inquiry" (Jenlink, 2001, p. 5).

## Conclusion

Generalizing the intent and tendencies of modernistic and postmodernistic approaches to educational reform and leadership preparation makes space for a critical pragmatic approach. Traditional methods of schooling have been driven by societal demands to "link the needs of corporate America to the American public schools" (McKinney & Garrison, 1994, p. 71). The traditional or modernistic tendency surfaces as a "commitment within the academic community toward a positivistic ideology" (Maxcy, 1991c, p. 171). This type of initiative patterns itself using the machine metaphor; it is a highly structured, strictly managed, practically applied, hierarchical system of efficiency and productivity.

Moreover, “common patterns and tendencies have cut across . . . democracy, the nation-state, science and ‘the scientific method,’ secularism, rationality as the method of thought, secularism, and humanism” (Cahoone, 1988, p. 1, as cited in Maxcy, 1991b, p. 132). Recognizable movements include “principal academies, certification and licensure, testing of teachers, and other credentialing efforts seek to restrict the voice of those out of power” (Maxcy, 1991a, p. 52). The implicate reality of modernity is voices are silenced and people are controlled, manipulated, and reduced to laborer status.

In contrast, the antimodernity movement or postmodernity’s intent is to dismantle public schools in order to “achieve the goal of a fair, free, intellectually rich, and instrumentally powerful educational system” (Kaminsky, 2000, p. 203). Disenchanted by social injustice, social inequity, and undemocratic practice, postmodern efforts are focused on leveling the playing field by abandoning power relationships, dismissing science, and abolishing truth (Kaminsky, 2000). Reform initiatives taking “aim at maximizing the democratic dimension of schooling” include “vouchers, site-based management, teacher empowerment, and other efforts” (Maxcy, 1991a, p. 52). Although representing but a few examples of postmodernity’s high theory, or codified knowledge, these tendencies as a response to the inadequacies of traditional practice become “so relentlessly downbeat, gloomy, and pessimistic that it may be beyond use for administrative purposes” (Kaminsky, 2000, p. 210). Subsequently, space is found between conflicting approaches to education.

Critical pragmatists as scholar–practitioners fill this space. They do so by not ignoring controlled “scientific inquiry in the practice of their profession” and by not ignoring questions of justice, equity, and democracy in a scheme referred to as “local theory” (Kaminsky, 2000, p. 214). As a result, local theory “portrays the discourse through which a citizen or citizens can engage in open reflection about the usefulness of various institutions for the purposes of a democratic society” (Kaminsky, 2000, p. 215). The implicate order of this reality reveals itself as research-based learning communities where participants become resources of past knowledge and generators of new knowledge through open lines of communication (Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2001). Additionally, “concerned with growth and continuous self-renewal,” the scholar-practitioner becomes a leader responsible for self-learning and providing opportunities for community members to learn (Ubben et al., 2001, p. 29). By effectively positioning “research in the concerns and experiences of practising educators,” the scholar-practitioner “will better serve and inform both research and practice” (Larson, 2000, p. 308). With a focus on the concepts of learning communities, transformative leadership, shared vision and values, and criticality, this initiative finds a fit within the “dynamic web of interconnected components” (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1999, p. 70). By meshing the strengths of two opposing perspectives, local theory used as a unitary element of practice and scholarship creates a “new scholarship” known as the scholar-practitioner.

Through examination of the interconnectedness of scholarship and practice, the critical pragmatist emerges as a connector of opposite perspectives (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1999). What is important to the critical pragmatist as scholar-practitioner is not the dismantling of education, but rather the preservation of the democratic values it was founded upon. As an “intellectual leader,” the scholar-practitioner is “driven by end-values” and “positive reformulation of ways of practice” (Foster, 1994, p. 45). At the same time, the “virtuous practitioner” seeks to elevate “followers’ consciousness” as a fundamental purpose of scholar-practitioner leadership (Foster, 1994, p. 45). While realizing the need for managerial leadership, the scholar-practitioner as a “transformative agent” works to shift authoritative practices aside making way for “more vital aspects related to the nature of the school as a democratic community” (Foster, 1994, p. 47). By serving as an intellectual leader, virtuous practitioner, and agent of transformation, the scholar-practitioner becomes a model of a reconceptualized vision of what an educational leader ought to be (Foster, 1994).

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