GOOD EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE

WITH REFERENCE TO MAINTAINED SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND

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I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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ABSTRACT

Accepting that "good" leadership is critical for a school to flourish, in a democratic society such leadership should be informed by democratic values. I develop this argument with particular reference to maintained schools in England. These are designated places that prepare the next generation for future lives as citizens, but their leadership practices promote an autocratic model of leadership centred on the agency of an individual, the headteacher.

I consider the influence of past practice on this hierarchical tradition of school leadership and criticise its continuing presence in current policy and practice. I offer an alternative conception of good school leadership, based on democratic principles of political liberty and equality. I show, with reference to empirical research by other scholars, how this might be applied to future policy and practice.

My argument applies theory to a significant problem in educational practice, working across the foundational disciplines in the study of education. While my critique of current arrangements is interdisciplinary, it leans most towards a philosophical approach. I draw on earlier work within that discipline which establishes what a characteristically democratic approach to school leadership must logically entail. I argue that existing school leadership practices may be democratic when undertaken in the right spirit by people morally committed to those values and skilled at translating them into daily life.

I conclude that schools should determine freely for themselves how they wish to be led, within limits identified by a new national framework for school leadership; this should replace the current system, focussed on "standards". Schools should ensure that strategic decisions concerning their future direction are shaped by directly interested parties. This alternative conception of good school leadership will require existing professional development programmes to be revised, because learning for and from leadership start at school, both "taught" and "caught" from experience.

CONTENTS

1 UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

> English schooling culture in the twentieth century ... (has) ...at its heart, a
> major paradox and contradiction. Formally designated as the cultural agency
> for 'making democracy work' and involved, at specific periods, with explicit
> pedagogical projects to enhance education for citizenship, its own practice
> has remained largely undemocratic. (Grace, 1995: 65)

1.1 Good school leadership

The ideas reflected in this thesis began to form when I considered becoming a
headteacher. Professionally ambitious as I was, I was not interested in adequate or
competent headship: I wanted to do it extremely well. Yet no headteacher from my
own teaching experience, whatever their strengths, captured the approach to
leadership to which I personally aspired that was based on my experience of middle
management.

As head of humanities in a secondary school in London, as a matter of principle I
tried to ensure that decisions were made democratically, within the confines of my
particular sphere of influence. The approach could be time consuming, particularly
in the short term, but yielded positive results. Experienced practitioners contributed
their complementary skills and perspectives, making careful, considered choices. We
honoured the commitments we made collectively, presumably because we had all
agreed to them. In short, I felt that we led our faculty together, both wisely and well.

However, I doubted that this approach could translate to the leadership of a whole
school. In English schools decision-making tends to be dominated by the
headteacher. Although they may consult other people through the process,
invariably they determine the final outcome, operating a form of benign dictatorship.
This situation is commonly justified on the grounds that headteachers as "experts"
are uniquely well placed to know "their" school's best possible future.

In this thesis, I challenge this assumption, on pedagogical and moral grounds,
arguing that maintained schools in England should be led democratically. I do not

bring a particular conception of the democratic school to my argument, nor do I attempt to define a "one size fits all" account of the democratic school leader. In a democracy, local groups should determine for themselves how they wish schools to be led within the constraints of a national framework for school leadership. On this representative account, while specialists take responsibility for aspects of school leadership in detail on behalf of society, at a strategic level all those people with a direct interest in the future of a particular school should be consulted.

Key to this interpretation of democratic practice is a distinction that I draw between two notions of "leadership". Leadership in one sense is concerned with an office or specific position of formal authority. In another sense, leadership concerns the influence that some members of a social group exercise over others. A democratic account of leadership assumes that while a few people are chosen by others to occupy formal positions of authority over the social group, in principle all members of the group are equally entitled to a say in those matters which concern them. No individual group members should become too powerful.

However, in England ordinary citizens enjoy relatively little direct influence over the direction of decision-making in education, leaving considerable power in the hands of educational professionals. At a local level headteachers, like the linchpin of a wheel (White, 1983), hold schools together so that all action revolves around them. The *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004) emphasise:

> the key role that headteachers play in engaging in the development and delivery of government policy and in raising and maintaining levels of attainment in schools in order to meet the needs of every child.

My attack is not directed at those who seek to live up to the demands of headship, but at the role itself which is both unrealistic and inappropriate.

The alternative that I propose assumes that individual school leaders are not merely competent and efficient but act in ways that are consistent with the values and beliefs of the particular society in which their leadership practice is situated. For schools in England, these principles are democratic. Moreover, I point to evidence that these

democratic principles have been translated to existing arrangements in those schools where pupils, teachers, parents and members of the wider community are already included in decision making. If we accept that one of the aims of education is to "make democracy work" as Grace suggests, these promising practices need to be developed and more systematically applied.

There are additional, pedagogical reasons why school leadership should be democratic. As Gerald Grace has observed (1995), Schools remain designated places where young people should be prepared for citizenship. The National Curriculum for England and Wales states that every young person while at school should:

> develop the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes necessary for their self-fulfilment and development as active and responsible citizens. (DfES, 2007: 1)

Yet while a linchpin tradition of leadership persists, the learning from experience that takes place runs counter to the promotion of democratic values.

As Jerome Bruner (1996) has argued, people learn in a variety of ways which include, but cannot be reduced to, the transfer of propositional knowledge from teacher to pupil. Learning also takes place through the practices in which people engage and through conversation with other people. This kind of learning cannot be switched on or off at a whim because it pervades the experience of schooling.

Hence "good" school leadership cannot be reduced to the implementation of processes by which specified outcomes, including positive examination results and university entrance, may be achieved by pupils in optimal numbers. Leadership is a form of moral education which initiates members of a social group into certain behaviours and skills, attitudes and dispositions associated with the particular social practice in which they are engaged. Nor is this phenomenon limited to life at school; it also operates in the world at large, presenting myriad opportunities for civic education both in school and in the wider community.

Thus, if learners are to be prepared for their future lives as citizens they need exposure from an early age to the cultural norms assumed by democratic society. This includes although it is not limited to, their experience of school leadership. They will learn from the models of formal school leadership practice to which they are exposed as well as through opportunities to participate personally in informal school leadership activity.

1.2 Interpreting good school leadership

My investigation is concerned with the kind of leadership that is best suited to the particular needs of maintained schools in England. I did not set out to discover reliable or consistent patterns common to successful leadership behaviour through my research. My approach to research is hermeneutical. I am concerned to *interpret* what the nature of "good" school leadership in a democratic society should be, informed by my particular experience as a university based teacher educator, teacher and pupil. I assume from the outset that values and beliefs exercise a considerable influence on the ideals of leadership that social groups construct for themselves. While other research has raised awareness of the role that their values play in the agency of school leaders, I highlight in addition the role that values play in determining what kinds of leadership are perceived to be good.

Given this emphasis on values and leadership, the philosophy of education has an important role to play in the argument I make. I am concerned with what school leadership ought to be like, a characteristically moral question. Moreover I develop my argument using philosophical methods. For example, I use analytical philosophy to scrutinise terms like "vision", "values" and "democracy" when they are used to describe very good school leadership so as to highlight inconsistencies and difficulties in the ways in which they are applied.

My analysis of language is not confined to a philosophical approach. For example, when I analyse the word "vision" in the dominant school leadership discourse I take into account the influence that religious belief has had on the ways in which people articulate their understanding of the nature of the imagination and creative forms of

thinking. This occurs whether or not they consider themselves personally to be religious. Drawing on my academic background in theology, I distinguish uses of vision that are appropriate to the context of school leadership in a democracy from notions of creative leadership which ought not to be encouraged.

I refer to existing sociological critique to identify problems in conceptions of leadership in the dominant discourse. Many of the concerns I identify in existing policy and practice are articulated very clearly by these existing commentaries. However, I do not confine my analysis to criticism but extend existing work in this field, with reference to philosophical ideas, to develop a positive alternative to school leadership as it is currently practised.

I draw on other foundational disciplines in educational studies elsewhere in the thesis, believing that no single scholarly tradition on its own can do justice to the complexity of a social, cultural and ideological interpretation of school leadership. For example, I engage briefly with the history of leadership in schools in England to determine the roots of the linchpin headteacher tradition. In this light, I discover that alternative traditions of leadership were practised before the introduction of a state controlled education system in 1870. I am able to reassess the influence of Thomas Arnold on the developing notion of a headteacher in schools in England, having engaged in some depth with related biographical literature.

I draw on existing social scientific research too when engaging with empirical data generated within the critical tradition of Educational Leadership Management and Administration (ELMA) research. While I refer in part to my own experience of schooling in England, in particular to create plausible examples of what school leadership practice could be like in this context in the future, I take care not to rely too heavily on this partial perspective. Where clear links can be drawn between my own *a priori* philosophical arguments and the findings of rigorously conducted empirical research, this significantly strengthens the case I am making. In particular it helps to counter the perception that democratic educational practice is an unattainable ideal. I demonstrate that there are glimpses of it already working in established practices.

While the argument I develop is rooted in the example of one particular education system, it will be of interest and relevance to a readership beyond those whose immediate concern is focused on leadership in English schooling. The method and structure of the study I have undertaken here is readily adaptable to a hermeneutical investigation of leadership in another context. The argument I develop – that learning takes place from the experience of leadership in a school – holds true whether or not the particular setting concerned is democratic. It could be used to frame a hermeneutical investigation of an entirely different topic as well.

This thesis is likely to be of greatest interest to those concerned with democracy and school leadership in various education systems across the world. The principles of democratic school leadership which I develop could be adapted to their needs and do not depend on the particularities of English schooling. For those readers familiar with traditions of democratic school leadership and governance better established than those in England, the ideas I develop identify principles of particularly good and successful leadership practice within those alternative contexts. Where there is pressure within those systems to move away from democratic school leadership, my argument reinforces moral reasons why the status quo ought to be argued for.

Given its particular tradition of autocratic leadership practice, truly "radical" change to schooling in England is needed. A more assertive argument for a democratic alternative must be made. If this is to be achieved, a more nuanced distinction needs to be drawn between the kind of school leadership that relies on the opinion of experts and that which requires deliberation involving all directly interested citizens.

1.3 Outline of the thesis

I present my argument in three sections, following this introductory chapter. In Chapters Two to Four I analyse existing literature relevant to the themes that I explore. The extent of this literature review reflects the wide-ranging nature of the literature I draw upon. This includes different literatures and perspectives within the Educational Leadership, Management and Administration (ELMA) field of study, as well as various disciplines in the study of education. While I place particular

emphasis on established texts in philosophy and philosophy of education, other parts of the thesis draw on writing in sociology and the sociology of education. At other points the history of education and biography are the focus of my attention.

In Chapters Five to Eight, my concern is to offer a critique of the notion of headship that currently informs the dominant discourse of school leadership in England. I find evidence that the linchpin ideal of headship continues to influence thinking about how schools might best be led, despite the clear contradiction between leadership of this kind and democratic values. I find further evidence of more promising leadership practices elsewhere within the dominant discourse but argue that these need further development if they are to herald the widespread introduction of a democratic alternative.

Finally, in Chapters Nine to Twelve I sketch an alternative conception of school leadership, starting from a theoretical account of democratic values based on general philosophical literature. I argue that this model should be adopted for pedagogical reasons as well as for reasons of moral principle. Finally I consider ways in which it might be legislated for through the introduction of a National Framework for School Leadership.

1.3.1 Reviving existing scholarship

In **Chapter Two** I review literature in the Educational Leadership, Management and Administration (ELMA) field that is concerned with values and school leadership. I demonstrate the degree of support within that field for research that seeks to "interpret" school leadership practice within its socio-political context. In future chapters (e.g. Chapters Seven and Eight) I build on those studies in particular which take an interdisciplinary approach to ELMA research and/or which are concerned, as I am, to promote democratic accounts of school leadership.

However, in a number of key respects my argument differs from this existing body of work, notably in the emphasis I give to the philosophy of education. In particular, I seek to clarify here those concepts that are central to an understanding of leadership in a democratic context, including "authority", "freedom" and "equality". In this

regard, I draw not only on the writing of philosophers (see below), but also on that of the social theorist Max Weber (1947). I also highlight my concern to provide a positive account of democratic leadership as an alternative to the conception of leadership that is promoted through the current dominant discourse. In doing this, I aspire to making a contribution to truly radical school reform in the future.

With this in mind, in Chapter **Three** I review a philosophical literature that will be similarly helpful to my argument. This includes criticism by an earlier generation of philosophers of education (e.g. Peters, 1966, Peters, 1973, White, 1983). I point out that over forty years ago these philosophers of education first raised concerns about the autocratic way in which headship tended to be practised in English schools, concerns that have still to be addressed by policy makers.

White in particular identifies a longstanding tradition of what she terms the "linchpin head", attributing this view of leadership at least in part to the ideas of the Greek philosopher Plato. Plato believed that particular individuals are suited to leadership because they are born with the capacity to know what is best for society. I sketch his views on the matter as they are set out in the *Republic* and point to arguments general philosophers have made to highlight the contradiction between Plato's assumptions and those characteristic of modern democracies (Harrison, 1995, Wolff, 1996, Swift, 2001).

I pursue the history of the linchpin tradition of headship in schools in England in more depth during **Chapter Four,** using existing work – by general historians as well as historians of education – to assess the work of one head teacher in particular, Thomas Arnold. I argue that the perception of Arnold that was to prove so influential on leadership practice in schools in England from the end of the nineteenth century was largely a myth, developed from partial accounts provided by close family members and a small number of influential former pupils. That "myth" of Arnold has promoted a particular ideal of school leadership developed from ideas found in Plato's *Republic* which has stuck and continues into the present, despite the development of a long tradition of alternative, more progressive thinking about education.

I point out that the kind of headship Arnold practised, in particular the autonomy he was able to enjoy, was atypical of school leaders in his day. Most decisions were made by lay people, including trustees, because teaching had not yet developed as a profession. At the same time, I highlight positive and innovative features of Arnold's leadership while at Rugby. These include his insight into the moral nature of school leadership and the influence on pupils' moral education of the way in which leadership is exercised.

1.3.2 Critiquing the influence of the linchpin headteacher

The perception persists to the present that good headteachers are linchpins of successful schools. This is wrong in principle, where these schools are situated in a democratic context. Moreover, there is good evidence to suggest that more collaborative approaches to school leadership may prove as, if not more "effective".

There has been a general trend in British society, whereby the control of major public services, including health and education, has shifted from the public to the private sector; with political accountability of those services moving from local to national levels of government. A political view has prevailed since the late 1970s that the private sector works more efficiently than the public sector as a rule, offering better value for money to the public purse. It is argued that the introduction of competition, the profit motive, makes a positive and significant impact on workers' productivity.

The *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004) are indicative of this trend; they were modelled on "best practice" in the private sector during the 1990s. I review them critically in **Chapter Five.** The criteria on which the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers is awarded, these *National Standards* continue to exercise considerable influence, shaping the attitudes of another generation of school leaders. I acknowledge positive aspects to these *National Standards*, not least the recognition they afford the professional development of headteachers, and the principle that headteachers should be held publicly accountable.

I raise two significant difficulties with the *National Standards* however, at the level of principle. First, they prescribe one particular view of the good headteacher, when in

a democratic society various conceptions of good leadership should be possible. Furthermore, the particular account of headship they seek to promote continues to revolve around a linchpin view of leadership focused on the headteacher; this model of school leadership is also inconsistent with democratic values. I suggest that a National Framework for School Leadership would offer a more appropriate means by which to hold school leaders to account, a theme I return to in Chapter Twelve.

In **Chapter Six** I provide further evidence of the continuing influence of the linchpin ideal of headship within the dominant discourse of school leadership. I challenge the suggestion that the most successful linchpin leaders are inspirational, providing "vision" to the school they lead. I suggest that this view of vision, understood as the capacity to know the future good of the school as though it were a form of privileged intuition, is both unfounded as well as undesirable in school leaders in a democracy.

I present two further, alternative conceptions of vision; one concerned with "imaginative thinking" and another concerned with the ability to interpret and communicate the best future course of action in a given situation, in the manner of a well-respected statesman. Each of these suggestions is more promising than the first. If vision is a form of imaginative thinking, concerned with the ability to take familiar ideas and apply them to non standard situations in ways that are helpful, or to capture the synergy of ideas that manifests itself when a group of people share their creative ideas, these interpretations of vision are consistent with democratic values.

The notion of vision as the quality of thinking that distinguishes the best statesmen is consistent with democratic values too, although I suggest that this might be better described, in the Aristotelian tradition, by the notion of practical wisdom.

Practical wisdom is my focus in **Chapter Seven.** I investigate the claim that a group of "Principled Principals" have brought theoretical understanding, technical competence and moral awareness to their leadership practice with remarkable success (Gold et al., 2003). Broadly, I welcome the findings of this study, although I challenge their suggestion that what distinguishes these school leaders from others is some kind of "moral art", as described by Christopher Hodgkinson (1983, 1991).

Like several earlier commentators (e.g. Bottery, 1992, Haydon, 2007), I argue that the Aristotelian notion of "practical wisdom" offers a more satisfactory account of the "Principled Principals" qualities as leaders. I describe practical wisdom briefly and indicate ways in which this might be applied to the findings of the "Principled Principals" study, although to establish my claim more robustly, a second study along similar lines to the first would need to be undertaken. Furthermore, I point out that if, in a democratic society, there is an important sense in which all citizens contribute to school leadership, practical wisdom is a quality that we should seek to foster across the population at large, not simply in those people with formal authority.

Chapter Eight reflects critically on further empirical research in the Educational Leadership, Management and Administration (ELMA) field, this time studies which have been concerned with the nature of school leadership that is "shared" or "distributed". Sometimes this has been described as "democratic" school leadership by ELMA researchers; although those examples they give to illustrate this claim do not seem consistent with key and characteristic democratic values. At other times, examples are given that are more consistent with democratic values, even though they are not described as such.

I conclude that empirical evidence that democratic leadership practice is not only desirable but practically possible is helpful to my case. However, a better, more widespread understanding of what democracy must and need not entail is needed in the theoretical frameworks of a number of ELMA studies.

1.3.3 Democratic school leadership

In Chapter Eight I highlighted confusion over the meaning of democracy within the ELMA literature. In **Chapter Nine** I set about the task of defining democracy, using as my guide the work of general political philosophers (e.g. Wolff, 1996, Swift, 2001). Democracy I point out, is valued highly and widely adhered to by many people across the world, although I recognise that it is not accepted universally.

One factor I suggest, which contributes to the negative way in which democracy can be perceived – as idealistic and impractical – is a tendency to conflate into one account two distinct kinds of democratic practice, direct and representative. I suggest that while direct or participative democracy might operate within very small groups or be the choice of a few, it does present difficulties when it is rolled out across a larger population; moreover that some citizens prefer not to be very actively involved in civic life and some allowances for this perspective ought to be made possible. I propose existing arrangements for representative school governance already in operation across maintained schools in England be reformed and revitalised. I recognise this system is not entirely devoid of difficulties but suggest ways in which these might either be overcome, or their negative effects minimised.

In **Chapter Ten** I consider the implications of the democratic principles I described in the previous chapter specifically applied to school leadership. I consider in particular the rights to consideration that both directly and indirectly interested parties might have reason to expect, as well as the claims that some citizens might make, particularly educational professionals, to special rights of consideration. I see no good reason on this basis to abandon democratic control of schooling, as some commentators have argued, for example James Tooley (1996, 2000) and former Chief Inspector for Schools Mike Tomlinson (Eason, 2007). Were those existing mechanisms that are already in place to be reformed, democratic school leadership could be introduced without resorting to another, entirely new system.

I consider a separate but related argument in Chapter Eleven. Returning to the insight that Arnold had into the influence of school leaders on the moral and political education of pupils (see Chapter Four), I add to the case for democratic school leadership on principle, the observation that learning takes place through leadership as one dimension of a school's "hidden curriculum". I demonstrate how firmly the notion of learning through experience is established in general philosophy, citing Aristotle and Hegel's thinking on the matter and highlighting ways in which these ideas have been developed by more contemporary writers on education, including Jerome Bruner (1996).

I anticipate likely objections to my suggestion that learning takes place through school leadership. For example, I reject the suggestion that moral education remains the exclusive responsibility of parents rather than schools. As the pedagogical argument I describe makes clear, schools cannot choose whether or not they educate pupils morally through the means by which they are led; this process is inevitable. Therefore the values they learn through the hidden curriculum ought to be consistent with those that schools are designated to promote, which in the case of English schooling are democratic values.

Finally, in **Chapter Twelve** I propose a "National Framework for School Leadership" that is informed by democratic principles as an alternative to existing policy measures. I make this case using arguments that have been applied elsewhere by philosophers of education (e.g. O'Hear and White, 1991) to argue for a national school curriculum. The representative view of democracy from which I build my proposals assumes that more participation in decision-making should take place in schools at a local level. Considerably more power to determine the future direction of education policies at a strategic level should be devolved to ordinary citizens, leaving the responsibility for more detailed decision-making to those educational professionals – whether practitioners, researchers or policy makers – with expert knowledge in the relevant areas.

I conclude my argument with the observation that little has changed in the time since Gerald Grace identified a paradox between the hidden and "taught" curriculum in schools in England. I suggest that significant change is possible but requires a widespread change of hearts and minds if radical change to leadership in formal education is to be effected. A lack of understanding about the nature of democracy, and how it works, needs to be addressed urgently, by improving the state of civic education. This needs to be legislated for by policy makers and tackled through learning about and from the experience of being engaged in leadership in practice.

2 ENGAGING WITH EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I relate the overall argument of the thesis – that English schools ought to be led democratically – to existing research in the Educational Leadership, Management and Administration field, which I refer to hereafter as "ELMA". Like other writers, I am concerned with educational reform, and assume that schools will improve when they are led well. However, I understand the "improvement" of schools to be a complex matter that is concerned, not only with the achievement of a broad range of desired goals that cannot be reduced to attainment in public examinations; but also with the means by which this is done.

I recognise that this view of the good in education, and therefore in school leadership, is reflective of values that are appropriate to some socio-political contexts and not others. This has influenced the particular methods that have been used in this enquiry, which are hermeneutical and interdisciplinary. At specific points (for example, in Chapters Four, Six and Eight), I introduce a further theological dimension to my analysis, reflecting the influence that religious language has played on expressions of leadership ideals. Although I draw on all four of the foundational "disciplines" in education, applied philosophy has the most prominent role to play, given that my argument is concerned with leadership and values.

In each of the three chapters that are concerned with reviewing existing literature (Chapters Two to Four), one section stands slightly apart, where I dwell in greater depth on one source in particular. In this chapter I consider Weber's analysis of "authority" in social organisations. I use the distinction he draws between personal and impersonal grounds for regarding authority as legitimate to suggest that school leadership should be interpreted in two senses, one "formal", the other "informal".

2.2 Links to other Educational Leadership, Management and Administration (ELMA) research

2.2.1 Discourses and ELMA research

I argued earlier (see Chapter One) that while ELMA research is commonly motivated by a concern to understand the nature of good practice in order to contribute positively to school reform, ELMA researchers do not agree consistently either on what good school leadership entails, or on what measures are needed to bring about the best school leadership possible. Even the assertion just made – that the nature of *good* leadership should be identified if schools are to *improve* – is contentious. Thus different discourses of ELMA research have developed within the field of study and these are often in tension with each other.

I use the word "discourse" here to refer to a narrative that is used to frame understanding of the world as it is experienced and which is expressed through language and the choice of certain concepts rather than others. In the context of research the notion of a discourse has profound implications because it implies that the way in which experiences are interpreted by the researcher could be very different at a fundamental level from one paradigm to another. In another discourse, the research question underpinning this thesis would be framed entirely differently, conducted by other means, and likely to reach alternative conclusions.

Grogan and Simmons (2007: 37) identify a spectrum of such discourses within the ELMA field of study. They place the positivist approach to studying leadership that has exercised considerable influence on the dominant discourse of school leadership (see below) at one end. The critical approach (e.g. Grace, 1995, Alvesson and Wilmott, 1996, MacBeath, 1999, MacBeath and Moos, 2004) that I have adopted here is to be found at the other end of Grogan and Simmons' spectrum.

I assume, as Gerald Grace argues, that notions of leadership and management "do not float freely in the discourse of textbooks of educational administration or in the prescriptions of technical primers of school management" (Grace, 1995: 5). I assume that concepts develop meaning(s) over time that need to be interpreted in relation to

the particular context(s) in which they are situated. I will explore next in more detail the implications of these contrasting and competing discourses of ELMA research.

I use the phrase *"dominant* discourse" to describe the narrative that frames official interpretations of experience. In schools in England, the dominant school leadership discourse emanates from national education policies formulated by central Government and its representative agencies. These include: the Department for Education (DfE), the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL).

2.2.2 Positivist ELMA research

When I use the term "positivist", I am referring to a particular form of research in the social sciences which assumes that human behaviour can be studied systematically in ways that will reveal patterns that are true to its essential nature. The French sociologist Emile Durkheim was an influential exponent of this approach. He used the phrase "social facts" to describe ways of acting, thinking and feeling that are "external" to the individual (Durkheim, 1895 (1938): 3) and which he believed could be identified objectively, once they were divested of additional layers of meaning that had become attached to them (Durkheim, 1895 (1938): 14).

A substantial body of research literature in the ELMA field of study assumes this positivist orientation. Take for example, those studies concerned with the "effectiveness" of schools that appear to have identified characteristics which cause some schools, consistently and reliably, to operate more successfully than others (e.g. Reynolds and Packer, 1992, Stoll and Mortimore, 1997, Reynolds and Teddlie, 2000). These studies frequently cite "leadership" as a key contributory factor.

The positivist approach has attracted a good deal of criticism, both in social science research generally and ELMA research specifically. The philosopher Charles Taylor (1985b) accepts that basic, elemental patterns in human activity may exist; he describes the "product" of researching these systematically as "brute data" (1985b: 19). However, Taylor argues that analysing "brute data" alone will yield a very limited understanding of human behaviour, given that it is constituted in such large

part by beliefs, or layers of meaning with which human behaviour becomes invested and which positivist research is keen to bracket out in pursuit of the essential elements.

I assume that where judgements are made about what makes a school or its leadership good, these will reflect particular values and beliefs. They will be subject to, what Taylor (1985b) terms "strong evaluation". I assume from the outset of this study that notions of good leadership are contested, influenced by the socio-political context in which they are situated (Chapter One). I do not accept the notion that certain behaviours essential to the best school leadership in all circumstances can be identified through carefully structured empirical research. Like Gerald Grace (1995: 5), I see considerable limitations to research that has sought to isolate and describe those general patterns of management behaviour that characterise all successful organisations so that these might be applied to schools. I consider next an alternative, hermeneutical approach to research in the social sciences, one that I deem better suited to my chosen focus of investigation.

2.2.3 Interpretive ELMA research

An early proponent of interpretive research in the social sciences, German sociologist Max Weber (1949) suggested that attempts to conduct "objective" analysis of cultural activity were "meaningless" (Weber, 1949: 80). Weber argued that the purpose of research in the social sciences instead was to seek to understand the meaning of social actions and institutions for those people who were engaged in them. Various traditions of interpretive research can be found within the wider ELMA field of study (Morrison, 2007: 23), but I do not engage with the detail of those distinctions here. Instead, I highlight three specific groups of existing ELMA research that have exercised a particular influence on the argument being pursued in this thesis.

One group of ELMA research that has been concerned to criticise the dominant school leadership discourse (e.g. Smyth, 1989, Greenfield, 1993) has exercised a formative influence on the argument I have developed, in particular the work of Gerald Grace (1995, 1997). Grace argues persuasively that "policy scholarship" – an

interpretive and interdisciplinary approach to studying school leadership – rather than "policy science" – Grace's categorisation of positivist ELMA research – is needed, if the nature of good school leadership in its socio-political and cultural sense is to be understood. Following Grace's example, I analyse the dominant school leadership discourse critically in this study, through historical, sociological and philosophical lenses. In contrast with Grace, I adopt a different balance of philosophical to sociological argument and I do not undertake any field work.

A second identifiable group of existing ELMA research studies has explored the relationship between values and leadership in some detail with reference to philosophical writing. For example, inspired by Plato, Christopher Hodgkinson (1991) argues that educational leadership should be seen as a "moral art"; while Mike Bottery (1992, 2000) articulates a notion of good educational leadership influenced by Aristotelian notions of virtue (1953). Graham Haydon (2007) has undertaken a critical review of both Hodgkinson and Bottery's work which offers an authoritative philosophical reading of the use of philosophical argument in these sources. Anne Gold (2004) links these more abstract ideas to concrete examples of very good school leadership practice. I develop this body of existing work further here, based on a shared interest in moral and ethical deliberation in the school leadership context.

A third group of ELMA studies that seeks to develop democratic models of school leadership practice (Harris and Chapman, 2002, MacBeath and Moos, 2004, Harris and Muijs, 2005, Woods, 2005) has also influenced my argument. This research shares a common understanding that decision-making in schools should be extended beyond the ranks of those at a senior level with formal leadership responsibility. It is broadly speaking interpretive, in that it does not seek to identify standardized solutions for educational reform to apply to any kind of school context.

In other respects this group is more loosely associated than others that I have identified. The interpretive nature of John MacBeath's research (1999) is clear – he insists that schools should be encouraged to "speak for themselves" – but it is less evident in the work, for example, of Alma Harris. Her commitment to a broad and inclusive conception of leadership, with particular emphasis on the leadership role of

teachers (e.g. Harris and Muijs, 2005) is evident but she mixes the language of "improving" schools with that of "effectiveness" (e.g. Harris and Chapman, 2002), suggesting positivist influences.

2.2.4 Addressing an imbalance

Critical ELMA research (Davies, 1994, Grace, 1995, Alvesson and Wilmott, 1996) has established that for the past thirty years, the dominant school leadership discourse in education policies formulated by central Government and its representative agencies has been based overwhelmingly on positivist assumptions. For those policy makers and practitioners charged with implementing educational reform across a national system of education, the attraction of research that claims to identify "social facts" is easy to understand. If those factors most likely to contribute to successful schooling can be isolated reliably and predictably, a blue print of standardised solutions may be drawn up and implemented.

However, this skews the way in which best educational leadership is perceived. For example, from a concern in Educational Management Studies to translate "best" leadership practice from the commercial sector to publicly funded schools, Grace argues:

> ..... a new discourse is generated in which school boards, trustees or
> governors become 'stake-holders' or 'players' and principals or headteachers
> become chief executives, market analysts and public relations specialists.
> (Grace, 1995: 5)

Thus, the language of effectiveness pervades the dominant discourse of school leadership in England. For example, in policy documentation the *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004) deploy the word "effective" 27 times over six pages to describe six "key areas" of headship. In a speech to the National College for School Leadership Annual Conference 2009, its Chief Executive, Steve Munby, assumed a common, persistent and reliable relationship between certain leadership characteristics on one hand and success in schooling on the other. He declared

> Being an effective leader means we first have to believe in our own leadership; to fully accept the fact that we are in charge. We put on the mantle of leadership (Munby, 2009: 2).

He argued for particular qualities that outstanding individuals must demonstrate if schools are to respond to those "profound challenges" faced in the early twenty first century (ibid : 1) in ways that will enable pupils to flourish.

The quality of work contributed by those key individuals in senior positions of authority in schools is one important factor in their likely success (see Chapters Five to Seven). However, I will seek to clarify what "quality" in school leadership entails; and propose that those qualities and skills which distinguish very good school leaders from others are acquired through nurture rather than nature. Good school leaders, I will argue, are made rather than born; aptitude for leadership depends on the education those in leadership positions receive and the quality of their reflection on professional experience, rather than their innate leadership ability.

Furthermore, to lead a school that is located in a democratic context well requires specific value commitments. These – rather than other values – should inform both the agency of those key individuals and the structures within which their leadership activity is conducted. I suggest that these values have been sidelined in the dominant school leadership discourse for two reasons. First, the paradigm influencing that dominant discourse lacks a sufficiently critical or interpretive framework of knowledge with which to factor in the moral dimension to educational practice, even less to analyse it. Secondly, I argue that this reluctance to factor a critical framework into reflection on leadership is both caused and reinforced by the alternative (positivist) framework which has been adopted.

2.3 Distinctions from other Educational Leadership, Management and Administration (ELMA) research

Having outlined those dimensions to this thesis which build on existing ELMA research, I turn next to consider the distinctive contribution it makes to that same field. Other ELMA study is interdisciplinary (e.g. Grace, 1995, Gunter et al., 1999),

drawing on several of the foundation disciplines in education in order to interpret it; human experience is unlikely to fall neatly into specific social, political and cultural categories. These other studies, while theoretical in part, tend to be more focussed on empirical investigation while this study is focussed on the analysis of ideas and concepts. For example, I dwell on claims other ELMA research makes about "shared" or "distributed" school leadership (Chapter Eight), analysing the use of language where this is unclear. I pursue research into the principles of school principals (Chapter Seven) where the theoretical underpinning the study invites attention.

Secondly, although earlier ELMA research has drawn on the foundation disciplines in education, other studies do not dwell as I do on philosophical and theological reflection, in order to highlight common ideological assumptions which underpin conceptions of leadership found in English schooling. My preoccupation, in common with other philosophers of education, is with moral questions about the state of education as it is now and what it ought to be like in the future. Like other forms of research in the educational foundations, this kind of reflection is valuable because it enables the researcher to establish a "critical distance" between those particular examples of policy and practice they might encounter directly, and other possible but currently abstract alternatives that exist at the level of principle (Ball, 1998).

By "thinking otherwise", new light is cast on what might appear self-evidently necessary or true. Hence, aware of the theoretical possibility of alternative interpretations of leadership in social groups (Weber (1947) see ahead), I came to question established conventions of school leadership and have since conceived of better possible alternatives to that practice. The thinking that has helped me to reach such a conclusion has been biased towards philosophy but is not exclusively philosophical. I spell this out next in more detail.

2.3.1 Contextualising school leadership

One way in which it is possible to think differently about familiar practices is to place them in their historical context. As Gerald Grace (1995) argues, the study of history can provide people with a sense of the regulative principles that they have inherited

from their past. However, historical research is relatively underdeveloped in the ELMA field of study (Walker, 1980, Sungaila, 1982, Thody, 1994), despite a journal – *The Journal of Educational Administration and History* – dedicated to the topic. One ELMA study notes in passing that historical enquiry should not be "dwelled on" unduly (Hall and Southworth, 1997: 152), as studies in this area "abound" (ibid), but this perception does not hold up when subjected to further scrutiny.

While general histories of headship in England have been attempted (e.g. Baron, 1970, Bernbaum, 1976, Grace, 1995, Tomlinson et al., 1999), these tend to be brief, comprising perhaps a single chapter. A healthy supply of biographical accounts has explored the professional and personal lives of significant headmasters of English public schools, in particular Thomas Arnold (e.g. Bamford, 1960, McCrum, 1989, Copley, 2002, Copley, 2005). This work is useful and reviewed during Chapter Four because it indicates an ideal of school leadership that has been valued in the past and passed down from one generation to another. The difficulty with this material is that it presents a skewed picture of what school leadership used to be like.

For example, in his general history of education, *A History of Secondary Education in England 1800-1870*, Roach (1986) assesses the careers of four "great" headmasters: Samuel Butler, Thomas Arnold, William Sewell and Edward Thring. These stories, by their very nature, are atypical, thus unreliable as general patterns or examples (Bamford, 1960). They reinforce one very narrow, so-called "traditional" conception of the headteacher which does not reflect the majority experience of school leadership – often exercised by women and men from lower social classes, whose careers took a rather different path, also worthy of commemoration but largely forgotten by later generations (Thody, 1994: 370).

Furthermore, a normative view of the ideal school leader becomes established, based on partial evidence that focuses on the agency of charismatic individuals. Gerald Bernbaum (1976) maintains that school leadership in England needs to be understood within the establishment of a universal system of education between the mid to late nineteenth century. I trace the tradition of the linchpin headteacher to this period as well as those factors which contributed to its establishment.

At the same time, other stories of good school leadership that was exercised collectively by groups may be forgotten entirely or categorised either as "democratic" or "progressive" schooling rather than as leadership. There are stories to be told of resistance to the linchpin ideal of headship and attempts to introduce alternative leadership traditions based on democratic values in mainstream educational practice (Chapter Four). To redress this imbalance, I review secondary sources concerned with the history of leadership in schools in England that refer to, but also go well beyond, the standard histories of public school headmasters.

Historical research may have been marginalised in ELMA research, given the focus of so many studies on educational reform, based on the assumption that a historical perspective is of limited value to proposals for change in the future. I will leave to one side the point that the value of educational research should not always depend on its utility. Instead, I offer two reasons why such a limited engagement with a historical perspective on school leadership is unfortunate.

First, it is very difficult to anticipate in advance of a research project whether or not its findings will prove useful. Good research should be rigorous and thorough with a clear rationale for investigation. However, if it is too tightly controlled and constrained in advance an opportunity may be missed to develop new ideas that were not part of the original hypothesis. The research I have conducted into the life and career of Thomas Arnold has yielded several unintended outcomes. One has been to discover that while it is important to recognise the negative influence his example might have had on the development of headship in England (e.g. Baron, 1970, Bernbaum, 1973, 1976, Grace, 1995, Tomlinson, et al., 1999), Arnold should be credited more positively for recognising the headteacher's role as a "moral educator" (McCulloch, 1991, Copley, 2002, Copley, 2005).

Second, researchers may appeal to the past when making proposals for future policies (see below). In this case, it is vital that their reading is scrutinised by other researchers for inaccuracies and idiosyncrasies. Used well, history not only sheds light on the provenance of today's beliefs and practices, but also enables us to draw comparisons between the desirability of life as it was then with how it is today.

However, I have already highlighted how care must be taken when passing judgement on past practice. Thomas Arnold's reputation, as Copley argues (2002), has suffered unfairly where commentators (e.g. Strachey, 1918) have failed to appreciate him on his own terms or on the terms of his time.

James Tooley (e.g. , 1995, 1996, Tooley, 2000) uses historical evidence to argue that schooling in England was "better" when it was under voluntary control prior to 1870. I engage with Tooley's arguments in later chapters (see Chapters Nine and Ten) when I consider issues of democratic school governance. To engage critically with his argument, I investigated the historical events he refers to and reviewed readings of that history other than his to determine whether his interpretation seemed valid.

I discovered through this process that mainstream commentators reach alternative conclusions which, on reflection, seem more plausible than his. It is more commonly argued that the introduction of universal state funded education for children up to the age of 12 in 1870, accountable to a democratic system of governance, represented progress on the ad hoc, inconsistent provision most children in England received before then (e.g. Aldrich, 1982, Roach, 1986, Roach, 1991). This point – that moral progress is possible over time – will be developed shortly (see ahead) when I support Charles Taylor's view of history over Foucault's.

2.3.2 Conceptualising school leadership

One foundation discipline in particular – philosophy of education – has influenced this thesis most forcefully because I am concerned to analyse the coherence and clarity of key concepts applied to an educational context, including "leadership" and "democracy". Given its importance to my argument, relevant literature in philosophy of education will be reviewed separately in the next chapter (Chapter Three). I wish to acknowledge at this point that clear thinking about concepts is not confined to those who define themselves as philosophers. Other thinkers specialise in theoretical work in the social sciences (e.g. Grace, 1995, Ball, 1999, Wright, 2003, Hatcher, 2005) who think through their use of language in ways that are rigorous and consistent.

This has not always been the case within ELMA research. For example, consider the concept of leadership which may be described variously as a "type" or "style" to be adopted, regardless of educational context. While some attempt may well have been made to assess their relative worth on instrumental grounds (Bush and Glover, 2003), little mention is made of their respective worth according to ethical criteria. Thus democratic leadership can appear as one coherent approach that might be chosen, possibly alongside another leadership model.

Yet the key terms at play in these arguments, including leadership and democracy, are deceptively complex and slippery. Perhaps it is taken for granted that their meaning may be understood readily and agreed because they are used so regularly in everyday speech; but this is not in practice the case, for their meanings are contested and they tend to be used inconsistently. I draw attention throughout the argument I make to conceptual confusion in the dominant leadership discourse, for example highlighting difficulties with the concepts of "authority" considered later in this chapter (see below), "democracy" in Chapter Nine, "standards" in Chapter Five and "vision" in Chapter Six.

Moreover, philosophers are concerned characteristically to analyse concepts in ways that are evaluative. A good deal of existing ELMA research has analysed the notion of leadership to include – as Briggs and Coleman (2007: 2) maintain – identifying types and styles of leadership and their relevance to specific educational settings. It was estimated at one point (Cuban, 1988) that within the ELMA field alone at least 350 possible interpretations of leadership have been identified. Further work has been undertaken to classify these individual definitions into leadership types (e.g. Bush and Glover, 2003), making it easier to gain an overview of the field.

Given these weaknesses in the existing discussion of concepts of leadership within the ELMA field, I turn instead to an earlier treatment of the subject by philosophers of education (see Chapter Three) as a more suitable starting point for my argument. I am guided by R.S. Peters (1966, 1973) in my choice of Weber's (1947) account of legal rational authority as the basis of a more coherent account of democratic school leadership. I will discuss Weber's ideas shortly (Section 2.4).

While earlier researchers (e.g. Hodgkinson, 1991, Grace, 1995, Bottery, 1999, Gunter, et al., 1999, Gold, 2004) have insisted that a concern with values distinguishes the very best school leaders from others, here I maintain that those leaders' actions should be informed in particular by *democratic* values. Moreover, these studies interpret leadership narrowly, focusing on formal positions of responsibility in schools. I argue that consistency with democratic values demands a broader view of school leadership be taken so that, for example, all directly interested parties including pupils should be engaged in decision-making at a strategic level.

Even when values are discussed in relationship to leadership, the focus of the discussion may be on those values that people in formal leadership positions hold, not the influence of values on conceptions of leadership. Interpreting leadership as a moral art, Christopher Hodgkinson (1991) draws on a moral argument, recognising the importance of values to leaders if they are to undertake the role well. Yet the particular model of leadership he advocates does not meet the needs of those schools situated in a democratic context which aims to promote democratic values. It emphasises the moral agency of those individuals in formal leadership positions alone, rather than all directly interested parties (Chapter Seven).

Other research in the ELMA field (e.g. MacBeath, 1999, Harris and Chapman, 2002, MacBeath and Moos, 2004, Harris and Muijs, 2005, Woods, 2005) has been concerned to promote shared decision-making as a key dimension of school leadership, offering empirical evidence to support its claims. However, these accounts lack a robust and coherent notion of democracy (Chapter Eight). Nor has work on this topic already undertaken by philosophers of education (e.g. Peters, 1966, Peters, 1973, White, 1982, White, 1983) attracted much interest among ELMA researchers. I seek to bring these respective literatures together.

2.3.3 Critiquing school leadership

This thesis is not unusual in being critical of the dominant leadership discourse (e.g. Grace, 1995, Grace, 1997, Hatcher, 2004, Woods, 2004, Hatcher, 2005, Woods, 2005). For example, I attack the conception of school leadership captured in the *National*

Standards for Headteachers (DfES, 2004) on two levels; on the grounds that it is both impractical and morally undesirable. My critique draws both on existing lines of argument to be found in ELMA research specifically, and on more general criticisms of school effectiveness made by philosophers of education (e.g. Davis, 1998, Smith, 1999) as well as sociologists of education (e.g. Chitty, 1992, Grace, 1997, Ball, 1998, Ball, 1999).

However, the approach I take to criticism will also be distinctive in two respects. I have chosen not to pursue the line of argument that has been used by those who are persuaded by the Foucauldian analysis of power, despite the degree to which this has influenced other critical ELMA research (Grogan and Simmons, 2007). In brief, Foucault's analysis (1975) suggests that in practice the distribution of power in human societies has not changed over time; he does not agree that power in societies has become more evenly distributed as democratic impulses have spread. He contends that in modern democratic societies surveillance is conducted by bureaucrats instead of absolute rulers and ordinary people are as entrapped as ever.

His argument is forcefully made and has influenced many whose scholarship offers useful support in later chapters (e.g. Wright, 2001, Wright, 2003) when critiquing the dominant discourse of school leadership *as it is today*. Yet, while Foucault's analysis offers one plausible reading of how the exercise of power has failed to change across societies in general over time, it feels overly dogmatic. It could engage more fully with other possible and plausible interpretations of social history. Charles Taylor (1985a: 164-5) has described Foucault's analysis of how power operates in modern societies as one-dimensional, or "monolithic".

It could be argued, from empirical evidence, that power *is* distributed more equitably under democratic rule, albeit imperfectly, than traditional societies allow. As Taylor points out:

> There is a tremendous difference between societies which find their cohesions through such common disciplines grounded on a public identity, and which thus permit of and call for the participatory action of equals, on

one hand, and the multiplicity of kinds of society which require chains of command based on unquestionable authority on the other. (Taylor, 1985a: 165)

Taylor seeks to defend one historical narrative as more desirable than others, arguing that evaluative comparisons are both possible and desirable. He suggests that a view commonly shared in modern western democracies (1985a: 181) is that civilisation is advancing steadily, i.e. improving, rooted in democratic impulses that feel "true", even if they are subject to constant revision. He challenges the way in which Foucault appears to depict various possible historical narratives, with no one account of greater worth than any other. Taylor argues that the argument Foucault deploys can only work when it is made from a standpoint that is outside history. Conversely, Taylor relates his own argument to historical events as evidence of social progress.

Critical Leadership Studies have been criticised (Parker, 2002, Simkins, 2005) for being too detached from educational leadership practice. If the Foucauldian line of critique is pursued, a sense of detachment is created because no substantive change to the distribution of power is possible; the search for social reform seems fruitless. However, if this perspective is avoided, the dynamic of the argument shifts because the possibility of change can be entertained. Although critical, this thesis seeks by contrast to be constructive, to contribute positively to the reform of future educational policy and practice.

2.4 Weber, authority and school leadership

I conclude this chapter by reviewing a short but significant passage in *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* (1947: 126-132) in which Weber analyses the types of authority that are typically found in social groups. While Weber's ideas have not exercised much direct influence on thinking in the ELMA field, Richard Peters applied them to educational practice over forty years ago (1966: 243). Peters uses Weber's analysis to distinguish those ways in which teachers might exercise their authority legitimately over their pupils from ways deemed morally inappropriate.

Guided by this earlier argument, I use Weber's notion of "legal-rational authority" to distinguish notions of leadership authority that are appropriate to a school located in a democratic society from those that are unjustified on moral grounds. I establish the basis on which *formal* leadership responsibilities may be allocated to some people in schools so that their powers are consistent with democratic principles. I use Weber's notion of "charismatic" leadership to show how the personal leadership authority that some people exercise over others must be interpreted carefully if democratic principles are to be observed; and I argue that decision making powers should not be concentrated unnecessarily in the hands of a very few individuals.

2.4.1 Types of authority

"Authority" derives from the Latin word *auctoritas* which concerns "producing, originating or inventing in the sphere of opinion, counsel or command" (Peters, 1966: 239). It is critical to the notion of leadership because authority is the basis on which some people within a social group agree to submit to the opinions, counsels and commands of others. In this regard, Weber draws an important ethical distinction between legitimate and illegitimate authority in social groups.

Weber identifies authority as "legitimate" where group members accept the authority of their leader(s) freely, while "illegitimate" authority describes the situation in which group members have to be coerced in order to follow the leader(s)' direction. He establishes two grounds on which authority over others may be legitimated, one which is "impersonal" and linked to a formal office, while another concerns the "personal" influence that some people are able to exercise over others because of qualities that are particular to them. I next consider three kinds of legitimate authority identified by Weber, two that are impersonal and one, charismatic type which combines elements of both personal and impersonal authority.

2.4.1.1 Traditional authority

As the term suggests, traditional authority is legitimised by sacred, time-honoured customs and traditions; royal power is a useful example to bear in mind when

considering its characteristics. Traditional authority is impersonal. Leaders are respected as being in authority by virtue of the office they have assumed, as the result of age-old customs or conventions. Likewise, their actions are constrained by expectations that have been laid down in traditions from the past, with any commands they might issue based on established conventions. Thus, when traditional leaders seek to impose their own personal – potentially arbitrary – decisions or "laws" on their subjects, they must justify them by appeals either to past precedent or another authority higher than their own.

2.4.1.2 Legal-rational authority

The legal-rational type of authority also relates to an impersonal office or role. In this case, as Weber's classification suggests, authority is rooted in a system of rules and laws. Democracy is an obvious and well-known example. Such laws become established by various means; these include common agreement as well as reasoned appeals to certain values over others. Gradually normative beliefs, practices and institutional structures build up that are accepted by members of that society.

Leaders are chosen to be in authority by their peers, issuing commands based on the rules that have been assumed or agreed. Obedience to nominated leaders is required; but to the office(s) rather than to the individual people who hold them. They remain in other respects equal members of the group with the sphere of influence they enjoy limited to those responsibilities which stem from their office. Leaders may bring personal qualities to the particular office they hold if they prove particularly well-suited to their role. However, their authority does not depend on their capacity to demonstrate exceptional powers of intuitive perception or intellect.

2.4.1.3 Charismatic authority

There are various personal factors which cause some people to follow others; these include family loyalty, affection, even bribery. However, the particular type of personal authority with which Weber is concerned is "charismatic authority"; and this notion is of key concern in the argument I present during this thesis. Weber appropriates the term from the Greek "charismata", used in the New Testament (e.g.

1 Corinthians 12: 5-11; Galatians 5: 13-6:2) to describe people set apart from others because they manifest the "gifts of the spirit". People who exercise charismatic authority over others are perceived to possess supernatural, superhuman or exceptional qualities that set them apart and cause them to be treated by others with the degree of deference prophets might have received from their disciples.

In more recent times, the notion of charismatic authority has become secularised (see Chapter Six). Individuals are identified who are able to display a "particular insight into what is correct or true" and appear to "source" or "originate" the rules governing their sphere of influence (Peters, 1966); this can be described, even in secular contexts as a "vision" (e.g. Dunford, 1999). Administrative structures, defined spheres of competence are set aside as the basis of authority in favour of more fluid arrangements, which are determined by the charismatic leader.

Although in the short term, groups that rely on charismatic authority can be powerful and coherent, in the longer term they are highly unstable. Reliant on a particular individual to determine their direction, they flounder when that person leaves, either to join another group or because they die. When the leader leaves (or dies) either the community disbands or it must settle on one or other formal type of authority. A sense of tradition might emerge; for example, defining characteristics, some kind of revelation perhaps, or the designation of a successor by the charismatic leader (Weber refers to this process as "traditionalisation"). Alternatively, a bureaucratic system of social order becomes established with "normal" procedures for recruitment, tests or training (Weber refers to this process as "rationalisation".)

2.4.1.4 Evaluation

Of the three legitimate forms of authority, Weber regarded the legal rational type the most desirable in contemporary society. He argued:

> Experience tends universally to show that the purely bureaucratic type of
> administrative organisation - that is, the monocratic variety of bureaucracy -
> is, from a purely technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest

degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most rational known means of carrying out imperative control over human beings. (1947: 309)

Why did he think this and what are the implications of his reasoning for school leadership?

First, he recognised that there are limits to the power of those people in authority on a legal rational basis because they have a clearly defined sphere of competence which is linked to the particular office they hold. This is attractive in societies, including democracies, where liberty is prized. It creates the possibility of a private sphere outside the jurisdiction of the public sphere in which the individual, rather than the group and its officers, has jurisdiction and may determine her/his own choices.

Second, those in authority are appointed through a selection process related directly to the sphere of competence associated with the post they hold; this is not the case in traditional societies. They are trained or educated to undertake the responsibilities of office, the assumption being that to undertake them requires preparation. This contrasts sharply with being in authority in a charismatic sense because the necessary qualities for leadership are gifted to extraordinary individuals. Legal rational authority has a levelling effect; it is open potentially to any willing and competent member of the group.

Thus those in authority need to know very thoroughly the laws and regulations by which the social group is governed and be able to apply these general principles skilfully to a variety of particular circumstances. They do not divine or perceive through a privileged and personal form of intuition what the laws should be. These are determined by the group itself, following a process of rational deliberation. Furthermore, these agreements are recorded making them equally transparent to all group members.

Weber recognised two potential objections to legal rational authority. First, that it might be perceived as cumbersome; this objection is surely addressed by adequate preparation, both for those in formal office and other group members. Further, it needs to be established who perceives it cumbersome, in relation to what alternative

forms of authority and for what reasons. Legal rational authority might prove less cumbersome for those few members of the social group who bear the lion's share of responsibility when authority is concentrated rather than shared. Moreover, with the responsibility of power, privileges follow and the rewards of extra endeavour may be shared more equitably. As both Taylor and Weber suggest, the desire for such a state of affairs is reflected widely in public opinion.

A social system premised on legal rational authority does require excellent communication between group members to succeed. A second concern Weber identifies is the sense of being impersonal and inflexible often associated with bureaucracies. Again this suggests a limitation in the quality of particular practice rather than an objection at the level of principle. The intention in a legal rational system is that general principles are applied by trained officials to the particular needs of individuals. Personal qualities and competence are crucial to the success of a social group conforming to the legal rational authority type. However, this should not be confused with authority bestowed because of those personal qualities alone and which, it has already been suggested, has other shortcomings.

2.4.2 Application to school leadership

In the previous section I explained why Weber set such great store by legal rational authority in contemporary society, believing it to be efficient and systematic, fair and transparent, allowing for a considerable personal freedom while respecting a good degree of equality. Weber recognised the importance of personal qualities to successful figures of authority in a social group organised along legal rational lines; but argued that this should not be confused with charismatic authority which, as I have indicated, has significant shortcomings. How does the model of leadership authority found in the dominant school leadership discourse of one particular education system in England compare to these insights of Weber's?

2.4.2.1 An imperfect legal-rational model

Steve Munby, Chief Executive of the National College for School Leadership, reminded his audience in a key speech cited above that good school leaders must

"put on the mantle of leadership" (Munby, 2009: 2). This is a helpful and appropriate image. A mantle is worn by leaders to symbolise the public office they hold; once the office is taken away, the leader reverts to being an ordinary member of the social group. Their authority rests on the office rather than upon them personally and is confined to their sphere of competence.

Moreover, evidence of a legal-rational basis to school leaders' authority is evident in the existence of formal systems of governance operating across schools in England, supported by tiers of representative government. Constitutionally the Chair of Governors, not the headteacher bears overall responsibility for a school; increasingly schools appoint a senior leadership team to share the head's executive responsibilities and the National College for School Leadership offers an extensive programme of professional development for both middle and senior leaders.

On the other hand, leadership authority still tends to be equated with a few senior leaders, particularly the headteacher (Moore et al., 2002) in the context of English schooling. The *National Standards for Headteachers* (TTA, 1997, DfEE, 2000, DfES, 2004) identify as the core purpose of the headteacher the responsibility for providing: "...professional leadership and management for a school in order to provide a secure foundation from which to achieve high 'standards' in all areas of the school's work" (DfES, 2004: 3). It is the headteacher, the *National Standards* suggest, who must "establish high quality education", effectively manage teaching and learning "to realise the potential of all pupils" (DfES, 2004: 3). Why is all this responsibility within the sphere of competence of the headteacher alone? What about other school leaders?

2.4.2.2 An over-emphasis on personal authority

Further, the comment that Munby went on to make in his speech to the National College – that leaders must feel able to accept that they are "fully" in charge (Munby, 2009: 2) – needs to be qualified. It is true that headteachers must have confidence in their ability to exercise their responsibilities competently and they will need particular personal qualities to do this. However, they personally are not "fully" in charge of schools, being answerable to governors and subject to the law.

An emphasis on personal authority tended to be found in conceptions of leadership according to a desk review commissioned by the National College for School Leadership (Bush and Glover, 2003). It found that the social influence persons or people had on the structure of the activities and relationships in a group or organisation was a recurrent feature in conceptions of educational leadership. School leaders hold their office because of the mantle they put on; the responsibilities that they bear will require them to develop personal qualities and skills but their authority does not depend on those qualities. This distinction is pursued in Chapters Six and Seven.

This tendency to over-emphasise the personal authority of senior school leaders in the dominant leadership discourse is further illustrated by a debate about the respective meaning of leadership and management. The word "management" is sometimes reserved for those organisational tasks associated with "directing the group effort, implementation or technical issues" (Bush, 1998, Bush and Glover, 2003). Meanwhile leadership is left to highlight those aspects of the school leaders' role linked to strategic planning for the future.

Hence, Day and others (2001) relate management to systems and paperwork, leadership to the development of people. Bolman and Deal (1997: xiii-xiv) equate management with having an "objective perspective" while wise leaders provide "flashes of vision and commitment". Cuban (1988: xx) suggests that leadership should be associated with the process of instigating change; while management is concerned with maintaining the status quo.

Bush suggests (1999: 240) that to place too great an emphasis on the daily organisation of a school at the expense of "bigger picture" concerns with values and educational purpose is dangerous. This echoes Weber's concern that legal rational authority must balance the systematic with the personal if it is to avoid becoming impersonal and duty bound (see above). However, if leadership becomes too closely associated with "wise" or "visionary" qualities, it implies that good leaders are individuals who possess a "particular insight into what is correct or true" (as

charismatic leaders do, see above). Leadership as a result can become detached from a defined sphere of competence, organisational responsibilities and formal office.

2.4.3 Defining school leadership on alternative lines

Developing a clearer, alternative conception of leadership for schools in England from the positive potential already evident, is a key aim of this thesis. Guided by Weber's analysis of authority, a simpler definition may be identified that focuses on the function of leaders in social groups. It respects the need to balance the everyday concerns of organisational matters with strategic decision making and future planning; yet avoids the dangers that have been highlighted (see above) when the expectations held of formal authority become tangled up with charismatic authority.

I have just argued that concern with organisational matters – for example ensuring that expectations are being met, rules that have been agreed – should not be bracketed out from discussions of leadership into a separate field of study called management. Instead, I wish to use the term "formal leadership" to describe those aspects of being in authority which are associated with holding office and which tend to be held, though not exclusively so, by educational professionals. Pupils on the School Council are leaders in a formal sense, as are parents elected as School Governors. On a democratic model formal leaders will not expect to dominate informal leadership in the school but will contribute to it.

Furthermore, there are certain attributes commonly assigned to the notion of leadership. These may involve creative thinking and planning strategy that are concerned with determining the future direction that a social group takes; or alternatively the responsibility for motivating and maintaining the well-being of the group, particularly through a period of change. I will refer to this capacity from now as "informal leadership", assuming that while sometimes those people who hold formal office generate good ideas or show personal concern for others such qualities are not confined to those individuals.

Nor need it be the case that one specific individual must always be responsible for creating good ideas. Weber notes the synergy that occurs in some groups who seem

better able than others to generate ideas collectively; a form of personal authority is shared. This idea will be explored further in later chapters of the thesis concerned with vision (Chapter Six) and leadership that is distributed or shared (Chapter Eight).

The distinction I have just drawn between formal and informal leadership will need adopting in policy and implementing in practice if further confusion and inappropriate attitudes towards the exercise of authority in schools are to be avoided in the future. In Chapter Five I challenge the suitability of the existing *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004) as a basis for training future school leaders in maintained schooling. In Chapter Twelve I propose a National Framework for School Leadership to replace them, based around key principles for democratic school leadership identified in Chapters Nine and Ten.

These principles will spell out what leadership in a democratic society involves, in both its formal and informal senses, as well as identifying the appropriate structures through which democratic school leadership will take place. The principles should seek to avoid becoming unnecessarily prescriptive, allowing flexibility for local groups to determine how they might wish schools to be led. On this broader account, the remit of the National College for Leadership will need to be re-visited if it is to be concerned with preparation for informal leadership as well. This will entail programmes for civic education as well as professional leadership development.

2.5 Conclusion

This thesis has been motivated by a desire to contribute to educational reform. I have argued that more ELMA research should be concerned to explain on what moral and ethical basis school leadership should be judged good, thus what kinds of leadership are needed if maintained schools in England are to flourish in the future. Notions of leadership are contested and cannot be understood fully without reference to the influence of beliefs and values: competing accounts of school leadership should be assessed according to their moral *and* instrumental worth.

Existing attempts to conceptualise leadership within the ELMA field of study are sidelined in this thesis. An alternative starting point is proposed in the final part of the chapter which draws on Weber's analysis of authority, inspired by a relevant but neglected literature in the philosophy of education. However another interpretation of leadership has come to dominate practice in schools in England. I address the philosophical difficulties this poses in the next chapter.

3 PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I characterised this thesis as an inter-disciplinary investigation of school leadership, with a bias in favour of applied philosophy of education. Next, I undertake a review of relevant philosophical literature (see Chapter Two, section 2.3.2), with particular reference to philosophical writing in the analytical tradition. This has influenced the content of my argument, for example in the attention I pay to concepts like 'leadership' and 'democracy' in the language of ELMA research as well as the dominant school leadership discourse. Analytical philosophy has influenced the style in which I have sought to present my argument too, being concerned to develop practical proposals for policy and leadership that are expressed in language I hope that non-philosophers will find accessible.

As with other chapters concerned with literature review (Chapters Two and Four), one section is both relevant to the analysis being presented but also stands slightly apart, in order to advance the overall argument of the thesis. In Section 3.3, I dwell on one text in particular, Plato's *Republic* (1987), in order to consider his account of the good society ruled by "Guardians" or "Philosopher Rulers", anticipating the review of historical perspectives that follows in Chapter Four. I do so in order to highlight the influence of these "Platonic" ideas on traditional models of school leadership in England.

3.2 Existing philosophical literature

Philosophy has been defined as "rational critical thinking, of a more or less systematic kind" (Quinton, 1995: 666) in three areas of intellectual enquiry: the general nature of the world, the justification of belief and the conduct of life. This thesis develops systematic critical thinking in at least two of the areas just identified. For example, "justification of belief" is a theme that Charles Taylor pursues (1985b) and which I draw upon (see Chapter Two, sections 2.2.2 and 2.3.3) to position my

argument within a critical approach to studying school leadership. I also consider the "conduct of life" during Chapter Two (see section 2.4.1.3). Richard Peters' work on ethics and education (1966, 1973) informs my argument for a particular understanding of authority in relation to school leadership.

I draw on a wide range of existing literature over the course of the thesis, both in general philosophy and the philosophy of education. Here I use the term "general" to describe philosophical literature reflective of a broad academic discipline. Examples of general political theory that have been referenced include classic texts in the history of western philosophy (e.g. Aristotle, 1953, Plato, 1987, Mill, 2006) alongside work by contemporary political philosophers (e.g. Harrison, 1995, Wolff, 1996, Swift, 2001).

In contrast, I use the term "philosophy of education" to describe a specific, applied form of the discipline which relates more general moral or epistemological questions to educational examples, or considers how the process of thinking rationally and critically through educational problems might shed light on various difficulties. For example, pioneers in the philosophy of education during the 1960s and 70s sought to analyse the concept of education to make its aim and purpose clear. They proposed logical reasons why some values rather than others ought to inform schooling and the means by which it is organised (e.g. Peters, 1966, Peters, 1973). The discipline has broadened considerably since to include alternative philosophical traditions applied to different kinds of educational question (a diversity reflected, e.g. in Blake et al., 2003, Curren, 2006).

General philosophers do also direct their theoretical concerns to educational issues in particular (e.g. Brighouse, 2002, 2003, Swift, 2003), making a valuable contribution of one kind to the philosophy of education. For example, the argument made in Chapters Nine and Ten in support of a characteristically democratic account of school leadership draws on the work of R.S. Peters while still a general philosopher (Benn and Peters, 1959). The differences are neither hard nor fast but indicative of distinct positions taken across a spectrum of more or less applied philosophical thinking about education.

Both approaches are necessary to a rigorous conceptual understanding of education; neither on its own is sufficient (Hirst in Hirst and Carr, 2005). Applied philosophy engages with contemporary issues and problems with an eye to what is feasible and possible given practical circumstances. Theoretical philosophy focuses on clear articulation of abstract concepts and values. Theoretical philosophy is valuable to applied philosophy. Without it engaged or applied philosophical work could lose sight of general philosophical principles and become, as Stuart White (2009) suggests, hostage to the vagaries of conventional or commonsense wisdom. Meanwhile, were all philosophical work conducted at the level of principle the value of this thinking to everyday life would never be realised, as Patricia White (1983) has emphasised.

For applied philosophy to be conducted well demands interest and academic skill in the practice and general theory of that to which philosophy is to be applied – in this case education – as well as in general philosophy; it is not a poorer relation to the purer form of academic enquiry. The applied philosopher is required, Janus-like, to stand on the threshold of two distinct but related areas of study, looking in both directions. Moreover, the applied philosopher may need to be prepared to pursue their enquiries across academic disciplines if they are to understand the subject of their research in the particular context in which it is situated. This was demonstrated in the previous chapter when Weber's models of authority were used to develop notions of formal and informal leadership by which multiple definitions of leadership could be organised (see Chapter Two, Section 2.4).

Finally, being concerned to create a piece of applied philosophical research that is at once scholarly and useful, I have written this thesis with both philosophers and members of the wider academic community of Education Studies in mind. To be scholarly, I must provide an accurate argument, verifiable against existing knowledge in the field; for my research to prove useful, I must locate those logical and conceptual difficulties I identify in the dominant school leadership discourse in real examples. Furthermore, I must present the argument in a style of academic

writing that is at once rigorous and accessible to non-philosophers (Haydon and Orchard, 2004).

What follows next is a brief review of the wide-ranging literature – both in general philosophy and the philosophy of education – that informs the argument I present through this thesis. This review is divided into two. In Section 3.2.1, I consider in more detail the way philosophy is used to critique prevalent education policies and practices. In Section 3.2.2, I identify a distinctive philosophical contribution to the search for an alternative account of democratic school leadership that might inform policy proposals for future practice.

3.2.1 Critique of policy and practice

3.2.1.1 Clarifying concepts

A recurrent role philosophy plays through this thesis is to clarify the use of concepts and ideas where these become muddled in the language of practice and public policy. In the previous chapter (Chapter Two, section 2.4.2.2) I set out organising principles that allowed the moral worth of competing notions of leadership found in the ELMA literature to be evaluated. In this way philosophy supports both other forms of educational research and the formation of social policy, by making the sense of words clear where their meaning has become obscured or distorted.

Hence in my consideration of the *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004) in Chapter Five, I combine ideas generated by a debate about the use of standards to capture the qualities of very good school leadership, with critical observations that philosophers of education have made about other policy initiatives. Few authors within the ELMA field have addressed conceptual difficulties with standards within two national education systems, two honourable exceptions being Anderson and English (English, 2000, Anderson, 2001), who raise the matter in the *International Journal of Leadership in Education*. I refer to Richard Smith's (1999) damning indictment of "effectiveness" in management and Andrew Davis' (1998) dissection of the claim that direct causal links can be traced between educational professionals' activities and attainments by pupils that are measurable.

Elsewhere, in Chapter Six, I analyse "vision" as a concept applied to school leadership because it is an ambiguous term, liable to misinterpretation in ways that are morally undesirable in a democratic society. I intertwine theological and philosophical methods to my interpretation of this concept. For example, I take general philosophical ideas concerned with the philosophy of mind (e.g. Descartes, 1986, Kenny, 1989) and combine these with ideas about "intuition" (Peters, 1966, 1973) and "imagination" (White, 2002) applied to educational practice by philosophers of education. From this analysis I distinguish three senses in which vision might be applied to school leadership, only two of which are appropriate to this context.

'Democracy' is a concept I am particularly concerned to clarify during the course of this thesis. Drawing on the work of general philosophers, I understand it in simple terms to mean "the political ideal of government or rule *by the people*" (Hardin, 2005). In democratic societies the power, as well as the responsibility of decision-making is extended to many people rather than concentrated with relatively few. In undemocratic societies those powers are limited to a relatively few people, on the grounds that they are rich or aristocratic (Blackburn, 1994:ref. democracy), physically strong or unusually intelligent.

I offer an extended account of democracy in two later chapters of the thesis (see Chapter Nine and Ten). I argue there that when insisting that school leadership ought to be democratic, it should demonstrate adherence to two principles - political liberty and political equality - rather than any one specific model or type of democracy. This distinction is important yet missing, for example, from Philip Woods' (2005) argument for democratic school leadership, which he advocates on the basis of one specific form of direct or participative democracy in particular which could, but need not, be replicated across an entire school system in general.

3.2.1.2 Highlighting logical contradictions

Use of the word democracy has become muddled in the language of educational practice and public policy. For example, it has been used inaccurately to describe

approaches to school leadership in which responsibilities are shared or distributed (e.g. Harris and Chapman, 2002). I untangle this conceptual problem in Chapter Eight and in Chapters Nine and Ten, drawing on authoritative sources in general philosophy to suggest how the term might be applied meaningfully with reference to the particular example of publicly funded schooling in England.

Where I highlight logical contradictions, I do so in the spirit of being constructive. For example, I am influenced in my approach to policy analysis by David Bridges (1996), who seeks potential benefits as well as likely difficulties in competence based assessment. Likewise, Christopher Winch (1996), who identifies good moral reasons – a concern for pupils' welfare as well as the stewardship of relatively scarce public resources – why the work of educational professionals should be held to account, if not in the way that policy makers have indicated. In being constructive, neither Bridges nor Winch pulls his punches; each spells out quite clearly what conceptual difficulties belie the respective schemes they are assessing.

I will highlight later in this chapter (see Section 3.3.2) a view of the good society derived from ideas found in Plato's *Republic* that is in contradiction with the modern democratic ideal, because it assumes that certain individuals should rule on the basis of a privileged ability to know the "Good" that distinguishes them from other citizens. Existing work by both general philosophers (Harrison, 1995, Wolff, 1996, Swift, 2001) and philosophers of education (Peters, 1966, Peters, 1973, White, 1983) helps to draw this distinction out. As I go on to show in the next chapter (Chapter Four), a particular view of school leadership has come to be accepted as the normative interpretation in England's schools (Baron, 1970, Bernbaum, 1976, McCulloch, 1991) rooted in assumptions of this sort.

3.2.1.3 Considering values and leadership

The contradiction I have just highlighted stems from alternative and competing sets of values that inform beliefs about what makes a good leader. One point I establish consistently through this thesis is, that while various accounts of school leadership may be possible, some are undesirable in a democratic society and ought to be

debarred. Having just acknowledged that notions of competence and capability are necessary attributes of educational professionals, including those in positions of formal authority in schools, nonetheless notions of good school leadership cannot be reduced to matters of competence alone. A significant body of existing research in the ELMA field emphasises the importance of values to educational leadership, with the best practitioners being both technically skilled and possessed of finely-honed moral judgement (Gold, et al., 2003).

I pursue this idea in Chapter Seven, taking a view of the good school leader based on another early Greek philosophical source, Aristotle rather than Plato. I suggest that practical wisdom rather than a privileged form of knowledge of the nature of the "Good" is what characterises very good school leadership, a point that the critical review of vision in Chapter Six supports further. This insight supports claims that have been made already within the ELMA field of study, to the effect that values have a critical role to play in the quality of school leadership (e.g. Hodgkinson, 1991, Bottery, 2000, Gold, 2004), but develops this idea further (see Chapter Two).

One development to existing research on values and leadership is the emphasis I place on democratic values in particular. I have argued already (Chapter Two, section 2.4.2.2) that both informal as well as formal dimensions need to be included in interpretations of leadership that inform policies for English schools. Thus, practical wisdom is a quality to be developed in all rational citizens, not only a few. The moral qualities that senior leaders in positions of formal authority need in schools are the dominant concern of existing discussion.

3.2.2 A democratic alternative

3.2.2.1 Asserting what should be the case

The value of clarity extends beyond constructive criticism to the presentation of an alternative account of school leadership, rooted in values of liberty and political equality. The point was made earlier (see above) that applied philosophers rely on the rigour of general philosophers' reflection on values at an abstract level when they engage with contemporary issues and problems. I draw on work in general political

philosophy (Berlin, 1958, Benn and Peters, 1959, Taylor, 1985c, Harrison, 1995, Wolff, 1996, Swift, 2001, Mill, 2006, White, 2006) to inform my discussion of what democracy necessarily entails in Chapters Nine and Ten.

Earlier (see Section 3.2.1.2), I highlighted the problem of the misrepresentation of democracy in wider educational research, public policy and practice (see above). Furthermore, questions about the practical application of democratic principles to educational practice have been raised, suggesting that while democracy may represent a laudable ideal, it is nevertheless unworkable (e.g. Tooley, 1995, 1996, Eason, 2007). I use established philosophical arguments to defend democracy against its detractors, given its value is recognised so widely, if not universally. Despite its imperfections, democracy represents the best means currently conceived of by which to organise society.

There are also clear arguments to add to the case for democratic school leadership on the grounds of principle concerned with matters of pedagogy. I refer in Chapter Eleven to another body of work in the philosophy of education concerned with moral education (e.g. Dewey, 1916, Haydon, 1997, McLaughlin, 1999). I argue that those values which pupils develop while at school are influenced through the means by which it is organised. This being the case, those values mediated through its leadership ought to be consistent with the accepted norms of the context in which the school is located, which in the case of English schools consists of democratic values.

3.2.2.2 Setting out a practical alternative

Philosophy helps here to re-assert the value of democracy and therefore reasons why democratic school leadership ought to be practised in state funded education. Furthermore, it helps to demonstrate how – in the case of English schools, at least – representative democratic school leadership might be introduced (e.g. White, 1983, 1988, Fielding, 2001, 2004) through an overhaul of existing structures and practices without the need for radical changes. In this study the philosophical dimension to the enquiry is complemented by both theoretical arguments (e.g. Ranson, 1993, 1994, Woods, 2004, Woods, 2005) and empirical evidence (e.g. Court, 1998, 2003, Flutter

and Rudduck, 2004) provided by educationalists from a varied range of disciplinary backgrounds.

Moreover, I use philosophical arguments in Chapter Twelve to propose a National Framework for School Leadership along similar lines to those that have been used elsewhere (e.g. White, 1990, O'Hear and White, 1991) to argue for a statutory national curriculum. The NFSL would identify general principles – rather than "standards" – of leadership that all schools would be required to follow. It would legislate for greater power to influence decision-making at a local level among ordinary citizens at the expense of quasi-autonomous agencies appointed by national government and their advisors. At the same time the NFSL would be informed by a commitment to representative democracy, with tiers of government in place to hold the actions of schools and their local leadership to account.

3.2.2.3 Anticipating likely concerns and addressing them

Given that a series of ideological assumptions underpin the proposals that have just been outlined, it is reasonable in a democratic society to expect that difficulties and objections will be raised to them. Again philosophy has a helpful role to play, in anticipating what the likely objections to these proposals will be and how to address them rationally. An existing philosophical debate concerning the democratic control of schooling (e.g. Jonathan, 1985, 1989, Ranson, 1993, 1994, Tooley, 1995, 1996) proves particularly useful and informs the conclusion I reach, that those objections are found wanting.

I anticipate that a second aspect of my alternative proposals for school leadership will attract negative comment. For those who contend that a child's moral education is a private matter and the responsibility of her parents, not a public body like a school, my contention that moral education takes place through school leadership will be challenged. Again, a number of philosophers, separately or in dialogue with each other (e.g. McLaughlin, 2000, Tooley, 2000, Sennett, 2003, Stern, 2007), have considered this kind of argument and I have drawn on these in my discussion of the pertinent issues during Chapter Eleven.

3.3 The "Philosopher Ruler" and school leadership

Having outlined the broader contribution that philosophy makes to my argument, I narrow the discussion down next to one text in particular, anticipating an argument I intend to make in following chapters. A tradition of leadership in English schooling has been traced (Bernbaum, 1976, Coulson, 1976, Grace, 1995), that is strongly influenced by ideas found in Plato's *Republic* (McCulloch, 1991). I will suggest in later chapters that these ideas continue to influence the dominant discourse of school leadership today, reflected for example in the ideal of leadership embodied in the *National Standards for Headteachers* (see Chapter Five), and the suggestion that 'vision' is a quality of the very best headteachers (see Chapter Six). I will argue that objections made several decades ago by philosophers of education (Peters, 1976b, White, 1983) concerned by a "Platonic" influence of this kind on conceptions of school leadership, continue to be relevant.

3.3.1 Plato and the good society

Plato's *Republic* (1987) might seem an obscure, outdated and therefore unlikely source of influence on school leadership in the twenty-first century. However, as the argument I present will go on to demonstrate, a particular interpretation of his ideas has exercised a profound influence on patterns of practice in English schooling. I explore the development of this phenomenon over time in the next chapter, while those ideas found in the *Republic* of specific concern to the argument made in this thesis and which have since been adopted and developed are presented in this.

It lies beyond the scope of this present study to explore Plato's ideas in great depth. Thus, no attempt is made to add to the wealth of existing scholarship (e.g. Nettleship, 1935, Crossman, 1939, Guthrie, 1975, 1978, Annas, 1981) either on Plato generally or the *Republic* as a specific text, although I use these sources to ensure Plato's ideas are accurately represented. I recognise the considerable uncertainty which surrounds authorship of the *Republic*; whether, for example, its arguments are genuinely Plato's own or those of the historical Socrates (Annas, 1981) who is cast as the text's narrator.

I also recognise that care should be taken not to read the text too literally. For example, Richard Smith (2011) takes issue with Carr and Hartnett's (1996) assertion that Plato "intended the *Republic* to be a blueprint for the creation of a good society" (Carr and Hartnett, 1996: 33). Smith's assessment is supported by Desmond Lee (1987) who contends that Plato leaves detailed consideration of government and administration in the ideal society to his later works, where his recommendations are less "austerely autocratic" than those of the *Republic* (1987: 21). Nonetheless, particular assertions are made about good political leadership that have exercised considerable influence on school leadership in England since, regardless of their exact authorship – or the precise meaning that author intended – and I turn to consider these in the next section of the chapter.

3.3.1.1 *Introduction to the* Republic

The main theme with which Plato's *Republic* (1987) is concerned is the notion of 'dikaiosunē' (δικαιοσύνη). This is commonly translated to mean 'justice' (Annas, 1981: 11-12); in the general sense of being morally 'just' found in classical Greek, rather than in the legalistic sense in which 'justice' is commonly understood in modern English. Plato equated 'being just' as a quality of individual persons with the just society (Plato, 1987: 65 footnote). For example, a discussion of the just individual in Part One shifts into concern with society as a whole in Part Two (Plato, 1987: Book II 369); and the ideal state is characterised as possessing four cardinal virtues: wisdom, courage, self-discipline as well as justice (Plato, 1987: Book IV 427), qualities which may also be found to varying degrees in individuals. Whether the two are indeed analogous is not discussed in the dialogue.

The claim is also made that a just society is an association of people drawn together by mutual need (Plato, 1987: Book II 369b) whose self-interest is far-sighted enough to divide labour and specialize in certain tasks. Plato argues that the common good depends on these being divided according to the different aptitudes with which each person within the social group is born (Plato, 1987: Book II 370). These suit them, both to a certain kind of life, and a role which they should execute for the good of society (Plato, 1987: Book II 370b). If necessary, the state should coerce people to

undertake their one designated role, he argues (Plato, 1987: Book II 374), a point he feels not need to justify morally (Annas, 1981 p.76).

3.3.1.2 Three social classes

Annas (1981) asserts that what has come to be known as the "Principle of Specialization" is something Plato regards as being natural and not merely a matter of convention. He identifies two groups of people in any particular society: a majority group of those people who are born with the capacity to be economically productive, ("Workers") while a smaller group are born with the aptitude to act as the "Guardians" of society (Plato, 1987: Book II 374). Plato later divides this second group into two further sub-groups of "Auxiliaries", who will function predominantly as warriors, and "Philosopher Rulers" who will rule with the state's interest most at heart, because it will accord with their own.

He proposes a "foundation myth" or "noble falsehood" (Annas, 1981: 102) which might be told by the Guardians to explain the differences between these groups of people within society:

> ..when god fashioned you, he added gold in the composition of those of you
>
> who are qualified to be Rulers..... he put silver in the Auxiliaries .... and iron
>
> and bronze in the farmers and other workers (Plato, 1987: Book III 415)

Plato emphasizes the importance of observing the Principle of Specialization; that without this, the state as a whole will be doomed (Annas, 1981: 103). He argues that the designated role which people in each respective group should make – and on which justice within the state depends – will demand responsibilities in accordance with their natural temperament (Plato, 1987: Book IV 421s-423c). This temperament, Plato reasons, is determined by the degree in which the three elements necessary to every human soul (Cornford, 1941: 126, Lee, 1987: 206) are combined: "reason", "spirit" and "appetite or desire" (Plato, 1987: Book IV 434e-441b). They are further developed through education (see below).

Those "workers" in whom "appetite" predominates are suited to the role of producing goods: farmers, manufacturers, traders and the like who provide for the material and economic needs of the community. Their virtue is obedience to the minority group of administrators who govern them. Meanwhile, those "Auxiliaries", born as "silver" and in whom the "spirit" predominates, are characterised by great courage and are thus suited to the responsibility of monitoring or policing the state (Plato, 1987: Book IV 428d-430c). Laws should be established by the class of people who are as "gold", those who combine "high spirits" with the necessary knowledge to rule society justly, the "Philosopher Rulers" (Plato, 1987: Book II 374-376). The wisdom and judgement that might be associated with reason will be most prevalent among this group. The self-discipline necessary to control the morally inappropriate expression of desire will be found in the harmony between the three classes which make up society (Plato, 1987: Book IV 430d-432b).

3.3.1.3 Knowledge of the Good

Plato argues that the ideal society will never see the light of day until

> philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands (Plato, 1987: Book V 473d)

He argues that philosophers are fitted naturally for leadership, unlike other members of society, because they are able to *know* the true nature of things (Plato, 1987: Book V 474c - 483). Memorably, Plato illustrates his point with reference to the Simile of the Cave (Plato, 1987: Book VII 514a-520a). Plato likens the unenlightened person to a prisoner in chains facing towards a screen onto which is cast her own shadow and shadows of objects in the world outside the cave. Knowing no better, she believes the shadow to be her true likeness. Annas (1981) suggests that Plato's meaning here is that most people take over second-hand opinions and beliefs, in unreflective fashion (Annas, 1981: 255) and are not capable of developing their own moral views (Annas, 1981: 257).

Were the prisoner to escape her present situation – the fate of the Philosopher Ruler - and stray towards the light outside, while she would be at first blinded, gradually she would come to see her true form and that of the world around her. The person who starts to think, Annas observes, "is shown as someone who breaks the bonds of conformity to ordinary experience and received opinion" (Annas, 1981: 253) with their "progress of enlightenment" portrayed as "a journey from darkness into light" (ibid).

In a move likely to appear strange to the modern reader, Plato portrays knowledge in abstract and impersonal terms. He argues that everything in the world, be it an object like a horse or an abstract noun like "the Good", has a perfect copy or form in another realm separate from the copies perceived imperfectly by the senses in this (Annas, 1981: 242). The Forms that Plato envisages are ordered hierarchically, with the form of the Good supreme. It is both absolute and universal, rooted in the authority of a supra-natural and perfect world.

Before being enlightened, the prisoner's former instinct might have been to remain outside the cave. Once enlightened through knowledge of the ultimate form in the ideal world, that of the Good, she is compelled, if reluctantly, back to the world of the Cave where she must try to improve the lot of those prisoners who remain unenlightened, even though they lack her understanding of the Good and will doubt her new insight into the way of the world as it really is. Elsewhere he describes a process through which

> after long study and discussion under the guidance of an experienced teacher, a spark may suddenly leap, as it were, from mind to mind, and the light of understanding so kindled will then feed itself. (Plato, Seventh Letter 341c)

This notion, that a few people are capable of knowing the future good for society reliably in this abstracted way, continues to exercise a profound influence on beliefs about good leadership in schools in England and I will return to it in later chapters (for example, Chapter Six, Section 6.2.1).

3.3.1.4 Education for leadership

While those people who should rule are born with the capacity to know the true nature of the Good, Plato goes on to argue that their abilities need further sharpening by a particular programme of education that will equip them for the responsibilities of leadership. This distinguishes Plato as the first thinker to defend systematically the notion that education is a training of character rather than an acquisition of information or skills (Annas, 1981: 86). A disagreement with the Sophists fuels his argument. Sophists were purveyors of information useful for "getting-on" in the political arena of Athenian society; knowledge that was ungrounded and unexamined, yet they expected payment for their services. Their pedagogical methods intended to train pupils' intellects in order that they might pursue their personal ambitions. Sophists were concerned with "cleverness" rather than goodness.

Plato attacks the Sophists' instrumental interpretation of educational aims, arguing instead that nurturing the intellectual qualities of Philosopher Rulers matters and is for the benefit of society as a whole. The training envisaged for them builds on a common phase of primary education (Plato, 1987: Book II 377) comprising poetry and stories carefully selected by the state for the suitability of their content. Annas described Plato as a "paternalist" (1981: 86) who assumes that people are to be brought up without questioning their moral beliefs (1981: 89), with free intellectual enquiry limited to an elite who are introduced to reasoning when they mature as a means of reinforcing the beliefs that have been established in them through earlier experience.

If early schooling is dominated by training in group values, how does this contribute to the dedication to academic ideals that Plato argues is necessary among an elite group? At this later point, he identifies an intellectual capacity – in particular for mathematical education – that is necessary to turn "the eye to the light" (Plato, 1987: Book VII 518b-c), with the educator providing the conditions in which the right kind of mind can develop these capacities. This kind of education Plato believes will produce people capable of innovative and original thought, with creative

mathematical work more likely than any other subject to survive conformity in values (Plato, 1987: Book VII 539a-d).

3.3.2 A critical review of Plato's account

As I indicated at the start of this chapter (see Introduction), my concern here has been to dwell on an account of the good society ruled by "Guardians" or "Philosopher Rulers" found in Plato's *Republic*. I have done this in order to set out key ideas that went on to inspire the development of a particular model of school leadership in England in the second half of the nineteenth century (see Chapter Four). Plato's argument rests on two significant assumptions. First, that most people are bad judges of political matters because they lack the expert knowledge to make sensible judgements; secondly, that democracy encourages leaders to be too concerned with retaining their popularity to lead well, because the personal liberty that they allow to the population undermines social cohesion. Disunity – as well as incompetence and violence – was the main danger against which Plato believed that society needed protecting (Lee, 1987: 28-30).

However, these assumptions are in tension with modern conceptions of democratic practice. Next, I anticipate two areas of potential difficulty for the conception of good leadership Plato advocates in the light of this tension.

I

As Plato's conception of democracy is classical, values which he presupposes to be democratic are different from those which underpin democracy in its modern form. Characteristic to the contemporary democratic ideal is government "of the people, by the people and for the people" (Wolff, 1996: 68). It assumes two key principles, political liberty and political equality. I explore these themes in greater depth and consider their implications for good governance in Chapter Nine.

Plato's ideal society does not presume the value of political equality. On the contrary, his argument rests on the possibility that the good may be known based on the unusual powers of perception that a few people have to access it in its absolute and

metaphysical ideal state, or "Form" (see above). Further, while some people accept the possibility that moral goodness might be known, for many others this suggestion is simply implausible. Some citizens – religious believers, perhaps – might find the notion of an objective, metaphysically constituted ideal of the Good plausible. However, to many others it is a strange idea, requiring them to objectify something that might usually be interpreted as an abstract concept.

Put more strongly still, Plato's account of knowledge as stemming from an innate perception of metaphysical reality – developed through a particular experience of education – is inadequate. Were this to be the case, how would anyone be in a position to confirm or deny a claim to have perceived the truth? We tend to insist that people have good grounds for their claims, including the evidence that their senses offer, and do not accept what they say based solely on claims that, unlike us, they were born with special powers that enable them to know the Good. I will have more to say on this in Chapter Six.

Not only is the nature of the good life contested in contemporary democratic society, and presented in a variety of forms, the foundation or authority to which conceptions of the good life appeal are similarly highly contested. Modern democratic rule assumes that such differences cannot be reconciled by the claims of one particular group (perhaps a religious group) to know what is right, based on a privileged access to the truth. Hence, a legal rational basis to authority (Chapter Two) proves attractive, offering a system by which people may deliberate over matters on which they disagree and reach some kind of agreement.

II

An attraction of Plato's argument, despite its overwhelming difficulties, is the emphasis it places on ethical understanding as an aspect of good leadership. I pointed out in the previous chapter (Chapter Two) that this point has been picked up and defended in the ELMA literature. For example, Christopher Hodgkinson's work (1978, 1983, 1991), and in particular his notion of the moral art of educational leadership, is rooted in an appreciation of Plato's position.

Plato's primary concern with the education and development of the moral character through education is at the root of his disagreement with the Sophists (see above). While Sophists employed a style of education intended to develop the proficiency of students in public affairs so that they might pursue personal ambition successfully, Plato emphasised the importance of intellect in the service of society. He argues that, reflecting their ability to perceive the Good, those few people born to rule will be reluctant to do so, and will accept the responsibility of leadership only as their destined duty to serve society.

However, the alternative account of moral education for the preparation of future rulers and leaders that Plato proposes also proves to be problematic; not least because he assumes that the Guardians' possession of *theoretical* knowledge of the form of the Good will be enough to ensure that they will act well. This is why their education as rulers is so focused on the acquisition of highly abstracted forms of reasoning. The greatest Form is of the Good, is not to be found in the world of experience; this is something that Aristotle criticises sharply in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle, 1953). How can learning about something like this help them to be good leaders?

Abstract theoretical knowledge has *a* place in the alternative view of learning for leadership influenced by the political and philosophical ideas of Aristotle that I will go on to propose in Chapter Seven, but not the pivotal one it enjoys in Plato. Surely something more practical is called for? It is not at all clear that Plato's assumption – those people who are best at moral philosophy are the most morally good people – is justified.

In promoting the notion of practical wisdom, Aristotle shared Plato's belief that education served a moral purpose without limiting the capacity to understand the nature of the good life to a very few people. Moreover, Aristotle argued that notions of the good life were dependent upon the particular circumstances in which experience was situated. He challenged the idea that Goodness can be absolute and unqualified (Annas, 1981: 245).

3.4 Conclusion

In the first part of this chapter, I highlighted the contribution of two kinds of philosophy, general philosophy and philosophy of education, to my argument. I have reviewed relevant literature of each kind – general and applied – in two sections. In one, I highlight the value of philosophy in at least three distinctive ways that critically analyse policies and practices expressed through the dominant discourse of school leadership. In the other, I highlight the use of philosophy to inform an account of representative democratic school leadership.

In the second half of the chapter, I have discussed criticisms of Plato's philosophy briefly, in order to open up a set of much larger questions - about education and school leadership - that will be explored in much greater depth in later chapters of this thesis. Already it should be clear that while Platonic notions of the moral character of educational leadership may be consistent with education for a liberal democratic society, his division of the world into three classes of people and his idea that a few people can know the good for others are anathema in a democratic society. Hence, such views are inappropriate foundations on which to build a system of schooling designated to educate future generations of citizens. Yet it is on these views that schools in England have developed, as the argument to be presented in the next chapter will demonstrate.

4 FROM ALL KINDS OF EVERYTHING TO THE LINCHPIN HEAD: ENGLISH SCHOOLS AND THEIR LEADERS

> Very often in human life somebody starts something. It catches on and becomes an established practice. No further more recondite type of explanation is necessary. ...... [T]he unusual degree of autonomy exercised by heads in Great Britain, together with the authoritarian way in which this autonomy is often exercised within the school, probably has a purely historical explanation of this sort. (Peters, 1976a: 1)

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review the general historical literature concerned with school leadership in England. I identify a consensus among earlier commentators that a view of leadership (see previous chapter, section 3.3) influenced by ideas from Plato's *Republic* came to exercise considerable influence in schools in England from the late nineteenth century (e.g. Baron, 1968, Bernbaum, 1973, Bernbaum, 1976, Grace, 1995, Gunter, et al., 1999). They suggest that a leadership ideal, "reliant on the charismatic power of an individual" (Baron, 1970) emerged based on the legendary example of Thomas Arnold.

However, as they also observe, few educational establishments in nineteenth century England were organised along similar lines to those attributed to Arnold at Rugby. Only a minority of public school headteachers enjoyed the same degree of autonomy, to the extent that they could single-handedly exercise considerable influence on the future direction of a specific school. Instead, most schools were led by their sponsors, rather than dedicated school teachers, whether an entrepreneur, trustee, local guildsmen or church leader. This balance of power shifted after 1870 when a state controlled education system developed.

I argue that the traditional view of school leadership that Arnold came to represent is not merely atypical but a construct. It is drawn from partial accounts of his life, provided by family members and former pupils who became influential figures in

educational reform in late Victorian England. Hence the claim that this form of leadership – focused on the power of the exceptional educational professional – would drive up standards in schools was based on evidence of dubious historical accuracy.

In the second half of the chapter I explain why I agree with an established claim in the ELMA research literature (e.g. Baron, 1968, Bernbaum, 1973, Bernbaum, 1976, Grace, 1995, Gunter, et al., 1999), that the linchpin tradition of headship, modelled on Arnold, persists. I demonstrate its resilience in the face of key changes to maintained schooling in England as it expanded and as social attitudes shifted. Linchpin leadership, I conclude, came to undermine other traditions of school leadership from the past that were both collective and also promoted leadership roles for 'lay' people in local communities.

4.2 School leadership in England 1800 - 1870: a brief review

Literature on the general history of how schools were led in England is extremely limited (see Chapter Two). Therefore the sketch which follows is brief, based on the small body of directly relevant published research (e.g. Baron, 1968, Bernbaum, 1973, Bernbaum, 1976, Grace, 1995, Gunter, et al., 1999). This is supplemented with evidence taken from general histories of education of this period (e.g. Simon, 1960, Aldrich, 1982, Roach, 1986, Sutherland, 1990).

Schooling expanded rapidly in the early to mid nineteenth century in England, in response to a sharp population increase and a growing conviction that children ought to be educated. Prior to 1870, outside the control of the state, schooling in England was under voluntary control and developed within three broad categories. There were schools for the working poor (children from very poor families did not attend school), the middle classes and the upper classes, divisions that reflect the influence of class on opportunities for education within English society (Simon, 1960, Aldrich, 1982, Roach, 1986).

4.2.1 Leadership in schools for the poor

Schools which provided basic education for children of the working poor were led by those people who funded them, often from within the churches. Sunday schools grew rapidly at the beginning of the nineteenth century, concerned to provide a form of basic education that included reading and writing, as well as religious nurture (Orchard, 2007). "Monitorial" schools were set up according to a strict (on its own terms, very successful) model with teachers employed to operate the system in local schools. Some schools followed the system prescribed by the Church of England's National Society, based on the "Madras" model developed by Andrew Bell (1753-1832). Others pursued the nonconformist version of the system, the "Royal British" or "Lancasterian System for the Education of the Poor" devised from 1808 onwards by Joseph Lancaster (1778-1838).

Parish schools offered a basic education for local children. A schoolmaster was appointed from the church rates and accountable for his actions to the local parish council. "Endowment schools" were another source of elementary education, funded from bequests by wealthy merchants, members of town guilds and noblemen who as a final act of charity sought to provide schooling for their local community in perpetuity. These schools were led by trustees, usually people of good standing in the community, including clergymen, magistrates and the aristocracy, who employed a single schoolmaster from the income generated by the endowment.

"Dame schools" were an early form of private elementary school established by enterprising women in their homes. The kind of education these schools provided varied considerably. In some cases dame schools offered day care facilities for minding children, while in others, women who were literate taught the basics of reading, writing, spelling and grammar.

More philanthropically minded industrialists and manufacturers set up factory schools, employing school teachers to provide basic classes in reading, writing and simple mathematics for working children. The Factory Act of 1833 sought to require all industrialists and manufacturers to take some responsibility for the education of

children who worked for them, stipulating they should be "schooled" for two hours each day between the ages of 9 and 13. Once again private individuals rather than the state, determined the content and structure of the school curriculum.

4.2.2 Leadership in schools for the middle classes

Schools which catered for the children of middle class families during this period tended to be one of two kinds. First, there were the well-established schools, including the older grammar schools, run as charitable foundations funded by the income from some kind of endowment (see above). Although most endowment schools were originally established to educate poor children in a local community (see above), increasingly places were offered to children from middle class families. Their trustees needed to attract fee-paying pupils in order to reconcile the income from the original endowment and the annual cost of running the school. This reduced significantly the supply of places available to poor local children but the trustees argued that it ensured the school remained financially viable.

The task of attracting new, fee-paying pupils commonly brought trustees into conflict with their employees, the schoolmasters. Endowment schools had been established assuming the value of a classical education, including Latin and sometimes Greek (Bamford, 1960). Schoolmasters favoured this traditional curriculum as their skills (thus their livelihoods) derived from it. Yet, from the eighteenth century onwards, the needs of an increasingly commercial society demanded a new kind of curriculum, including modern languages, arithmetic and English (Bernbaum, 1976, Aldrich, 1982, Roach, 1986). Increasingly trustees came under pressure to square this particular circle, often devising schemes which flouted the original terms of the endowment.

Second, there were private schools which developed as education became more fashionable. These were run by individual entrepreneurs who sought to cater flexibly for the various wishes and needs of middle class families. Most employed one schoolmaster and had no need of a *head* master. In some private schools, the owner undertook this role personally while others employed part time tutors to teach across

a range of subjects. In larger towns and cities there was often a good range of tutors. A few, particularly large schools attracted up to two hundred pupils (Roach, 1986) requiring more staff.

One advantage private schools enjoyed over the endowment school competitors was the freedom to respond innovatively to requests from potential, fee-paying parents. Hence small, private girls' schools made a significant contribution to the development of education for women from the mid nineteenth century onwards (Binfield, 1981: 3). A clear disadvantage of entirely unregulated private schools was the very variable quality of the education they provided.

Although the treatment of pupils in some private schools seems to have been humane (e.g. Binfield, 1981), elsewhere, those strategies schoolmasters adopted to maximise profit yields could result in appalling conditions. Charles Dickens, in *Hard Times* and *Nicholas Nickleby* and Charlotte Bronte in *Jane Eyre*, portray conditions in private schools that were unrelentingly harsh, even cruel. These schools might not have been long-lasting; this is one reason why it may be difficult to learn much of their leadership history. Nonetheless, while they were in operation they caused misery for children who attended them.

4.2.3 Leadership in schools for the upper classes

A small group of particularly prestigious schools developed, focused on the education of children from upper class families. Often these schools were initially established as endowment schools, which then expanded as transport improved opening up a market for elite schooling. The development of a network of road and rail made it practical to send children to board at schools beyond their immediate neighbourhood (Archer, 1921: 14).

These schools began to employ a headmaster, dedicated to raising money and sustaining the position of the school in the educational market place. Edward Thring, headmaster of Uppingham School for 34 years (1853-87), invested his own money and that of his friends and the staff in the school: "Anything for freedom from debt and slavery" (Parkin, 1898: 123), he recorded in his diary. They tended to appoint

headmasters who came from the upper echelons of society and were able to draw on their social connections to generate revenue from fee-paying pupils. In return for their success in raising finances, the trustees gave these headmasters a degree of freedom in decision-making that was quite unlike that of other schoolmasters.

While they introduced some new subjects, elite schools also retained the classical curriculum, marketing it – and the university degree to which it might lead – as something highly valuable. Adopting the notion of the Philosopher Ruler from Plato's *Republic* (see Chapter Three, Section Three) that was popular at this time among opinion-forming intellectuals (e.g. Coleridge, Mill and Arnold), public schools, as they came to be known, offered their pupils "education for leadership" (McCulloch, 1991). They defended the established and traditional curriculum as a necessary part of the preparation of the social elite, or "clerisy" (Coleridge, 1830), for their future moral duty as the guardians of culture and morality (McCulloch, 1991).

4.3 School reform and the Education Act of 1870

4.3.1 The Royal Commissions

As public concern about the quality of schooling grew, three Royal Commissions were appointed to investigate widespread claims of low standards of teaching, financial mismanagement and the physical mistreatment of children. The Newcastle Commission was established in 1858 to review elementary schools for poor children and published its recommendations in 1861. They argued for the introduction of a system of government grants to support elementary education paid according to results, which were to be measured according to average pupil attendance and examination performance.

The Clarendon Commission was constituted in 1861 to review the state of nine designated top public schools (Archer, 1921: 13). It reported in 1864, making particular reference to the outstanding quality of education offered by Rugby School, which they attributed to the leadership of its headmaster Thomas Arnold. These findings focused on four key issues: financial probity, the welfare and treatment of children, the state of the curriculum and the quality of teaching. The Commissioners

noted that boys at Rugby experienced particularly humane conditions, their health was good, as well as the system of discipline, and there was a marked lack of problems resulting from poor behaviour.

The Taunton Commission, appointed in 1864, reviewed schools which had not been considered by either of the previous two Commissions. These included around 800 endowed schools in England as well as private schools (Gordon and Lawton, 2003). It found the quality of education that they provided was variable as well as identifying significant financial problems, including widespread inefficiency and the misappropriation of funds with endowments insufficient to sustain the salary of schoolmasters.

The Commission proposed a national system of education, created from the restructuring of endowments, with three grades of school corresponding to the social divisions in society (Gordon and Lawton, 2003). The first grade should prepare boys for university (the Taunton Commission made no mention of girls' education) through a curriculum of classics, modern languages, mathematics and natural sciences up to a leaving age of 18. The second grade should prepare boys for the professions, business and the army through a curriculum which included Latin but was otherwise devoted to "modern subjects" with schooling finishing at the age of around 16. The third grade should concentrate on the basics of very good reading, writing and arithmetic as well as some practical subjects, for the large number of boys who were the sons of small tenant farmers, tradesmen and superior artisans up to a leaving age of 14.

In return for the greater financial stability provided by the state subsidy, trustees in schools would be expected to relinquish a good degree of the control they had previously enjoyed. An independent Examinations Council was proposed, combined with a more robust system of inspection across the three grades of school. A central government authority should be introduced with responsibility for secondary education across the country.

4.3.2 A system of control by the state

In 1870, the Education Act introduced universal provision of elementary education for children aged 5 and 13. A Board of Education was established to oversee and regulate state education in schools although a later court judgement (in 1900) clarified that School Boards had no jurisdiction over secondary schools. A restructured School Inspectorate was given new powers and a more systematic approach was introduced to train new teachers (Copley, 2002).

While the power of trustees was reduced significantly by the Endowments Act of 1869, the conditions of pay and service for those headteachers (still mostly men) in the majority of schools that served children from poor and lower middle class backgrounds improved. This group benefited from a new level of independence, receiving a small basic salary, with the opportunity of an additional income from any fee-paying pupils who they could attract (Baron, 1970: 186) to the school.

In contrast, attempts by the state to control education in the more prestigious schools were resisted strongly by their headteachers who, because they already enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy, had decision-making powers to lose from state control of endowments. Galvanised into collective action by their opposition to reform (Baron, 1970: 188), the Headmasters Conference (HMC) was established in December 1869 by Edward Thring at Uppingham School. By 1870, 34 schools were represented on the HMC, 50 in 1871 and over 100 by 1902 (Aldrich, 1982: 108). The foundation of the Headmasters Association in 1890 brought together headmasters of country grammar schools and newly founded municipal secondary schools with headteachers from the expanding public school system.

Further reforms were introduced after 1870 including: the establishment of a Board of Education by the 1899 Education Act; and the introduction of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to be directly responsible for school provision in their area by the Education Act of 1902 (Baron, 1970). Once again, headmasters in prominent and successful schools opposed these reforms vociferously.

Articulating his opposition in the strongest terms at a meeting of the Midland Association of Endowed Schools in 1906, the Reverend George Cooper declaimed:

> The ghosts of Arnold and Thring rise up before us and ask in unmistakable terms whether inspection would have appealed to them. Could they have brooked interference with their ideals as they were working them out? And would such interference have proved beneficial? The answer comes straight to the heart of each of us - they would not .... They were born to rule, and their innate power exerted itself for the good of the nation in accordance with the will of God .... (Bernbaum, 1976: 18).

These remarks are significant, indicating that by 1906 the view of natural, aristocratic leadership which the English public schools had promoted was now being invoked to defend not only the autonomous power that a very few public school headteachers had previously enjoyed, but as a general entitlement that extended to endowed school headteachers.

However, the notion that inspired individual leaders of the calibre of Arnold were capable of discerning "the will of God" for the good of the nation appears to fly in the face of historical fact. Helen Gunter (Gunter, et al., 1999: xii) has argued that the recommendations of the Clarendon Commission, with their emphasis on Arnold's individual brilliance as a social reformer, established the conditions in which the pivotal role of the headmaster could emerge. Yet, as I go on to show next, biographical evidence reveals that the findings of the Clarendon Commission, at least with respect to Arnold, are inaccurate.

4.4 The archetypical linchpin school leader: Thomas Arnold

From the considerable volume of material available, I will limit myself strictly for the purposes of this chapter to key authoritative biographies of Arnold (e.g. Bamford, 1960, Honey, 1977) and three significant pieces of scholarship (McCrum, 1989, McCulloch, 1991, Copley, 2002) conducted by historians of education since the role of the head was last reviewed by philosophers (see Chapter Three, Section 3.2). These

later analysts, while remaining critical of Arnold, nonetheless acknowledge aspects to his work that made him distinctive in his time.

Arnold's early career as a school teacher began – like many other early nineteenth century Anglican clergyman keen to supplement his income – in a private school, based in his vicarage at Laleham in Berkshire (Copley, 2002). With his brother-in-law John Buckland, Arnold educated local children at a small charge to their parents, offering boarding places to extend the pool of potential pupils to those who lived further away. This helped to realise the value of the family home as a commercial asset.

From this start, Arnold was appointed headteacher of Rugby School in 1828 and remained there until his sudden death in 1842. Archer (1921) believed that Arnold's brilliant leadership over that time reformed the school; later authors (e.g. Bamford, 1960, Honey, 1977, Roach, 1986) are more circumspect. There is little doubt that he was an accomplished academic, both passionate and knowledgeable about those classical subjects that dominated the nineteenth century public school curriculum. He was one of two nineteenth century public school headmasters to reintroduce Greek to the curriculum and his choice of Plato for sixth form studies was unique to Rugby (Rogers, 2009: 181).

At the same time, Arnold was not necessarily a remarkable teacher; former pupils seem divided in their opinion of him. Some revelled in his moral seriousness, while others found his style "overbearing" (Bamford, 1960: 181). Sympathetic to Arnold, Copley (2005) reminds us that in the context of a historical review he should be judged according to the standards of his time. Headmasters in larger schools like Rugby could afford to delegate teaching to assistant masters: the fact that Arnold chose to teach at all set him apart from contemporaries.

Those who knew Arnold personally often liked him very much. He had much to discuss with those boys and masters who shared his intellectual interests. He seems to have discussed his views freely with pupils and believed that the sharing of developing ideas lay at the heart of what made a good teacher. "If the mind once

becomes stagnant" he once remarked, "it can give no fresh draught to another mind; it is drinking out of a pond instead of from a stream" (Arnold, 1839 cited in Bamford, 1960: 177).

Arnold appears to have been very well-respected by members of staff at Rugby and staff turnover during his headship was extremely low, with very few seeking promotion elsewhere. When appointed to a headship elsewhere for example, assistant master James Prince Lee thanked Arnold for:

> your invariable kindness, courtesy and liberality, for the information and advice I have gained from you, and the advancement and support you extended to me in the school. (cited in Roach, 1986: 249)

Arnold tried hard to improve the pay and working conditions of his staff (Roach, 1986: 248), putting the boarding houses in their hands, thus ensuring them good salaries, and he was financially astute as an administrator (Bamford, 1960). His career established teaching as a fashionable profession; and headship as a role suited to ambitious men seeking social advancement.

Arnold's view that headship contributes to moral education in schools distinguishes him most from his contemporaries. As a key proponent of the notion of "education for leadership" (see above), he placed considerable emphasis on the need to instil character of a particular kind in his pupils, one that was public spirited and self-restrained (Bantock, 1984, McCulloch, 1991). Leaving aside difficulties with the elitist assumptions which informed his beliefs, Arnold showed an unusually clear sense of the value of learning from experience, and insisted that pupils needed to develop their leadership ability through practice.

He developed the system of prefects, or *praeposters*, to enable those boys who he considered to have a natural aptitude for leadership to develop their sense of responsibility for others. Selected from the body of older pupils, Arnold expected them to maintain discipline, promote uniformity, foster moral and spiritual esprit de corps (McCulloch, 1991). It is interesting to note that from the group of boys who experienced Arnold's headship at Rugby directly as pupils, twice as many were

promoted to the headship of public schools than their contemporaries from any other institution (Bamford, 1967).

4.4.1 Dispelling the myth of Arnold

The positive assessment of Arnold's qualities offered so far must be balanced by his shortcomings, including evidence that he continued the practice of flogging. This was a key concern of the Clarendon Commission, who commended Arnold's "humane example". However Arnold never abandoned the practice entirely. He was clearly uncomfortable with it and may have fostered a more humane ethos at Rugby than was common in public schools of the period and certainly never regarded it as the badge of honour assumed by other headmasters (Bernbaum, 1976). However in one extreme case this did not prevent him from beating a boy – who, it later transpired, was innocent – so soundly that he was bed-ridden (Bamford, 1960).

Certain improvements to the physical conditions experienced by boys at Rugby that the Clarendon Commission attributed to Arnold did not in practice emanate from him. For example, the health of boys improved when new public water and sanitation systems were introduced (Bamford, 1960). This was a social reform that came some time after Arnold's death and for which he can take no direct credit.

Moreover, while Arnold was financially astute (Bamford, 1960), contrary to the Commission's findings he was no model of financial probity. In 1839, Arnold (with the trustees of Rugby School) was found guilty in a court case brought by a local solicitor of breaking the terms of the endowment on which the school had been established. The court found that local boys had been discriminated against in their application to the school, in favour of fee-paying boarders, because they lacked the necessary ability in Latin; when the original charitable intention on which the school had been founded had been precisely to provide them with a basic classical education of this nature. Worse, Arnold showed no remorse in the light of this guilty verdict, reacting as though he regarded himself above the law, suggests Bamford (1960). Incidents like this, casting Arnold in a less than favourable light, are omitted entirely from the widely circulated biography by Dean Stanley (1890).

Two biographers (Bamford, 1960, Honey, 1977) find no compelling evidence that Arnold left Rugby School in a better state than under his predecessor, a little known headmaster called Dr Wooll. Bamford (1960) and McCrum (1989) agree that the account of Arnold in Stanley's *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold* (1890) is "overstated". Even Copley, a great admirer of Arnold, concedes that by the standards of his time his leadership was not outstanding (Copley, 2002, Copley, 2005). While Lytton Strachey's attack on Arnold in his volume *Eminent Victorians* (Strachey, 1918) seems unduly harsh, the uncritical reputation as a headteacher that Arnold enjoyed after his death should be challenged.

4.4.2 Why did Arnold become so influential?

That Thomas Arnold (1795-1842) should come to epitomise good headship, so that a whole "culture of headship" in English schooling could develop from his influence (Grace, 1995: 11), might have puzzled his immediate contemporaries. Arnold's significance as an educationalist was far from assured in his short lifetime. However, it should be noted that he was regarded as a remarkable man, even by those who disapproved of him.

His obituary in the *Northampton Herald* of 18th June 1842, a paper that attacked him repeatedly while he was alive, offers a balanced assessment of his achievements, while saying little to suggest he was an exceptional school leader. His exemplary private life is emphasised, with his remarkable ability to sustain scholarship at the highest level while concurrently a headmaster (Arnold was appointed the Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford in the year before he died). The paper acknowledged the number of Rugby pupils during Arnold's time at the school going on to make prominent contributions to public life.

The paper remains critical about Arnold's strongly held opinions – seen as dangerously "radical" by a Tory leaning publication like the *Herald* – and the manner in which he chose to make them public while he was a headmaster (Bamford, 1960). Arnold published pamphlets, newspaper articles and letters during his time at Rugby on a range of contentious social, political and religious issues. These included

the relationship between the Church and the State, social and welfare reform, as well as the Irish question.

Bamford (1960) suggests that the energy and commitment Arnold invested in a variety of other activities outside his school work may have contributed to the considerable shortcomings he demonstrated as a headmaster (see above). While Rugby school claimed his duty:

> his real efforts were poured into his classical works, his history, his religious, social and political writings. Throughout his Headmastership, the world outside held his true interest and emotions (Bamford, 1960: 148).

The popular attention that Arnold commanded, having been a well known social commentator and public intellectual during his short life, may offer one reason for his enduring influence. His publications, including newspaper articles as well as more scholarly works, lived on after his death, arousing curiosity and perhaps respect in some readers. He was fixed further in the popular imagination by Thomas Hughes' (1857) classic novel *Tom Brown's School Days*.

The influential role of members of Arnold's own family in educational reform after Arnold's death should also be noted. His son, Matthew, was an influential school inspector; it is very likely that first hand accounts he was able to give of his father's leadership of Rugby School would have influenced his colleagues. Arnold's eldest daughter, Jane, married the Bradford MP William Foster, an architect of the 1870 Education Act.

Likewise, Arnold's former pupils and their families were often advantageously positioned, powerful and/or influential people in late Victorian society. The number of former Rugby School pupils who themselves went on to teach and lead in the public school system has already been mentioned (see above).Those who took degrees at Oxford and Cambridge talked about Arnold in the reverential and rather idealised tones of someone who has died suddenly in office (Bamford, 1960). Arthur Stanley's *Life and Correspondence of Dr Arnold* (Stanley, 1890) captures the heightened impression Arnold left on his most loyal pupils and was reprinted several times after

its initial publication. By 1901, Sir Joshua Fitch, inspector of schools and an early teacher trainer, had produced a *Teacher's Edition* of Dean Stanley's "Life" of Arnold that was presented by the Board of Education to each trainee teacher in the country (Copley, 2002).

More broadly, Arnold's growing reputation, as an exceptional school leader and educator, resonated with a popular sense in late nineteenth century England that inspirational individual leaders had the power to bring about change (Bamford, 1960). Stories of Arnold's life were told and received into a society that was deeply troubled by the welfare of children and their entitlement to education and who wanted something done. Many believed that social reform would be most likely to happen through the single-handed efforts of charismatic leaders (Grace, 1995).

Given the frustratingly slow progress of attempts to change deep-seated social problems through collective and bureaucratic efforts, this is perhaps understandable. There had been widespread agreement since the 1840s that the lives of the very poorest children in society needed to change and that the conditions in which they were expected to live and work from a very early age were deplorable. Yet consensus about how to address this problem as a society had proved elusive and decades were to pass before elementary schooling could be introduced for all.

In contrast, a view of social reform dependent on inspired individuals offered a means of by-passing the wrangling. A headteacher like Arnold might be portrayed, Gerald Grace argues, as a man of "mystique":

> constituted by personal charisma, moral, and frequently religious, authority, impressive scholarship, the capacity to 'master' all other members of the school, indefatigable energy and a sense of mission or vocation in the role.
> (Grace, 1995: 10)

Arnold had instilled in those whom he taught, and who had gone on themselves to powerful positions in society, that they were members of a natural aristocracy who, enlightened by classical learning, had a moral duty of public service for the future

benefit of society. Clear links can be drawn between this idea and arguments that might give it intellectual authority found in the *Republic* (see Chapter Three).

This view of the ideal leader as Philosopher Ruler seems to have been reflected in the stories they told of Arnold in return. Hence, writing in 1921, Archer (1921: 2) commended the contribution of the "creative genius of individuals" of men like Arnold to social reform, suggesting that a correlation existed between periods of popularity (thus prosperity) enjoyed by schools and long, interrupted periods of headship by distinguished individuals. As Richard Peters (1976a: 1) observed "In human life somebody starts something, it catches on and becomes an established practice and no further, more recondite type of explanation is necessary".

4.5 The ongoing influence of linchpin leadership

The literature on the general history of school leadership (e.g. Baron, 1968, Bernbaum, 1973, Bernbaum, 1976, Grace, 1995, Gunter, et al., 1999) suggests that the linchpin tradition of headship, modelled on Arnold, persists in schools in England today. As I argue below, it has proved remarkably resilient, despite the expansion of schooling, changing attitudes to young people and political changes.

For example, the Education Act of 1944 reflected a growing commitment to equality of opportunity in education and by the middle of the twentieth century new powers had been transferred to LEAs at the expense of headteachers in state schools. This could have represented a decisive break with the linchpin head model but these measures were neither entirely successful nor politically popular. Thus, when major changes were introduced in the 1980s, those changes introduced in 1944 were largely reversed; strategic decision making powers were taken away again from local education authorities to be re-distributed between national government and individual schools, reasserting the pivotal place of the linchpin headteacher. I will pursue this point further when I go on to review the National Standards for Headteachers in England (TTA, 1997, DfEE, 2000, DfES, 2004) in the next chapter.

In the rest of this chapter, I briefly outline four areas of change in English schooling during the twentieth century. I show how, in each case, attempts to move away from

the linchpin model of leadership were largely reversed. The areas of change I identify are:

1. The growth of teaching as a profession

2. Changing attitudes towards children

3. Changing attitudes towards social equality

4. Changes to school governance and management

4.5.1 Key changes to affect leadership in twentieth century English schools

4.5.1.1 The growth of teaching as a profession

Through the first half of the twentieth century, teaching continued to grow in status as a profession. One reason for this was that the demand for day education continued to grow fast, particularly in the secondary phase. A figure of 188,000 recorded attendees in 1913, rose to 363,000 in 1921 and 482,000 by 1936 (Aldrich, 1982: 116). Children began to stay on for longer at school as their rights improved, enabling publicly funded schools to operate on a sounder financial footing. For example, the Fisher Act of 1918 raised the school leaving age to 14 and prohibited the employment of children under the age of 12 (Aldrich, 1982: 86). Schools also began to get bigger as demand grew and with this, particularly at secondary level, their organisational structures became more complex.

"Middle" leadership roles grew up, particularly for specialist teachers of curriculum subjects in secondary schools (Bernbaum, 1976). Teachers with specialist knowledge of their respective curriculum subjects were delegated responsibilities that drew on their particular expertise, creating the role of the head of department (Bernbaum, 1976: 21). This corresponded with the growing importance of public examinations. Headteachers were left to focus on administration, making it more difficult – if not impossible – for headteachers to dominate other teachers (Bernbaum, 1973).

The nature of the teaching force changed too, as good honours graduates were attracted in large numbers by improvements to working conditions and pay. More confident and motivated than their predecessors, these teachers took over

responsibility for classroom matters, including pedagogy and pupil behaviour, leaving headteachers to focus on administration. As a result, the distinctions between the academic and professional backgrounds of teachers and headteachers were blurred. Moreover, a change in social attitudes (see below) caused power relations in schools to shift, particularly in secondary schools. Likewise, the unquestioning authority traditionally enjoyed by headteachers also changed, as they became less attracted to the confident exercise of power traditionally associated with them (Baron, 1970: 191).

After World War II, teachers experienced improvements to their pay and working conditions as a result of the work of the Burnham Committee (1945-47). The national salary settlement, superannuation and, ultimately, security of tenure that were negotiated and agreed greatly improved their status (Greenhalgh, 1968). In state schools members of staff became increasingly independent of headteachers' patronage as a result. This had a knock-on effect in privately run schools because they needed to be able to compete with state sector pay and conditions to attract the very best graduates (Baron, 1970).

Reinforced by measures to expand higher education in England and Wales, the Robbins Report (1963) insisted for the first time that teaching should be a graduate profession. This ensured closer links between classroom teachers and universities, strengthened by pioneering collaborative educational research projects during the 1960s and 70s, most notably the Schools' Council/ Nuffield Foundation Humanities Project, directed by Lawrence Stenhouse. Stenhouse sought to promote the active involvement of teachers in educational research and curriculum development (Pring, 2003). This had implications for the role of the headteacher; for if teachers were to coordinate the implementation of the curriculum successfully, they would need some say in determining how available resources should be organised and responsibilities distributed as well (Fielding, 2008).

This kind of experimental practice complemented calls by theorists for a radical review of the headteacher's role from the 1960s; "part and parcel", Richard Peters (1976a) suggested, "of the widespread demand for more participation in decision-

making in the community as a whole" (Peters, 1976b: 1). This raised questions that challenged the linchpin model of headship. Would it not be better to have a collegial system of responsibility introduced in schools, co-ordinated by the headteacher? (Gray, 1973) Did schools really need headteachers (Hargreaves, 1974)?

By the 1970s, some variety in the leadership arrangements of maintained schools in England was evident (Bridges, 1980). Nonetheless, autocratic leadership often continued to be practised (by so-called "progressive" as well as more traditional headteachers), while on other models of leadership, decision-making powers were devolved to varying degrees. This included some examples of democratic school leadership, although these were few and far between and regarded as experimental. In a review of these leadership practices, Bridges noted that the (democratic) approach had the potential to take up more time than a conventional one, but argued that it was a matter of opinion as to whether or not such time was wasted:

> "Before we dismiss democracy as 'time wasting' we should really try to see that it is our own method of operating the democratic procedures rather than the procedures themselves which are wasteful and inefficient" (Bridges, 1980: 71)

Despite such evidence of some changes to the decision-making powers of headteachers in favour of other teaching staff by the end of the century, particularly in secondary schools, I share the pessimism of earlier commentators. Writing both during and after the period in the 1960s and 70s when "progressive" practice in education was most influential (e.g. Baron, 1968, Bernbaum, 1973, Bernbaum, 1976, Grace, 1995, Gunter, et al., 1999), they found that the linchpin tradition of headship, modelled on Arnold, has persisted in schools. Despite the best efforts of reformers to dispense with it, commentators (e.g. McCulloch, 1991, Carr and Hartnett, 1996, 2000) have pointed more generally to the strength and endurance of elitist assumptions in English education through the twentieth century.

"Progressive" leadership practice remained very unusual, particularly in primary schools. Gathering his evidence during the 1970s, Coulson (1976) argued that changes in power relations that were evident in secondary schooling were less marked in primary schools, where the power of headteachers continued relatively

unabated. They were smaller, Coulson concluded, with their organisational composition more straightforward. Without the same emphasis on separate subjects on the curriculum, there was less scope for devolving teaching responsibilities.

In an article entitled "Is the head obsolete?" published on 29th September 1972 in the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES), Ann Chisholm (1972) reported that despite widespread concern to reform school headship in principle, at the level of practice there was little sign of change in schools in general. She pointed to various factors, including the size of secondary schools and the complex expectations held of them. From an empirical study of headteachers' attitudes, Bernbaum (1973) found that they continued to seek total overall control of their schools' affairs.

4.5.1.2 Changing attitudes towards children

Attitudes also changed where awareness of the developmental needs of children grew, and the importance of establishing a curriculum and school ethos which reflected those needs, rather than one which was determined by the demands of particular academic subjects and their exponents. In 1911, Edmund Holmes, formerly a Chief Inspector of the board of education, published *What is and What Might be?* He called for a radical review of elementary education and his book went through four impressions in only seven months. The second part, called *The Path of Self-Realisation*, contained ideas for an ideal school inspired by Harriet Finlay Johnson's school at Sompting in West Sussex (Aldrich, 1982).

Public schools had attracted a critical response from a very early stage (Gordon and White, 1979, McCulloch, 1991, Carr and Hartnett, 1996); and what came to be known as the "New Schools Movement" (NSM) sought to provide a practical alternative. Abbotsholme School in Staffordshire was founded by Cecil Reddie in 1889 with its offshoot institution Bedales, founded in 1893 (Skidelsky, 1969). A second wave of NSM schools sprang up after the First World War, including Dartington Hall (1925) and Summerhill; the latter, founded by A.S. Neill in 1921 (Skidelsky, 1969) become almost synonymous with the notion of democratic school governance in England.

NSM schools were established typically by former pupils of public schools who viewed their own education very negatively. They held rather different beliefs and assumptions about the nature and purpose of learning, based on a concern for the developmental needs of individual children – rather than which subjects on the curriculum benefited children in general – arguing that schools should foster children's inclinations if they were to foster personal growth (Skidelsky, 1969).

As a result, attitudes towards children who were disinclined to classroom work were markedly different in the NSM. Poor behaviour was interpreted in terms of lack of motivation, including boredom; the struggle to engage with academic work rejected as a necessary evil in the process of character-building, or an inevitable stage on the path to learning. Teachers were encouraged to take time to draw difficulties out with children (Skidelsky, 1969) on the understanding that this would generate an internal desire for education.

The alternative curriculum they received was designed to develop a sense of natural curiosity about the world and focussed on "relevant" subjects, including science and modern foreign languages. Instead of competitive sports, a strong emphasis was placed on the role of play in education, including outdoor activity that would appeal to the "average" child and foster collaboration.

The NSM were very critical of the much vaunted prefect system of the public schools. Considerable emphasis was placed on direct participation in decision making by many pupils rather than a few unusually morally insightful ones. From an early age they were given tasks and responsibilities to undertake, paving the way for a more democratic and egalitarian form of school governance (Skidelsky, 1969: 54-57). For example, the emphasis on equality in principle placed at Summerhill meant no rewards or sanctions; equal power relations between teachers and pupils; and the principle of voluntarism the school espoused set an early precedent for education for democracy through the establishment of a school parliament.

The example that had been set by the NSM within the independent sector attracted the interest of educationalists concerned to introduce more "progressive" practice

into the mainstream provision of state maintained schools. Social attitudes towards children did shift during the mid twentieth century (Aldrich, 1982) and young people were included more actively in decisions about their future lives as the idea spread that they had needs and desires as people in their own right that adults ought to accommodate. Increasingly opportunities opened up for them to develop confidence and autonomy. Innovative practice spread through informal educative activities and youth clubs, including Scouts (1907 onwards), Guides (1910) and the YHA (1935) (Aldrich, 1982), giving rise to the idea that they should be involved in making decisions.

During the 1960s and 70s – while they remained relatively autonomous of national government control – a few schools sought to pioneer more progressive practices into the mainstream of schooling in England, including models which involved children and young people. The rationale for these arrangements was rooted in a particular view of learning (Fielding, 2008): the more students take responsibility for studying, it was believed, the more they need a voice to determine the conditions of study.

The Schools' Council/ Nuffield Foundation Humanities Project overseen by Lawrence Stenhouse (see above) proved a particularly influential example of the concern to empower children as learners. The development of a new approach to class work for secondary school pupils divided opinion. It was embraced enthusiastically by some and heavily criticised by others. Similarly, the Plowden Report (1967) attracted controversy in seeking to introduce more "progressive" educational practice at primary level.

A few schools in the maintained sector attempted to include children and young people in active decision-making, particularly among the new comprehensive schools. These included: Countesthorpe College in Leicestershire, Sutton Centre in Nottinghamshire, Abraham Moss in Manchester and Stantonbury Campus in Milton Keynes. Teachers at these particular institutions were also committed to promoting a more student-centred classroom pedagogy (see Chapter Eleven) but it is the work undertaken to develop a democratic form of school life which interests me here.

For example, at Countesthorpe School in Leicestershire, a system of "participatory government" was introduced when it opened in 1970 (Watts, 1977). Although influenced by the example of Summerhill, it was recognised that a relatively large school community (approximately 1,400 students) would inevitably involve more complex management arrangements. Nonetheless, in a radical departure from convention, a new kind of "chain of authority" was established at Countesthorpe to replace the traditional leadership and management structure of a headteacher and deputies. The chain of authority took a flexible approach to overseeing the day-to day running of the school adopting a flatter organisational structure comprising various executive roles. These could be held interchangeably by any school staff, including the headteacher.

A body called "the Moot" was set up to establish the ruling consensus of opinion in the school; this general meeting was open to all, including staff and students meeting as necessary, usually once every six weeks. The Moot determined its own constitution, procedures and chairing arrangements (Watts, 1977). Major policy decisions affecting the strategic decision of the school, including for example its curriculum, the policy for behaviour and discipline, were made by the staff of Countesthorpe, while students were given opportunities to contribute to this consensus, as well as parents and governors. Other, more detailed decision-making was delegated to dedicated groups.

The Moot set up various committees, including the Standing Committee which met every fortnight and was responsible for decision-making not involving changes in policy. Staff representation on the Moot was determined by rota, with all staff on the Standing Committee during the course of an academic year. Membership was open to students and two from each "team" (the mini-schools that emerged as the key communities of learning in the College) could be registered as having voting rights, with anyone being entitled to attend meetings.

All attending had one vote each and anyone in the school was entitled to call a Moot although, in practice, student participation in the Moot and Standing Committee was minimal and often confined to a small number of sixth form students (Fielding,

2008). Moreover, for many teachers, the informal structures and very significant way in which students were involved on a day-to-day basis about their learning was what really mattered. Building on the lessons to be learned from the Countesthorpe experience, adaptations were introduced when Stantonbury Campus in Milton Keynes was established. Key issues that had been identified in the minimal student involvement in the participatory structures included: the lack of appropriate information; somewhat confusing and mystifying formal procedures; dominant and complex language and behaviour by some staff; and the tendency for the decision-making process to be protracted or ineffective.

At Stantonbury Campus a more limited, exploratory model of involving students was developed through the invention of "Hall Meetings". Five Halls or mini-schools of about 550 students and 30 staff were established on Stantonbury Campus in the mid 1980s, each with a school council. In Portway Hall, for which Fielding was responsible, each Student Council form representative was paired up with a member of staff, usually their tutor, whose responsibility it was to meet beforehand, elicit issues the student felt important or which she wished to raise at the meeting, explain agenda items, and make her aware of some of the pertinent background issues. During the meeting paired student and staff would sit together and after the meeting they would again meet to talk things through.

Efforts of this more progressive kind continued to develop within informal educational settings, where opportunities to include young people in decision making were relatively widespread; but they remained limited within formal educational settings outside the New School Movement. These schools, while influential at the level of ideas, were atypical. Overwhelmingly, they were located in the independent sector, with very few schools in the state sector willing or able to replicate their "progressive" practices. One reason was that parental attitudes were different; parents who chose to send their children to NSMs tended to do so having attended a public school themselves, in a negative reaction against that experience (Skidelsky, 1969: 18). The element of choice, underlined by a willingness to pay additional fees for this alternative experience, is surely significant.

Other aspects of the NSM schools were atypical too. They tended to be boarding schools and therefore dislocated from local communities. They were small-scale, relative to large and modern secondary comprehensives, and concerned to offer schooling for younger pupils too; for example, Summerhill takes pupils to the age of fifteen, a very different proposition indeed to a much larger institution with pupils as old as eighteen. These factors may support the establishment of a strong school community.

Even those examples highlighted within mainstream educational practice were limited in number. They are important because they exemplify what is possible in large, maintained secondary community schools in England (see Chapter Ten) but they do not reflect widespread practice (nor indeed, necessarily, popular opinion) in contemporary schooling. The problem was, at least in part, a circular one. Without exposure through experience to the benefits of more progressive educational practice, including active participation in decision-making, why would many people seek to introduce this unfamiliar practice to other schools? It could only be at the level of an abstract idea (easily dismissed as being "impractical") that its value might be appreciated. Unfamiliar, regarded with a good deal of suspicion, democratic school management did not take hold across a sufficiently large number of schools to establish the practice indelibly.

4.5.1.3 Changing attitudes towards social equality

It has been suggested (see above) that as the acceptability of authoritarian attitudes in society started to be questioned, headteachers in general became less attracted to the confident exercise of power traditionally associated with them. Some authors (e.g. Baron, 1970, Bernbaum, 1973), have suggested that more egalitarian attitudes emerged during the twentieth century as a result of the two world wars which brought people together across class divisions to fight a common enemy. It is argued that those from the upper classes in particular reassessed the feelings of natural superiority over working and middle class people that their education and upbringing had encouraged.

Influential figures on the left of British politics, for example R.H. Tawney in *A Secondary Education for All* (1922), argued that a more democratic society could not be achieved while public education in England remained rooted in elitist principles. The Hadow Committee (of which Tawney was a member) published recommendations for radical reform of primary education in 1931. Public opinion evolved so that schooling came to be regarded as an equal entitlement for all children and young people at both primary and secondary level (Sockett, 1980: 5). These ideas went on to inform the Education Act of 1944 (Carr and Hartnett, 1996: 101) which acted on many of the Hadow Committee's recommendations. For the first time schooling was divided into three distinct phases, with the common primary stage for pupils aged 5 - 11 intended as preparation for all to enter secondary phase education.

As well as expanding schooling at the secondary phase, campaigners argued for a more equitable system. The popularity of public schools in England reached an all time low in the period immediately after the Second World War (McCulloch, 1991). Support for a new system of comprehensive secondary schooling to replace the existing selective system gathered momentum. Anthony Crosland was an architect of British Labour party policy on this theme. In *The Future of Socialism*, published in 1956, Crosland publicised concerns about the validity of intelligence testing (on which selection at 11+ relied) raised by educational psychologists.

Furthermore, he highlighted sociological studies that suggested the selective system was enmeshed in social factors, and did less to promote equality of opportunity than had previously been suspected (Carr and Hartnett, 1996: 104). As Minister for Education in the 1964 Labour Government, Crosland proposed that all publicly funded secondary schools should become comprehensive in Circular 10/65 and the school leaving age rose steadily through this period. In similar vein, the Robbins Report (1963) found an untapped pool of potential graduates unable to access Higher Education and recommended the immediate expansion of universities, with all Colleges of Advanced Technology given university status. The number of full-time university students rose from 197,000 in 1967-68 to 217,000 by 1973-74 (Sockett, 1980).

Although changing attitudes were evident in these reforms at the level of policy, it is not clear the extent to which they reflected a deep-rooted or long-lasting shift in public opinion. For example, while a general entitlement to secondary education was widely accepted, opinion divided over what form schooling at this level should take. Some people accepted the argument that the subject-based curriculum did not suit the majority of children and ought to be replaced; also that established (didactic) teaching methods were not always successful and that alternative methods based on collaboration and group work were also needed. Many others remained sceptical.

Hence, for example, the popularity and influence of political pamphlets expressing conservative opinion; these included *Education: quality and equality* by Angus Maude, published in 1968; and in particular, the *Black Papers*, so-called because of the contrast the contributors – who included Kingsley Amis, Geoffrey Bantock, Iris Murdoch and Rhodes Boyson – sought to strike with 'White Papers' published by the government whose views they were opposing. With stark titles, like *Fight for Education*, published in 1969 by editors Charles Cox and A.E. Dyson, these impassioned attacks of comprehensive schools and "progressive" education were widely read and popular.

It has been suggested (Hill, 1997) that the kind of view they represented was given "pretty much uncontested space in the right-wing broadsheet, middle-brow and tabloid press". For example, Hill cites the example of Culloden Primary School in Tower Hamlets. This was pilloried by the *Daily Mail* and the *Mail on Sunday*, as an example of a progressive and egalitarian school failing its children; while its policies and practice were widely praised in television series in 1991 entitled "Culloden - a year in the life of a Primary School" (cited in Hill, 1997). However, ordinary readers tended not to make these connections; it seems plausible that some readers accepted the newspaper version of events at face value and were misled, as Hill implies.

If such reports were read and accepted on face value this suggests that they captured sincerely-held beliefs about what a good school entailed and how the next generation ought to be educated. Social attitudes ebb and flow and conservative political views became increasingly popular. So, while there were educationalists and social reformers, as well as a minority of citizens, who were keen to introduce even greater

social equality in schools by political means – a move which would have undermined the traditional practice of leadership in schools – a majority of the electorate at the end of the 1970s thought otherwise. Thus, the headteachers' role stayed as it was and was entrenched by the changes that followed.

4.5.1.4 Changes to school governance and management

Finally, those mechanisms through which maintained schools in England were held to account also changed, so that for several decades in the middle of the century local government enjoyed more power relative to headteachers; but these reverted back several decades later. From 1870, and by popular consent, overall responsibility for education had rested with the state. Trustees in local schools had relinquished most of the control that they had enjoyed when all schools were independent (see above).

This increased the responsibilities and rights of national bodies, including the Board or Department of Education, examination boards and school inspectors. In general, people have accepted that national regulation is a necessary part of school governance in principle, although how these powers should be exercised and how far they should extend continues to be debated (see Chapters Five and Nine). The matter of how more localised opinion should be included, in decision-making as well as the civic duty of holding educational professionals to account, has proved more controversial.

One response has been to invest powers in local government, a route taken during the post war period in England. The powers of LEAs were extended by provisions laid down in the 1944 Education Act. This divided formal responsibility for school governance at a local level in England and Wales three ways: between the LEA, a board of managers and headteachers. LEAs gained strategic control of schools across a local area (Section 17, III), giving them the power to determine the school curriculum and the distribution of resources. The headteacher's role centred on "the internal organisation, management and discipline of the school", as well as the supervision of teaching and non-teaching staff (Carr and Hartnett, 1996: 102).

However, this more localised approach to strategic decision making through the auspices of the LEA was still relatively distant from very local contexts of individual schools and communities. LEAs came to be attacked on two fronts. Unpopular from the beginning with those who believed that schools should be autonomous (see above), opponents complained that schools, particularly headteachers, best understood the interests of those children for whom they were directly responsible. Others attacked LEAs for being partisan, keen to pursue the personal agendas of councillors rather than those of the community they represented (see above and Chapter Nine).

This situation was complicated further by a longstanding problem with the ambiguous status of the school governing body (Thody, 1990). Governors were given powers from the earliest days of state maintained schooling to control and direct decision making (Thody, 1990). However, in practice the role of the school governor tended to be interpreted as one offering support and protection for staff and principals (Thody, 1990). Before 1870, there may have been relatively few "lay" people who had a say in the affairs of individual schools. As teaching became increasingly established as a profession, even that selective "lay" voice became squeezed out and it is not clear that either governors, or locally elected politicians and their officials were well placed to represent the views of ordinary citizens adequately.

Therefore when Prime Minister James Callaghan spoke on the occasion of the opening of the new library at Ruskin College, Oxford in 1976, he was seeking to articulate a wider mood of public discontent (Sockett, 1980: 6). Lack of public confidence had climaxed over the "William Tyndale Junior School affair" (1974-6). This north London primary school became paralysed by internal arguments, when a large number of the teachers sought to introduce new "progressive" teaching methods against the wishes of the parents (Davis, 2002). The situation escalated over two years into a full blown public enquiry. The perceived failure of "progressive" methods in this one school captured wider public sympathy and contributed to

growing demands for a more interventionist approach to teaching methods and standards nationally (Davis, 2002: 275).

Callaghan reported complaints from representatives of industry that former school pupils lacked basic skills, while top graduates lacked the desire to work in industry. He reported concerns about standards in the teaching of science and mathematics and "new informal methods" of teaching raised with him by parents. Echoing the *Black Papers*, he questioned whether these was sufficient rigour and depth in what students were learning at school, so that they might leave "socially well-adjusted" yet lacking the requisite "skills" for employment. His message was clear. Academic "standards" should not be diluted in order to achieve optimal equality of educational opportunity; existing mechanisms for holding publicly funded education to account were inadequate for the purpose, and needed reforming urgently.

Callaghan set out a two-fold agenda for change. He argued that national government, through its ministries, should assume greater responsibility over the curriculum and administration of state education, including the appropriate methods and aims of instruction as well as a "core curriculum" of basic knowledge (Davis, 2002). This was necessary, Callaghan argued, to ensure that resources were being used to good effect and in order to maintain a proper national standard of performance. At the same time, he highlighted the importance of the work of the recently commissioned Taylor Committee, "to report on the government and management of schools in England and Wales in ways that would bring together local authority, parents and pupils, teachers and industry more closely" (Callaghan, 1976).

The Taylor Report (1977) *A new partnership for our schools* introduced new powers for the governing body so that, for example, "the procedure for the appointment of heads should provide for a small selection committee consisting equally of members of the governing body and representatives of the local education authority" (Taylor, 1977: 73). With regard to the curriculum, the Taylor Report recommended that the governing body should be responsible for identifying the aims of the school as well as monitoring the head's plans for implementing these aims. A further, more radical

move was introduced by the 1984 Green Paper, *Parental Influence at School: A New Framework for School Government in England and Wales.* It re-envisaged the role of the governing body independently of the LEA and delegated to them the responsibility of focusing on and improving the work of individual schools in such a way as to give parents a leading voice (Gillard, 2000).

One response to this new legislation was captured by the Cambridge Accountability Project (CAP), a two-year study funded by the Social Science Research Council from January 1979 to December 1980 (Elliott et al., 1981). The project set out to explore a view of school accountability that engaged in dialogue with the local community rather than looking only to central or local government. The model was based on the assumption that schools had a moral responsibility to the local communities in which they were situated and should be answerable to them directly. Four secondary schools from three different Local Authorities participated in the study, selected for their interest in being more responsive to the interests and concerns of external groups and establishing a role for themselves within their local communities.

However, others favoured an alternative, more "radical" solution, drawing on popular management techniques of the time found in some businesses in the private sector (see Chapter Five). Best private sector practice, it was argued in the early 1980s, would improve the quality and efficiency of the public sector if it were introduced as a radical reform to existing practices (Thrupp and Wilmott, 2003). This was the approach that was to influence the direction taken by both Labour & Conservative governments after 1980. With conservative-leaning values gaining political purchase, wider public opinion was receptive to this idea. Public support for the introduction of competitive market place into maintained schooling gained momentum. Increasingly ordinary people were convinced by the political argument that a substantial percentage of funding and power should be taken away from LEAS and given to schools that should be directly answerable to those who "consumed" their services.

Another agenda promoted by this conservative-leaning position was a return to socially and morally authoritarian values that were popular during the late Victorian

period in England. Influential voices of the time, including Caroline (Baroness) Cox, Rhodes Boyson and Ray Honeyford, were keen to stress traditional values including respect for authority, the values of a social elite (see above remarks on clerisy) and their place in preserving a common culture. So while, over the course of the century, the notion that very good school leaders were powerful individuals was challenged this view had been re-appraised by the late 1970s and early 1980s.

4.6 Conclusion

A notion of leadership based on the innate abilities of remarkable individuals became a dominant ideal in English schooling from the late nineteenth century, fashioned around the mythical example of Thomas Arnold. One aspect of Arnold's headship, his awareness of the importance of learning from the experience of leadership as well as the taught curriculum, was genuinely innovative. However, this insight tends to be omitted from the discussion of his influence on school leadership in England. I will pursue it further in Chapter Eleven.

The role of the headteacher developed as part of a new approach to schooling which demanded teaching by trained educational professionals. Overall standards in schooling may have improved, as financial control was transferred to officials as part of a national system of education. However, lay people lost out as a result, with the opportunity to participate in decision-making at a local level in individual schools in ways that were powerful taken away from them.

Small scale attempts have been made since to introduce more democratic systems for decision making in education. One might have expected the attempts to introduce a fairer school system after 1960 to have produced school leaders more attuned to democratic and egalitarian ideas; but a powerful backlash from the right began almost immediately and the new thinking failed to take hold in mainstream, state controlled education. In the next chapter I consider the view of school leadership reflected in the dominant discourse of schooling in England since the 1980s and conclude that the notion of linchpin headship continues to be influential.

5 NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HEADTEACHERS IN ENGLAND

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I considered the way in which one approach to school leadership – that of the linchpin head – became established practice in England, despite various attempts to establish a system of governance more consistent with democratic values. This chapter takes the story up from the late 1970's/ early 1980s to the present day by reviewing the *National Standards for Headteachers* (TTA, 1997, DfEE, 2000, DfES, 2004). These have enjoyed considerable influence on the dominant discourse of school leadership since they were instituted.

Their origins can be traced to commercial models of quality assurance, combined with one particular approach to research into educational leadership practice. They offer one possible account of headship shaped by a concern to hold pupil performance in schools to account. I concede three potential benefits to the *National Standards*, although these are qualified. Overwhelmingly, I find them to be unfit for purpose and argue that they should be replaced by a *National Framework for School Leadership* (see Chapter Twelve).

5.2 Origins

When Gillian Shepherd, the Minister for Education from 1994-7, first introduced national standards for headteachers in schools in England her argument was that headteachers needed preparation and support for the exacting demands of their job. This position was not new. The Plowden Report (1967) had highlighted the issue in relation to primary school headteachers; and leadership in British schools has been the subject of educational research from the 1970's (Brundrett, 2001) (see Chapter Two). Committed practitioners, including senior school leaders, chose to engage with this research through professional Masters Courses and private study often in their "spare time", without being required by the state to do so.

However, Shepherd's intervention was distinctive, raising the political profile of the issue. She insisted preparation for headship should be mandatory and subject to regulation by central government rather than Local Education Authorities or headteachers' associations. Her insistence was double-edged too: the purpose of training headteachers was partly to provide professional development but primarily to create a mechanism through which headteachers could be held publicly accountable, demonstrating their competence against prescribed criteria.

Further, her concern was for headteachers to receive "hands-on" experience of practical skills relevant to the job. Academic ability to reflect critically on practice, developed through Masters level degrees and diplomas in educational management, might be desirable in good headteachers but not essential. Those practical skills identified as necessary to headship were of a particular type too, more familiar to leaders and managers in the private sector than public sector educationalists.

Only two publicly funded education systems in the world have opted to develop standards for school leaders. The US Inter State School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISSLC) published its standards in 1996, following a consultation process led by researchers and including policy makers as well as practitioners. In contrast, the British government commissioned the (then) Teacher Training Agency (TTA) to produce standards for headteachers in England alone. Written by a few "specialist advisers" and based on "considerable" work undertaken on "management standards" outside education (DfEE, 2000: 3), little if any consultation was undertaken at all: a strategy that has been roundly criticised since (Bush, 1998, Brundrett, 2001).

As other commentators have observed, (Ball, 1999, Thrupp and Wilmott, 2003) British governments since the 1980s have systematically shifted decisions about the distribution of educational goods and services away from political control by local government to market-led control, overseen and regulated by national government. Divisions between commercial and public practice in education have blurred as a result over time, so that for most of her tenure (1995-97) Gillian Shepherd oversaw a department combining the brief for Education with Employment. A set of

management standards for headteachers in line with "best practice" from industry was unpopular among the educational establishment but came as no surprise.

5.2.1 In commercial practice

The "best practice" from industry on which the *National Standards* came to be based was a commercial accountability model found in some medium to larger-sized companies. Standards are a "quality assurance" tool used to maximise the number of goods made, or services provided, that are "fit for purpose" (Winch, 1996). They describe in some detail the exact process to be followed in the production of goods or services, based on an assessment of the purpose for which the good or service needs to be fit. Practice can then be scrutinised against the prototype provided by the standards, so that mistakes are spotted during production and unnecessary waste is reduced. Ideally, the discipline of conforming precisely to standards ensures right procedures are established over time, as errors are reduced then eliminated.

Management standards are used to describe how, in an ideal world, the production process ought to be overseen by managers. Characteristically they break down into lists of tasks or functions managers perform on one hand; the competencies needed to perform those functions adequately on the other. The relevant functions and competencies will then be used as a focus for training that will help each individual manager to optimise their performance at work. They provide the criteria, too, by which individual managers' performances can be assessed.

5.2.2 In School Effectiveness

The ability to establish clear management systems within organisations has particular appeal to those approaches to school reform rooted in a concern with "effectiveness" (Chapter Two). In those schools where pupils appear to achieve less well than others in similar circumstances, their leadership and management systems can be scrutinised for deviations from the ideal. These can be identified and corrected, it is assumed, before individual pupils' life chances, not to mention public resources are wasted.

Better still if headteachers could be trained to meet the appropriate standards, minimising the possibility of mistakes, optimal numbers of pupils would leave school "fit for the purpose(s)" intended by their schooling. If those standards could be deduced from what is known about school leadership by "experts", no time-consuming pontificating around the endless preferred possibilities would be needed. Energy could be devoted instead to the delivery of quality services.

Beneath the idea of "standards" as well as "effectiveness", lies a common concern to identify regular and predictable patterns to human behaviour that can be verified by empirical data. This assumption has long been discredited by the academy (Smyth, 1989, Grace, 1995) (see Chapter Two) and as an academic force in educational leadership research, interest in school effectiveness has waned. However, it continues to exert considerable influence on education policy in Britain as a form of "captured discourse" (Ball, 1999). For example, the *National Standards* (DfES, 2004) refer twenty three times to "effectiveness" in a matter of three pages.

When the first *National Standards for Headteachers* (TTA, 1997) were published, Anthea Millett, as chief executive of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) argued:

> We should make explicit all of the key characteristics of those most likely to succeed in establishing and maintaining excellence as the headteacher of a school. (Millett, 1996)

Although no claim is made here that the same qualities or traits *always* distinguish the very best school leaders from the rest, there is still an implicit assumption that those "key characteristics" *most likely* to be found in excellent headteachers can be isolated and described. School Effectiveness research published in the same year as the first edition of the *Standards* continued to identify those key characteristics most likely to be exhibited by the best school leaders (Stoll and Mortimore, 1997).

The value of a "standard" here assumes that a reliable and consistent link can be made, in this case between those actions or behaviours introduced to systems and procedures within a school by a headteacher on one hand and the final outcome or end product of pupil achievement on the other. The claim is made that in an

"effective" school "quality" leadership will cause "quality" teaching; which will lead to pupils' success. The revised *National Standards* of 2000 assert confidently:

> The key to unlocking the full potential of pupils in our schools lies in the expertise of teachers and headteachers. Research and inspection evidence demonstrate the close correlation between the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils and between the quality of leadership and the quality of teaching. It is these links which lie at the heart of the Government's drive for school improvement. (DfEE, 2000: 1)

So far I have established that professional standards for Headteachers in English schools were introduced in the mid 1990s as a means of assuring the quality of their leadership, one of only two publicly funded education systems in the world to have opted for this approach. Standards break leadership down into tasks or functions and identify competencies needed to perform them well. This assumes that reliable and consistent links may be traced between those actions or behaviours introduced to systems and procedures within a school by a headteacher on one hand and the final outcome or end product of pupil achievement on the other.

In a standardised system good leadership is equated with the capacity to know what the right strategies are, as well as the relevant skills and qualities to be able to apply them in practice. There is no need to discuss or debate how a school ought to be led because the nature of good leadership may be known. Furthermore certain people are capable of knowing what the future good of a school is and should be allowed to implement it on behalf of others in society. I explore next the difficulties posed by this notion of standards, applied to school leadership.

5.3 Problems with standards for school leadership

5.3.1 They may appear, but are not objective

Education is a contested concept (Chapter One). People bring different, often competing criteria to bear in judgements they make about the value of formal schooling. Christopher Winch points out that while transparent criteria to

judgements about the quality of educational practice in the form of standards could be helpful, it needs to be recognised first that notions of quality in education rely on appeals to a particular set of educational values (Winch, 1996). I have already highlighted value assumptions that underpin the traditional view of leadership in English schooling (see Chapter Four).

While the word "standard" may be used literally to describe a measure, it may also be used metaphorically to refer to an ideal. For example, the word "standard" is used to describe a flag found on the front line during war; it is born bravely by the standard bearer as an emblem of those values being fought for. The popular expression "nailing one's colours to the mast" reminds us that a standard or flag can be used in everyday speech to symbolise public commitment to a particular view.

Meanwhile the "gold standard", once a currency system used to fix monetary units against the value of a measure of gold, has retained meaning in ordinary speech long after 1933 when the measure itself became redundant (Evans, 1970). It is a phrase used to suggest exceptional quality. For example, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, A-Levels are commonly referred to as an "academic gold standard" (Crace and Smithers, 2006) by people who believe that they reflect pupils' ability to perform academically at the highest level; and the "Alpha Plus Group" of 16 independent schools – and 5 colleges – claims to meet a "gold standard" in the education that it provides for its pupils[1]. The word "standard" in this context creates an ambiguous impression of educational excellence that can be measured (Anderson, 2001).

Joseph Murphy demonstrates how difficult it can be to divest standards of this ambiguous impression, even though he concedes that leadership standards are "normative, rooted in values and beliefs" (Murphy, 2000: 412). As English and Anderson (2000, 2001) point out, he appears to regard the values implicit to the ISSLC Standards he helped create as in some sense right or true. Murphy retorts with the observation that educational practitioners are untroubled by "abstract epistemological issues" in the same way as academics and seek instead clear,

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[1] http://www.alphaplusgroup.co.uk/ accessed 10th January 2011

unequivocal statements about the nature of school leadership that will help to make their (often) complex work easier to navigate (2000: 43).

This may be true of educational practitioners known to Joseph Murphy but cannot be said to apply universally. As graduates educational practitioners may prove capable intellectually of appreciating the "abstract epistemological issues" manifest in their daily work and wish to address them, given time and encouragement to do so. Nor should "abstract epistemological issues" be swept under the carpet anyway on the grounds that they fail to concern practitioners. One clear function of educational research is to offer robust, rigorous comment on policies that are flawed conceptually.

5.3.2 They do not represent the best leadership practice possible

If notions of the good in education are contested, any attempt by experts to prescribe a model of good school leadership will prove problematic. There are important ways in which some people do know more about school leadership than others (I pursue this idea in Chapters Six and Seven). Yet the bizarre process by which leadership standards were imposed on schools in England without wider consultation has been criticised heavily (Bush, 1998, Brundrett, 2001, Gronn, 2003). The adoption of "best practice from industry" implied that, where organisational systems are concerned, "experts" are to be found in the field of commerce. This presumes the insights of those from within the field of education are somewhat amateur in comparison.

Useful observations about human behaviour in organisations, based on insights that are either theoretical or experiential, could be shared between fields of practice and across one sector to another. However in this case, the exchange would surely be reciprocal, commercial organisations learning from public sector practice as well as the other way around? A claim that "best practice" comes automatically from the business world makes no sense without further qualification: in what sense would it be better and according to which particular account of the good?

Industry does not describe a specific body of opinion; nor should it be assumed that one definitive account of the best leadership and management would emerge from

expertise in the commercial sector. Moreover, in the private sector notions of best practice usually assume that less intervention by the state is better than more. How could commercial expertise be replicated in the public sector by state imposition?

Educational practice may have operated something of a closed shop in the past (see my discussion of James Tooley's criticism of the educational establishment along these lines in Chapter Nine, Section 9.5.1.1). If notions of good school leadership rest largely on opinions and beliefs, the expertise of educationalists, whether researchers, practitioners, should be respected but held in check. It may be time to consider new ways in which, in democratic countries at least, the views of a wider range of people on school leadership could be included by policy makers.

This would not require any view of school leadership that proves popular to be adopted (Chapter Twelve); and those opinions better informed by professional knowledge than others might continue to exercise a disproportionate degree of influence. However, the views of parents, members of the wider community deserve to be given serious attention in addition to those of representatives from the business world. As future citizens, pupils' views should also be taken into account.

5.3.3 They do not mediate between accounts of good school leadership

Given the potential for a variety of legitimate views of good school leadership in a democratic society, a mechanism is needed which can help to mediate these contested ideals. After all, one important function of regulation in a democratic state is to provide a means by which potentially irreconcilable views between different people can be held together. Regulation should also guard against *laissez faire*. It is not the case that in a democratic society every possible conception of school leadership is acceptable; views that are harmful to the welfare of particular groups of citizens and/or discriminatory can be outlawed and dismissed (Chapter Nine).

The *National Standards* do not mediate between possible accounts of school leadership but impose instead one particular interpretation as though it were right. Radical changes to the role of the headteacher introduced by the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) (Moore, et al., 2002) made new demands on school leaders for

skills more obviously entrepreneurial than educational. Responsibilities held previously by Local Education Authority officers shifted directly to schools. Career teachers, with little experience of work if any outside schools, now needed initiating into a vastly different set of skills that were reflected in the *National Standards*.

So one controversial aspect of the NPQH when first introduced was the suggestion that it might be used as a route to "fast-track" successful business leaders into a career in education; this challenged the traditional assumption that school leaders rose inexorably through the ranks of classroom teachers. The *National Standards* were introduced with the specific intention of shifting the role of school leaders, specifically the headteacher, from understanding educational matters including the curriculum, towards generic management skills more typical of a company CEO.

Standards not only steer the preferred account of school leadership in one direction that is commercial, they reflect only one approach used by commercial companies to assure the "quality" of their work. Others have developed alternative methods, finding the bureaucracy required too labour-intensive (Winch, 1996). In a medium to large scale company, where reliable judgements based on the spoken word of individuals located at some remove may be difficult to form, investment in written communication might prove effective. In smaller firms more efficient, if not foolproof practice involves verbal agreements and judgements based on personal interactions.

Performance standards can work well in the context of mass production where the process can be broken down more readily into isolated phases, with workers specialising in one particular aspect or another. In smaller firms workers have to be more flexible, able to specialise in several areas of production. Standards work in some commercial contexts better than others. They are one strategy that can be used for quality assurance but not a necessary one.

Other forms of quality assurance have been developed in commercial practice, particularly in smaller firms, that are non-hierarchical and non-paper orientated, allowing talented but unorthodox individuals freedom to be creative and to implement new ideas. These involve a degree of risk and can prove disruptive, at

least in the short term (Winch, 1996). The *National Standards* promote one, entrepreneurial account of school leadership therefore and adopt one particular commercial account of leadership accountability without debate.

5.4 Can anything positive come from the National Standards?

The pessimistic analysis offered of the *National Standards* so far reflects the overwhelmingly negative tone of the wider research literature. A brief but balanced debate about the potential value of leadership standards has been conducted between Joseph Murphy (Murphy, 2000, Murphy et al., 2000) and his critics (English, 2000, Anderson, 2001) in the *International Journal of Leadership in Education*. Elsewhere, Gronn (2003), Louden and Wildy (1999) have developed criticisms of leadership standards in general terms while specific concerns about the *National Standards* for headteachers in England have highlighted problems with the first NPQH courses (Bush, 1998, Brundrett, 2001) as well as the unrealistic workload (Orchard, 2002).

Yet the *Standards* were conceived to serve at least two seemingly reasonable functions. They were written as the basis of a clearly structured, national mandatory programme of ongoing professional development for school leaders. Moreover, they were focussed on the development of headteachers' practical skills, rather than their intellectual understanding. This suggests that the qualities successful leaders require may be learned through experience and do not require extraordinary levels of intellectual insight or innate academic ability. Perhaps value might be found in the project as a whole, even if the *National Standards* themselves have been found wanting?

5.4.1 A responsibility to prepare school leaders adequately

School leaders are responsible for the education of many thousands of children and young people, supported at huge cost by the public purse. The demands of school leadership are complex. The degree of power that school leaders exercise over the lives of other people is considerable. Given the potential impact on the well being of

other people if their competence is suspect, the process of preparing and equipping them for these responsibilities should not be left to chance.

This is not to say that before qualifications and formal preparation were introduced there were *no* good school leaders. Many practitioners took opportunities to develop relevant professional skills and attributes well before the NPQH was introduced or the *National Standards* conceived. However the technical knowledge now required of headteachers in particular cannot be acquired through prior experience of teaching alone. The capacity to balance a budget and to employ staff according to the correct legal procedures requires prior experience and learning of another kind entirely.

The state is responsible for the welfare of school leaders as well as pupils. Winch (1996) highlights the moral responsibility that accompanies any system of accountability, though pointing out this is not always recognised either by employers or employees. Another reason why professional development *ought* to be offered to, and accepted by, potential formal school leaders is to prepare them for the office they undertake on behalf of society (Chapter Two). It should be related clearly to the terms of reference implied by their job description, reflected in the *Schoolteachers' Pay and Conditions Document* (DCSF, 2010) and the needs of the school the leader works in.

A document like the *National Standards* could be helpful in this respect. It could translate the statutory demands on school leaders contained in the *Schoolteachers' Pay and Conditions Document* (DCSF, 2010) which defines the sphere of competence expected of headteachers as well as the OFSTED Framework for Inspection (OFSTED, 2009) against which they will be held to account into elements of a professional development curriculum for school leaders. Currently the *National Standards* make no mention of either document; this seems strange and unreasonable, creating additional requirements.

5.4.2 A national professional development programme

The demands of the *Schoolteachers' Pay and Conditions Document* (DCSF, 2010) are common to all headteachers in maintained schools. The National Curriculum applies

to all maintained schools with equal force: all school leaders might reflect usefully on how these aims and values could be represented consistently in the way schools are led. All pupils in English schools moreover, are future citizens of the same democratic state, with implications for leaders of all schools across the United Kingdom.

At the same time, school leaders must be responsive to the needs of the school they serve and the community in which it is located. While some duties that they discharge will be common wherever that school may be, a good many more will be defined by the needs and wants of individual children and their families. Thus, general requirements require nuanced interpretation as one aspect of their professional judgement. I will pursue the notion of the qualities that distinguish the very best school leaders from others during Chapter Seven.

On a charitable interpretation, the *National Standards* reflect an attempt to straddle this general/ particular divide. The strict logic to a "mandatory" qualification (NPQH) based on a set of "advisory" standards remains elusive but perhaps the argument struggling to surface is this: although school leaders in England need professional development relevant to the particular circumstances of their work, nevertheless they share professional development needs with other school leaders. These arise out of matters of common concern and might be best served through a national programme combining standard and specific features.

Professional development for school leaders devised at a national level offers economies of scale in a relatively specialist field. The concentration of resources in a central and uniform programme based at a National College for School Leadership represents responsible stewardship of valuable and scarce public resources. Links from the national "hub" to satellite leadership centres across the country disseminates centrally held resources in the service of more local needs.

A nationally accredited programme, available in local leadership centres and via distance learning offers equal access to a professional development opportunity for all deserving candidates; prestigious and well resourced. It should not represent an

additional burden on hard-pressed practitioners but an entitlement. Few school leaders' professional lives are static; many will move from one school to another, perhaps across areas which share common characteristics as well as local distinctions. A national scheme prepares potential school leaders for work across this range, rather than focusing narrowly on the needs of a single institution. It offers school governors a recognised quality mark too, when they are looking to recruit candidates to senior school leadership positions.

The potential advantages to national accreditation need to be held in check. It is not clear how well a national scheme can be sufficiently responsive to the needs of a range of candidates as professional individuals rather than servants of a standardised system. Those aspiring to school leadership positions do so for a variety of reasons, bringing a range of contrasting skills and experiences as well as differing views about the nature and purpose of education.

Also, while a nationwide scheme needs to be funded centrally, should the provision of professional development for school leaders operate as a state-controlled monopoly? In the absence of any one right way to exercise school leadership legitimately, there seems little reason why potential school leaders could not chose to undertake a nationally recognised professional development programme which, while based on common criteria, was tailored to suit their individual requirements. A range of regulated but independent providers could offer courses of this kind, including the professional associations.

5.4.3 An emphasis on practical skills

Conceptions of good school leadership in England have tended to confuse formal with personal authority (Chapter Two) and attach too great a significance to the perceived charismatic qualities of remarkable individuals (Chapter Four). In everyday life in schools, personal qualities are demanded of good school leaders but these seem more closely aligned to the Aristotelian conception of practical wisdom (Chapter Seven) than the spark of genius associated with Philosopher Rulers (Chapter Three). I pursue this issue next during Chapters Six and Seven.

Good school leaders master a body of professional knowledge specific to the organisational practicalities of running a school (Chapter Two) which they must be able to apply at the right time and in an appropriate manner. They cannot rehearse standard answers to problems or opportunities but must improvise confidently, solve problems quickly and well. They need to be intelligent but not in a way that would be developed necessarily through a theoretical Masters programme alone.

Again, on a charitable interpretation the most recently revised *National Standards* include some attempt to capture this balance, by identifying the kinds of actions headteachers might demonstrate in relation to technical knowledge and professional attitudes. The attempt to offer a more nuanced approach to capturing the qualities of good school leaders is timely, however the discourse of the *National Standards* seems inescapably bound up with notions of measurement and objectivity and it would be better to abandon them for something else entirely.

5.5 Future regulation of school leadership?

Empirical studies have suggested that over-regulation of headship at a national level may prove counter-productive to efforts to improve schooling. Bush, Coleman & Glover (Bush et al., 1993) and Levacic (1995) discovered in separate studies that schools often function more effectively where their leaders are afforded significant levels of autonomy. If the interests of the pupils are best served by less regulation than more, school leaders should be left to manage schools as independently as possible within agreed limits.

Even those generally suspicious of the state (Tooley, 1996) nevertheless concede it should have some power of regulation, at least to a minimal degree, over individual institutions. Ironically for example, an ideological commitment to deregulating maintained schooling completely would rely in the first instance on a political decision to effect the change, appealing to the consensus of public opinion. In a modern liberal democracy, debate rests on the degree to which the state should intervene and the form that regulation should take.

There are significant mechanisms in place already that do so with respect to headship in maintained schools. For example, the *Schoolteachers' Pay and Conditions Document* (DCSF, 2010) dictates the contractual responsibilities of all teachers, referring to headteachers specifically in Part IX. It is negotiated annually between employers' representatives from local and national government as well as representatives of the teachers and headteachers professional associations. However, the link between the *Schoolteachers' Pay and Conditions Document* and the *National Standards* is unclear (ATL, 2004).

Furthermore OFSTED, Her Majesties Inspectorate (HMI)[2] also contributes to the regulation of headship through a fairly rigorous system of school inspection. These existing measures, though open in exceptional circumstances to abuse or misinterpretation, are broadly speaking sufficient to regulate the power of headteachers. Anyone found to have broken the terms and conditions of their contract can be disciplined and ultimately sacked, if they fail to meet competently the requirements they agreed to at the time of appointment.

The *National Standards* represent only one part of a "suite of resources"[3] that "inform and govern professional practice" (DfES, 2004: 5) in relation to school leadership but exert a far stronger influence than their "advisory" status might suggest. They capture, it is claimed "the evolving role of headship in the early 21st century", reflect "current government thinking and guidance about school leadership" (DfES, 2004: 2) and "underpin" the NPQH (NCSL, 2005). Increasingly the ability to meet them is expected. One headteacher quoted by the National College for School Leadership has even suggested the *National Standards* could offer "cohesion" to this complex area, a "common language" to talk about headship, a "basis for cross-referencing procedures and legislation" (Newman, 2004). If this were desirable though, surely any consolidation of the current policy position on school leadership should begin from the mandatory and legal documents, including those parts of the *Schoolteachers'*

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[2] The independent sector of schooling in England has its own system of self-regulation.
[3] The 'suite' also includes the OFSTED Framework for Inspection (OFSTED, 2005) and the GTC Code of Professional Values and Practice.

Pay and Conditions Document (DCSF, 2010) concerned with leadership and management, and not the *National Standards*?

5.6 Conclusion

Professional development ought to be mandatory for formal school leaders because they are undertaking public duties that are significant and considerable. Moreover, they are likely to benefit both personally and professionally from a well-resourced programme of study based on the theoretical knowledge and practical skills and qualities needed to lead a school well. This should be an entitlement.

However, the qualities of good school leadership are open to debate and cannot be captured adequately by lists of functions and competences. Thus the attempt to root professional development for headteachers in *National Standards* is well-intentioned but misguided, creating a further set of expectations that headteachers are required to meet. I pursue mistaken ideas about good school leadership in the discussion of vision next (Chapter Six) before considering the notion of professional judgement which does seem to distinguish the very best school leaders (Chapter Seven).

6 ARE GOOD HEADTEACHERS VISIONARY?

If not "standards" or "competencies", what qualities do distinguish the best school leaders from others and how might they best be described? Some people have been drawn to the language of "vision". For example, the Royal Air Force Headteacher of the Year in a Secondary School in England for 2009 is described as follows:

> a visionary head teacher who has a clear and very well expressed picture of the future for the school which she explains so well, and so frequently, that she is able is secure the commitment of governors, teachers, support staff, students and parents to making this vision a reality' (Stourport High School, 2009).

The term has also been appropriated into formal policy documentation, including the *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004). However, some commentators (e.g. Gunter, et al., 1999, MacBeath, 1999, Harris and Chapman, 2002) are very uncomfortable with talk of school leadership and vision.

"Vision" is a word with multiple meanings but these are rarely elucidated. Vision may be attributed to individuals as though they possess privileged powers to perceive the future good, a problematic assumption in a democratic society. More promising is the idea that a vision is either the capacity to think imaginatively or the object of imaginative thought. In either case, vision of this kind might be shared (Fullan, 1992) among those with a direct interest in a particular school and its future. Vision can also refer to "statesmanlike" thought; this quality – the ability to "interpret" what should be done at a particular time and place – has a great deal to do with very good school leadership but may be captured more successfully with reference to the notion of practical wisdom rather than vision.

Given the range of possible interpretations and its widespread use in public policy, the discourse of vision and school leadership should be examined critically. In the rest of this chapter, I draw first on dictionary definitions, as well as the roots of the term in biblical imagery, to elaborate on the various meaning of the term vision.

Then, I turn to look at how these different interpretations are used in discussions of school leadership. I argue that its multiple meanings need to be understood and the term used clearly and coherently by policy makers in ways that are morally appropriate; or it should be avoided entirely.

6.1 What vision means

6.1.1 Three definitions

The etymological roots of the term vision are, at least in part, biblical, although this may not always be acknowledged. Take, for example, Robert Fisher (2002), who cites "Without vision, the people perish", as one of several "statements" that have come to influence his view of leadership. If he knows that the quotation is biblical (Proverbs 29:18), he certainly plays down this association.

His source is a popular, "common sense" saying that became assimilated into spoken English from Judaeo Christian scripture at a time when familiarity with biblical imagery was commonplace. The phrase has an authoritative air of wisdom, which Fisher (2002) treats as though its meaning is self-evident: he does not explain why having vision might be so critical, even though it may be interpreted in a variety of ways. Moreover, the use of vision to describe qualities of very good school leaders has been challenged by established writers in the ELMA field. For example, Michael Fullan (1992) objects to it on the grounds that it promotes individualistic and charismatic styles of leadership over other, more collegiate and collaborative kinds.

Three definitions of vision may be found in the Oxford English Dictionary[4], each of which might plausibly be linked with the qualities of very good leadership:

a. something which is apparently seen otherwise than by ordinary sight; *esp.* an appearance of a prophetic or mystical character, or having the nature of a revelation, supernaturally presented to the mind either in sleep or in an abnormal state;

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[4] The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online, Oxford University Press. 4 Apr. 2000 <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50278245>.

b. a mental concept of a distinct or vivid kind; an object of mental contemplation, *esp.* of an attractive or fantastic character; a highly imaginative scheme or anticipation

c. an ability to conceive what might be attempted or achieved, esp. in the realm of politics; statesmanlike foresight

These may be linked in turn to three possible interpretations of vision in the context of Proverbs 29:18 in the following, brief passage of biblical exegesis.

6.1.2 Vision's biblical roots

6.1.2.1 As a non-natural experience

The Book of Proverbs was written originally in Hebrew for a community of Messianic Jews. They believed literally that they were living in the last days, interpreting the radical social and political changes around them as signs that the "eschaton" was imminent (Anderson, 1978). Given the extraordinary nature of the times, it is perhaps not surprising to learn that this community believed that there were prophets living among them.

It is this literal, overwhelmingly powerful, direct revelation of the word of God to which the Hebrew word *hazon*, or "vision" refers.

> Hazon means a prophetic vision or oracle, in which the will and purpose of Yahweh are made known: it is given to the people. The reference is either to oracles of the prophets, or more probably, to the utterances of the sages, for which the same divine inspiration and authority is claimed. (Scott, 1985: 170 footnote 18a).

Moreover, the *people* to whom the vision is given do not include humanity at large but God's chosen people, Israel. From Hebrew, Proverbs 29:18 translates "Without prophecy, the people of God will perish". God's vision is only for them.

Vision interpreted literally as "a supernatural or prophetic apparition" is very hard indeed to connect with the role of the headteacher. Arguably, members of a

conservative and exceptionally devout faith community might seek such qualities for the leader of a school of religious character. However, it is most unlikely that this quality is what Fisher has in mind, or that it captures the qualities of outstanding leadership demonstrated by an award winning Headteacher (see above).

Nevertheless, visual metaphors are used regularly in English to describe a form of internal seeing or intuition that leads to a feeling of deep comprehension; for example, "enlightenment", "illumination", words that may or may not have a religious meaning. The form of intuition they seek to capture might happen in an intense burst, "a flash of inspiration", or gradually as the "light dawns", over time.

6.1.2.2 As imaginative perception

The quotation of Proverbs 29:18 that Fisher uses (2002) comes from the Authorised Version of the Bible. This translation draws on the (Latin) Vulgate Bible compiled by St Jerome in the fourth century, so it comes from Hebrew through Latin into English. This context has had an impact on the translation of the text; the particular early Christian community for whom the text was prepared believed that the age of prophecy in its literal sense had ended. The Messiah had come in the person of Jesus, who had lived on earth and died on the cross for the sins of the world. With his resurrection they believed, came new hope. The fear of annihilation was over.

By the time of the Vulgate translation of the Bible, Christianity had been adopted as the official religion of the Holy Roman Empire and the people for whom the message is intended are no longer a specific group of socially marginalised political and religious radicals, but humanity as a whole. The notion of a vision in the Proverbs passage develops a new, figurative meaning which is grounded in the expectation of a long and stable future. Without *imaginative perception*, the people will never flourish (Scott, 1985). Moreover, this message is no longer interpreted as one that is directed at a particular group, but one which bares truth for all people.

The notion of vision as imaginative thought seems a more suitable conception for a modern, democratic society than vision as intuition. For example, a key area of headship identified in the *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004) is "Shaping

the Future". Headteachers are expected not to dictate, but to create a *shared* vision and strategic plan which "inspires and motivates" members of the school. This document also stresses that headteachers must be able to think creatively and to innovate (DfES, 2004: 6), in other words to think imaginatively.

6.1.2.3 As interpretation

The Septuagint translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek for Jews dispersed by Roman occupation (Anderson, 1978) during the last century before the Common Era. This community did not expect the literal prospect of prophecy among them but were close in time and culture to its possibility. The translation of the passage steers clear of any association with prophecy and *hazon* becomes "exegesis" or "interpretation"[5].

The emphasis on interpretation arises from the concern of a scattered community to retain its distinctive cultural and religious identity through the Law, or Torah that holds Jewish people together. Proverbs 29:18 translates into English from Greek to mean: "Where there is no interpretation, a nation acts contrary to the law". The passage argues that without accurate and consistent interpretation of the law by those in authority including its enforcement, the nation of Israel will fall apart.

Vision thought of as a form of interpretation adds a further and unexpected complication to this analysis. It links to the definition of vision highlighted above as an "ability to conceive what might be attempted or achieved" as a form of statesmanlike foresight. Emphasis that it is particularly suited to the context of politics reminds us of the value-laden nature of leaders' pronouncements. The judgement or wisdom of very good leaders is recognised here to be rooted in ideological beliefs. However, I have been unable to find vision interpreted this way in the existing ELMA literature. I have found evidence that the qualities being discussed here have been identified as qualities of very good school leadership (e.g. Bottery, 1992, Gold, et al., 2003) without being referred to explicitly as vision.

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[5] I am most grateful to Rev Dr Darryl Hannah who was kind enough to guide me through these interpretations of Proverbs 29:18

6.2 Without vision, would schools perish?

The *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004) identify vision as "critical" to headship. It does not feature in OFSTED's inspection framework for maintained schools in England (OFSTED, 2009)[6] though, nor is it mentioned in the *Schoolteachers' Pay and Conditions Document* (DCSF, 2010). Headteachers are declared responsible for "formulating the overall aims and objectives of the school and policies for their implementation" (Point 57.2, : 108) which could, but need not be about vision.

Bush and Glover (2003) acknowledge vision is "highly problematic". However, they argue that it is an important, if complex idea that helps to shed light on the nature of good school leadership. With this in mind, I seek to make sense of the notion of vision in this context, looking to distil clear, coherent and culturally appropriate ideas from the three possible interpretations I have just outlined.

6.2.1 Vision as intuition

In a discussion of authority, Richard Peters (1966) draws attention to the claim that a person might make to expert knowledge over others, based on the perception of an "inner flash", or an intuitive feeling of inner certainty that leads to an unusual degree of prescience about the future. Some people have suggested (e.g. Wright, 2003) that at the heart of the headteacher's role is the capacity to know what a school ought to be achieving on the part of its pupils, an impression reinforced in the *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004) where they identify the headteacher's "Core function" as providing:

> vision, leadership and direction for the school and ensures that it is managed
> and organised to meet its aims and targets. (DfES, 2004: 3)

Emphasis on the bureaucratic and managerial aspects of the job is down-played in favour of a view of leadership associated with exceptional powers of conscious thought. An assumption underpinning the linchpin tradition of headship is that

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[6] A reference was made in the OFSTED Inspection Framework for Schools in England of 2003 to assessing the clarity of vision demonstrated by a school's leadership

certain charismatic individuals are capable of feelings of inner certainty; intuitions that should determine the future direction of the group (see Chapters Three and Four). The term "vision" is used, perhaps because the intuition is often described in terms of it being a mental image.

Although this phenomenon may have religious associations, secular forms are also possible. Peters (1966) interprets the kind of knowledge that distinguishes Philosopher Rulers from others in Plato's *Republic* as being of this kind (see Chapter Three, Section 3.3.1.2), for to know the Good is to perceive the Form of the Good as an image in the mind's eye. I have argued already (see Chapter Four) that Plato's ideas have exercised considerable influence on thinking about leadership in England's schools. Yet this interpretation of vision is ill-suited to the notion of good school leadership in a modern democracy. Efforts on the part of leaders to introduce change on the basis of a feeling of certainty when "the penny dropped" or the "light dawned" should be treated with caution.

First, a vision of this kind is claimed as authoritative beyond any rational challenge, yet I have argued consistently (e.g. Chapter Two, Section 2.2) that notions of the good in education are based on beliefs, so that they are contestable. Thus, a headteacher could not claim to know the best possible future for a school based on an intuition. On the contrary, inspiration is a very personal and subjective matter: a seemingly visionary insight to some might appear abhorrent to others. Leaders may try direct appeals to the emotions of their followers, in speech or activity, as a means by which to reinforce their authority but cannot assume success by this strategy.

In a modern democratic society, citizens hold various different conceptions of the good life which they debate, until they are able to reach some kind of consensus (I pursue this idea in Chapters Nine and Ten). However, the problem with values and preferences founded on an intuitive sense of what is right or good is that they cannot be challenged or verified by rational means. Yet reason plays a crucial part in democratic deliberation, providing a basis on which competing values can be assessed and decisions made. Reason cannot reconcile every disagreement in a pluralist society but can at least provide a basis for common engagement.

On the other hand, intuitions are private mental experiences that cannot be challenged or verified by argument or persuasion. A bright idea, a pipe dream, followed through by systematic reflection as to its feasibility could provide a helpful stimulus for change. However, for a school leader to act on impulse alone, making decisions where the welfare of others is at stake on the basis of a whim and without further thought, could prove reckless and irresponsible.

Second, it is not possible to share a vision conceived as something which *belongs* to the headteacher. The *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004) suggest that headteachers should be committed to "a collaborative school vision of excellence and equity that sets high standards for every pupil" (DfES, 2004). In good schools various possible notions of excellence, as well as equity, are possible (Chapter Two). Therefore, in a modern democratic society presumably a "collaborative" vision would be identified through discussion so that a consensus of opinion was reached. While consultation might mean that the aims and values of a school take longer to identify, if that process of deliberation is organised well, the result could be better than that which would be achieved by one person reflecting in isolation (see Chapter Seven).

However, if a vision is a private mental event, exclusive to a particular individual, it cannot be shared in any meaningful sense, because it is by definition private and particular to that person[7]. The idea of a shared or collaborative vision on this view becomes something that the headteacher imparts, for her followers to implement. This is precisely the notion of vision with which Fullan feels so uncomfortable.

> The current emphasis on vision in leadership can be misleading. vision can blind leaders in a number of ways.... The high-powered, charismatic principal who 'radically transforms the school' in four or five years can... be blinding and misleading as a role model... Principals are blinded by their own vision when they feel they must manipulate the teachers and the school culture to conform to it. (1992: 19)

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[7] I am very grateful to John White for making this observation in correspondence

Charismatic leadership is not an appropriate model for school leadership of maintained schools in England. First, because it is morally unacceptable for one person to exercise so much power in a democratic society (see Chapter Three). Secondly, because a moral message would be communicated through schooling organised along these lines; that while nominally people in England are committed to democratic values, they do not expect to translate that commitment into everyday practice. I will pursue this second line of argument in more depth in Chapter Eleven.

There may be a kind of thinking that people who lead schools well do to particularly good effect, but vision understood as some kind of intuition, does not capture this mental activity successfully. Indeed, a study which explored the kinds of vision that school leaders claimed to have had found them to be "neither surprising nor striking nor controversial" but very traditional; "closely in line with what one might expect of the British system of education" (Bolam et al., 1993: 35). It may be that vision entails another kind of imaginative thinking.

6.2.2 Vision as imaginative thinking

Headteachers are often required to think in ways that are imaginative or creative. Kate Griffin identifies the following example of creative thinking taken from her everyday work.

> A few years ago I employed somebody to serve coffee into the staff room before school and at break time. This encouraged a much higher proportion of staff to gather there and the opportunities for conversation, the development of ideas and the exchange of information that this created have been invaluable. Certainly the return has far exceeded the investment. (Griffin, 2001: 24)

Imagination can be taken here to mean the capacity to suppose, or to think "beyond actuality into the sphere of the possible" (White, 2002). Griffin applied a conventional model of care for employees from industry to the context of a school staffroom in an original way. She identified a new idea, based on systems or practices that exist already, which she translated to another acceptable purpose (White, 2002).

The form of imaginative thinking linked to leadership being described here involves no particularly unusual or sophisticated mental skill and is not exclusive to headteachers. For example, the toilet facilities provided for pupils in British schools are often terrible, a problem for which no routine, adequate response is currently available. One creative headteacher decided to overcome the difficulty in his primary school by involving pupils from the school council so that both he and they were able to address the issue, combining their powers of imagination and creativity.

While many schools have student councils, few use this mechanism as an active force for institutional change. However, in this case the headteacher included the pupils actively in decisions regarding refurbishment and design, gave them a budget and access to the building contractors. When the work was complete, he listened to suggestions pupils made to keep the facilities pleasant and fresh once they were finished.[8] His imagination and the confidence he showed in the ability of his pupils to identify possible solutions were rewarded by the outcome.

Anthony Kenny (1989) stresses the importance of originality to accounts of imaginative thinking. If what distinguishes the imaginative from reflection of other kinds is the capacity to entertain alternative scenarios, to think beyond conventional responses, it is not clear that all visions meet this particular criterion. For example, headteacher John Cain is able to suppose beyond the actual to the possible to describe his idea of a possible future state, without painting a mental picture that seems strikingly creative. He emphasises the importance of achieving realistic targets related to the school roll and improved examination results.

> Broadly the vision running around in my mind was to increase the intake, raise standards, and to have the students behaving well in good facilities.... By the year 2001 there would be 850 students, achieving a GCSE pass rate at above the national average in a school which would value and respect all its members (1999: 100).

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[8] The positive impact of his initiative was reported in the Times Educational Supplement in March 2003.

That said, the need for headteachers to be imaginative should not be over-stated; and there may be reasons other than the capacity to think creatively which might explain apparently spontaneous and brilliant decisions. For example, tragedy might strike in a school, so that a pupil was killed suddenly in exceptional circumstances. A good leader might announce a clear plan of action in response which people adhere to without question or debate and praise it afterwards because it proved so appropriate. Although the leader's response might appear spontaneous, in practice it was improvised around a premeditated and carefully structured plan for emergencies, rather than an act of intuitive brilliance.

John White points out that genuinely creative ideas remain "within the bounds of what is appropriate in the context" even if they transcend conventional expectations. Very rude or mad people can transcend convention with ease, but that does not make them imaginative, he continues (2002). An anecdotal report provided by a case worker from a teachers' union (personal communication) provides a clear example. A headteacher of a small primary school decided to spend a year's school capitation on balsa wood because she wanted every child to have an opportunity to make something. Her vision was most certainly original but a swift intervention from a teacher's union was needed to limit the havoc reeked by her eccentricity.

It may or may not be true that in the creative arts, for example, certain people are noticeably more creative than others. It is not clear from the examples given here, that to attribute creative genius to these practically minded headteachers would describe a quality core to the purpose of a headteacher in the way vision has been identified. However, if the imaginative perception required of headteachers is closer to the quality of supposition described by John White, it is not clear in a modern democracy that the quality of vision should be confined to the headteacher.

The headteacher who addressed the difficulties with the school toilets did so by allowing the pupils in his school the opportunity to think imaginatively too. The *National Standards* state:

> Critical to the role of headship is working with the governing body and others to create a *shared vision* and strategic plan which inspires and motivates pupils, staff and all other members of the school community. This *vision* should express core educational values and moral purpose and be inclusive of all stakeholders' values and beliefs. The strategic planning process is critical to sustaining school improvement and ensuring that the school moves forward for the benefit of its pupils. (DfES, 2004: 6)

If a vision is to be shared, all members of the school community deserve an opportunity to be imaginative. If vision is an expression of educational values there can be no expert knowledge of the best possible future for the school, only opinions. Hence, by opening this subject up for discussion the vision that is agreed cannot in one sense be wrong. That point made, expertise would be needed to co-ordinate the process well, structure the debate so that it is constructive, consistent with democratic values and ultimately conclusive.

Vision – as an account of the possible future state of a school which emerges from sharing imaginative suggestions and ideas – may be important but says nothing in particular about the headteacher. A headteacher who did not feel they were an imaginative thinker might nonetheless facilitate a shared vision, drawing on the capacity of other people in the school to think creatively. All those people who are willing and able to do so should be able to contribute ideas that lead to institutional change without needing an official position of formal leadership responsibility.

6.2.3 Vision as interpretation

Thomas Greenfield (1993) identifies vision with the idea of a "moral imagination", with the *moral* dimension to imaginative thinking lying in the capacity to bring clear personal and organisational values to the role of educational leadership. Bush and Glover (2003) argue that good leaders are informed by, and communicate clear sets of personal and educational values that are represented in the sense of moral purpose they bring to the school that they lead.

Something of vision as a quality of statesmen may be what they have in mind here. Very good school leaders like statesmen at their best, are diplomatic and politically astute. Their concern is to hold the social order of the school together with references to the principles by which it stands. They are wise in ways that derive from experience, and develop over time.

However, this point needs to be qualified. First, the kinds of values that ought to characterise a very good school leader's work should be clarified. As Wright (2003) points out a skilled, successful yet corrupt headteacher would be good at what she did; her actions would infuse a school with "moral purpose" but one that was undesirable. It is not the case that any moral value will do but that some values which school leaders could hold, including racist and sexist attitudes, should not be allowed in practice to infuse their public work.

Moreover, in a second positive sense, certain values and practices will be more appropriate than others, given the particular socio-political and cultural context in which they are situated. In schools in England these will be democratic values and practices (see Chapter Nine). Schools unlike organisations in general, have a particular role to play in promoting these on society's behalf (Grace, 1995). For pedagogical reasons that I will spell out in a later chapter (see Chapter Eleven) all school leaders, including headteachers, should model these through their actions.

This is another reason why the traditional model of the headteacher as the linchpin of the school will not do. Values will be transmitted through the means by which headteachers execute their professional responsibilities: the *National Standards* stress the responsibility of headteachers to "model the values and vision of the school" (DfES, 2004). If state maintained schools are required to promote democratic values including autonomy, that power to decide autonomously cannot be limited to the headteacher.

The ability of formal leaders to interpret how policies should be translated to meet the present and future needs of the school for which they are responsible is extremely important in a democratic society. In this context, national governments

should not seek to impose detailed and prescribed measures onto schools. People in schools should be able to develop their own sense of vision for the future. Rather, the skill of the school leader would lie in facilitating this process and contributing to it, without seeking to dictate what the future vision of the school should be. Their opinions are informed in such matters but they are not privy to right answers.

Although formal leaders may have particular skills of interpretation, being specialists in detailed matters concerning how the school is managed and organised, the quality being discussed here is one that should apply to informal leadership too, in those schools located in democratic societies like England. As the *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004) make clear, vision should be shared across a school, with headteachers responsible for ensuring that this happens. Furthermore, in a newly constituted section on "Strengthening Community", the *National Standards* make it clear that headteachers should involve parents and the community too in "supporting the learning of children and in defining and realising the school vision" (DfES, 2004: 11).

While these ideas appear on first glance to relate well to headship done well they move away from the qualities identified with vision in the existing policy and research literature.

6.3 Conclusion

If vision is to be referred to in school leadership policy documents at all, its meaning needs to be clear, coherent and consistent. This is not the case at present. One possible interpretation of vision in particular supports the linchpin view of school leader that is inconsistent with modern democratic values (White, 1983): this should be made clearer. While some people may continue to believe leadership should be visionary in a charismatic sense, this is not a view that should be enshrined or sanctioned in educational practice or policy.

The use of vision in the most recently revised *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004) can be interpreted in ways that are more consistent with liberal

democratic values. In particular, where vision is used to highlight the importance of imaginative thinking in the life of a school community, it helps to highlight the importance of regular, structured discussion of strategic concerns, including the aims and values of education for a school community, their goals and aspirations for the future. Vision in this sense need not come from the headteacher.

Distinctive to the formal authority of the headteacher is the capacity to interpret legal and statutory requirements made of a school according to the particular context in which the school is situated. This quality could legitimately be described as vision too, although in a sense of the word that is less familiar. Vision as the ability to interpret what to do in the right place, right time and in the right way in this sense is extremely important to good school leadership. However, this might be captured better by the Aristotelian idea of practical wisdom considered in the next chapter.

7 PRACTICAL WISDOM AND THE GOOD SCHOOL LEADER

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore in more detail those qualities that distinguish the very best school leaders from others. Having argued that competencies and skills are necessary but not sufficient to such an account (Chapter Five), I highlight a study of ten "Principled Principals" (Gold, et al., 2003) which offers some potentially helpful findings. These leaders were judged to be "outstanding" in two senses.

They were *good at* school leadership, according to criteria of success favoured within the dominant discourse, including inspection by OFSTED. At the same time, these leaders were *good* in a moral sense, demonstrating an approach to leadership informed by a commitment to broadly speaking "social democratic" values. The "Principled Principals" study demonstrates that good formal school leadership may be both democratic and effective within existing arrangements.

However, significant limitations to the "Principled Principals" investigation have been highlighted (e.g. Wright, 2003). In addition, the notion of school leadership as a moral art (Hodgkinson, 1978, Hodgkinson, 1983, Hodgkinson, 1991) is problematic. I propose that a new investigation be conducted, along similar lines to the first but based instead on the notion of "professional judgement". Philosophers of education (e.g. Dunne, 1993, McLaughlin, 1999, Carr, 2007) have already suggested that this is what distinguishes the practice of very good school teachers from others and I suggest this be extended to include school leadership.

7.2 "Principled Principals" and their leadership qualities

Gold et al. have investigated ten "outstanding" school leaders of maintained schools in England whose practice has been judged unusually good, "superb" even, according to two potentially conflicting sets of criteria (Gold, et al., 2003). Official indicators of quality, including OFSTED inspection, deemed them to be highly "effective". They oversaw "high standards of teaching and learning" in the schools

for which they were responsible, managing human and other resources – in partnership with the school's governing body – to extremely good effect (Gold, et al., 2003: 127).

At the same time, they proved to be leaders of "principle" or "sound moral character" (see below). They demonstrated a clear commitment to "values, learning communities and shared leadership", qualities that were also identified consistently in the practice of very successful school leaders indeed in research commissioned by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) (Forde et al., 2000, HayGroup, 2001). Four characteristics in particular were noted across the ten "Principled Principals":

1. Attitude to change

2. "Open Governance"

3. Authoritative Senior Management Team

4. Learning for leadership distributed across the school

Having analysed these findings in detail, I have found it helpful to re-formulate these headings for the sake of clarity so that they reflect a closer match with the substance of what I believe the researchers were claiming to have found:

1. A commitment to inclusive decision-making

2. A commitment to "open governance"

3. A commitment to teamwork

4. A commitment to distributing responsibility, thus power

1. Commitment to inclusive decision-making

The respective "Principled Principals" had a common view of how change ought to be managed in the schools that they led, often referred to as "transformational leadership" (e.g. Bass, 1999, Bush and Glover, 2003) in the ELMA literature. Where

new initiatives were proposed they ensured that clear reasons in favour of change were identified, linked convincingly to the needs of the school in order to justify their introduction (Gold, et al., 2003: 132). Change for the sake of change tended to be resisted, as well as change for the sake of conforming to change introduced by governmental prescription.

Where changes to existing practice or tradition were introduced in a school led by these particular leaders, these were consistently regarded as worthwhile by other directly interested parties. As "transformational leaders" they sought to include members of the school community actively in decision making, a view that is consistent with (if not necessarily equivalent to) the democratic concern for political equality. Direct involvement in the decision-making process appeared to increase the likelihood that most people in the school would accept the changes proposed.

2. Commitment to "open governance"

In a related attitude, the "Principled Principals" were committed characteristically to a process of "open governance". The procedures they adopted for making decisions were typically "transparent" as well as inclusive. Thus, careful attention was paid to disseminating information, with resources being invested in clear and public channels of communication, including notice boards and regular information bulletins, so that this was distributed among all members of the school community. Meetings conducted in the schools that were studied had an ethos that communicated respect for the participants as *people*, rather than elements of an organisational structure (Smith, 2002).

3. Commitment to teamwork

Belying a popular perception that teams work less efficiently on leadership activity than a driven, focused and/or intelligent individual, the researchers found that in the ten "outstanding" schools studied, the executive function was shared by senior leaders. Logistical issues and practicalities were handled to very good effect such that they appeared to work "seamlessly" together. The sum of their collective achievement seemed greater than its constituent parts.

Furthermore, their collaboration was focused clearly and consistently on matters to do with learning, a form of leadership referred to in the ELMA research literature as "instructional" or "pedagogical" (Bush and Glover, 2003). This created an atmosphere of respect among others who saw the leaders as credible authorities in educational matters as well as responsible stewards of the school's resources. The research team found the "Principled Principals" capable of facilitating an informed debate about what counted as a "good lesson" for example; or what theories of learning would be appropriate to the achievement of particular curricular objectives.

4. Commitment to distributing responsibility, thus power

The collegiate responsibility modelled by the senior leadership team seemed to set the standard for others. "Principled Principals" proved willing to listen, trust and learn from their colleagues without assuming that they had privileged insight into the best possible course of future action. Moreover, senior leaders sought to extend those rights and responsibilities associated with leadership proactively throughout the school (Gold, et al., 2003: 134).

Professional development and leadership were seen to be closely connected in these schools. This could be structured professional learning through a leadership course that might or might not be formally accredited; or unstructured learning from experience, facilitated through the way in which the affairs of the school were conducted. Again this tended to be modelled through the attitudes and dispositions of the "Principled Principals" who were observed characteristically behaving in ways that indicated they were open-minded and curious, keen to learn from other people (ibid).

If accurate, the "Principled Principals" study suggests how a representative form of democratic leadership might be possible within existing arrangements for maintained schools in England. These very good leaders oversaw the delivery of very good results, according to conventional, measurable indicators of success, while at the same time applying broadly speaking "social democratic" values (Gold, et al., 2003) to the means by which the collective effort in the school was organised. Models

of shared school leadership may be found within existing arrangements for English schools that might be developed systematically into distinctively democratic practice. This will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

Moreover, the "Principled Principals" seemed able to act in this way, despite external constraints within a centrally standardised education system on opportunities for decision making at a local level. Thus, the research found "outstanding" school leaders able to work creatively within a tension between standards of educational effectiveness prescribed by the national level government, and to which the school was expected to conform on one hand; and creating conditions in which directly interested parties felt able to influence the future direction taken by their local school on the other. With colleagues, they proved able to "interpret" what was required generally by law in ways that were appropriate to the needs and wishes of the particular school (and its pupils) for which they were responsible.

7.3 Limitations to the notion of "Principled Principals"

First, I consider those difficulties in the "Principled Principals" research that have been raised, principally by Nigel Wright (2001, 2003).

7.3.1 "Bastard Principled Principals"?

Wright does not agree that "outstanding" practitioners in English schools are free to mediate their values freely in the way that the findings of the "Principled Principals" study indicate. Citing evidence from the publication *From Failure to Success* (OFSTED, 1997), he suggests that the best school leaders identified by OFSTED are cast as "strong" and "heroic" individuals (Wright, 2001: 275) with excellent organisational skills (Wright, 2001: 277). This does not sit easily with the picture of very good school leadership painted in the "Principled Principals" study, which promotes nuanced understanding of context, a "social democratic" commitment to the collective effort.

Wright does not accept that school leaders who are preoccupied with their role as educators could satisfy the competing demands made on them by the dominant discourse. Wright is sceptical about the extent to which "pedagogically" orientated

leadership by the "Principled Principals" could be focused on the individual learning needs of pupils, based on a broad interpretation of what good education entails. They might be preoccupied with the promotion of attainment in academic subjects and/or the acquisition of economically useful skills. However, there is no evidence that these outstanding leaders were able to balance these demands with those of pupils' moral and social education (Wright, 2001: 278).

Thus no reference is made in relation to the "pedagogical leadership" qualities of the "Principled Principals", of the contribution they make to the hidden curriculum in the schools they lead or the learning that takes place through the values mediated by that means. This issue has been raised since the start of the thesis and should be included as a necessary if not sufficient aspect of very good school leadership. I will return to it as the focus of the argument in Chapter Eleven.

Wright chooses to distinguish clearly between the function of a leader and a manager (see Chapter Two); "administration" or "leadership" involves identifying desired ends or goals he argues, while "management" is concerned with means or processes intended to attain them. He draws attention to the frequency of references to leadership in the dominant discourse of schooling in England, yet sees neither the "space" nor the "inclination" for practitioners to exercise that "genuine agency" (Wright, 2001: 278) with which authentic leadership is preoccupied. "Principals" in English schools are effectively managers, he concludes, with choices about the future direction a school should take made at a "political level where it is not available for contestation, modification or adjustment to local variations." (Wright, 2001: 280)

What passes for school *leadership*, Wright calls "bastard leadership", a term he derives from historical analysis rather than the abusive sense of the word "bastard" found in common speech. "Bastard feudalism" is used to describe the kind of feudalism that existed in England during the Middle Ages which evolved from feudalism in its original form. Something is "bastardised" when it is different in its essence while remaining similar in a superficial sense. The language remains the same while describing something that is fundamentally different.

Thus, if Wright's assertions are to be believed, the ten outstanding school leaders to feature in the study may be principled, but "principals" in name alone. Where they are free, apparently, to make decisions autonomously, in practice their powers of influence extended to procedural, management issues alone, rather than leadership activity. Meanwhile, those strategic concerns with which leaders are characteristically involved are determined at the level of central government rather than in schools. It is not yet clear how far proposals being introduced by the Coalition government elected in May 2010 intended to shift power to local leaders will affect this situation.

7.3.2 Defending "Principled Principals"

I am broadly sympathetic to Wright's concerns. For example, I objected earlier (see Chapter Five) along similar lines to the particular kind of control currently exercised by national government over schools in England. Nevertheless, I note difficulties in turn with the criticisms he makes of the "Principled Principals" research.

Wright distinguishes rigidly between the function of a leader and a manager but other writers in the ELMA field have disputed whether or not in practice this need be the case (see Briggs and Coleman, 2007). I argued in Chapter Two that this was not only an unnecessary but an undesirable distinction to make in the context of a democratic society, and that it was better to conceive instead of leadership in two senses. Both Wright and Gold et al are preoccupied with formal leadership; good leadership in the informal sense I have identified has no place in either argument.

There are sound practical reasons for delegating detailed decision-making to formal leaders in schools, who operate as an executive body charged with responsibility for the day to day running of a social group on behalf of its members. However, a representative democratic model of school leadership requires an accompanying separation of powers to ensure that this group does not become too dominant. If the value of political equality is to be respected, key strategic decisions should surely involve citizens more widely, unless there are reasonable and relevant differences that justify excluding them (Benn and Peters, 1959). It should not be assumed, if

democratic values are to be respected, that a few individuals, possessing privileged insight into the future good of the school, are best-placed to determine strategy. I pursue this theme in more depth later, in Chapter Ten.

Ignoring the distinction between leaders and managers in Wright's account, what he describes as the more "managerial" kind of decision-making with which the "Principled Principals" are concerned proves consistent, on my alternative reading, with the proper function of a formal school leader. The agency identified so positively in the "Principled Principals" research might reasonably be regarded as a genuine form of leadership after all, with its quality having a significant impact on schools and thus the life chances of many school children. This is one very important reason why national governments, without attempting to micro-manage educational provision, should oversee it, as the people's democratically elected representatives. In the right measure, limits to the extent to which individuals can determine the future of children are to be welcomed.

Meanwhile, strategic decision making in education ought to be conducted through political processes. As views about the good in education are contested, they are inescapably matters of political concern which, in a healthy democracy, should be the subject of debate among citizens. Here, Wright's use of the word "political" is unhelpful; he conflates the control of education generally with one particular form of political control by big government. Accepting his point that in a democracy too much control over the detail of localised decision-making is undesirable, the idea that the expert opinion of educational professionals has an even greater role to play in such decision-making, at the expense of citizens, ought to be challenged.

7.3.3 Leadership is not a moral art

In addition, Wright does not appear to recognise at least one further, and considerable, difficulty with the "Principled Principals" research. Given the "social democratic" values found to characterise the approach to school leadership highlighted, it is odd that the research team chose to frame their study using the concept of leadership as a moral art as this is conceived by Christopher Hodgkinson

(1978, 1983, 1991). Hodgkinson's ideal leader is a Philosopher Ruler, modelled on the Guardians of Plato's *Republic*. Thus, as writers in the ELMA field of study (e.g. Gronn, 1993, Allix, 2000) have already pointed out, good educational leadership on the lines advocated by Hodgkinson is at odds with values assumed by contemporary democratic society.

Hence, beyond a shared concern with values mediated through the practice of leadership, little else in the "Principled Principals" research appears compatible with the moral art of leadership that Hodgkinson proposes. Leadership distributed through teams at various levels of the school hierarchy is not consistent at all with his argument; nor are "inclusive" and "participative" models of decision making. These are unnecessary, arguably even counterproductive, if one believes, as Hodgkinson does, that particularly insightful individuals can know the future good for others.

7.4 Practical wisdom (phronêsis) and school leadership

Pursuing the conclusion reached by the "Principled Principals" research – that "outstanding" school leaders are both good at what they do as well as morally good – Graham Haydon (2007, Chapter Three) commends a "virtue ethics" approach as a powerful alternative means by which to account for the "outstanding" professional practice of some school leaders. This might be done along lines similar to those used by philosophers of education (e.g. McLaughlin, 1999, Carr, 2007) who have described the qualities of very good school teachers in terms of "professional judgement".

7.4.1 A brief account of practical wisdom

Writing about teachers, Terence McLaughlin (1999) argues that judgement and character, qualities of reflection that enable them to stand back from engagement in action, distinguish the very best educational practitioners from others. Like him, I judge the idea of practical wisdom developed from Aristotle a helpful means by which to describe such qualities, accepting as he does that they are very difficult indeed to capture with precision. Moreover, like McLaughlin I do not follow

Aristotle's ideas slavishly but adapt the general position he proposes to the context of education situated in a contemporary democratic society.

Aristotle shared with Plato the view that while acquisition of knowledge for its own sake may be desirable, fundamentally education is concerned with enabling people to lead flourishing lives. However, the kind of knowledge each of these thinkers conceived as being necessary to human flourishing was radically different. Plato's account focussed on intuitive perception of the Good as a Form or Idea that is a metaphysical entity. This assumption, and the idea of knowing which Plato developed from it, is highly problematic in the context of a democratic society. Hence, I argued in Chapter Six (see section 6.2.1) that the word "vision" should not be used to intimate thinking of this kind as a quality of outstanding school leaders.

Aristotle's understanding of how the good may be known proves more promising. He retains a concern with "reasoning", seeing it as the *ergon* (ἔργον "function", "task", "work" – Kraut, 2001) of being human and what distinguishes people from other forms of life. Moreover, he retains a place for theoretical forms of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη, *episteme*) in his schema, regarding it as a necessary, though not sufficient kind of knowing that will bring about *eudaimonia* (εὐδαιμονία "happiness" or "flourishing") which he understands to be its main purpose.

The *Republic* was written by Plato as an attack on the kind of useful knowledge being promoted in Athens in his day by the Sophists. Aristotle does not share his teacher's preoccupation. For him, reasoning must also be of a practical kind that is grounded in human experience. He distinguishes between two "non-theoretical" (Dunne, 1993: 243) forms of knowing necessary to human flourishing alongside episteme: techne and phronesis.

Techne (τέχνη)

"Techne" is the term Aristotle employs to describe the knowledge required to undertake activity (poiesis – ποίησις); that is, knowledge that is concerned with making or production, thus aimed at a pre-defined outcome (τέλος, telos). The

purpose of knowing of this kind might be either to bring about the creation of an object or – in a more abstracted sense – a particular state of affairs. Aristotle likens knowledge of this kind to that an expert craftsman needs to create, for example, a finely turned wood-carving. Dunne suggests that for the master craftsman to excel at his craft he requires "a clear conception of the why and wherefore, the how and with-what of the making process and enables him, through the capacity to offer a rational account of it, to preside over his activity with secure mastery" (Dunne, 1993: 9).

In the more abstract sense of bringing about a desired state of affairs, we see how practical wisdom may be overlaid with a moral dimension while remaining a form of practical knowledge concerned with being productive. Productive activity may at the same time be weighted with a concern for doing the right thing for its own sake (Dunne, 1993: 265). For example, the "Principled Principals" were typically concerned to ensure that decision-making processes in the schools they led were inclusive (see above). They were motivated by certain social democratic assumptions about what the ethos of the school ought to be like, and also identified effective means by which it might be achieved.

Phronesis (φϱόνησις).

Aristotle identified a second kind of practical knowledge, "phronesis", concerned with judgement; that is to say, determining the right course of action in particular circumstances having identified and taken into account all relevant considerations. Other kinds of knowing will support the capacity to judge situations well; however the focus of Aristotle's point is that moral sense of what ought to be done, to what degree and according to the particular circumstances. Such knowing is not fixed; it concerns the ability to innovate and improvise; judge what ought to be done even in situations which one could not have foreseen.

Dunne suggests (1993: 10) that phronesis is characteristically a personal and experiential kind of knowledge. In a related argument, I argue that the notion of phronesis may help to describe the qualities of imaginative thinking, both in the

sense of "interpretation" as well as "imaginative thinking" with which vision may legitimately be linked (see Chapter Six, sections 6.2.2-3). I will indicate shortly (see below) how such qualities of judgement may lie behind the reported capacity of the "Principled Principals" to balance governmental demands against other educational considerations (see above).

For Aristotle, "phronesis" is bound up with his understanding of the virtues, a range of desirable dispositions which good judgement enables people to identify and which, once adopted, enable them to flourish, both individually and as members of the polis, or wider society. Some virtues are concerned with the proper regulation of emotions: for example, courage is concerned with regulating the emotion of fear; self-control the virtue of regulating anger. Others, like temperance, are concerned with the capacity to show restraint in relation to one's bodily desires, thus refraining from behaviour that is greedy for example. Aristotle also suggests dispositions that are appropriate to the citizen of a polis, like justice, liberality and "great-souledness" (see below).

With an appropriately well-developed sense of judgement, people behave virtuously and desist from those inappropriate extremes of behaviour which Aristotle identifies with vice. Virtue, he argues, may be found at the mean point between excess and deficiency. Hence, for example, the virtue of courage is a disposition to act which is neither excessively fearful, or cowardly; nor insufficiently sensitive to the potential danger a course of action might entail, foolhardiness; but striking an appropriate balance.

That point of equilibrium will depend on the particular circumstances faced and may not be equidistant between the two extremes: that is the appropriately courageous disposition in one context may err on the cautious side, while in another situation a more devil-may-care approach may be morally justified. There are no universal rules to determine the mean for virtues and these vary greatly from one occasion to another. Aristotle does hold that certain emotions (for example spite, shamelessness, envy) and actions (adultery, theft, murder), are always wrong regardless of the circumstances (Aristotle, 1953: 1107a 8-12).

All normal people are capable of developing phronesis over time, given the opportunity to reflect on their experiences. From childhood, virtuous people develop appropriate habits as they become increasingly habituated into the moral norms of the society in question. Aristotle assumes that their understanding of the good is reinforced by the feeling of enjoyment experienced when one is engaged in virtuous activity. As their rational faculties develop, people begin to reflect on what it is about the virtuous activities in which they are engaged that causes them to feel worthwhile, a process in which emotion and intellect combine. From this they are able to deduce the virtuous course of action whether or not they have previously encountered that particular virtue; indeed regardless of whether or not that virtue had previously existed, the virtues being dependent on the circumstances in which they are situated.

7.4.2 Practical wisdom and the "Principled Principals"

Although the account offered has been of necessity brief, the notion of practical wisdom just introduced may well help to make better sense of the qualities that distinguished the "Principled Principals" from other school leaders than that of a moral art. However, as this is not the concept that the initial study was set up to investigate, I can only infer this from the evidence that is available at present, aiming to show that a second study is warranted, conducted along similar lines to the first but framed by a revised conceptual framework. Were these not school leaders who, within the limits of their sphere of competence, knew how best to act in the situation they found themselves working within, drawing variously on both theoretical and practical understanding and in ways that also engaged their moral sensibilities?

While the theoretical knowledge on which these school leaders probably drew is not stated explicitly in the "Principled Principals" study, it is implicit to doing the job well. The majority of formal leaders in maintained schools possess a raft of formal qualifications: a first degree, a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (or its equivalent), perhaps a Master's degree and either an EdD or several credits towards such a qualification. In addition, any headteacher appointed to a maintained school

in England after 1ˢᵗ April 2004 will have been awarded an NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headteachers).

Theoretical professional knowledge in this context would include, not only knowledge of subject, of how children and adolescents develop but other kinds of abstract and theoretical forms of knowing that will inform the conduct of good school leaders. Take, for example, the knowledge that good school leaders require of the area local to the school, how best to manage a school budget, the relative professional weaknesses as well as strengths of individual staff.

Reflecting again on the attitudes that characterised the "Principled Principals" work, one was a commitment to inclusive decision-making. In this regard, they combined theoretical knowledge of the goals or indicators of quality – including success in OFSTED inspections – necessary to success on the dominant discourse's terms, with technical understanding of how to translate those particular priorities into practice, based on reasons that might be defended in terms of the needs most pertinent to the school (Gold, et al., 2003: 132). This shows an impressive ability to interpret both means and ends appropriate to a specific context and to understand in practical terms what needed to be done to ensure those goals were achieved.

Leaders who determine autonomously whether or not to accept or reject government proposals for change to their institution should not be deemed worthy of unconditional applause (see above). If they judged aright, the "Principled Principals" demonstrated the moral sensitivity to conform to requirements imposed externally to the right degree, sensing when a line needed to be drawn between what could be justified by the future well-being of the school and those which were irrelevant to future progress. The value of practical wisdom in this regard is to be able to identify a sound evaluative basis on which to act, or not, in the light of this kind of issue.

The commitment characteristic of the "Principled Principals" to "open governance" suggests moral sensitivity of a kind that is particularly suited to schools in England, given the democratic context in which they are situated. Patricia White has argued (1996) that "civic virtues" are necessary to the democratic way of life. We cannot

know, without further investigation, precisely whether or not the "Principled Principals" "commitment to social democratic values" (see above) corresponded to those specific civic virtues which White highlights, for example "trust"; yet the observation that the "Principled Principals" were successful "team players" would seem consistent with this. Furthermore, they were observed to be "open-minded and curious, keen to learn from other people", suggesting that they were untroubled by concerns with status.

Further evidence of virtuous behaviour appropriate to the context of a democratic society was evident in the commitment of the "Principled Principals" to distributing leadership responsibility across the school. They were disposed to listen, trust and learn from their colleagues, without assuming that they had privileged insight into the best possible course of future action. They sought to extend those rights and responsibilities associated with leadership proactively throughout the school (Gold, et al., 2003: 134), to this end prioritising investment in suitable professional development. Moreover, the "Principled Principals" combined the commitment to appropriate attitudes with the necessary abstract knowledge and practical skills to enable and facilitate the involvement of others appropriate to a democratic society.

It is not entirely clear from the evidence available whether or not this commitment to inclusive decision making was motivated by instrumental concerns (techne), or by a more tacit sense of the right way in which to conduct business given the circumstances (phronesis). An inclusive ethos and culture was observed in the schools led by "Principled Principals", despite the lack of any evidence to suggest, on its own, that this could impact positively on measurable achievement by pupils. That said, the research team noted that involvement in the decision-making process appeared to increase the likelihood that most people in the school would accept them; it represented an effective leadership strategy.

The question of motivation is an important one. A headteacher might choose to stand at the gate of the school each afternoon when she is available to talk to parents, pupils and teachers as they leave because she believes this strategy will reduce the likelihood of poor behaviour at the end of the school day; or because she values

personal relations and meeting others on equal terms for its own sake; the two are qualitatively different. Both represent sound reasons for choosing to act in a particular way; one is more calculated, a virtuous form of techne, while the other is indicative of phronesis, a felt sense of the right thing to do in the situation.

7.4.3 Possible shortcomings

Interpretations of practical wisdom in the Aristotelian tradition have attracted various objections; here I highlight two. First, that the notion of practical wisdom presented is too neat and closely structured to capture the more chaotic nature of professional practice. Second, that it is unattractive because it is too conservative.

Let us consider briefly the concern that professional practice is less susceptible to the orderly interpretation which practical wisdom provides than has been suggested. For example, Schon suggests (1996), given the chaotic nature of the working environment in which professional knowledge is worked through, that a good deal of it is by its very nature "tacit". That is to say it is formed spontaneously, and not in the conscious and clearly structured manner implied by phronesis. Schon prefers to liken the quality of "knowing in action" needed in such situations to the "artistry" involved in an activity like musical improvisation (Schon, 1996: 29-30).

First, should it be accepted that the practical context in which decisions are made by educational professionals is indeed characteristically chaotic? At times practice may be dogged by uncertainty; very often it is not. In these cases clear, ordered and structured approaches to decision making may prove highly successful. Furthermore, the notion that the kind of knowing associated with artistic improvisation is apparently free-flowing, embodied, spontaneous is attractive. But is it accurate?

Take, for example, the kind of knowledge required for a musician to improvise very well indeed. What might appear, to an untutored ear, a spontaneous, "in the moment" piece of creative genius, relies to a considerable degree on technical competence, built up through initiation and immersion in a particular social practice. From this total immersion develops the confidence to experiment, applying standard

solutions to non-standard circumstances rather than as a result of improvised brilliance on the spot. The thinking of a creative school leader may be like this (see Chapter Six, section 6.2.2).

Secondly, Aristotle's account of practical wisdom has also been attacked for its conservatism. In *A History of Western Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell (1945) makes a withering attack on the *Nichomachean Ethics* along these lines. There are examples of virtues that Aristotle stresses with some force that now seem out of place in contemporary society; for example, "great-souledness", or the ostentatious display of wealth that Aristotle thought appropriate for a rich citizen of a polis.

The emphasis placed on moral character in Aristotelian-inspired views of practical wisdom offers a view of morality that may be seen as "complicit with an established way of life" (Dunne, 1993: 373). It may be used uncritically to explain interconnections between beliefs and activity within the context of the status quo as a given context. It does not seek to question whether such beliefs are right or if those activities which result from it are morally justified.

However, the discussion conducted has been concerned with values which, far from being conservative, would represent a radical departure from current leadership practice in many schools were they more applied widely. It is quite possible to adapt the notion of practical wisdom in ways that highlight virtues consistent with modern democratic life rather than those of ancient Greece. Without further investigation we cannot know precisely which civic virtues the "Principled Principals" manifest through their commitment to social democratic values (see above). However, observations indicate that they were open-minded and curious, keen to learn from other people, rather than fixed on "great-souledness", or impervious to the equal rights of women.

Further conceptual work is needed to develop the very brief sketch of practical wisdom provided here into a full account of "outstanding" school leaders' professional knowledge. Nevertheless, the notion shows considerable promise. The potential value of Aristotle's work to thinking about educational leadership has been

recognised already in the ELMA literature (Haydon, 2007) while other traditions of thinking about practical wisdom are rather less familiar.

The debate pursued by philosophers between themselves at the level of theory is important to furthering understanding of what practical wisdom entails. They should continue to debate these issues. However, the practically wise philosopher of education, seeking to engage those people who conduct research in educational leadership – and who are non-philosophers – will focus on Aristotle!

7.5 Conclusion

Some forms of agency rather than others make a difference to the quality of formal leadership in schools and this is captured by the research conducted into the work of Principled Principals. The value of this research is compromised by its weak theoretical framework and many of the criticisms to which it has been subjected, most notably by Wright, are well made and reasonable. While it may be true that even the very best school leaders do not and cannot exercise the degree of moral autonomy that the research team claims, the suggestion that their agency makes no difference to the quality of their leadership is overstated.

Practical wisdom appears to offer a better account of the professional knowledge that distinguishes these outstanding school leaders from others than leadership conceived as a moral art. It helps to capture those combined qualities; of educational and formal leadership know-how on one hand and moral character on the other that characterise their work. This hypothesis should be tested by further research using similar methods to those adopted by Gold et al (2003).

This task is worth undertaking because such research could offer important empirical evidence that it is possible for some people to undertake formal leadership in ways that are highly skilled or expert, better than others without compromising their commitments to democratic values. The discussion should be extended too, as a truly democratic account will identify the practical wisdom of both formal and informal school leaders, setting the agenda for the next three chapters.

8 SHOULD SCHOOL LEADERSHIP BE SHARED?

8.1 Introduction

I concluded the previous chapter by arguing that it is possible to lead a school well while respecting democratic values. In this chapter I pursue a similar theme, looking for evidence of democratic practice within existing arrangements for schools. A cluster of initiatives developed by educationalists have described school leadership as "shared" (Kagan, 1994, Gronn, 2002) or "distributed", sometimes as "democratic"; rarely is their potential as desirable accounts of leadership on moral grounds considered.

These approaches have attracted interest as a practical response to the problem of recruiting and/or retaining suitable headteachers faced by schools. For example, leadership may be described as shared where two practitioners cover the headteacher's role ("co-headship"). Leadership may also be described as shared when traditional models are dismantled entirely to redistribute decision making powers in ways that include teachers, non-teachers, pupils and parents.

Were empirical evidence to prove that school leadership can be shared along the more radical lines just indicated, conventional practices and policies assumed within the dominant school leadership discourse (Court, 1998, MacBeath, 1999, 2003, 2004, Woods, 2004, 2005) could be challenged without completely dismantling those existing arrangements. Observations of a "broad-based" (Harris and Muijs, 2005) approach to school leadership appear particularly helpful. Further conceptual work is needed to unravel the interesting and important – but nonetheless confusing and at times contradictory – collection of school models that are interpreted as shared.

8.2 What is shared school leadership?

The premise that school leadership may be shared successfully has been the subject of a number of Educational Leadership, Management and Administration (ELMA) research projects (e.g. Court, 2003, Harris and Muijs, 2005, PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007). Evidence gathered through this research shows that the impact previously

attributed to individual headteachers or principals on the improvement of schools may have been exaggerated (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2000, Wallace, 2002). Instead, a cluster of new leadership practices has been identified, loosely linked because they advocate a team approach. These include: "participative" leadership (Leithwood et al., 1999), "teacher leadership" (Harris and Muijs, 2005), "collaborative leadership" (Clift, 1995) and "dispersed leadership" (Crowther et al., 2002). Some go further, suggesting school leadership may be at its *most* effective when it is distributed (Harris and Chapman, 2002, Gronn, 2003).

However, the main focus of attention in this chapter is another distinction debated within the educational leadership research literature: between leadership that is shared for instrumental reasons on one hand, and for intrinsic reasons on the other (Court, 2003, Woods, 2004, Hatcher, 2005). An instrumental reason is understood in this context to refer to leadership that is shared for practical reasons, perhaps to facilitate the recruitment and/or retention of a suitable headteacher. A school might also adopt a shared approach to its leadership for instrumental reasons as a longer term strategy to achieve other ends that are valued.

Imagine a school that takes very seriously the outcomes of an educational research project which is focussed on making schools more effective. The research concludes that shared leadership contributes to the likelihood of pupils achieving higher grades in exams, because parents/carers engaged in decision-making at their children's school seem to take a more active interest in monitoring the work of their children at home. Thus decision-makers in the school might seek to include parents in decision-making as a way to improve exam results, though not as an end itself.

Here lies the contrast. An intrinsic reason for sharing school leadership is based on the belief that decision-making power, and thus the accompanying responsibility, *ought* to be distributed as a matter of moral principle. For example, the role of the headteacher within a school might be abandoned entirely, to be replaced with a "teacher leadership collective" (Court, 2003: 1), because those parties directly interested in the school have agreed that there are insuperable moral difficulties with leadership hierarchies. In fixing on this approach, practical considerations might be

calculated – the potential impact on pupils' well-being, for example, including their attainment – but these would not be the primary reason for changing practice.

There are two reasons why I have chosen to analyse shared leadership here with this distinction in mind.

[A] Were suitable examples of shared leadership to be found in place in mainstream schools, this would offer strong support to a theoretical case for democratic school leadership. Democracy is criticised frequently (Wolff, 1996) as an attractive ideal that is nonetheless impractical; counter examples would challenge this perception. However, given the wide range of practice embraced by the term shared those examples used would need to be chosen carefully. Thus Hatcher (2004) has been critical of the distributed notion of leadership that appears to conform to, rather than challenge, hierarchical power structures in schools.

Similarly, Philip Woods (2004) has suggested that the term "distributed" be reserved for shared leadership practice justified on instrumental grounds. He notes that the expressions: "shared", "distributed" and "democratic" leadership are used inter-changeably in the educational leadership and administration research literature. Hence, examples of practice may be described as democratic (for example in Harris and Chapman, 2002, Bush and Glover, 2003) that do not reflect consistently those values specific to the concept of democracy (Woods, 2004, Hatcher, 2005). He concludes that the term "democratic leadership" should be reserved for practice motivated by a commitment on principle to sharing leadership power.

Surely Woods is right to insist that the influence of specific principles must be apparent in particular examples of shared leadership if they are to be described legitimately as democratic. The adjective shared is ambiguous; without further qualification it encompasses a very wide range of practices. However, is Woods' distinction quite right? Examples of shared leadership practice are easy to conceive that are both informed by principles yet undemocratic, e.g. a hierarchy of increasingly powerful leaders, perhaps allocated places according to their perceived merit.

[B] Thus a second reason to pursue the distinction is to contribute positively to the discussion of shared leadership in the wider educational research literature. Philosophy has a valuable role to play here clarifying the meaning of concepts used in theories that inform influential policies as well as practices. The distinction Woods (2004) makes between distributed and democratic leadership may need further development but it alludes to something potentially significant that he and other educational leadership researchers have identified.

In what follows, five models of shared leadership of the kind Woods identifies as "instrumentally" motivated are explored in more detail. Two make few concessions, if any, to the re-distribution of power and/or responsibility for decision-making in schools, thus illustrating concerns with the coherence of shared leadership noted already by other commentators (Court, 2003, Hatcher, 2004, Woods, 2004, 2005). In three further models, two significant points may be observed: first, a shift may be detected in the distribution of decision making powers away from the top and towards the lower echelons of the organisation, even if the extent of the shift may be qualified; secondly, a strict separation between instrumental and intrinsic motivations for sharing leadership does not bear up in these cases when analysed.

It is not the presence – or absence – of principles which distinguishes any one of these models from another: all are sustained by principles of some kind, even if these are assumed rather than stated. Rather, the distinction between those particular values that motivate the sharing of leadership matters. Depending on what those values are, these models might be – or could be developed into – shared leadership that both works well and is morally desirable in schools in democratic societies.

8.3 Five models of shared school leadership

8.3.1 Federations

Federations do not contribute towards a democratic account of school leadership. They do not extend decision making powers to the many people directly interested in those schools located within them (Court, 2003). Indeed, with the responsibility for

setting the strategic direction located firmly with the federation head, and divorced from day to day administration, opportunities to do so could be more restricted still than on a conventional headship model. Traditionally headteachers have borne ultimate responsibility for one school. On a federal model, day-to-day administration is managed by a senior deputy so that a very experienced, previously successful former headteacher can take control across a cluster of schools at a strategic level.

In the past, federations have proved unpopular, although their introduction is beginning to gather momentum (NCSL, 2008). The Coalition Government elected in May 2010 supports them as a school improvement initiative that will enable leaders and managers in the most successful schools in the cluster to "drive" (Gove, 2010c) change in the least successful. Meanwhile, a report by Smithers and Robinson (2007) found that school leaders and their representative organisations regarded federations inappropriate and unworkable. With the existing demands of headship already great (Chapter Five, Section 5.4) such that they render the job unattractive to a number of candidates, and federation heads expected to shoulder more responsibility still, it is perhaps little wonder that so few practitioners have been convinced by this option.

The role of the federal head is fashioned along the lines of a Chief Executive Officer overseeing the strategic direction of a group of companies. Indeed where federations have started to be established they have usually been sponsored by a charitable trust funded by private means (for example, the Harris Trust, the Oasis Trust and the CfBT Educational Trust). While the public sector should be open to the possibility of learning from the private sector, organisations are not of necessity more efficient simply because they have commercial status. Private sector companies perform poorly and go out of business, a scenario that cannot be entertained in schools maintained by the state if the welfare of vulnerable future citizens and their carers is to be respected.

Furthermore, comparisons between the management of organisations in general and schools in particular are of limited value, given the peculiar nature of education. Learning is not simply a product *of* but also embedded *in* the process of what takes

place; both the means and ends matter. In the previous chapter, (see Chapter Seven, Section 7.3.1) I argued that the place of the hidden curriculum is underdeveloped in discussions of "pedagogical leadership". This aspect of the school leader's role cannot be delegated to generic leadership experts (Smithers and Robinson, 2007). Those in positions of formal responsibility in schools need to understand, not only how to run a school, but how they mediate appropriate – rather than inappropriate – values through their actions.

Another defence of the federation model has been to suggest that, where leadership is shared across a group or cluster of schools, it allows them to benefit from economies of scale (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007) with a much larger pool of senior staff from which to draw specialist knowledge, for example in human resources, finance and project management. Yet political choices were made from 1988 onwards to devolve responsibilities like these directly to schools so that they might act autonomously, where previously they were undertaken by Local Authorities. Why then, if the devolution of such services to individual schools has proved impractical, is the responsibility for providing them not returned to local government? This proposal brings the added advantage that schools under Local Authority control, unlike federations, are democratically accountable to local citizens.

8.3.2 Collaborative leadership

"Collaborative" school leadership is considered next. Similar to the federal model, in that sharing takes place across rather than within schools, collaborative leadership brings people with formal responsibilities from each institution together for the purpose of joint effort focussed around areas of mutual interest (Court, 2003). Each school retains its institutional independence. While collaborative leadership is built around the idea of a collegial style of working between schools of equal status, in a federation, the status of schools in relation to one another is ambiguous.

On a collaborative model of shared school leadership, formal leaders of equivalent status in each school might meet as partners supporting Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers in a local area.

The leadership capacity shared need not be limited to the expertise of the leader at the top of the management structure. Where schools collaborate through an ITE partnership, for example, this is usually led by designated "Professional Tutors" in each school and not the direct responsibility of headteachers.

Schools have been encouraged to collaborate with each other in response to the "Every Child Matters" (ECM) agenda (DfES, 2005); as well as to "network effectively" with professionals from other children's services (DfES, 2004: 11) in the interests of supporting specific children whose needs are complex. Networking between schools would conform to the collaborative leadership model where a locally based working party that included senior managers from each school delegated responsibility for ECM who solved pertinent issues together. Headteachers might, but need not, be included on this working party. Further, experts in the needs and interests of children and young people outside formal education on such a working party would be afforded equal status alongside educational professionals.

Collaborative leadership is difficult to categorise according to the strict division of distributed and democratic leadership identified by Philip Woods (see above). Shared leadership activity between these schools pooling their resources appears to combine both practical and principled motivations. Schools may feel under pressure to collaborate for instrumental reasons; for example, they are expected by the state to act in the best interests of particularly vulnerable children. At the same time, working collegially implies a commitment to that way of working on principle.

Thus, collaborative leadership could contribute towards a model of democratic school leadership. A commitment to the value of equality appears to inform the power relations between people in formal leadership positions across the cluster of schools. It is not a complete account of democratic school leadership but might be part of one, were the egalitarian impulses that seem to inform collaborative leadership practice developed further.

For this to happen, the control educational professionals exert in decision-making would need to be broken down further still, so that a working party of the kind just

mentioned in relation to the "Every Child Matters" agenda included other directly interested parties in decision making, including parents. Were it possible and appropriate to do so, children whose needs were being considered should also be consulted; this could be factored into collaborative leadership practice.

For example, imagine a group of schools in East London that chose to organise a joint community development plan to benefit from additional investment targeted in that area for the London Olympic Games in 2012. Were the collegial emphasis associated with collaborative leadership extended further still, the steering committee of the project might include parent – and pupil – representatives from each partner school and be chaired by someone who is elected. The person best suited to the position of "Chair" is unlikely to be a pupil, but might be a parent who commanded the respect of the community, instead of an educational professional.

8.3.3 Co-headship

Next, three models are considered where shared leadership takes place within the confines of one school. While the practice is by no means widespread (Glatter and Harvey, 2006), one way in which responsibilities traditionally associated with the role of the headteacher may be shared is through the employment of co- or dual headteachers (Court, 2003). "Co-headship" is another practical solution developed to address problems associated with headteacher recruitment and retention (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007), the responsibilities being split between two people, not one, who are employed as a job-share (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2000, Court, 2003).

The co-headship model offers a response to criticism made of the *National Standards* (DfES, 2004) that they make unrealistic demands on one person (Orchard, 2002, Gronn, 2003). The "supported dual leadership" version of co-headship described by Court (2003: 9), for example, demonstrates "task sharing" between the job-share partners according to the particular skills and aptitudes of each practitioner. Moreover, very experienced practitioners, perhaps a headteacher close to retirement, might regard co-headship as an opportunity to extend their working life on a part-time basis to support the professional development of a less experienced colleague.

This positive assessment of co-headship assumes the parties involved have complementary, rather than overlapping, professional skills and can co-operate with one another.

Another possible attraction of co-headship might be to ensure that where pressure is experienced by headteachers that this burden is shared and not the responsibility of an individual. The performance of schools is scrutinised regularly, for example by the Local Authority, OFSTED or Her Majesty's Inspectors, and responsibility for the result rests formally with the Chair of the Governing Body, rather than the headteacher. However, this is not the popular perception of senior teachers who were asked to account for their reluctance to seek promotion to the highest levels of school management (Smithers and Robinson, 2007). One reason they cited for finding the role of headteacher unattractive was because they regarded headteachers as accountable personally for their schools' success or failure in inspections.

While co-headship might offer certain practical advantages, at least in the short term where schools are struggling to recruit a suitable headteacher, this model does very little to address deep-seated and longer term problems that have been identified with the dominant school leadership model focused on the agency of one or very few individuals (e.g. White, 1983, Grace, 1995, Wright, 2001). Co-headship could even be judged to collude with the existing ideal in seeking to accommodate it. In the search for democratic alternatives, co-headship does not help us.

8.3.4 Teachers as leaders

Increasingly, research concerned with their improvement has found significant advantages accrue to those schools that recognise teachers as leaders (Gronn, 2000, Day, et al., 2001, Harris and Chapman, 2002, Wallace, 2002, Harris and Muijs, 2005). Confusingly, several terms are used interchangeably to describe this idea, including: "teacher leadership" (Harris and Muijs, 2005), "democratic leadership" (Harris and Chapman, 2002) and "distributed leadership" (Harris and Muijs, 2005). The deliberately non-technical phrase "teachers as leaders" will be used here, to avoid confusion with any account in particular.

In some ways, opportunities for teachers to exercise formal leadership responsibility have opened up in maintained schools in England over the past decade. For example, a government-sponsored "Leading from the Middle" (NCSL) initiative has supported the professional development of teachers as middle level managers, encouraging them to exercise more influence on decision-making in schools, including strategic planning. New job-titles for middle managers have proliferated, including: "Lead teachers", "Advanced Skills Teachers" and "Key Stage Co-ordinators" alongside more familiar roles in pastoral and curricular leadership.

However, Hatcher (2004) has been critical of the limited impact that strategies of this kind have had on the power afforded teachers to influence decision-making. He suggests that while responsibilities have been delegated down to middle managers in the name of distributed leadership, very rarely have these been accompanied by any power to affect decisions autonomously, even where those relate back specifically to those same duties. Effective control of what happens in schools is retained by senior managers, even more so at a strategic level, where decisions concerning the overall future direction of a school still tend to exclude middle managers and other teachers. Furthermore, the value ascribed to teachers as leaders continues to be expressed in terms of their increased effectiveness (for example Harris and Muijs, 2005) so that they are granted responsibility on these grounds, rather than as a matter of principle (Hatcher, 2004, Woods, 2004, Hatcher, 2005, Woods, 2005).

For Harris and Muijs (2005) the formal leadership role that teachers can play in schools on the basis of their professional status is only one, relatively insignificant part of their potential leadership influence. They suggest that the capacity of teachers to influence decision-making informally through their interactions, with each other and with other people in their schools is far more potent. Leadership in this informal sense is a "dynamic" between individuals, a "by-product of social interaction and purposeful collaboration" (2005: 14). The language in which their observations are phrased seems somewhat opaque; they appear to suggest that teachers say and do

things liable to cause attitudes and behaviours around the school to change, whether as a result of conscious effort or not, particularly in relation to learning and teaching.

This idea is attractive in the quest for examples of practice that might contribute to a democratic account of school leadership. A shift may be noted away from a concept of leadership determined by actions, skills or qualities identified with special or expert individuals and towards the suggestion that all people may exercise influence on the direction that the group effort takes through their interactions with other people, regardless of their official status within the school. This hints to a broader notion of shared leadership that is not exclusive to teachers.

Harris and Muijs suggest as much, stating "teacher leadership encapsulates *all staff engaged in supporting teaching and learning*" (2005: 17). Why then describe this as "teacher leadership"? It would be helpful to distinguish more clearly between the *formal* contribution teachers make to school leadership as professionals and the general contribution they make with others in an *informal* sense (see Chapter Two, Section 2.4.2.2).

Elsewhere, Harris and Muijs (2005: 55) distinguish between "broad-based" and "skilful" leadership. They describe "broad based" leadership in similar terms to the informal sense of leadership already described (see above). By "skilful" leadership they draw attention to the expertise peculiar to particular positions people hold in an organisation, related to their experience and sphere of competence. For example, teachers should be experts in lesson planning, capable of knowing and understanding how to manage the learning of relatively large numbers of children in a classroom; they possess particular insight when making decisions about pedagogy.

This notion of "skills based" leadership should be extended to include experts other than teachers who have a special contribution to make to decision-making in schools. The relevant expertise and skills that other children's services providers might have to offer have already been highlighted in relation to the "Every Child Matters" initiative (see "collaborative leadership"). Parents have skills they might bring to

bear in a voluntary capacity on decision-making in education, drawing on capacities developed either through their paid work or other interests and experiences.

The distinction Harris and Muijs make between skilful and broad-based leadership, with further conceptual work could feature very helpfully in an account of democratic school leadership. It is not as it stands a democratic account of school leadership (see below). A democratic approach to decision-making would require all directly interested parties in schools – including teachers – to be included in some way in major decisions as a matter of principle, not simply practical expediency.

8.3.5 Distributed leadership

Gronn (2000, 2002, 2003), unlike Woods – who ascribes another specific meaning to the term (see above and below) – describes "distributed leadership" in abstracted language of the kind employed by Harris and Muijs (see above). He suggests it is a "synergy released when the sum effort contributed by members of the team is greater than the total of its parts" (Gronn, 2002). Rather than being ascribed to any individual in particular, Gronn (2003) describes leadership as "emergent", a power located in certain positive kinds of interaction between people that causes change to happen. He envisages it as something that it is released when groups of people are able put to one side the formal status each brings to the discussion table thus facilitating an open and free discussion of ideas (Gronn, 2003) which generates new perceptions.

Similar observations to these are made by Leithwood (1992) describing "participative leadership". Also by Kagan (1994), who notes that where leadership is shared, individuals or sub-groups of individuals rise into and fall away from positions of leadership spontaneously, depending on the particular and different situations in which the group finds itself. Their leadership is temporary rather than fixed and does not rely on formal status within the organisation.

Common to these accounts is a concern to describe those mental events and psychological interactions which take place when decision-making is undertaken as a collective task shared across a team, rather than confined to the thoughts of a single

person. They are consistent with the argument I have made (see above) with respect to formal and informal notions of leadership and Harris and Muijs' observations about "broad-based" leadership. They suggest that distributed leadership flourishes where its value is recognised and encouraged. Next I turn to the task of developing an argument from principle why such conditions should be established in schools and why formal leaders *ought* not to dominate their informal leadership capacity.

8.4 Principles and shared leadership

Five examples of leadership identified as shared in the educational leadership research literature have been explored. Each can be categorised as "distributed leadership" on Woods' distinction (2004, 2005) between shared leadership motivated by instrumental concerns (distributed) on one hand and commitment to the intrinsic value of sharing school leadership (democratic) on the other. Quite rightly, Woods challenges examples of practice described as democratic which are unrelated to distinctive democratic values; and highlights important reasons in principle why school leadership practice *ought* to be shared.

Within mainstream practice in English schooling there are very few extended examples of leadership shared democratically (Gribble, 1998) and where these do exist, they tend to be found on the margins of mainstream practice (Fullan, 1993, Woods, 2004), an obvious example being the independent school, Summerhill. Extended examples of democratic leadership practice are more prevalent outside the UK in New Zealand for example (Court, 2003) and in Denmark (MacBeath and Moos, 2004).

However, a rigid distinction of the kind that Woods draws fails to do justice to the traces of democratic practice that may be found even in the inauspicious environment of English schooling. Distributed school leadership (for example "collaborative leadership") may be motivated by both instrumental concerns and principled desire to share best practice with fellow professionals. Concerns to promote the voice of students in decision-making in schools – where this is relevant and appropriate (see below) – may well conflate instrumental with intrinsic beliefs.

There is still considerably more work to be done to emphasise the intrinsic importance of sharing the power to influence decision making widely in schools. Rarely, Michael Fielding (2004: 199) observes, do schools allow pupils the "courage and confidence to create new practices and proposals for a more just and vibrant society" or interpret this practice as one aspect of shared leadership. However, a straightforward division into distributed and democratic classifications of leadership types does not capture accurately the state of play in practice.

Choices made to pursue one particular model of school leadership over another based on instrumental concerns will still be influenced by principles. Should the school focus on attainment of the highest possible grades in public examinations; or the political education of the next generation of democratic citizens? Both are instrumental concerns reliant on judgements that are made in relation to principles. Moreover, autocratic leadership practice is informed by certain principles (Chapter Six) *and* it is undemocratic. The point to be made is not that instrumental reasons are bad or mercenary *per se*, but that on their own they are insufficient as a basis for judging one kind of school leadership better than another.

8.5 Democratic school leadership

While there are promising aspects to the particular account of democracy that Philip Woods provides (2005), it would benefit from further development. It is dominated by one specific example, that of the religious congregation adopted by seventeenth century groups of English religious radicals (Hill, 1975), including the Ranters and the Levellers. Generally the use of concrete examples to illustrate abstract ideas is valuable; however the particular model of the radical dissenting congregation is not the most accessible for a modern, predominantly secular readership. Nor does it provide the best parallel possible for loose associations of directly interested parties were they involved in the local democratic leadership of twenty-first century schools.

It does offer some sense of the role that political equality ought to play in the decision-making of a community organised on democratic lines. For these groups rejected the notion of an elite priesthood, arguing instead that all believers were able

to know the will of God through prayer through the forum of the congregation. Their common life was marked, Woods suggests, by:

> respect for reason and the potentialities of all people to live the good life with others. (2005: 3)

Woods is right to highlight the importance of reason as a fair basis on which to establish some kind of consensus where, as is the case in most democratic societies, there are ideological differences among citizens.

However, religious dissenting groups of the kind Woods has in mind would be committed broadly speaking to the same radical Christian world view. They would share similar perspectives on many matters, united by beliefs of significance that provoked their dissent from the establishment; the degree to which they disagreed would be relative. In contrast, those people whose interests were clustered around the fortunes of a particular school could not as a general rule be assumed to share beliefs in the same way. Moreover, while dissenters are traditionally respectful of the place of reason, it is as a means by which "the will of God" is revealed; the foundation of belief is reason *with* not *in place of* revelation.

Moreover, the radical dissenting congregation was a potentially volatile and unstable model of social organisation, raising further questions about its suitability as a model of democratic practice for contemporary schools. Ranters, Levellers and Diggers had largely disappeared by the end of the seventeenth century. Those groups that survived – for example, the Quakers, Congregationalists and Baptists – did so as groups who compromised the authority of their local congregations by agreeing to the discipline of a wider denomination structure at regional and national levels.

If democracy is to be applied successfully to the context of schooling in the twenty-first century, it will be developed across a system of schools on a representative model of democracy, a theme I pursue in the following two chapters. Those people with direct associations with the school will be entitled to determine their own affairs for the most part, with some regulation by the state acting as a safeguard against the potential vagaries of local interest groups.

8.6 Conclusion

A significant body of evidence is gathering to suggest that schools tend to operate more effectively where their leadership is shared. These initiatives may be positive, depending on what is being referred to by the term "effective". However, only in those cases where values of a particular sort can be seen to inform the sharing of power and responsibility do they contribute to democratic school leadership in ways that reflect political equality and autonomy.

Where examples of shared leadership are designated democratic, this may not prove to be the case on closer inspection. However, not all shared leadership practice should be written off or dismissed entirely as undemocratic simply because it may be motivated partly or significantly by other, more immediately practical concerns. It may also be consistent with democratic values or capable of being so, were it to be adapted by relatively minor adjustments. While a convincing moral argument for sharing the responsibility and power associated with school leadership has still to be made, from the review of five models of shared leadership practice conducted here, three – collaborative leadership, teacher leadership and distributed leadership – offer some sense of how democratic leadership might be applied to maintained schools in England in the future.

9 DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND ENGLISH SCHOOLING

9.1 Introduction

Over the previous two chapters, I have identified elements of leadership practice that have become established in maintained schools in England and which have more or less democratic elements to them. A commitment to "social democratic" values has been attributed to the very best school leaders (Gold, et al., 2003) but as an attractive addition rather than a core expectation (Chapter Seven). Likewise, examples of democratic, shared and distributed school leadership have been identified which promote "social democratic" values (see Chapter Eight) but which fall short of the requirements of a truly democratic account of school leadership.

During this and the subsequent chapter I will make a theoretical case for democratic school leadership. There is a model of representative democratic school governance across maintained schooling in England already but this is in urgent need of rejuvenation. This process of renewal will include the development of opportunities to engage directly in democratic decision-making at a local level. This argument will lead into a discussion I will have later (see Chapter Eleven) about the need to educate citizens. I link this discussion to the distinction that I made earlier (see Chapter Two) between formal and informal leadership.

9.2 Democracy

So far, I have simply defined democracy (see Chapter Three) as the political ideal of government or rule *by the people* (Hardin, 2005). I have suggested that what characterises democratic societies is that the power, as well as the responsibility of decision-making is extended to many people rather than concentrated with relatively few. I have characterised as "undemocratic" those societies in which such powers are limited to a relatively few people, on the grounds that they are rich or aristocratic (Blackburn, 1994:ref. democracy) physically strong or unusually intelligent.

Democracy in its modern, rather than classical form assumes two characteristic values:

1. **political liberty** or the right to participate in decision-making, particularly where those decisions affect one directly; and

2. political **equality** or the assumption that this freedom should be extended to all people unless good reasons can be given to the contrary (Wolff, 1996: 85)

These values are widely – if not universally – accepted, their implications for practice are fiercely contested. Next, I describe political liberty and political equality in more detail and explain why they have proved popular but controversial.

9.2.1 Political liberty

Underlying the practice of democracy in its modern sense (see above) is the principle that people are autonomous, capable of "self rule", and therefore entitled to political liberty. Political liberty is taken here to refer to that freedom to which people are entitled in democratic societies to make rational decisions and choices in what concerns the good life for themselves (Swift, 2001: 79). Democracy requires that people are included, if not in every decision made, at least in those that impact on their lives directly as it is currently lived and/or how it might be lived in the future.

Generally speaking, it is assumed that ordinary people are best placed to know the future good for their own lives. In "our world", Patricia White observes (1983: 9), there are no "super-people" expert in the good life in detail for others. Even if such super-people, who knew unerringly what the good was, were to exist, it is still not clear that they would be morally justified in taking control over other people's affairs. I will consider reasons why this assumption has been disputed later (see next section on political equality).

More likely, she concludes, is that we are all "normal" people able to choose for ourselves. In this case:

the only way to dispose of political power in a morally acceptable way is to allow each individual access to an equal share in the exercise, or control, of power. (White, 1983: 9)

Political liberty in a positive sense lies in the freedom to choose; for people to participate actively in those collective decisions concerning the common life which affect them directly. However, this creates a potential problem if the principle of liberty is to be observed consistently; for with the right to an equal share in the exercise or control of power, comes a responsibility to become involved actively in political decision-making. The value of liberty concerns not only questions of who should be free to govern but "how much government should there be?"(Berlin, 2005) and "how far should it be insisted upon that citizens agree to participate in it?"

Out of this concern, Berlin (1958) developed a well-known distinction between two kinds of liberty. Having experienced at first hand the terrifying consequences of totalitarian rule in Europe during the early to mid twentieth century, Berlin criticised those governments on either extreme of political opinion for using a positive interpretation of liberty to insist that their citizens must participate in civic life and along lines that they determined for them. He argued that liberty ought to be interpreted negatively instead, meaning by this that individuals should be left free from government intervention as far as possible; they should not be "forced to be free" in ways that, far from helping them to realise their freedom, interfere with it.

Both Adam Swift (2001: 52) and Charles Taylor (1985c) acknowledge the sharpness of Berlin's political thought and suggest that it has helped to clarify complexities that are inherent to the notion of political liberty. They agree that it is helpful to retain two "families" of ideas about liberty but argue that a rigid logical distinction between them into "freedom from" (negative) and "freedom to" (positive) breaks down under further scrutiny. For example, it is simply not true to suppose that all proponents of positive liberty are committed to strong collective control over the common life so that citizens feel "forced to be free"; many may allow that other kinds of freedom are possible outside collective control. Positive liberty need not lead to totalitarianism as relentlessly as Berlin envisaged (Taylor, 1985c, Swift, 2001: 55-68).

It is also unclear how the right to political liberty can be sustained on a negative view, if too many citizens exercise the choice to opt out of civic responsibility. In this case, the notion of rule by the many rather than the few breaks down (Swift, 2001: 67), contravening the very notion of political liberty that those who advocate negative liberty are seeking to defend. If a right to political liberty is to be sustained, the state may need to insist – in ways that fall far short of those undesirable extremes reflected in totalitarianism – that citizens engage actively, if minimally, in some civic responsibilities.

Nor can all citizens exercise political liberty equally if governments are too limited in their powers to intervene. Political authorities help to remove barriers external to the individual – for example, discrimination, or a lack of financial assets – in order to create conditions in which political equality is possible. Barriers which are internal to particular individuals might also prevent them from identifying, let alone achieving, their ambitions: a lack of confidence perhaps, or inappropriate advice received from people in authority over them. Indeed, the individual concerned may not always be aware of the internal factors that constrain them from making fully informed decisions. These concerns are more prominent on a positive view of liberty.

I have argued (see above) that the right to political liberty assumes *normal* people are capable of making choices for themselves. Therefore, if internal barriers in some people constrain them from exercising their right to choose freely, they have been unable to realise their *normal* self. The theme of a "self" was highlighted earlier with reference to Charles Taylor's work in Chapter Two. I argued that human life is characterised by more than instinct and natural behaviour because people are also constituted through the adoption of social and cultural practices. Therefore, the freedom to choose will involve more than the satisfaction of physical need alone, although physical need will be one important aspect of the good life for people.

Put simply, if the self is that aspect of the person concerned to make judgements between conceptions of the good life, both physical and non-material, these judgements will require the capacity for "strong evaluation" (Chapter Two). One vital function of an education is the moral and political dimension that will enable

people to judge for themselves whether or not their choices are their own or internally constrained. This may but need not be facilitated through programmes of study that lead to entrance in public examinations. I pursue this theme in Chapter Eleven.

9.2.2 Political equality

I argued earlier (see above) that political equality was the equal right to consideration, or treatment with concern and respect unless reasonable and relevant reasons prove otherwise, in decision-making. This is an important claim about the nature of social relationships that ought to characterise democratic societies and is of considerable relevance to school leadership. Where people are equal with respect to their political status their relationship during decision making cannot be conceived hierarchically (Swift, 2001: 94).

This does not mean that a commitment to non hierarchical social relations requires people to be treated in the *same* way (Swift, 2001: 93) as they are very clearly different (Peters, 1966: 118). However, an equal right to consideration ensures that where people are not included in decision-making, reasons must be given to justify their exclusion. Moreover, those reasons that are offered must be relevant to the distinction that is proposed (Benn and Peters, 1959: 110-1).

Take for example, the situation at the beginning of the twentieth century when women in Britain were excluded from the franchise. The stated grounds for excluding them from the right to vote were that their interests would be the same as their husbands if they were married, or their fathers if they were unmarried (Wolff, 1996: 113), so that to include them was unnecessary. Slowly social attitudes have changed; many people now reject such assertions.

The right to political equality is now widely accepted. Celebrations across the world in the early 1990s to mark the ending of the apartheid regime and the introduction of multiracial elections to the previously segregated South African parliament offers powerful evidence of this, Wolff suggests (1996: 112). The happiness expressed was not only for the result itself but what the election symbolised; that for the first time

people were regarded as equal, worthy of the same degree of respect; free to express their political beliefs through the ballot box, whatever their ethnicity.

Consider a further and more recent example of the same phenomenon; the global response to the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States of America. Even his political opponents declared the election a victory for democracy. "History was made yesterday" the Republican President Bush declared to reporters the following morning, suggesting the success of his Democratic opponent represented a move in the direction of a "more perfect union" (2008).

Political equality is a necessary condition of the modern democratic way of life. The classical form of democracy practised in the city states of ancient Greece including Athens, did not conform to this condition because neither women nor slaves were entitled to a share in political power (Blackburn, 1994). South Africa before 1994 was not democratic, although its government was elected for limited terms of office because it discriminated unreasonably against particular people on the irrelevant grounds of their ethnicity.

A compelling case would be needed in a democratic society to deny people their right to political equality. Any reasons presented should be capable of being generalised; that is, they should not be specific to individuals and therefore discriminatory. On these grounds, for example, anyone found guilty of "corrupt or illegal practices in connection with an election" within the previous five years is not allowed to vote in British elections (Electoral Commission, 2006). A clear and impersonal category of ineligible people is defined.

The grounds for denying political equality should also be relevant. In the example just cited people found guilty of electoral misconduct in the recent past are not able to vote because their participation would cast doubt on the legitimacy of the result, given their propensity to cheat. Meanwhile, prisoners on remand are entitled to a vote (Electoral Commission, 2006) because, presumed innocent until proven guilty, there is no relevant reason why it should be denied to them. Note, the onus falls on

those seeking to deny political equality to make the case; not those who would extend equal consideration (Peters, 1966: 120-1). To sum up;

> The notion basic to justice is that distinction should be made if there are relevant differences and they should not be made if there are no relevant differences or on the basis of irrelevant differences (Peters, 1966: 123)

While an equal right to consideration guarantees each person an opportunity to engage in making decisions, it does not guarantee that their wishes will be granted. Were absolute unanimity required before any proposal for action could be approved for action, a form of tyranny could be created, with the majority of the citizenry disadvantaged by disproportionate power exercised by the minority view. For this reason most modern democracies operate a system of majority rule.

However, this solution creates a further problem, because it compromises the political liberty of a minority group, whose opinions differ persistently from the majority, perhaps on religious or cultural grounds; each time their views are considered equally at the point of democratic deliberation, they are rejected by the majority's will. A detailed response to this problem goes beyond the scope of the more general argument presented here. However, in brief, democracies have a moral responsibility to try to accommodate the differences of members of minority groups, without compromising those decisions made by the majority.

9.2.3 Two approaches to democracy

Next, I consider how these abstract ideals translate into democratic practice. While democracy can take a variety of forms (Wolff, 1996: 68-69), "participation" is a key characteristic of any kind of democratic life. Democracy may be distinguished from all other systems of government by a commitment to collective decision-making by a group, that is binding on all its members (Christiano, 2006). It concerns participation by group members in determining what laws and policies should be adopted for their society (Christiano, 2006).

That said, crudely speaking the various particular models of democracy which may be practised can be characterised as one of two kinds – either "direct" or

"representative" – according to the nature of participation that is expected from – and by – citizens. I will make a brief introductory observation about the different approach to participation taken in direct and representative models of democracy. Then I will illustrate the implications of this difference in more detail, with reference to the particular example of political governance.

9.2.3.1 Participation

First, let us consider the different interpretations of participation in decision-making that are found in these contrasting approaches to democratic practice, using the specific example of voting. There are two dimensions to participation in a vote: one is the "end product", or the result of the vote; the other, which is of equal importance, is the electoral process of "deliberation" which takes place prior to the vote itself (Wolff, 1996). The purpose of deliberation is to enable various opinions to be considered; and to try to ensure that electors' votes are based on an informed appraisal of the various options open to them.

On a direct or participatory account of democracy, ordinary citizens should engage directly with the end result *and* the process of decision-making. Both the quality of opportunity to engage actively in deliberation and the quality of the decision reached are considered to be significant. Meanwhile, on a representative view of democracy, much of the process of deliberation tends to be delegated to a smaller group of nominated citizens. In effect, the value accorded to the process of deliberation itself is reserved for only the most significant decisions, leaving citizens, on a representative model of democracy citizens, with greater freedom to pursue other valuable activities (see above). What continues to matter for all citizens is a good outcome.

This simple example helps to highlight both the fundamental difference between these two approaches to democracy and their basic weaknesses and strengths. Participative democracy empowers many people to be included directly in decision-making, but at a cost of time and effort which may, depending on the issue at stake, lead to decisions which ordinary citizens are not placed to make well. Representative democracy may be more efficient, and may allow the citizenry to delegate certain

decisions to those who are expert in that field; however, it can also compromise the power of ordinary citizens to affect decisions which directly concern them.

9.2.3.2 Laws

Other features that are characteristic of democracy in both its direct and representative forms take a quite different form in each approach. One such feature is the distinctive view of the law taken in democracies. While all societies require rules or laws to arbitrate between people's competing needs and wants, in a democracy all people are equal before the law and no one is above it, even a king or an elected president. The law is the ultimate authority. Those laws agreed should protect the liberties of all citizens equally, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion or sexuality. No one may be arrested, imprisoned, or exiled arbitrarily, except by laws established by the society's parliament. Moreover, in a democracy, unlike the just society of Plato's *Republic* (see Chapter Three), nobody claims privileged knowledge of what the law should be; no-one is expert in the detailed needs and wants of other people.

However, the following important distinction between direct and representative democracy ought to be noted. In a direct form of democracy all people make the law and enforce it, holding each other to account. In representative democracies certain legal responsibilities may be delegated to those citizens with legal expertise in how the law, once determined, should be interpreted (see ahead).

Democratic societies of all kinds will appoint specific people, through a fair and open means of selection, to administer aspects of organisation on behalf of the wider group. The means of selection may vary but tend to revolve around the practice of free and fair elections, other citizens having identified in their peers certain dispositions and commitments needed to exercise a particular responsibility well. Their authority will depend on the particular office or responsibility which they have accepted; they should not seek to claim personal authority over fellow citizens.

The flexibility within direct democracies to appoint particular people to administer decision-making is not always appreciated. Their powers are very limited indeed,

with as much power as possible being reserved for the people (Wolff, 1996: 103). Such roles are significantly more developed within representative democracies which will elect, as a matter of course, smaller groups, to undertake designated tasks on behalf of the people as a whole, including the appointment of an executive. Various structures of executive are possible, with an elected chief a common feature.

9.2.3.3 Separation of powers

While democratic groups of all kinds delegate some responsibilities to varying degrees, all are committed to political equality in principle and introduce means to ensure no one individual or elite group of people becomes too powerful. Those who have been delegated power should not be in a position to abuse it; should they do so, it should be easy to discover such abuses when they take place.

It is much easier on a direct model of democracy to avoid this problem. With citizens so directly involved in most decision making, an unhealthy balance of power will be extremely difficult to hide. Direct democracies must nevertheless take care to ensure that particular individuals do not dominate the group effort unduly. Where certain citizens have been allocated responsibilities on behalf of administering the group, it might be considered prudent to fix the length of time that any individual will undertake this task. Certain methods might be established whereby members of the group can voice their concerns if they are dissatisfied with the role played by those who have been given responsibilities.

Representative democracies are more complex. It is usually necessary to attempt to separate out the powers of those who have been delegated additional access to it, particularly those occupying key positions in the executive. Hence, for example, the standard practice in of separating out the powers of the police and the military and ensuring that they are answerable to civilian authorities. Separation of legal power is significant too: the power of the legislature to determine the law is deliberately separated from that of the executive overseeing its implementation and the judiciary overseeing its enforcement.

This being the case, the powers accorded the judiciary must also be separated to guard against corruption. The court system characteristic of a democracy is separated into two tiers: higher-level courts concerned with the over-arching framework or legal constitution on which laws are based and acting as a court of appeal; and courts administering the main body of law. The constitution is intended to capture a sense of what it is that people have believed over time their society stands for in its broadest terms. This constitution may be written, or unwritten. It may change over time but once fixed should be very difficult to change, not least to protect the constitution from an abuse of power by an unscrupulous executive.

9.2.3.4 Tiers of government

Finally, the practice of tiered government – so that decisions are made at local, national and transnational levels, according to the issue at hand – is a characteristic of representative rather than direct democracy. Many decisions may best be made directly by citizens, for example in matters based on their local knowledge of what needs and wants should be met by community services. However, there are other decisions which may benefit from economies of scale if supervised over a wider area. The national level of government, it is argued in many modern democracies, is better suited than the local to organise issues of trade including a common currency, or defence, although increasingly in Europe these matters are determined at a transnational level.

There are potential diseconomies of scale, though, for with each tier added, ordinary citizens become increasingly distanced from their democratic right to decide. The effects of these potential disadvantages may be minimised, though not eradicated, by clear lines of communication and accountability between citizens and the various tiers of government and their respective officials, facilitated by improved global communication systems.

9.2.4 Direct or representative? Striking a middle path

So far, I have described two approaches to democracy, direct and representative; their common commitment to participation in decision-making; and certain features

– laws determined by the people, the appointment of administrators or an executive to support the organisation of the group, the principle of the separation of power – which are characteristic of both but which are interpreted differently. I have identified one further significant feature – tiered government – which is a characteristic solely of representative democracy. On further inspection, a potentially complementary relationship between the two approaches can be traced; it seems possible to practice direct democracy at a local level within a wider representative system, bringing the best – and minimising the shortcomings – of both approaches together.

At a very localised level there are significant advantages to direct democratic decision-making; Wolff (1996) describes it as democracy's "pure spirit". Perhaps the most significant is that it maximises political equality. It offers both the simplest and fairest way in which to ensure each individual has equal access to and equal share in the exercise or control of power (White, 1983: 9).

Healthy democracies depend on their citizens to participate actively in civic life. Political liberty cannot be sustained if too many citizens opt out of their civic responsibilities (see above). I have identified flexibility within a model of direct democratic decision-making to appoint particular people to administer decisions taken (see above). Moreover, it is through active engagement in civic life that one's capacity to exercise one's political liberty may be developed.

For example, politicians are forced to act when they are petitioned directly through a public meeting, or a constituency surgery; it is more difficult for them to ignore, or prevaricate about, a problem that has been raised, so that it is never adequately resolved. There is a transparency and immediacy to decision-making when it is conducted on a small scale. It is through active engagement in decision-making that external barriers to realising political liberty, including irrational attempts by some citizens to discriminate against others on grounds of their gender or ethnicity (see above), are challenged and removed.

Direct democracy ensures that individual citizens are immediately responsible, not just for any decisions that are made, but for ensuring that they are acted upon. Where matters are delegated, regular and extended deliberation enables people to raise issues directly and persistently with those people responsible for overseeing them; were there to be tiers of government involved, these might be easier to conceal. Citizens hold the actions of fellow citizens directly to account in practice of this kind.

Furthermore, internal barriers to civic activity, including the capacity to judge for oneself whether or not one's choices in life are being artificially constrained, may be also be challenged through active engagement in democratic deliberation. It is by engaging in discussion with those whose opinions are different from mine that I refine my own views of the world and construct new opinions. I will have more to say about the pedagogical reasons for this claim in Chapter Eleven. The kinds of active engagement I have described so far fall very far short of the kind of strong collective control associated with totalitarianism.

The process of deliberation conducted by localised groups of citizens along direct democratic lines can improve the quality of legislation and lead to better decision-making. Reflecting on my own experience as a school leader, I observed (see Chapter One) how people seemed more likely to honour those decisions that they had helped to make. It enhanced their sense of responsibility for and ownership over the outcome.

Wolff's (1996) assertion that the practice of direct democracy is "virtually unknown" in the modern world seems over-stated. It is widely practiced informally, and at the level of local communities, if not as a means of ruling at a national level. Nonetheless, he is right to raise concerns about the potential inefficiency of direct democratic practices. I have already pointed to the potential danger that the principle of political liberty will be compromised (see above) in uncompromisingly direct democratic practice, if unwelcome and/or impractical responsibilities are imposed on citizens.

Moreover, as the earlier discussion of political liberty indicated (see above), there is a potentially heavy cost – for example, in terms of time and effort – in undertaking the responsibility of making civic decisions directly and personally. Nor does extended deliberation lead inexorably to the very best decision-making. For example, there might be social dynamics within the group that cause the influence of certain individuals to be disproportionately powerful; yet in practice those views are invested with self-interest rather than the best interests of the group.

Some people more than others enjoy being civically active. I accept the earlier point that has been made about challenging barriers internal to individual citizens; people might not appreciate the value of active civic engagement without being required initially to experience it. Nonetheless, individual people will judge to differing degrees the place of citizenship in the good life for them personally.

While there is some scope within direct democracy to vary the levels of participation required, in representative democracy the levels of participation expected from citizens are considerably more flexible still. Moreover there is considerable variation in practice from one representative model to another. For example, compulsory voting is found in some societies, while citizens of other societies are not required by law to participate in elections to a representative assembly. A commitment to non-hierarchical social relations need not entail that people are to be treated in the same way; rather, that when they are treated differently, there are good reasons to exclude them from decision-making that are clearly relevant to the distinction that has been proposed as grounds to exclude them (see above).

In *'Representative Government'*, John Stuart Mill argues that:

> Participation should be as great as the general degree of improvement of the community will allow; and that nothing less can be ultimately desirable than the admission of all to a share in the sovereign power of the state. But since all cannot, in a community exceeding a single town, participate personally in any but some very minor portions of the public business, it follows that the ideal type of a perfect government must be representative. (Mill, 1975: 217-8)

If Mill is right, representative democratic practice is necessary for reasons of scope and scale. Nonetheless, within that wider system, direct aspects of democratic practice at a local level are also possible.

The advantages to representative democracy are considerable, particularly in practical terms but at the level of principle too. Representative democracy addresses the concern, prominent in direct democracy, to respect political liberty. In delegating responsibilities to dedicated groups, time in which many other citizens are required to engage in civic activity is minimised. A representative system might stipulate a minimum degree of civic participation that is morally acceptable while allowing for, even encouraging, more active approaches where these are desired and prove practical. Some groups will be more committed to direct participation than others.

A second advantage to representative democracy is that it maximises opportunities for interested individuals to develop expert knowledge in the affairs of state. In some matters, better decisions will be made by those individuals who are involved directly; for example, whether or not to hold a street party, on what date, where and with what theme. Other more complex and technical matters are likely to be better served by expert opinion; for example, a concern with media intrusion into the private lives of public figures is an issue of international significance, requiring a technical knowledge of the law, that is most likely to be possessed by a legal expert, to grasp relevant details. Wider public scrutiny on the matter will be needed, but the best proposals for legislation on the matter are likely to come from experts; and they will be more robust in the face of potential media and government influence.

I concede one obvious disadvantage to representative democracy at the level of principle: political equality is compromised by democracy of this kind. Most decisions made in representative democracies concern the representation of the group on that public body where decisions will be made on their behalf. Decisions may be made on matters of vital importance at one remove from the people whose future the outcome concerns.

However, there are ways within a representative model of democracy of minimising this disadvantage. Levels of decision-making might be identified so as to promote opportunities for this in smaller groups where it is sensible to do so. At the same time, where such opportunities are targeted within a wider framework of representative democracy, they avoid the diseconomies of scale incurred by pure direct democracy. Additional costs of time and effort are avoided, for example, if referenda are targeted at specific strategic issues (like devolution) and avoided at other times.

Representative democracy turns into a virtue the likelihood that some people are likely to be more politically active than others. At the same time it honours those values – political liberty and equality – which are necessary to the democratic way of life and which matter most. Overall autonomy is respected, and critical discussion promoted, while there is flexibility about the specific means by which the democratic way of life is followed.

9.3 Democratic governance and maintained English schooling

I have briefly sketched features distinctive to democratic practice, illustrating these with reference to systems of government in general. I have highlighted the potential value of combining the strengths of direct democracy at the local level with the advantages of a broader representative system. Next, I test my hypothesis on one small part of the democratic political system in England that is concerned with school governance. I will consider direct democracy again in Chapter 10, while in the rest of this chapter I will sketch the wider framework of representative democracy within which such practice has a place, indicating on occasion where this might be.

I have argued (see Chapter Two) that governance is a key dimension to school leadership. While distinct from leadership, governance dictates the institutional structures within which both formal and informal aspects of school leadership must operate. What emerges from my analysis is that there is a system already in place which lends itself, albeit imperfectly, to a democratic model of leadership in a representative sense.

9.3.1 Tiers of government

It is already the case that national government exercises a strong, direct influence on school governance in England, subject to some transnational influences. Laws that are passed in the European Parliament are considered "legally superior to domestic law" where these conflict with UK law so that citizens should enjoy similar rights across the continent. For example, European law prevails in the case of workers' rights, so that the hours that employees in schools can be expected to work are commensurate with those of other similar workers. At the same time, the UK government, like other European states, retains control of its school system. This ensures that legislators bring a contextual knowledge of the particular national education system for which they are responsible to decision-making which might not be possessed by international legislators.

Meanwhile, the power exercised over schools at the level of national government has increased considerably since 1988 (Chapters Four and Five) and decreased correspondingly at a local level. In 2007, Local Education Authorities were abandoned and Local Authorities took on the more limited role of "commissioner" rather than "provider" of local education services. They continue in this capacity to bear responsibility for school admissions, ensuring there are sufficient places and that access to them is fair, as well as monitoring standards, with powers to intervene in the affairs of those schools where there is evidence that they are failing to meet the expectations that the national government has of them. This shift in who determines the expectations, national rather than local government, is significant.

In contrast schools have been given greater direct control over their own affairs, including their budgets. Greater variety has been introduced in the type of school maintained by the state. These include "Trust Schools", "Academies" and most recently the proposed introduction of "Free Schools", all accountable directly to national – not local – government. They may have a governing body that represents local opinion but otherwise they are free of local political control. In other words, the capacity for direct democratic decision-making at a local level depends entirely on those measures that individual schools have put in place to accommodate them.

9.3.2 Participation

With a tiered system of representative governance in place, many ordinary citizens in England do enjoy opportunities to participate in decisions made about schooling indirectly at both a local and national level when they vote in elections. "Free Schools" and "Academies" create opportunities for particularly motivated citizens to become more actively involved in education decision-making at a local level but reduce the opportunities for citizens in general to influence decision-making in their local schools. A school which moves outside Local Authority control is only politically accountable at a national level.

It might be countered, given the relatively low levels of participation by ordinary citizens in local elections in England, that people are "voting with their feet", opting to devolve such decisions to those who are more directly and keenly interested. Maintained schools have been required to elect a governing body, representative of its various constituent groups including parents, teachers and local interest groups as well as the Local Authority, since the Education Act of 1980. Yet in many schools elections to the governing body are poorly supported, making it unclear how representative the views of its members are. Moreover, governing bodies tend to be conducted as though they were the board of directors of a limited company rather than a political body (Levacic, 1995). Governors tend to defer in decision-making to the view of expert opinions of educational professionals, particularly the headteacher (Farrell and Law, 1999). I will pursue this issue in Chapter Ten.

Noting that there are practical problems that need to be addressed if more people are to engage with school governorship, there is a further fundamental problem at the level of principle which needs to be aired. This relates back to comments I made earlier about political liberty (see above). I will address practical reasons why people might not volunteer for this civic responsibility in sufficient numbers in the next chapter, suggesting ways in which these might be acted on in an attempt to resolve the situation. I will go on to argue that on a positive view of liberty the future health of democracy in the UK depends on more citizens coming to regard governorship, like jury service, ass duty that people must undertake in their turn. It should be given

greater priority in terms of publicly funded resources, including resources for civic education.

9.3.3 Laws

Laws governing English schools are democratically determined, although ordinary people are seemingly distant from the process by which this is achieved (see above). There are positive aspects to this state of affairs on a representative account of democracy, with economies of scale to be accrued where decision-making is focussed at a national level. In an earlier chapter I identified advantages to establishing national expectations for school leaders (see Chapter Five, Section 5.4). National level agreements bring other advantages in terms of equality of opportunity including, for example, a nationally agreed curriculum which establishes an entitlement for all children (DfES, 2007) and a mechanism for holding the decisions of policy makers to account by experts in parliament, through a cross party education sub committee.

However, at the level of local government the power of ordinary citizens to determine policy directly is more limited (see above). It is not clear at the time of writing what impact policies of the Coalition Government elected in May 2010 concerned with a shift in power to local communities (e.g. Gove, 2010c) will have on maintained schools in England. The concern must be that, with such ad hoc arrangements for school governance, dependent on the agency of individuals and special interest groups, a few people will have considerable influence on direct decision-making for individual schools. Meanwhile, other stakeholders, including pupils and parents, may have very little say in comparison with decisions that are made which impact very directly on their wellbeing now and in the future.

9.3.4 Executive power

Increasingly, since the 1980s, executive power over decision-making in schools in England has been concentrated at the level of national government, with significant power also being enjoyed by formal leaders in individual schools (see Chapters Four and Five). Conservative and Labour administrations alike have exercised tight control over educational provision in schools, supported by civil servants and

experts employed by Quangos, or Quasi Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisations, including OFSTED and the QCA. The recent introduction of Free Schools and expansion of the Academies programme transfers power away from local government to national government level to whom they are accountable directly (NGLN, 2010).

Within individual schools, considerable power tends to be exercised by headteachers or principals, supported by a senior management team. Appointed by, and answerable to, the Governing Body, formal school leaders nonetheless exercise great influence over the direction of decision-making (see Chapter Seven, and the example of the "Principled Principals", for a counter example to this trend). Although governors have been given powers from the earliest days of state-maintained schooling to control and direct decision-making (Thody, 1990), in practice the role of the school governor has tended to be interpreted as one offering support and protection for staff and principals (Thody, 1990) (see Chapter Four). I will consider at the level of principle the role of the Governing Body in an account of democratic school leadership in greater length in the next chapter.

Meanwhile, at a local government level, the executive powers of service provision that Local Education Authorities enjoyed from 1944 until the end of the 1970s (see Chapter Four) have contracted; indeed in 2007 these were disbanded. In their place, Local Authority Education Committees will commission educational services, for example from schools and from private sector providers. Local government employs significantly reduced numbers of professional officers to support and co-ordinate educational services across local areas, with these responsibilities (and associated powers) shifting either to executive groups within schools (see above); or across schools as part of a "federation", for example the Harris Educational Trust, the Oasis Trust and the Educational Trust linked to CfBT (see Chapter Eight).

9.3.5 Separation of powers

A further problem in the system of governance that currently operates in England arises where decision-making power becomes imbalanced in favour of executive

groups because the separation of powers breaks down. Having an executive is a positive feature of representative democracy in principle, because it enables specialists to undertake work on society's behalf and frees up time and effort for ordinary citizens to pursue other valuable activities (see above). However, checks and balances need to be retained at every tier of government, including local government, if the potential for holding professionals to account by representative democratic means is to be suitably robust.

Hence at a national level, for example, parliament must continue to scrutinise education policies generally before they become legally binding. There are various means by which this is done, including the system of cross-party Select Committees, debate in both Houses and correspondence between ministers, shadow ministers, M.P.s in general and civil servants. Schools are held directly accountable to the government department with responsibility for schools (from 2010 called the DfE), based on evidence gathered from inspections conducted by HMI and OFSTED. This level of scrutiny is retained at a local level where school governing bodies are accountable to their Local Authority. School governing bodies are also responsible for holding the actions of formal leaders within individual schools to account, although there are concerns about the extent to which this happens in practice (see above) which I will consider in more depth in the next chapter.

However, in practice Local Authority control over individual schools is in decline; its powers are greatest in relation to arrangements for school admissions. Individual governing bodies are required to ensure that the admissions policy for the school conforms to national guidelines; while parents have a right of appeal to Local Authorities in the case of both admissions and exclusions, as mediating bodies dealing with the competing interests of local citizens. However, this represents a very limited level of democratic engagement indeed in decision-making in education in a local area.

9.4 Potential difficulties with democratic school governance

I have traced the existing democratic approach to the structures of governance within which the leadership of maintained schools in England operates but argued that there are significant shortcomings to the current system. Before I move on to make proposals to tackle these shortcomings, I need to address an alternative interpretation of the present state of affairs which suggests that democratic school governance is flawed at the level of principle. If this alternative interpretation can be sustained, my proposals cannot proceed any further.

9.4.1 Theoretical difficulties

James Tooley (1996 Chapter Five) does not object *per se* to democracy but argues that liberty and political equality are served best by the market, because it is better able than political structures to respond flexibly and directly to the wants and needs of ordinary people. He recognises that a minimal regulatory role must be undertaken by the state but only in so far as the welfare of society's most vulnerable members should be protected by it (Tooley, 1996: 26).

9.4.1.1 Political equality

Tooley highlights the cost to political equality in school governance controlled by the state. It was conceded earlier in the chapter (see above) that most ordinary citizens only participate in decisions made about schooling at some remove. Moreover, as Tooley points out, votes cast for a government or local MP in elections are unlikely to reflect citizens' views on education in particular (Eason, 2007). The potential contribution citizens can make to political decision making, even at a national level, should not be reduced to voting when other options (illustrated earlier) are possible.

The potential cost to political equality (Tooley, 1996: 71) created by the appointment of an executive was also conceded earlier (see above). This cost was accepted reluctantly, given the advantages that accrue for citizens in terms of their liberty to pursue other worthwhile activities. Furthermore, the benefits of specialist knowledge to pursuit of the common good were highlighted, with room for expertise in a democracy, including experts in democratic deliberation (Wolff, 1996 p.106).

Tooley argues that at a national level in particular, well-placed individuals and officials have been too dominant in the process of formulating education policies, to the exclusion of the views of ordinary citizens. Meanwhile, in individual schools individual leaders seek, and are encouraged by their followers to "impose their curricular vision on educational institutions" (1996 p.72). Tooley seems most unwilling to entertain the possibility that these difficulties within the existing arrangements for schools in England could be reformed (Tooley, 1996 p.73) and he is committed resolutely to the market as an alternative.

Criticisms levelled at market-led alternatives to state control (Tooley, 1995, Tooley, 1996) Tooley believes, could be resolved were "authentic" market conditions realised (Jonathan, 1989, Ball, 1990, Ranson, 1993, Ball, 1998). Why is he not ready then, to grant state control of education under "authentic" democratic conditions the same degree of latitude? It may be true that members of an "educational establishment" have become too powerful, with the status of their informed professional judgements inflated out of proportion. It neither follows from this that all educational professionals labour under the same misapprehension, nor that other citizens must accommodate them. It does suggest that those structures already in place should be reviewed in the light of this apparent abuse of power and that different and better civic and professional education is needed in order to empower ordinary people.

9.4.1.2 Minority views

One distinctive characteristic of democracy is that it encourages people to express their opinions, however diverse, and through deliberation come to decisions about laws by which they agree to live (see above). A stable society, based on a social contract determined by the people themselves is preferred, either to instability or to stability imposed by the decisions of one or a small group of people. Occasionally agreements can be reached that are unanimous.

More often, decisions have to be made without complete agreement having been reached. The equal right to consideration guarantees citizens an opportunity to engage in decision-making, but cannot guarantee in every case their wishes will be

granted. Where a distinctive worldview sets a minority apart, their wishes may be excluded persistently from the majority view. The principle of majority rule is necessary, for without it the minority holds disproportionate power to veto the majority's wishes. Yet it brings with it too a danger that people of minority opinion will in effect be tyrannised (see above).

James Tooley pursues this point to argue for a market-driven system of educational provision (1996 p.70). The vision of education held dear by a minority opinion would never be realised within a state system tied to majority rule, he argues. Alternatively, he proposes that a market-led system would enable minority groups to "exit" from majority provision to alternative provision of their choosing (1996 p.74). Again (see above) Tooley seems unwilling to allow for the considerable scope for reform within the existing system.

While funds for state education are provided from money collected through the tax system, why should taxpayers forfeit the right they currently enjoy to contribute to political discussions about how their contributions are allocated? Moreover, an expectation that separate and additional facilities will always be provided to cater for minority opinion goes beyond the moral duty of right to equal consideration (Swift, 2001). Citizens should be concerned, as Mill was (Mill, 1859?), that majorities do not stifle the "experiments in living" favoured by a minority of citizens with a more creative character; and various "protective strategies" (White, 1983) can be introduced to minimise the impact and occurrence of the problem. Were the majority always required to sponsor the wishes of minorities, *their* freedom would be compromised.

Nor should the concern to cater for minority views extend to state-sponsorship of practices that are incompatible with basic democratic values. For example, why should autonomously controlled schools located in a democratic society be tolerated who seek to admit pupils on the basis of their ethnicity alone? Such a policy might curry favour with a minority who privately held such views but could not be acted on in a democracy without risk of censure.

Local Authorities have retained the responsibility of overseeing the allocation of school places, even though in other respects their powers have been curtailed, because successive governments have recognised the need for a fair and transparent system through which the claims of various "experiments in living of a creative character" may be arbitrated. The tier of government best placed to interpret the needs of a local community is located within that community itself as they deliberate directly with each other. Democracy, Stuart Ranson (1993) argues,

> ....can enable members of a locality to articulate and reconcile the different values and needs which they believe to be central to the welfare of the communities in which they live (p. 340)

Thus, where interests compete or conflict over school provision for example, responsible citizens are asked to consider the needs of all local people, including those holding a minority opinion when making decisions. An assumption is made that when educated to understand both the responsibility of self-rule as well as the rights to which it entitles them, most people are capable of judgements detached from perceived self-interest alone. Mill suggests in his essay on Representative Government (Mill, 1975) that these qualities of character may be developed through the experience of engaging in public business.

While Mill depicts effective self-rule at a local level as a strategy to protect minority interests, people of minority opinion might conclude that in practice their own local community proves incapable of demonstrating the detachment from self-interest just described. In these circumstances they are invited to turn instead to other tiers of government. At the highest level, the High Courts and an independent judiciary are deemed expert in interpreting the spirit of the constitution to which they can appeal.

White (White, 1983) describes this as an "aristocratic" strategy to protect the interests of minority groups, although political equality need not be compromised by it in the manner that its name might suggest. For experts are called upon to pass judgement on the legitimacy of decisions made by other citizens; they do not decree what decisions should have been made instead. Rather, the relevant legislature is required

to reconsider the apparently inadequate terms of the agreements they have reached to seek alternative resolutions.

9.4.1.3 Practical difficulties

Having considered key theoretical objections, I consider practical problems that have been associated with democratic school governance next, with particular reference to the observations of Mike Tomlinson, a former Chief Inspector of Schools in England. Tomlinson has compared unfavourably the ability of local government and "The Learning Trust", a not-for-profit charitable organisation of which he was the director, to co-ordinate educational provision in one particular part of north east London (Eason, 2007). His remarks are taken here at face value to illustrate the types of concerns other people might also voice.

Tomlinson complains that the political process was "inefficient", taking too long to reach decisions in contrast with the more flexible arrangements the "The Learning Trust" was able to adopt.

> The trust can make decisions quickly, can be innovative in the actions that it wants to take and ideas and projects it wants to back...... We didn't have to go through the council chamber and debate it and all of that rigmarole. We could just do it. (Eason, 2007)

Tomlinson is critical not just of the time taken but also the quality of those decisions reached. He suggests that the local politicians who feature in the account of his particular experience were too engaged in matters of "parochial" concern to pay attention to the wisdom of more "radical" school reform being proposed to them by experts. He notes the considerable improvement in pupils' educational performance in local schools in relation to formal testing once those recommendations were implemented[9].

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[9] GCSE results rose from 31% of pupils achieving five 'good' grades in 2002, when the Learning Trust took over, to 54% in 2007, Tomlinson claims, citing similar statistical improvements in pupils' academic performance at other Key Stages.

The "parochial concerns" local government representatives identified, moreover, did not reflect in Tomlinson's view the concerns that troubled local parents when "The Learning Trust" consulted them. Tomlinson complains that while local politicians debated school status for example, parents were concerned primarily with the provision of good local schools that their children could walk to that were safe, where children could be happy and achieve well academically. "It's really not rocket science", Tomlinson concludes, "it's get the right people in place, give them backing, tell them you believe in them, and let's go." (Eason, 2007)

The views of an experienced educationalist of national reputation deserve, of course, careful consideration, however inconvenient they might appear at first glance to the case being presented. A distinction will be drawn when responding to his remarks. Some comments Tomlinson makes are reflective of his particular experience engaged in school reform, in which he can reasonably claim expertise; others are comments he is entitled to make as a citizen but which stray into personal opinion.

Advocates of representative democratic governance concede that where additional time is taken by larger groups to reach decisions, this may not always be justified; on occasion, individuals and smaller groups may be better placed to translate thoughts and ideas into action (Wolff, 1996: 101). Time is a limited resource; time spent deliberating may prove subject to diminishing returns. However, time may be well spent thinking through deep-seated or apparently intractable differences with care. Depending on the situation and context, listening to the views of others, the opportunity to voice personal opinion, may – or may not – reap its own rewards.

Tomlinson notes how well the streamlined organisation of "The Learning Trust" was able to make operational decisions. However, there is no reason why such a group could not be incorporated within a democratic system of governance if citizens agreed to it, even if there is currently no precedent for a structure of this kind in local government. Note, even though Tomlinson claims a post democratic status for his organisation, three elected council representatives are members of its executive.

Ranson (1993) is strongly supportive of democratic control of education in principle but agrees further improvements could be made to its practice. He suggests that opportunities for citizens to deliberate in decisions concerning local education services might be extended through the introduction of community education forums. Local politicians would be present in order to listen to the views of their constituents as well as being held to account in public by them.

If "The Learning Trust" identified systems through which the opinions of local people were consulted successfully, and yielded helpful results, local governments could develop them without replicating them entirely. First, democratic decision-making includes all citizens, not just those who hold a direct stake in how particular services are used. Second, while it is difficult to judge from the brief account given of the – doubtless – carefully structured process of consultation conducted with parents by "The Learning Trust", the findings of research may enhance, but should not be conflated with democratic deliberation.

Tomlinson's frustration at not being heard by local politicians may be understood; if the evidence of improvement in educational performance provided is borne out in other measures of quality they may have been wiser to listen to him. However, it is the prerogative of local politicians to pursue "parochial" interests of their own choosing, cognisant of the issues affecting local people. If they are inept or corrupt in their judgements it is for local citizens to decide this, not particular individuals.

Experts have a place in democratic government but as servants of the citizenry. Earlier, I identified a valuable role for expert opinion; for example, interceding where groups of citizens have acted unconstitutionally or compromised the welfare of other citizens, particularly those of a minority opinion (see above). However the limits to professional expertise need also to be recognised, by those experts themselves and by other citizens; it is not clear that this distinction is understood widely.

9.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have identified and described two key values, political liberty and political equality, which characterise the democratic way of life. I have identified

advantages to a representative approach to democracy which incorporates features of direct democracy at a local level, and shown how this is broadly reflected in the system which governs maintained schools in England at the beginning of the twenty-first century. I have found that system to be working relatively well at the national level of government, but questioned its success in schools. I will pursue this theme in the next chapter. However, it is no exaggeration to suggest that retaining a representative democratic system of accountability over publicly funded education is a difficult and demanding but necessary task if the right to political equality is to be sustained and nurtured.

10 DIRECT DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOLS

10.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I highlighted those principles that distinguish democracy from other forms of political rule and considered the relative weaknesses and strengths of representative and direct democratic practice. I analysed the system of democratic governance which operates in England, arguing that governance dictates the institutional structures within which both formal and informal aspects of school leadership must operate. I showed a system already in place which lends itself, albeit imperfectly, to a democratic model of school leadership.

I consider next decision-making at a very local level, particularly within schools. If the model of democratic school leadership I have in mind is to be successful, those directly involved in the affairs of local schools will need to participate actively in decision-making, although there should be some flexibility in how much responsibility is expected of them. I consider who, at the level of principle, should be included in decision-making, as well as the kinds of outcomes they should help to decide. I consider the decision-making processes that might be adopted as well as the rights – and responsibilities – pupils and parents might reasonably expect to enjoy as informal school leaders.

Given the representative model of democracy being argued for, I suggest that special rights might be afforded formal school leaders in decision-making, including teachers, recognising the additional responsibilities they undertake on society's behalf. These are limited though, and need to be held in close check. In particular, I review the traditional practice of headship in maintained schools in England and set out conditions in which it might be possible to retain a modified version of this office, while continuing to respect the value of political equality.

10.2 The rights of relevant parties to decision-making

If democratic principles are to apply at the level of leadership in individual schools, the equal right to consideration will need to be respected. This requires that people should have a say in decisions that are made over what concerns the good life for them (Swift, 2001: 79) there being no "super-people" (White, 1983) able to know this for them. However, as the constituency of a school is not clear cut, this creates a practical problem; how to distinguish fairly from a large, potentially unwieldy pool of people to whom such rights might extend.

In the previous chapter, I observed that very clearly and morally justified reasons are needed – relevant to the distinction proposed (Benn and Peters, 1959: 110-1) and capable of being generalised – if *anyone* is to be excluded from decision-making (Chapter Nine) and I have found this principle a useful guide in the sorting exercise which follows. I seek to establish why, on principle, particular people might be entitled to a say, to what extent and over matters of what kind. Within the representative model of democracy being argued for, I identify considerable scope for delegating some responsibilities to formal school leaders. However, opportunities for leadership to operate informally – so that those most closely affected are included in decisions over matters that concern them directly – must be extended.

A reasonable, relevant distinction can be drawn between those people who are connected directly in some way with a particular school, and all other citizens. I consider the rights and responsibilities of indirectly interested citizens first.

10.2.1 Indirectly interested parties

Citizens in general have a responsibility to support schools financially through the taxes they pay; and as a result should have a general right to consideration when it comes to making decisions about the future direction of educational policy. Under current arrangements, citizens are able to do this indirectly through their entitlement to vote for representatives in local and national elections. By voting at regular

intervals, citizens also undertake a civic responsibility to hold the actions of elected officials to account, by keeping them in power or replacing them.

The views of local people with an indirect link to a school are also formally represented through a school's governing body. Governorship may be overlooked in standard accounts (Glatter and Harvey, 2006: 3) but its role is fundamental on a democratic account of school leadership (see ahead). At present, local community representation takes two forms: locally elected councillors and community representatives who the governing body itself currently appoints (DfES, 2006). This latter group could be elected by members of the community, were governing bodies to operate along the lines of the school board model found commonly across North America as well as Scotland.

Otherwise, citizens in general do not have a claim to influence the internal affairs of specific schools. A very small group of people will have a loose association which should distinguish their rights from those of other people in relation to single issues which are likely to affect them. I have in mind local residents, former parents, former pupils, as well as future pupils and their parents; small businesses close to a school fall into this category too, as well as housing associations, local charities and locally based religious and cultural groups.

A democratic account of school leadership would need to factor in the right for this group of citizens to be consulted directly; for example, when the decision to sell off playing field land to a developer would have implications for the quality of life in the surrounding area. Other channels of political participation exist; however, were direct democratic activity to be insisted upon in schools, the views of those people held on the matter would be sought proactively. This might happen through a series of public meetings, or a community forum along lines promoted by Ranson (1993, 1994) (see Chapter Nine), drawing on the informal leadership capacity around the school. Having included them in the process of deliberation in this way, depending on the issue, they might additional rights to vote for an outcome after consultation.

Imagine a second kind of single issue in which a secondary school was considering significant internal changes, for example whether or not to adopt the International Baccalaureate instead of GCSEs and A Levels; or to change its status from faith based to non-denominational. The impact of the change might be of most significance to very young rather than much older children who might have left the school by the time the proposals had been fully implemented. A school led democratically might seek proactively the views of those potential future pupils, and/or their parents, interest groups who might otherwise be denied the opportunity to register an opinion.

These initiatives might, in the short term, create responsibilities for school leaders that incur additional costs in time and effort because many people, rather than a few, are invited to participate in decision-making. I am not proposing that people with an indirect interest in the affairs of a particular school should be forced to participate in decision-making; given their rights are relatively restricted, responsibilities placed upon them to exercise those rights should be proportionate. Rather, I am suggesting that where good practical judgement is exercised by formal school leaders they will extend these kinds of invitations in such circumstances.

Furthermore, I am suggesting that, as direct democratic practice values the process of deliberation as well as the end result (see Chapter Nine), this time is not "wasted" (Bridges, 1980). On the contrary, as such a decision has potentially far-reaching consequences for those groups of people who might be directly affected they ought to be consulted. As the findings of the "Principled Principals" (Gold, et al., 2003) research (Chapter Seven) found, very good practice of this kind is found already in maintained schools in England where their leadership is characterised by a commitment to open governance. Nor does it compromise the success of the school according to other, more instrumental, indicators. The potential benefits: the quality of the final decision made, good will and other unforeseen side effects generated, all combine to outweigh the disadvantages.

In principle, therefore, the structures are in place for direct democratic leadership to operate in local schools and communities within the existing structures of

representative democratic school governance. In practice, there are no grounds for complacency and many grounds for concern. For in practice, indirectly interested parties are relatively detached from educational decision-making and their influence is decreasing further. The power of local government to determine the future direction of local education policy is in decline (see Chapters Four and Nine).

It has been argued that "Academies" and "Free Schools" offer a particularly effective alternative means by which local groups of people can be involved directly in educational provision in their communities (Gove, 2010b, NGLN, 2010). The opportunities of a motivated few may be enhanced but as the number of these schools increases, the influence of local government decreases proportionately and with it the influence of ordinary local citizens. Meanwhile, the difficulty in engaging local citizens actively in the work of school governing bodies has already been identified (see Chapter Nine). I will pursue this theme further (see Section 10.4) when I go on to consider the role of the governing body in more detail.

Given, as the example of the nineteenth century teaches us, organising schooling outside the control of the state does not guarantee high standards or quality in educational provision (Chapter Four), this trend is disturbing. Certain powers over school admissions and attendance have been retained by Local Authorities because it is recognised that some state intervention at a local level is necessary, for example if children's welfare and safety is at issue. If direct democracy is to be practiced at a local level within a representative democratic system of school governance, this would seem insufficient. It becomes increasingly difficult to maintain high standards of public accountability when decision-making powers in education concentrate with specific individuals or representatives of special interest groups (see Chapter Nine).

10.2.2 Directly interested parties

The rights – and responsibilities – of those people with a "direct" interest in the affairs of one particular school should be more considerable. People in this second category might include pupils, parents or carers with responsibility for those pupils, and people who are employed there. Not all will seek very active involvement in

decision-making; and opportunities have already been identified in representative democratic systems to delegate some responsibilities to members of sub-groups who may become experts (see Chapter Nine). However – depending on who those directly interested people are and what their decision concerns – there will be other responsibilities for decision-making that all directly interested groups of people should undertake, unless there are very good reasons why they should not do so.

The distinction drawn between formal and informal leadership once again proves helpful here (see above). The kinds of decisions that might need to be made in a school fall roughly into two groups: "strategic" level decisions and everyday decisions concerned with routines and rituals of the school day as well as the detail that follows from strategic decision making. Those decisions at a "strategic" level concern the informal leadership capacity of the school; on a democratic account opportunities for extended deliberation should be extended widely to all directly interested people. The decisions in detail that follow on from any agreements made should be delegated to formal leaders who, supported by others, bring expert knowledge to bear on how the issues at stake could be implemented.

Having sketched in outline how the right to consideration of all directly interested parties might operate in a maintained English school, the implications for sub-groups of directly interested parties are considered next in more detail. First, I consider the particular rights and responsibilities that might reasonably be expected from parents/carers and pupils as a contribution to the informal leadership of schools. I go on to consider the decision-making responsibilities and rights of those employed to work in schools, i.e. workers' rights in general, followed by the claims to special rights that might be made by teachers and those appointed to formal leadership positions. In the final section, I consider the very significant – and currently problematic – contribution of governors (see Chapters Four and Nine) to the democratic leadership of schools.

10.2.2.1   Parents

Parents/carers have significant responsibilities for particular children or young people who attend a certain school, and they should be consulted whenever strategic decisions are made that have direct implications for the way in which they undertake those responsibilities. For example, parents/carers bear financial responsibility for resources that children need at school; their opinions should be sought when, for example the policy of prescribing clothing for school is reviewed through discussion of what is considered appropriate. They should be entitled to equal consideration alongside members of staff, for example, when the timing of meetings and the school day, or policies for homework are discussed as each has a direct bearing on them.

It should be borne in mind that where strategic decisions are to be made about the future direction of a school, these may be on matters in which parents/carers are themselves expert. Parents whose own children have made the transition from primary to secondary school might advise a school on how to improve its practice. Parents with expertise as musicians, actors or artists who are included in decision-making in schools might improve the quality of decision-making concerning creative arts provision over decision-making conducted solely by educational professionals.

Parents may respond more favourably to new initiatives, and schools be better placed to challenge them, if their rights to consideration are respected. Julie Critchlow reacted forcefully to a decision made at her children's school – to introduce chef Jamie Oliver's "healthy school meals" initiative – by passing food prepared outside the school through its recently erected perimeter fences (Iggulden, 2006). She claims that the school adopted Oliver's campaign without consultation over the summer holidays and failed to prepare the alternative food to a high enough standard (Hendry, 2008). Oliver sought Critchlow out, apologised for insulting her, listened to her views and persuaded her to support him (Martin, 2008).

Mill's observation – that citizens develop judgement detached from perceived self-interest through the experience of engaging in public business (see Chapter Nine) – is illustrated by the detail of this story. Oliver invested two hours to discussion of the

issue with Critchlow; Critchlow was prepared to change her – previously fixed and strongly held – views, when presented with a clear, seemingly well-reasoned argument; that children's health benefits from some restriction to their choice of school food. In a school led democratically, celebrity chefs (where available), parents, workers and pupils should debate the matter, then agree to abide by the majority decision as to how far teenage children have rights to choose what they eat at school.

10.2.2.2 Pupils

In a school led democratically, children and young people have a right to equal consideration which should develop as they mature. Very young children indeed may have a limited capacity to participate in wider decision-making; however, when they do begin to express opinions drawn from their particular experience of the world, they should enjoy limited rights to simple choices: in the food they would like to eat, perhaps, or the clothes that they would like to wear. Non-statutory guidance on how citizenship education might be promoted in the early years of primary schooling in England has suggested that structured personal and social development of this kind provides a sound foundation on which to build civic education with older children (QCA, 2008).

Yet age should become increasingly irrelevant as a reason to deny young people their rights to be consulted; and as they mature, young people who engage in decision-making should also learn to share responsibility for the outcomes. Specific details of the rights that might reasonably be extended them at particular ages will depend in part on the context and circumstances in which they are being educated, not least that point at which young people involved feel is an appropriate age for this to be. What follows then is an account of general principles and determining factors, supported by examples that indicate, where relevant, likely sticking points and difficulties.

Children function more independently as they become accustomed to time spent in the public space of the school, rather than privately in the home; therefore they can reasonably expect their rights to choose to increase, appropriate to their developing

maturity. At primary school children chose who they sit next to for some activities, what stories they will read and games they will play. By the time they reach adolescence, most will be capable of deciding for themselves (within carefully and appropriately determined limits) which subjects they will study to public examination level. "Options" for young people in this sense are well established already in English schools.

At the same time adolescence is a "liminal period" (Turner, 1967), a time of transition between childhood and adulthood. Despite their increased independence, many adolescents nonetheless rely heavily on their parents/carers for financial, emotional and physical support, perhaps until their later teens. Thus in some matters the rights of parents/carers to consideration may continue to outweigh those of their children, although this will be carefully negotiated; there will be an attempt to offer support to the child, for example, by providing a reasoned response, rather than attempting to dictate the child's choices for him/her.

I have already alluded to practical ways in which children might be given opportunities to make decisions at their school in matters directly personal and particular to them. In Chapter Four, I highlighted extended examples of direct participation in decision-making in school being extended both to younger (Summerhill) and older children (Countesthorpe, Stantonbury Campus); and across both the independent and maintained sectors of schooling. These high profile examples have continued to inspire educationalists, including those found to exhibit a commitment to "open governance" and "social democratic values" (see Chapter Eight). In those schools where the "voice" of students is prioritised (Fielding, 2001, Fielding, 2004, Flutter and Rudduck, 2004) they may hold genuine influence on the direction of school policies.

In other schools, while student "voice" may be promoted in name, it is done in ways that cause pupils merely to mimic decision-making. They may be denied power to affect substantive change (Fielding, 2004 p.199), with opportunities to make decisions limited to specific, personal concerns. Yet there are a good many decisions that affect the whole school, for which there may be no reasonable relevant difference in

principle to deny older young people a consideration, as Fielding's first-hand account of participative democracy at Stantonbury Campus serves to testify (see Chapter Four). I spell out some of the differences next, using two composite examples of contrasting practice that I have witnessed in schools in England, either as a teacher, teacher educator or pupil.

A student council, for example, is a common feature of maintained English schools. Where these operate on genuinely democratic lines they offer a means by which students contribute meaningfully to decision-making. Imagine School A, committed to promoting "student voice" so that it has prioritised an appointment of a teacher to co-ordinate this work on behalf of children and young people at the school. Regular student council meetings are held to which student representatives of all ages are elected. The agenda and minutes of the school council are reported across the school and are discussed regularly as a fixed item on the agenda of the governing body.

School A goes further, recognising that student councils offer only one means by which the opinions and ideas of the pupil body may be consulted. Through age-appropriate means other student representatives are chosen to serve alongside adults on standing committees and working parties to determine the policies of the school. Students are involved in the selection of new members of staff including the appointment of the headteacher (Little Heath School, 2009). Students are actively involved in decisions concerning teaching and learning at the school, too, as trained action researchers gathering data among the student body and teachers about the kinds of lessons that seem to go particularly well. On very major decisions indeed, opinion is sought across the entire student body through surveys, questionnaires and interviews.

The opportunity of involvement in a student council might attract the interest and attention of a particular kind of confident, extrovert child and repel others for whom the notion of political involvement is alien or unattractive: School A is mindful of this, supporting with care those children reluctant to become involved in the civic life of the school. In discussion, these students might explain either to a teacher or fellow student that they view schools as places where exams are passed, or where children

learn to love curriculum subjects: through articulating their opinions openly, though, they will have started to engage in deliberation. The opinion will be respected to a point in School A; sometimes, though, even reluctant deliberators will be expected to a limited degree to join in consultation on issues that concern the whole school.

A commitment to the notion of a student council is evident in School B, because the senior management team recognises value where pupils engage in concerns beyond their personal interests, and encourages trustworthy students to take on some additional responsibilities. However, little is conceded in return to their rights of consideration, so that those areas in which the views of the student body are able to exercise any substantive influence are strictly limited. The student council in School B might be involved in decisions to determine how money collected from a non-uniform fund-raising day might be allocated, but excluded from a wider debate about the regular requirement to wear prescribed clothing.

Senior leaders in School B do not see the need to grant pupils greater power to affect substantive change, as the school is over-subscribed, already popular among pupils and parents, and well-regarded in the wider community. Pupils may be consulted over decisions that personally affect them, for example over opting for Drama over Spanish as a course to pursue to the level of a public examination. However, they are not invited to make a wider contribution to other issues or practical situations. This is not regarded as a priority for energies which, the teaching staff have agreed in a staff meeting, would be better channelled in favour of other worthwhile activities.

It is not wrong for the leaders in School B to suggest that children should perhaps only enjoy limited rights in decision-making while at school. There is no formula that can calculate exactly what that involvement should be; and schools, in consultation with pupils and their parents, should enjoy some freedom to interpret what those limits should be. I will consider in a later section the extent to which pupils should be required to participate in decision-making (see below).

However, empirical studies (Morgan and Streb, 2002, Flutter and Rudduck, 2004, Dutson-Steinfeld, 2005) suggest that where children and young people engage in

active and constructive responsibility for decision-making at school, this does not detract from other kinds of educational attainment. In Chapter Eleven I will develop in more depth this point about learning through engagement in the decision-making process. Given the lack of an adverse effect, and the potential benefits if their rights to consideration are respected, there should be very good reasons indeed if pupils are not included in decision-making.

10.2.2.3 *Workers*

The nature of social relations between and among staff will be of critical importance to any school seeking to operate democratically. In principle all staff should have the same rights to decide, regardless of the nature of their job or its status. Relevant reasons that might justify claims to slightly different treatment on other grounds will be considered shortly (see below).

In schools that retain a strong culture of "traditional" (Weber, 1947) attitudes towards authority, this egalitarian ethos would be difficult to foster. For example, in a school staffroom where social hierarchy continues to operate, there might be unwritten rules about the allocation of territory; "charismatic" (Weber, 1947) individuals and their retinue might determine patterns of behaviour within this shared space, so that certain chairs or preferred corners would be reserved through established and non-negotiated conventions for their use. Those colleagues with an equal right in principle to cross to that part of the staffroom would nevertheless feel awkward in doing so. Moreover, there would be no formal means of reviewing these practices.

In contrast, the staffroom of a school led democratically should be a facility that all members of staff, regardless of their status would wish to use. Rules and conventions would develop but these would be transparent, open to all staff members to determine. Consultation would take place on basic and practical questions, for example about the amount of space devoted to quiet individual work, the quality of the soft furnishing or facilities to make coffee. These are concerns that reflect matters of value and opinion, for example whether or not it is important to socialise at work,

so that a good staffroom should promote social interaction. Teachers and non-teachers should be granted an equal say on these kinds of matters, there being no relevant differences between their opinions.

The group of those people employed casually in schools needs to be considered as a special category. Often basic services, for example, the provision of staff to cover absences, catering and site security, are "out-sourced" to private sector companies. This arrangement may bring economies of scale with specialists able to focus on one aspect of service delivery. A disadvantage it brings is that a significant number of people who come to work each day in schools have no direct contractual relationship with them, creating ambiguities in their status and their rights to consideration.

In a school that is democratically led, these indirectly interested workers should be consulted on single issue decisions that affect their work directly. Moreover, the criterion of relevance should be interpreted generously, consistent with a belief that to consult widely is beneficial to the quality of the decision made. The right should extend to all indirectly interested workers regardless of status to include, on one hand, relatively skilled workers who bring expertise to the school, for example in ICT or Child Protection issues; as well as relatively unskilled workers on the other hand, including cleaners, caterers and site security staff. Thus, if litter is a problem around the school, cleaners should be involved in discussions as well as being held to account for their part in its resolution.

10.3 Claims to special rights of consideration

There is a cost to political equality in its purest sense, if a representative model of democratic practice is adopted (Chapter Nine). Some people will exercise more power over decision-making than others, particularly certain groups of senior workers. I consider next those rights to which those people are entitled as well as the measures that need to be in place if they are not to become too powerful.

10.3.1 Special rights for teachers

There are some specific decisions that need to be made in schools over which teachers should have a greater say, including those concerned with the implementation of the curriculum. Fully qualified teachers develop competences when they train to teach against a rigorous set of professional standards. Immersed in classroom practice over time, initiated into an understanding of educational theory, their professional opinion should be distinguished from lay opinion in those matters in which they are expert; for example, how to mediate knowledge in their chosen subject, or choose teaching methods best suited to a particular age group.

Note that these are matters of some detail. Another area in which teachers are expert includes the schemes of work they plan for the particular children they teach. However, strategic decisions about what ought to feature on the curriculum should be determined by all directly interested parties.

Moreover, there are limits to those special rights that teachers ought to be able to claim. Take, for example, those particular physical spaces within the school that teachers tend to be allocated as their main working environment, including the classroom. They might reasonably claim special rights to determine how that environment is organised, given the likely impact this has on pupils' learning. The daily working conditions of a teacher would be affected by the quality of classroom environment but this would be a prescient factor for pupils too, when the room is one in which they spend a good deal of time perhaps as their allocated form base.

Likewise, cleaners' working conditions would be affected by the degree of mess made by the kinds of activities normally undertaken in the classroom; some negotiation between workers on these grounds would be reasonable. In such discussions, teachers should not attempt to pull rank, either over one another, on grounds of seniority, length of tenure at the school or respective value of curriculum subject. Nor should they seek to claim privileged rights in all decision-making solely on the grounds of their status as teachers.

10.3.2 Special rights for formal leaders

People who occupy formal senior leadership positions in schools are also expert in what they do, and bring a distinctive, specialist knowledge and understanding to decision-making. I have argued already (see Chapters Five and Seven) that professional competence is a necessary dimension to formal school leadership and that this is built up over time through the experience of leadership itself. However, claims that senior leaders might make to special rights of consideration should stem from the office they hold; they are not rights that are due to them personally.

Their professional knowledge is distinctive because, for example, they have built up through experience a reservoir of standard solutions that might be applied in various ways, with confidence (or vision?) to non-standard situations (Chapter Six). They also develop, when this is supported by the appropriate moral commitments and sensibilities, an understanding of the process by which good decisions can be reached democratically (Chapter Seven) and how to ensure this takes place effectively. Hence, the "Principled Principals" (Gold, et al., 2003) ensured that strategic decisions were made productively in the schools that they led, while respecting the rights to consideration of a complex range of directly interested parties, through their commitment to "open governance" and teamwork.

For example, senior leaders in a school led democratically would know how meetings should be organised so that they are characterised by certain practices and conventions. They would ensure that a few individuals do not dominate meetings, that the authority of the chair is understood and respected by all parties attending the meeting. The formal role of chair could rotate at such meetings, and need not be undertaken at every meeting, either by the same person, or by a senior leader.

The responsibility to organise and circulate information in advance of meetings would put formal leaders in a privileged position in deliberation, because they would have analysed thoroughly the issues in hand. They might be invited to speak to the meeting to guide others with their considered reflections, making it clear that the status of their presentation was one of informed opinion rather than fact. They

would not attempt to pull rank over others in the school on grounds of their senior leadership status but, informed by a commitment to political equality, respect the opinions and alternative perspectives of other people.

10.3.3 Special rights for headteachers?

Broadly speaking, the limited claim to special rights that senior leaders might claim also applies to the headteacher – where there is one –in a school led democratically. In the day-to day-running of the school and on matters delegated to them by the governing body, the buck stops with the headteacher; as the appointed leader of the executive, she/he should expect to take on additional responsibilities for which they can expect to be suitably remunerated. They should enjoy certain corresponding privileges in terms of decision making in matters of detail for which they bear ultimate responsibility (Chapter Nine). The buck stops at the strategic level with the chair of the governing body (see below).

The practice of a single school leader bearing ultimate responsibility is a convention that has caught on and become established over time (Chapter Four) that local schools should review very carefully. Not only could such leadership practice be different but arguably it *should* be changed so that schools are less reliant on key individuals – who become less powerful, thus less responsible – but no less successful. The collegiate approach to headship hinted at by existing research into the effectiveness of shared leadership hints at existing models of practice that could become more widespread in the future were the dominant discourse to encourage it. In other education systems a more collegiate approach to educational leadership is already well-established, for example in Denmark (MacBeath and Moos, 2004).

Having suggested that English schools do not need headteachers in the traditional sense, I accept that this ideal remains popular. This is unsurprising for, as earlier discussion of wider political practice has shown (Chapter Nine), the appointment of an individual leader is very common; at the level of political governance in democracies, for example, a president is elected, or a prime minister. This being the case, it should be possible for schools to continue to be led by a single leaders too,

although the linchpin approach to leadership should not be permissible in its current form, as it conflicts with democratic values (Chapter Three).

Were this the case the position of leaders of schools, as in other forms of democratic leadership, should be subject to review with the possibility of them being changed if it could be shown that directly interested parties desired this in sufficient numbers. Were a single leader to be appointed this would need to be done in such a way that their status as a servant to the needs of the governing body – rather than its master – were clearly established. The leader would need to demonstrate a commitment to non-hierarchical social relations in the school, knowing how to translate this into the characteristic procedures with regard to meetings and decision-making associated with democratic practice. They would be held to account by the governing body through regular review, subject perhaps to a probation period.

Limited terms of appointment as chief executive would provide a further safeguard against the potential abuse of personal power. Appointments could be made from within those who have been permanently employed in the executive for periods of between 3 to 5 years with the possibility of reappointment for one further term of office. After this, there should be a period of ineligibility during which those with a taste for the chief executive's role might seek to secure a full time appointment in a different school entirely. Others would return to a different position or the position they left on the same executive.

10.4 Governors and democratic school leadership

The contribution governors make to the leadership of a school tends to be overlooked (Glatter and Harvey, 2006: 3), yet the governing body has a crucial role to play in a school that is democratically led. Governors, rather than paid officials, act as the legislature of the school and hold final responsibility for decisions made, so that they become accountable personally to Local Authorities (Farrell and Law, 1999). While officials, including headteachers, are paid to serve the best interests of the school (see above), those best interests are determined by the governors.

In principle, the notion of a governing body as well as an executive leadership team in a school ensures that powers are separated, a necessary feature of representative democratic practice (Chapter Nine, Section 9.4.5). However, it is unclear how strictly this principle is understood and observed in practice. Official briefing notes suggest that governors should be seen as "working in partnership with the headteacher and other school staff to promote high standards of educational achievement" (DfES, 2006), casting doubt on the ability of policy makers to appreciate that a critical distance should be retained between the legislative and executive function in a school. Moreover, Farrell (2005) found that governing bodies were rarely, if ever, involved at a high level in making strategic decisions within schools but that this was generally undertaken instead by headteachers.

10.4.1 Representation

The formal arrangements for ensuring fair representation across the governing bodies of maintained English schools do not appear to be at fault, although I make two suggestions for minor reforms to the existing arrangements. The Education Act of 2002 (Sections 19-40) allows individual schools to determine for themselves the membership of their governing bodies, including their size and composition, within a framework of guiding principles (DfES, 2006). This approach to regulation is more flexible than the *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004) (Chapter Five) and should be extended to other aspects of school leadership (Chapter Twelve).

The size of the governing body will normally range from a minimum of 9 to a maximum of 20 governors. The principles require that all indirectly and directly interested parties identified in this chapter as having rights of consideration are represented, with one significant exception, pupils. Parents and staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are entitled to elect their representatives. The governing body will appoint community representatives directly, while the Local Authority is entitled to make one or more further appointments. The governing body is extended where schools have foundation or denominational status. New procedures could also be introduced (see above), to allow local people who are indirectly interested in a

particular school to vote for community representatives, along the lines of school boards adopted in other education systems.

The omission of pupils is a more significant matter given the case that has been made for their rights to be consulted. There are significant anomalies in the political rights extended to children and young people. A 16 year old may serve in the armed forces, fight and die in the service of their country but be denied until 18 the right to vote for any government that commissions them.

Given the degree of personal accountability school governors hold if the separation of powers is to be respected, it is reasonable to insist people may be elected or appointed only at the age of majority (DfES, 2006). Were the age of majority reduced from 18 to 16, older pupils in 11-18 schools should be eligible to stand for election to their school's governing body in the category of "pupil representative", it being implicit to the right of consideration that people should be included as widely as possible in formal leadership positions.

10.4.2 Practical working

If the value of political equality is widely accepted, in principle the notion of participation on a school governing body should be attractive to many citizens, allowing the opinions of many directly interested parties, rather than a few, to be included. However, this is not borne out by the empirical evidence (Farrell, 2005). To what might this discrepancy between principle and practice be attributed? I identify certain potential difficulties and on this basis propose possible changes.

Although there are currently around 350,000 school governors in England, "the largest volunteer workforce in the country" (DfES, 2006), some schools in particular find it very hard to recruit suitable candidates in sufficient numbers[10]. Even where enough candidates have been nominated for an election to be held, these may be

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[10] The vacancy rate for all governor vacancies stands at around 12%, higher in inner city areas ((DfES, 2006)

poorly supported. Parents appear difficult to engage in governor activity (Farrell and Law, 1999: 15).

One reason for this might be an unrealistic level of commitment from citizens already hard-pressed by the demands of other kinds of paid and unpaid work. There is a tradition of unusually long working hours among employed people in the UK[11], compared with other parts of Europe. Were this culture to be challenged collectively, pointing out insufficient time is being invested in engagement with civic duty, perhaps more volunteers would be forthcoming.

Aside from the privilege in its own right of a very direct influence on decisions made, further incentives might be offered school governors if it could be demonstrated that the duties they are required to undertake are unusually labour-intensive. School governors might attract allowances of the kind offered to awarded local councillors. Were governing body meetings to be held during the working day, a precedent is set in the arrangements for supporting juries to cover lost earnings where citizens are self-employed or to require employers rather than private individuals to bear the cost of employees' contribution.

Governors are placed in an invidious position, if conventional expectations of them conform to the findings of Farrell's empirical research. They, rather than paid professionals, are expected to bear the final responsibility if a school is found to be "failing" its pupils (Farrell and Law, 1999). Yet if Farrell's (2005) findings were to be replicated across all governing bodies, headteachers are more likely to assume the right to determine the school's strategic future with the governors little more than "rubber stamping" their decisions. Accountable, yet powerless: why volunteer?

It could be proposed on this basis that democratic accountability, at least at the level of individual schools is unworkable and should be replaced, for example, by market-led alternatives. The arguments for continuing the system of democratic control were made at length, however, in the previous chapter. Greater effort, it was concluded,

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[11] Eleven per cent of employees in the UK work long hours (over 48 hours a week) (Kodz et al., 2003)

should be made to reform existing practices rather than abandoning them. How then might the existing burdens on school governors be reduced?

The Education Act 2002 introduced "Constitutional Regulations" for governing bodies that introduced the possibility of schools to elect to work closely together (DfES, 2006). Where appropriate, they might hold joint meetings, set up joint committees, even develop a full federation of schools under one single governing body. This idea could work within the representative rather than direct model of democratic governance that is proposed here. Rather than replicating responsibilities, schools might pool resources in ways that could benefit clusters of small rural primary schools, for example, making the role of the governor less onerous. The degree of responsibility passed on to governors must necessarily increase, moreover, as schools become more autonomous: a further option would be to return some powers to Local Authorities.

The governors of Avon Valley, a foundation status school, sought the support of Warwickshire Local Authority, for example, in the face of extreme allegations of misconduct by its headteacher. Mark Braine was headteacher of Avon Valley for fourteen years. OFSTED judged his leadership "outstanding"; Braine's efforts to keep the school open by working through his summer holiday after a serious fire threatened to close the school "inspirational" (Abrams, 2006).

Braine left Avon Valley School in Rugby, however, following a series of serious allegations reported to the Local Authority by the school governors. He was found guilty at a hearing of the General Teaching Council of England (GTC) in 2006 on a charge of unacceptable professional conduct that included bullying, intimidation, sexual harassment and employing his wife and daughter at the school without following proper procedures (Abrams, 2006). The Local Authority led the case, supported by the evidence of governors, pupils, parents and members of staff, because the governors felt ill—equipped to deal with the matter without them. This safety net would not have been available to governors were schools entirely autonomous.

The duties of governors might be eased but ultimately cannot be eradicated. Democratic rights inevitably attract some accompanying responsibilities. All citizens must be prepared to undertake a share of civic activity, or risk losing the rights they hold dear, the state having ensured that those responsibilities it places on people acting voluntarily are reasonable and necessary (Chapter Nine).

10.5 Should directly interested parties be required to participate?

With responsibilities and interests other than decision-making to pursue (Chapter Nine), not all directly interested parties will share the same concern to be involved in decision-making. How far might they be required to participate? On the representative approach to democracy being advocated here, the distinction between formal and informal leadership approaches (Chapter Two) once again proves helpful. Only strategic level decisions need concern the informal leadership capacity of the school while everyday, routine decisions that follow from those strategic decisions, and involve matters of detail, can be delegated to formal leaders. Nonetheless, even the need to participate on this more limited basis might be challenged by some citizens.

10.5.1 Parents

With constitutional level agreements in place to which schools must conform, many parents will presumably be happy to leave the day to day running of their child's school to the "professionals". However, there will be specific issues on which parents should be consulted directly because they have implications for their responsibilities as carers and on which they should be expected to respond. Schools should provide regular opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress at school with their teachers and support workers and parents should be expected to attend these. They may also hold strong views, for example, on how sex education should be taught, an issue on which schools are required by law to consult parents.

10.5.2 Pupils

Schools must be mindful that children have special needs and interests without overplaying them (Sennett, 2003: 104). They should not underestimate children's abilities to choose for themselves; nor should they deny them powers to which they might be entitled. At the same time, children remain relatively inexperienced decision-makers, facing decisions in their schooling with potentially life-changing consequences. They may be vulnerable as well to the undue influence of predatory or domineering adults; Julian Stern (2007: 29-34, 40) suggests schools should be thought of as "semi-protected" environments that encourage young people, while supporting them to make decisions.

Hence, Stern (2007) has raised concerns about the degree to which school pupils should become actively involved in decision-making. Schools should not attempt to establish themselves as idealised (direct) democratic communities, he argues, as though they were somehow "outside" the mainstream of society, a precursor to "real" life rather than being integral to it. Surely though, were decision-making practices in maintained English schools to follow the wider system of representative democracy governing them more closely, they would be more reflective of "real" world values?

Were Stern's objection to be developed further, the argument might run as follows. In the "real" world, the practice of democracy has been far from perfect (Chapter Nine); thus, were schools democratically led in ways that followed ideal practice too closely, Stern's concern that schools become divorced from reality could continue to hold true. I will pursue the pedagogical aspect to this concern, identifying reasons why schools ought to model the democratic ideal through their hidden curriculum, in Chapter Eleven. Here I will confine my remarks to matters of moral principle.

The National Curriculum (DfES, 2007: 1) states that education both "influences and reflects the values of that society in which it is situated". Schools are both constituted by the socio-political context in which they are situated (Chapter Two) and places where, by offering an education of a certain kind, changes to that socio-political

context will be instigated so that the "real" world reflects more consistently those values which are held dear. Schools both prepare children and young people for life in the wider world and encourage them to change it, by being and becoming more consistently committed to democratic principles (Ranson, 1993).

For this to happen, young people will need to engage in a variety of activities while at school, and preparation for life as a future citizen through the opportunity to be included in decision-making represents only one of a number of educational goods. Many others are highlighted, for example in the National Curriculum (DfES, 2007), which includes initiation into curriculum subjects and practical competencies as a key priority for schools. Thus pupils should be protected from the full burden of decision-making responsibility to protect their liberties: however, on grounds of equal consideration alone, they should not be excluded from decision-making.

What should happen when pupils themselves do not wish to be actively involved? For many children the opportunity to do so would be received positively; perhaps for a few it would be alien, pointless and even unattractive. Schools should be mindful of this possibility, and willing to discuss the matter in a reasoned way with such a pupil. Through the opportunity to articulate their opinions openly, that pupil will have *de facto* engaged in deliberation. Reluctant deliberators will be cajoled and were it appropriate a non-monetary sanction of a suitable kind imposed, so that consequences follow obstructive non-co-operation. In practice, I judge apathy, rather than outright hostility of an extreme kind, a more likely problem.

10.5.3 Limits to insisting on active engagement in decision making

How much energy should a school expend on engaging the active participation of these directly interested parties in decision-making, in particular if the means by which it operates is popular among its pupils, parents and wider community? I have suggested (see above) conditions under which the traditional means of mediating power in schools might be retained in schools for that reason and argued that schools in a democracy should be free to make choices about the how they would wish to be

led. I accept that in some schools a more democratic approach to decision making will be regarded as an issue of relatively limited significance.

Thus, I will propose in Chapter Twelve that schools should be able to determine for themselves how they wish to be led, within a framework of principles of good leadership that they would be required to follow. This offers citizens greater choice in the matter than they enjoy at present. I have suggested (see above) that schools happy with the status quo should be allowed to retain a headteacher, within certain morally acceptable limits because I respect the democratic right of citizens to choose. The danger, if citizens do not exercise those democratic rights they have been given actively, is that they will lose them altogether (Chapter Nine).

At a practical level, the "Principled Principals" (Gold, et al., 2003) study suggests that schools flourish when the means by which they are led is informed by democratic values (see Chapter Seven). Furthermore, various studies focused on children and young people and their achievement in schools (Morgan and Streb, 2002, Flutter and Rudduck, 2004, Dutson-Steinfeld, 2005) have shown how they may take on an active and constructive responsibility for decision-making in ways that do not detract from other kinds of educational attainment. Efficiency is not grounds for denying people their democratic rights to be consulted.

Furthermore, as the purpose of a school is to prepare the next generation for their future lives as citizens (DfES, 2007) civic education, far from being a distraction from the "real" business of a school relates to its core purpose and function. I referred earlier (see Section 10.2.2.1) to Mill's observation – that citizens develop judgement detached from perceived self-interest through the experience of engaging in public business (see Chapter Nine), highlighting the educative dimension of involvement in decision-making. This will not happen if schools do not bother to include people in decision-making. I will take up this theme in the next chapter.

10.6 Conclusion

I have identified reasonable and relevant differences between those citizens with an indirect interest in the affairs of local schools whose influence should be limited to single issues that directly affect them; and those with direct interest in particular schools. The directly interested group, which includes pupils, parents, people employed in the school as workplace, should be consulted widely through a variety of means and represented on the Governing Body of the school. The rights of younger children to consideration should be qualified but this distinction decreases with age. They should be consulted widely but there are good legal reasons to exclude them from the responsibility of being on the governing body.

Particular responsibilities might be delegated by the governing body to people in designated positions of authority. The role of the headteacher might be retained, were strict conditions imposed that limited the extent and term of office. Radical change is needed in the ethos or culture of decision-making rather than the structures in place in schooling. The capacity to influence the direction and organisation of the group effort should not be restricted to those in formal leadership positions but opened up as a matter of course to many people capable of an informal school leadership contribution.

11 LEARNING THROUGH LEADERSHIP

11.1 Introduction

At the start of the thesis I drew attention to a "major paradox and contradiction"(Grace, 1995) at the "heart" of English schooling. While the National Curriculum (DfES, 2007) states that pupils in maintained schools in England should be prepared for their future lives as citizens, the approach to leadership adopted in those same schools promotes practices that are undemocratic (Chapter One). Having pursued an argument from principle in the previous two chapters, I suggest pedagogical reasons here why this inconsistency is problematic. A second reason why leadership should be democratic in English schools, I argue, is because learning takes place through it.

Philosophers have long argued that learning takes place through the experience of ethical living. The idea originates with Aristotle (1953) and has been developed subsequently by other general philosophers (e.g. Dewey, 1916, Bradley, 1927, MacIntyre, 1981, Hegel, 1991, Taylor, 1992); as well as more contemporary philosophers of education (e.g. White, 1996, Haydon, 1997, McLaughlin, 2000, Carr, 2007). I note the reflexive relationship between lived experience and structured reflection on that experience found in both Aristotle and Hegel's writing; neither abstract nor practical forms of knowing on their own offer sufficient preparation for a life lived ethically.

I will link these established philosophical ideas to existing ideas about pedagogy (Section 11.2.2), framing my response around Jerome Bruner's (1996) analysis of "folk pedagogies". I will suggest practical ways in which schools might foster widespread commitment to equal consideration (Section 11.3.4) among future citizens. This will require them to develop and sustain a consistent relationship between what is taught formally and learned informally through the means by which children and young people are educated (or the hidden curriculum (Huddlestone and Kerr, 2006)).

Some learning and teaching along these lines is evident already in schools in England. Heeding the concerns of a minority, I conclude that education for leadership could be introduced with relative ease across the maintained sector if moral education is afforded greater priority. If this is to happen, the complex nature of learning needs to be better understood more widely. Moreover, a critical mass of policy makers and practitioners will need to learn how to translate commitment to democracy at the level of principle into familiar structures and practices.

11.2 Learning from experience

11.2.1 A philosophical perspective

While Aristotle shared with Plato the belief that the primary purpose of education was as preparation for living a good life (Chapter Seven), he rejected the assumption that particular intellectual abilities, innate to a few select people, enabled them to perceive the Good as an abstract form or ideal (Chapter Three). Instead, Aristotle regarded all citizens capable of understanding both what a flourishing life entails at the level of principle and how practically one might live it. He thought that the kind of knowledge they required combined a theoretical grasp of those abstract principles which underpin the notion of a good life with non-theoretical forms of how to know and sense it (Chapter Seven).

Aristotle believed that lived experience, or engagement in the common life with one's fellows, (Chapter Seven) was necessary to the formation of the knowledge and understanding, as well as personal characteristics and dispositions, that enable people to flourish. He believed that this process of social education begins in early childhood, through the sensation of enjoyment when engaged in virtuous activity. However, while he regarded intuitive understanding of lived experience necessary it is further enhanced by ethical reflection as the rational faculties of the child develop.

This view of the nature of morality and the associated view of moral education is not confined to the ancient world but has been developed since by more recent general philosophers. For example, Hegel does so in his articulation of the concept of

"sittlichkeit" or "ethical life" in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1991). Seeking to make sense of the tension between the two traditions of thinking about morality reflected in Plato and Aristotle, Hegel's view of the ethical life suggests a dialectical relationship between the "subjectively" held moral beliefs of individuals on one hand and the sense of "absolute right" reflected in established social norms on the other.

Hegel locates this tension in two opposed yet interlocked dimensions of social existence. First, in the private sphere of the "family" – Hegel suggests there are other social groups that also share family-like features – participants appear to share common values and assumptions. Second, in the public sphere participants regard themselves, in the first instance, as separate individuals who then enter into relationships with other people that are external to them. One difficulty – and at the same time, one opportunity – for a social group is to hold in tension these potentially conflicting sets of objective feeling and subjective feeling moral assumptions.

Hegel argues that moral understanding develops as people become immersed in habits, particular moral codes enshrined in laws, customs and traditions of the society in which they are situated. However, the complex, dialectical nature of that learning process needs to be appreciated. Rather than absorbing those moral "truths" at face value, the capacity to reflect on those beliefs critically develops over time, thus determining the appropriate course of action given the particularities of the context in which ethical reflection is situated. This process takes place not only at a micro level, within the consciousness of individual people, but at the macro level of society itself; as groups of people within civil society wrestle with the tension between those norms reflected in custom and practice and beliefs particular to individuals.

Hegel's influence may be traced in later Anglo American philosophers writing about education. For example, John Dewey (1916) argued that children and young people should be immersed in democratic practice so that it became "part of their being". Hegel also influenced British Idealist philosophers, FH Bradley and TH Green (Gordon and White, 1979: 25-7). In his essay *My Station and its Duties*, Bradley (1927: 248 ff) argued that any social institution that shapes our moral being is potentially

educative. Schools, he suggested, either unsettle or reinforce the manner in which an individual's moral being is shaped by other social institutions to which they may belong.

In more recent times, in *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre argues (1981) that people achieve the highest standards possible through engagement in social practices (as these standards are defined by the particular social practice concerned). Through activity and reflection on activity, their conceptions of the ends and goods involved in the social practice are also enabled to develop (MacIntyre, 1981: 187). Charles Taylor (1992) also argues that moral character is formed through participation in a social context, adding that moral maturation involves reflection on the kind of life one finds oneself living. In his particular interpretation of this generic idea he argues that over time people construct personal narratives which provide terms against which they may judge their actions and beliefs, either as virtues or as vices.

11.2.2 A pedagogical perspective

Pedagogy is concerned with applying theories of learning to educational practice. I will argue next that the view of learning that has just been described exercises influence on thinking about pedagogy, at the level of pedagogical theory as well as established policies and practices adopted in schools in England. I have chosen to frame my discussion around Jerome Bruner's analysis of folk pedagogies (1996) in *The Culture of Education*. "Folk pedagogy" is a term he uses to describe widely held, common sense perceptions of learning developed typically from direct experiences of learning and subsequent reflection upon it, without reference to a formal study of education theory.

Bruner draws attention to four distinctive types in particular:

a. learning propositions through traditional forms of didactic teaching;

b. learning from example or modelling, particularly associated with forms of vocational learning including apprenticeship;

c. learning in groups that co-construct knowledge together;

d. learning through critical engagement with knowledge that has been constructed in the past and has stood the test of time.

a. One simple and popular perception of how learning takes place concerns the successful and efficient transfer of knowledge from teachers to their pupils. Those learners able to do so acquire those propositions the teacher presents (Bruner, 1996), assuming the teacher capable of understanding propositional knowledge herself and communicating it competently. While Bruner is keen to assert the value of theoretical understanding to learning, he does so along lines more akin to the thinking of Aristotle (see Chapter Seven) than of Plato (see Chapter Three).

He argues that "concepts" offer structures which act as helpful tools to learning (Bruner, 1960). He does not hold them to be reflections of forms or ideals that may be objectively known but as constructs that have a quality of objectively held beliefs because they have stood the test of time (see ahead). He assumes they have an instrumental value, providing a useful means by which to organise and categorise ideas, aiding memory as well as facilitating comprehension. An advocate of a "spiral" approach to curriculum planning, Bruner (1996) argues that teachers must encourage learners to re-visit fundamental concepts regularly in order to develop their understanding of them gradually over time from an elementary to a more advanced level.

Academic subjects are firmly established and highly prized in schooling in England. For example, their value is reflected in the focus on academic learning in subjects found in the National Curriculum for Schools in England (DfES, 2007), as well as the premium placed on attainment measured by success in public examinations (Chapter One). However, the purpose of studying them is contested and may not be grounded in reasoning of the kind offered by Bruner. Rather, the value of learning in subjects as an end in itself has taken root, detached from the concern with education for a better society to which it owes its origins (Chapter Four).

Bruner's defence of the place of subjects on the school curriculum is interesting here because his thinking assumes the reflexive relationship between theoretical and experiential learning articulated by Aristotle (see above and Chapter Seven). Following Bruner's lead, I will be in a position to argue for education for leadership that draws on both kinds of learning in complementary style. I will include but not limit my discussion to learning in subjects.

b. A second folk pedagogy identified by Bruner concerns "modelling", or learning through observation of the actions of others, which are copied until they are mastered. Modelling links clearly to the idea that education operates as a form of initiation into social practices, along lines identified by Alasdair MacIntyre (see above). There are numerous kinds of social practice into which pupils might be initiated while at school, not least being initiated into academic subjects or disciplines. The skills academic practice entails include the analysis of text, writing essays, completing equations.

Other more practically oriented social practices are also developed in part through learning from modelling. The ability to play a musical instrument, sing or engage in sport, all rely on watching and practising. Furthermore, this kind of learning is not confined to schooling but may happen in any dimension of the learners' lived experience. This last point has a particular significance here given the focus of concern is preparation for future citizenship as part of a child's moral education. If children and young people develop a habituated sense of the life well led from immersion in the lived experience of virtuous behaviour (see above), this will include their life in the home or in the wider community as well as at school.

The value of learning through modelling is appreciated already in schooling in England. Some commonplace examples have just been indicated. However, while some appreciation of learning of this kind is established in English schooling, it tends to be afforded a lower status than learning in academic subjects, even though –as has just been pointed out – academic learning in practice itself relies to some extent on learning from example. Bruner recognises a tendency to under-estimate the cognitive demands made by experiential learning. Far from "merely copying", he suggests it

involves a rich combination of practical, conceptual and emotional attributes (Bruner, 1996).

Of particular importance to Bruner is the notion that learning from experience entails some kind of structured reflection alongside physical activity, a process he describes as "metacognition". This concerns not only the way in which a person "acts upon the world" at the time in a straightforward sense but also how their beliefs and values about that world develop over time. It represents Bruner's response to Aristotle's contention that preparation for the ethical life requires structured reflection to complement practical experience, focussing in more detail on the nature of structured reflection.

c. Developing the notion of metacognition, Bruner highlights a third folk pedagogy, or commonsense understanding of learning associated with the experience of being part of a group. An assumption is made (in common with the democratic way of life) that all people are deemed capable in principle of holding beliefs and ideas and that they are engaged typically in conscious reflection of some kind when they are involved in activity. On this account of learning, human minds do not simply absorb ideas passively from the process of exchanging them with others, but rather they engage with them actively and critically and through this process their own ideas are likely to develop.

Bruner contends (1996) that through the exchange of ideas, people learn from experience to sense occasions on which their initial thinking seems "wrong" in the face of better reasoning offered by others. Children, no less than adults, can learn to think about their thinking in this way he suggests, and correct their ideas and notions from a certain stage in their moral development. In contrast, while learning is possible as a solitary or individual activity, it suffers from the loss of this particular dimension.

The notion that learning takes place in groups is established already in schooling in England. For example, in Religious Education (RE), the work of Michael Grimmitt (1982, 2000) has highlighted how well the subject lends itself to discussion and

deliberation. Contentious moral and ethical issues, beliefs about ultimate meaning and purpose that matter to children and young people and which have the potential to create divisions within communities are grist to the mill of a certain kind of RE teacher.

Group work may be found elsewhere on the curriculum; for example in a Geography lesson in which pupils might role play a local dispute between residents and town planners over the proposed construction of a mobile telephone mast. In an English or Drama lesson pupils might explore more and less successful ways in which a community conflict might be resolved as a stimulus for a piece of creative writing or a performance. Science teachers suitably trained might encourage pupils to debate matters of controversy in medical ethics. All new teachers trained to teach in England must demonstrate the capacity to structure group work successfully if they are to meet the standards necessary to achieve qualified teacher status (TDA, 2007).

The argument that has just been made – that learning will take place, whether intended or not, through social interchange – informs the notion of a "hidden curriculum" (Huddlestone and Kerr, 2006) or learning that will take place through the means by which a school is organised. The "hidden curriculum" may refer to the learning that takes place through the structures and ethos found across a whole school or in much smaller groups, for example within individual classes.

This being the case, learning through social interaction should support the intended aims of the educational institution in which it is situated, rather than working against them. If publicly funded schools are to be concerned with the efficient use of scarce resources provided by the state, they might seek to provide value for money by optimising through the process of schooling the achievement of ends that have been agreed democratically.

d. Bruner acknowledges a difficulty in this claim that learning takes place through the process of deliberation and social interaction. It could be argued that it generates opinion rather than knowledge that has its basis in a recognised authority rather than the subjective views of individuals or groups of individuals. Bruner addresses this

objection by introducing a fourth, complementary notion of pedagogy which concerns the learning that takes place when engaging with the received wisdom contained in past practices and ideas.

Cultures preserve reliable knowledge, he observes, acting in the same way that common law is able to capture reasoning which, over time, has enabled communal conflicts to be adjudicated in a consistent manner. Arbitrariness is overcome by the identification of "general principles" that are sufficiently robust to avoid abrupt "re-construal" (Bruner, 1996). Like constitutions (see Chapter Nine), these principles are robust statements of widely held beliefs that capture those values that a society characteristically has upheld over generations.

This knowledge embedded in established practices should not be taken lightly. There is a sense of "absolute right", as Hegel suggests (see above), in those values and beliefs reflected in social norms, although such knowledge is ultimately subjective and thus revisable. At the same time, its authority is not of the same order as a personally held belief, hunch, or opinion. What makes it significant is not its objectivity but that it has stood up to sustained scrutiny, been tested over time by the best available evidence. It is knowledge in the sense that it is firmly rooted in an interpretation of culture and history.

Bruner argues that children should learn to draw a distinction between what is known in this sense, from what they know personally and idiosyncratically. There is something appealing, he suggests, about juxtaposing one's own version of knowledge with traditionally held views. Reflecting together on the wisdom of earlier civilisations may help children and young people to identify reliable judgements from the past that they can agree upon.

It is a view of learning which resonates with Hegel's contention (see above) that society wrestles with the tension between those norms that are reflected in custom and practice and those beliefs that are particular to individuals. Rather than absorbing them at face value as moral truths, learners' capacity to reflect critically on

those beliefs, to apply them to various contexts flexibly, and to assess their continued relevance and/or appropriateness, develops.

11.3 Learning and leadership at school

Next I will apply what has been said about pedagogy generally to address the specific concern of this chapter; how the learning about and from leadership which takes place in schools in England might be consistent with and contribute positively to the preparation of children and young people for their future lives as citizens. I will suggest that it can be addressed easily through the taught curriculum concerned with subjects, although this will be limited unless group work is involved and also opportunities to reflect critically on concepts are structured into lesson planning. Learning will also take place through exposure to examples of leadership practice that are modelled through the school.

11.3.1 Subjects and leadership

Learning about leadership will be focussed on the acquisition of propositional knowledge at two levels. One will be abstract, and concern learning what the concept of leadership means as it features in the context of learning within academic subjects. Existing arrangements for Citizenship Education include civic education either in discrete lessons or through units of work in "carrier" subjects (Huddlestone and Kerr, 2006: 10). The concept of leadership might be studied in History lessons for example, in topics concerned with the respective weaknesses and strengths of kings and queens, or the causes and effects of the social and political revolutions in France and North America. An appreciation of literature, whether in Shakespeare's plays or more contemporary work might likewise facilitate a consideration of leadership at a conceptual level.

Another, more practical form of learning about leadership in this sense will concern the knowledge that needs to be acquired in order to take on a position of formal leadership. This may have limited impact on many children and young people, who will generally be left free from the more arduous responsibilities associated with

leadership on the model of democratic governance this thesis proposes (Chapter Ten). Nonetheless, being a representative on the school council, or a peer mentor, will require knowledge of the role, what expectations it entails, not as information that will be tested through an exam or formal assessment but applied to practice. Care will need to be taken to ensure that opportunities to undertake positions of this kind are shared, not limited to a small group deemed unusually well-suited to leadership responsibility.

11.3.2 Learning from leadership example

There is nothing original in the idea that values modelled by those in positions of formal authority in schools will influence the behaviour of their pupils. Thomas Arnold believed this, regarding the "formation of Christian men" to be a key responsibility of his headship at Rugby (see Chapter Four); at the time this was an innovative idea (Copley, 2002). Members of the teaching profession today continue to be regarded as people who should uphold high standards of moral conduct as an example to others in society (Haydon, 1997). Gold (2004) observes that school leaders in particular are regarded as key figures, both in the school for which they are responsible and the wider community it serves (: 9), to the extent that their behaviour in public life is expected to be highly principled.

Distinctive to the notion of education for leadership being advocated here is the opportunity both to observe, and to participate in school leadership; furthermore to learn about leadership from modelling, in both formal and informal senses. With regard to the former, pupils will experience the example of those in formal authority at school; they will learn from the way leaders speak to groups, run meetings, or simply take the initiative in being responsible for the well-being of specific individuals. Through direct exposure to these kinds of leadership activities practised democratically, learners will come to associate certain kinds of speech and action rather than others with a normative conception of leadership in the public sphere.

As well as learning from observing formal leadership in action, pupils should have opportunities to engage in those kinds of activity that leaders practice. These may be

found in schools in England already where pupils are involved in a school council. Others may be elected a prefect, house captain or sports captain, or encouraged to act as peer mentors or a "buddy" for younger children (Chapter Ten).

The influence that teachers exercise as moral authorities over children should not be exaggerated. As Haydon (1997) points out, teachers are only one of a number of moral authorities that children and young people may encounter. Other models of leadership to which they might be exposed may include parents, family members and people encountered in wider society, directly or via the media. Nor are opportunities for children and young people to practise exercising formal leadership roles the preserve of schooling; these may extend to include taking on responsibility in the home, in youth clubs and in various kinds of uniformed organisation. This connection between formal and informal learning has been developed within Citizenship Education (Huddlestone and Kerr, 2006) but may not be understood widely across all schools or among all teachers.

11.3.3 Collaborative learning

The opportunity to contribute and develop the necessary attitudes, skills and dispositions to contribute, to the informal leadership capacity of the school will be developed through deliberation in groups. This might happen through the introduction of group work to taught lessons. Discussions might be structured in ways that facilitate the contribution of many learners rather than a few predisposed already to be confident in articulating their opinions.

Group work well done can enrich learning in subjects, by developing learners' understanding of key concepts and ideas while at the same time fostering those skills associated with listening to and evaluating opinions and ideas as these are expressed. In contrast, too much teaching to the test, drilling for the purpose of examinations, denies learners the opportunity to deliberate, work through reasonably matters of sometimes radical disagreement. If learning from and through academic subjects is to play its part in the moral and social education of pupils, it

needs to be resourced with the necessary time for appropriate activities and suitably trained teachers cognisant of a wide range of teaching methods.

Moreover, some time needs to be given over at school to include children and young people in discussions about procedural matters. Group work contributed to the capacity of children and young people to deliberate in the example cited in Chapter Seven of a headteacher who encouraged pupils to make decisions about the refurbishment of the school's toilet facilities. Time invested in consultation was reported to have saved resources in the longer term by reducing the instances of vandalism and bullying.

Informal leadership capacity will be developed in those classrooms where teachers and pupils determine together what constitutes acceptable behaviour for lessons. By this means an understanding of the role of those in formal office –as people who enforce rules agreed by all relevant parties, rather than dictating personally those terms and conditions to be imposed – will be reinforced. Such practices are relatively common in English schools already (Chapter Ten), but may be rather limited in scope. Where these limitations result from undemocratic attitudes and practices, education for citizenship is compromised.

11.3.4 Learning through critical engagement

If teachers encourage their pupils to subject values to rational assessment, Graham Haydon (1997: 121) argues, indoctrination into those values may be avoided because they allow (or even encourage) disagreement. One final dimension of learning from leadership will need to include education through structured critical reflection on leadership practice. Learners will be encouraged to reflect on the different kinds of society that are possible and the basis of authority in each. Far from taking allegiance to democratic values as read, its limitations and shortcomings as well as reasons why it come to be so widely accepted in so many contemporary societies will need to be thoroughly interrogated.

Thus, learning about leadership through subjects will complement learning about leadership from experience. British history is both popular with traditionalists and

appropriate to a study of leadership. A unit of work on the English Civil War perhaps, or Tudors and Stuarts, may facilitate a critical discussion of the democratic account of leadership if care is taken to ensure that those values which are communicated are suitably balanced. Where the reign of a king or queen is assessed, perhaps through the standard question, "were they a good ruler?" the topic should not be used to promote the value of absolute monarchy over all other systems of government, including democracy.

These brief examples show how learning from leadership might be encouraged through established practices in schools. However, if schools continue to promote one set of values through their taught curriculum but promote contradictory values through their leadership practice, they undermine the legitimacy of democracy; worse, moral inconsistency and double standards are legitimised and normalised.

This is not to suggest that once democratic leadership is practised more widely in schools, all pupils will reliably and consistently become either committed democrats or model citizens: as noted above, the influence school leadership can exercise on the values people hold given the other influences on them should not be over-estimated. However, where opportunities for involvement in leadership and decision-making are distributed widely, pupils will be in a position to make an informed choice about the value of democracy based on direct experience of the opportunities it can bring to effect significant change (Fielding, 2001).

11.3.5 Responding to the naysayers

Aristotle's account of learning from experience reflects one tradition of philosophical thinking which, consistent with democratic rule, places considerable store on the power of human minds to reason. Similarly Bruner is very taken up with the role of cognition and metacognition in learning. Further philosophical study at the level of general principle might explore Bruner's ideas more critically and develop an account of pedagogy which, for example, might explore in more depth the notion of learning from experience, making greater play of the role of the senses and the

emotions. However, it goes beyond the scope of the present study, which is concerned with the application of the basic Aristotelian position to practice.

A more modest attempt to address likely criticism of what has been proposed is attempted here, focused on the principal argument of the chapter: that school leadership ought to be democratic on pedagogical grounds. One objection I anticipate concerns the view that academic learning in subjects would be diluted were this to happen. Second, I anticipate the charge that, far from being morally educated, children and young people would be indoctrinated into liberal values by active participation in democratic school leadership.

a. I have argued that while education for future citizenship appears as an overarching aim of the National Curriculum, in practice this is not a priority for policy makers (Chapter One). Indeed, whispers have been heard since the election of the Coalition government in May 2010 that Citizenship Education is to be abandoned as a separate curriculum subject at Key Stages Three and Four in schools in England, although this threat had not been realised at the time when this thesis was submitted (April 2011). Attempts to raise the status of moral and social education in schooling have commonly attracted the criticism that to do so would compromise the primary and proper function of formal education at school, i.e. instruction in traditional subjects.

The account of learning from leadership above demonstrates that such fears of the dilution of academic standards by this means are unjustified. Learning through leadership would represent one activity among many in which pupils would engage while they were at school; it would not take time away from traditional subject-based learning. Furthermore, far from dumbing down the academic curriculum, teaching which deploys the full range of pedagogical methods will further develop the cognitive capacities of all learners. Flutter and Ruddock's research (2004) has shown that pupils' academic achievement improves where teachers consult them about their learning.

The quality of school leadership has commonly been linked to high academic attainment in schools (Chapters One and Five). However, given the vagueness of attempts to capture the characteristics of high quality of school leadership, there is no reason to believe that treating the organisation of the school as a means to promote moral and civic education will compromise such standards, particularly in the light of Flutter and Ruddock's findings. Moreover, there is no guarantee that linchpin leaders on their own are reliably and consistently more likely to oversee excellent results achieved by most pupils (Chapter Five). Worse, it is quite possible that if too much power in schools is concentrated with too few people serious problems will ensue should they prove incompetent. This risk is minimised where leadership responsibility is distributed (Chapter Eight).

If by including people in decision-making the leadership process takes a little longer, is this not a price worth paying for a better functioning democracy? Clearly there is an issue of degree to be considered. On the representative approach to school leadership being advocated here, the potential cost to citizen's political liberties is recognised, where civic activity intrudes too much into their right to pursue other valuable activities (Chapter Nine). Meanwhile, by promoting participation in decision-making at school, where the necessary skills, capacities and moral commitments can be developed through experience, the potential inefficiencies associated with democratic practice may be reduced significantly.

b. A second anticipated area of concern is the extent to which schools have a role to play in children's moral education, rather than this being a private matter, the business of the home. First, it should be stressed that an emphasis has been placed here on the active involvement of parents, carers, families and the wider community in decision-making as both informal and formal leaders in schools, working in partnership with educational professionals. Responsibility for moral education on this account is seen as something that is shared with parents and/or carers and schools, a process to which both parties make a distinctive contribution.

Given that learning takes place through lived experience, parents and carers should expect to hold a considerable degree of responsibility for the moral education of

children in their care. Those families and wider communities to which children and young people belong help them to form attachments to particular values and beliefs. Meanwhile, as Hegel suggested (see above), the public sphere of the school brings people into contact with others whose views are different or external to them, creating a tension which fosters learning. Parents, though eminently well-qualified to do so in other respects, cannot provide moral education of this kind for their children at home; *de facto* they are at home, i.e. in the private arena, and poorly placed to recreate the ethical environment of the public space.

Second, indoctrination into liberal values is avoided because this account of learning about and from leadership includes critical forms of reflection on values, including the value of democracy. Here, knowledge is co-constructed through deliberation rather than imposed by an external authority. Learners reflect on the values that other people present, subject them to scrutiny using their developing powers of reasoning and, through active engagement in dialogue with others, create new ideas and meanings. Values should not be seen as inert entities which those in authority "transmit" to passive recipients (1997); it is hard to see how learning of this kind could indoctrinate children. At the same time, the kind of knowledge created through co-construction or deliberation must be subjected to further scrutiny and evaluated against the established norms of society that have stood the test of time.

Learning about leadership will involve teaching about forms of rule other than democracy as well as an introduction to recognised problems and limitations associated with it. With regard to learning from leadership, no attempt is made to force pupils to participate actively in formal school leadership responsibilities against their will. Although opportunities will be provided to contribute to deliberation on matters of importance to pupils, the few who it might be anticipated would not wish to do so will not be coerced to participate actively in those debates

11.4 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that something should be done to address a contradiction that is currently experienced by pupils in schools in England; between those values

that they are taught formally through the curriculum and those to which they are exposed – and from which they learn – through their schools' hidden curriculum. The problem would not be difficult to address, as the links that have been drawn to existing theories and practices have indicated. However, at present the complex, multi-faceted nature of learning – particularly learning from experience – is commonly underestimated, with the result that too great a premium is placed on learning through academic subjects at the expense of other forms of learning.

Learning about and through leadership happens in schools in various ways. Hence there are pedagogical as well as moral reasons why the kinds of leadership that can be practised in schools should be regulated by the state, without resorting to the prescription of the *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004). In the next and final chapter, the case will be made for a statutory National Framework for School Leadership, developing the line of argument presented here. At the same time, preparation for leadership needs to be conceived far more broadly; in terms of what leaders need to know, how they might learn this and who society's future leaders might be.

12 A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

12.1 Introduction

Through the course of this thesis I have challenged the undemocratic approach to leadership regarded as normal practice in English schooling and proposed that an alternative model of good school leadership be promoted; one that is informed by democratic values. Although I have taken care to link these theoretical ideas to examples of existing leadership practice, I consider the practical implications of the reforms I propose in this final chapter. I consider, with particular reference to maintained schooling in England, how the principles I have indicated might be introduced systematically and sustained across a system of state sponsored schooling. My suggestions are tentative and I indicate the future direction that policy might take to directly influence practice, without seeking to offer prescriptive detail.

In Chapter Five I criticised the *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004). Here I propose they be replaced with what I describe as a *National Framework for School Leadership* (Section 12.2.1). While the *National Standards* are unfit for this purpose, the quality assurance baby should not be thrown out with their undemocratic bathwater. The principle that schools and their leaders should be held to account is sound but requires a suitable means by which it may be achieved.

I will indicate some of the principles a *National Framework for School Leadership* (Section 12.2.2) should contain, given that political equality and political liberty are necessary characteristics of a modern democratic society (Chapters Nine and Ten). I will sketch those arrangements that will be needed in order to agree on such a document by democratic means (Section 12.2.5). These negotiations should be informed, but not dominated by the opinions and ideas of experts.

I will consider briefly the implications of the NFSL for the learning that will be needed to prepare people for school leadership. A new approach to the professional development of those practitioners willing and able to take on positions of formal leadership authority in schools will be taken (Section 12.2.4). If the rights and

responsibilities of informal school leadership are to be shared more broadly among citizens and future citizens including pupils, suitable opportunities for the civic education of these directly interested parties will also need to be factored into these arrangements, along the lines I have suggested in Chapters Ten and Eleven.

12.2 A National Framework for School Leadership

12.2.1 A framework rather than leadership standards

A National Framework for School Leadership in England is needed to replace the existing *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004). In a representative model of democratic school governance, national governments have a responsibility to ensure that constitutional level agreements are in place; these should reflect those values and principles that have come to be held widely and over time in that particular society (Chapter Nine). They should take a regulatory role in the oversight of leadership practice that local schools choose to adopt at the level of general principle rather than detailed prescription.

Given limitations to public funds, could the ambiguity inherent to the existing *National Standards* for headship (so that they fail in their attempt to prescribe in detail what good school leadership is like (Chapter Five)) be turned to some advantage? Rather than investing even more time and energy in a new framework for school leadership, a simpler solution might be to work through a democratic interpretation of good school leadership which conforms well enough to the existing *National Standards*. I understand the concern for expediency and the need to steward the public purse responsibly but reject this suggestion on two counts.

First, ambiguity and "flexibility of interpretation" are not at all the same. While education policies in a democratically governed system should be capable of interpretation in a variety of contexts, for that interpretation to be meaningful the criteria used must be internally consistent and coherent. Second, the existing *National Standards* reinforce a notion of leadership linked very strongly indeed to formal leadership, specifically headship.

Therefore, a new National Framework for School Leadership should be devised which, adopting a constitutional style, identifies general principles consistent with those commitments and beliefs that have characterised British society over time and to which locally determined choices of school leadership practice should expect to conform (Chapter Nine). A similar argument has been used in the past to justify a National Curriculum for maintained English schools (O'Hear and White, 1991)to allow "leeway, though not unfettered leeway" (: 17-19) for schools to decide in detail how prescriptions common to all maintained schools might best be translated to their particular circumstances. Recent reforms to the National Curriculum (DfES, 2007) similarly have moved away from detailed, prescribed schemes of work for every subject by key stage towards greater flexibility for schools to determine their own arrangements.

Likewise, where constraints are to be imposed at a national level on the choices of individual schools over arrangements for their administration, these should be pared back to those that are strictly necessary. This would allow far greater scope, rather than less, to diversify practice at a local level than presently accommodated by standards for headship. I have already suggested compromise measures (Chapter Ten) for those local groups attracted to traditional forms of leadership so that they might retain a modified form of linchpin headship, for example, that was nevertheless consistent with democratic values.

It is widely recognised, even among those thinkers who are circumspect about the power of the state to intervene in the affairs of their citizens, that some form of political control will always be needed to arbitrate between citizens' conflicting interests (Nozick, 1974, Tooley, 1995, Tooley, 1996). Even privately funded schools outside state control in all other respects – and so normally beyond the scope of this thesis – are required by law to conform to legislation where it concerns, for example, child protection, health and safety, financial probity, the employment of staff. Surely, there can be no complaint against the people's representatives, i.e. the state, intervening to some degree in the affairs of schools funded through the public purse.

Nor can the affairs of any one school within the maintained sector of publicly funded schooling be considered entirely in isolation from other schools in that sector. While individual schools should be left in large part to make decisions about matters affecting them directly, based on their particular knowledge of the best interests of their pupils, some decisions will need to be made between groups of schools. An important role remains at the level of Local Government to oversee and co-ordinate the choices of groups or clusters of schools in one area where those decisions to be made in one school are likely to impact on the pupils.

The relatively modest account of representative democracy I have argued for identifies a continuing role for Local Government as the public body which holds schools to account. Yet this role is undermined and its future threatened by measures intended to increase the number of state funded schools accountable only to national government (see Chapters Eight and Nine). There is no pressing need to expand the role of Local Authorities back to that it once enjoyed as a "provider" of educational services, however their role as a "commissioner" ought to be retained.

I recognise the concern that states should not intervene more than is necessary in the affairs of their citizens, so that their involvement should be minimal at both local and *national* government level. The framework for school leadership I propose as a replacement for the *National Standards* is less intrusive on those rights, not more so. Original or creative thinking, I have suggested (Chapters Six and Seven), requires a clear sense of "what is appropriate in the context" (White, 2002); so that engaging and interesting new approaches to leading a school must be possible within suitably clear and unambiguous, yet sufficiently flexible, guidelines.

Despite the clear reasoning behind the argument I have just presented, it is likely a minority of people holding unqualified commitments to a libertarian view point will remain unconvinced by it. For them, any attempt to constrain individuals' liberties at all by the state may be considered morally unjustified. In a democracy, the freedom to hold such an opinion should be respected and included in deliberation where these and other ideas are debated.

However, while it remains a minority view, it need not be accommodated fully into policies agreed by the majority. Libertarians like others, may not claim a right of veto over the majority. Minimal constraints on choice at the level of general principle are justified morally while the possibility exists of a few normal people who, ruthless and prepared to pursue a view of the good life for them, do not pay due regard to the needs and wants of fellow citizens.

12.2.2 General principles rather than specific standards

A problem I identified in the *National Standards* was that they are too ambiguous to judge the quality of educational practice either fairly or consistently (see above). I suggested (Chapter Five) that this ambiguity is deliberate, at least in part; a rhetorical device used by policy makers as well as practitioners in leadership positions who are keen to persuade the public that their pursuit of excellence in maintained schooling is focused, unrelenting and uncompromising (Chapter Five).

Therefore attachment to the language of standards should be abandoned (see above). The task of improving and reforming the quality of publicly funded schooling matters very much. However, it must be shared with – it cannot be "done to" – ordinary people who should help to decide what the good in schooling means to them (see below).

I recommend that the term "principle" is used in a *National Framework for School Leadership* to capture those limits within which practice in maintained schools would be expected to conform, omitting any reference to "standards". The sense of the word principle is associated clearly with a commitment to values that are dearly held and which people agree to abide by. No attempt is made to disguise their moral nature (Chapter Two). Any false impression the term "standard" creates – that quality school leadership practice can be measured – may thus be avoided.

I distinguished earlier between those unhelpful statements made in public policy documents that are ambiguous and therefore confusing, open to obfuscation; and statements that are clear while being open to some flexibility in interpretation, according to the particular circumstances in which they are to be applied. The

language used to express principles in the framework should be of the latter kind. However, it will also need to strike a delicate balance between the qualities of flexible interpretation just described and those of clarity, so that they are sufficiently robust to service the minimal degree of state intervention in choices made by directly interested parties in local schools that I argued for earlier (see above).

The challenge this presents will be to identify principles that accommodate a broad range of possible leadership models, with "possible" taken here to mean practically possible as well as consistent with values key to democracy. They must allow for the interests of those schools still attached to traditional forms of leadership, reluctant yet required to change their existing practice, without constraining by the same agreement more progressive schools committed to changing their leadership practice radically along democratic lines. A constitutional style framework will factor in sensitivity to the interests of those individuals – likely to represent a minority – who do not share the values of the majority and who are therefore circumspect about active participation in the shared life of the school, including decision-making (Chapter Nine). At the same time that minority should be denied the option to opt out of a contribution to the common good of the school entirely.

While I will not attempt to provide precise wording here (for reasons explained below), the likely content of key principles may be anticipated from those values characteristic to the democratic way of life. The framework will need to make it clear that the value of political equality should be respected in all schools, directly interested parties –including the pupils - being included in decision-making of significance unless there were relevant reasons capable of being generalised for excluding them (Chapter Ten). Thus leadership practice in those maintained schools conforming to the framework would follow the statement of aims underpinning the National Curriculum (DfES, 2007) that argues formal schooling should contribute to the preparation of those young people in their future lives as citizens (Chapter Eleven): if children are to become self-determining adults, they must have some experience of self-determination (O'Hear and White, 1991: 18).

It would follow that the value of autonomy would also influence significantly the kinds of principles identified for the framework. Given the logical and moral complexities associated with it, autonomy would need to be interpreted here in limited terms along the lines of being the right of those parties with a direct interest in a particular school to exercise choices based on a view of the good life for them in relation to decisions of significance (Chapters Nine and Ten). Qualifications to the right to autonomy would follow; for example, that the right of those individuals identified to be consulted in the affairs of a particular school and express views personal to them can be no guarantee of those ideas being adopted (Chapter Nine).

Moreover, while the state can have no business directing citizens in those thoughts they hold and views they express in private, in the public arena of school meetings for example, certain limits to freedom of expression should be anticipated so that the welfare of other directly interested parties may be safe-guarded (Chapter Ten). A national framework should not go further into the detail of what that concern for the welfare of others might entail. Local groups should be afforded the respect in the first instance of resolving this for themselves, with reference to a code of practice for the school, some form of social contract or concordat agreed by and binding on directly interested parties. Where disagreements occurred that could not be resolved among the directly interested parties concerned, a tiered representative system of government would then provide higher court(s) of appeal to which either or both sides might recourse with the intention of settling their grievances.

12.2.3 School leadership rather than headship

A further distinction needs to be made clear between the existing *National Standards* and the framework being proposed to replace them. Those principles that are identified apply to all people who contribute to the leadership of the school and are not confined to headteachers or senior administrators. This would need to be made clear in some kind of introduction to the framework document, where the notion of leadership would be explained impersonally in terms of the activity involved in directing the group effort, distancing it from any association with the traits and characteristics of exceptional individuals.

Furthermore, a distinction would need to be drawn between leadership in its formal and informal senses (Chapter Two) when influenced by democratic values and assumptions. Again, the National Curriculum provides a helpful model of existing policy. It includes a short (4 pages), clear statement of values and aims in language that is widely accessible to a general audience of citizens rather than particular to educational professionals.

Those employed in formal leadership roles, particularly headteachers where schools choose to retain them, will have responsibilities additional to those of other people and which will require related but additional layers of legislation. This should be relatively straightforward where governors are concerned, as their actions are regulated already by general principles (DfES, 2006) rather than standards. Other kinds of documentation specific to those in formal leadership positions, for example the Teachers Pay and Conditions agreement, the OFSTED Inspection Framework, will need more radical revision consistent with those principles contained in the framework document. A more modest form of regulation than the standards for headteachers that was specific to senior school leaders, including headteachers where relevant, might be undertaken as part of this review.

Although no specific lists or characteristics of successful leadership, whether formal or informal will be included in the principles contained in the framework, given the emphasis on political equality that will run through them, it is important that those responsibilities and activities associated with leading a school should be kept to realistic proportions, avoiding the unreasonable demands (Chapter Five) the *National Standards* place on headteachers. There are instrumental and pragmatic reasons for this as well as those intrinsic to the smooth running of democratic society.

Individuals should be spared the sheer weight of responsibility put upon them where linchpin leadership is demanded as a matter of course. Considerable difficulties are faced in recruiting suitably qualified practitioners to headteacher positions in maintained English schools in the early part of the twenty first century. A survey of *The State of the Labour Market for Senior Staff in Schools in England and Wales 2008-9* reported vacancies for head teachers remain at a historically high level

(Howson, 2009). One possibility is that a redefinition of formal leadership positions based on a more realistic assessment of what is possible might ease this situation. Moreover, although there is no conclusive proof that this is the case, there is some empirical evidence at least to suggest that schools are more likely to flourish where leadership responsibilities are shared (Chapter Eight).

At the level of principle, no one person in a school that is democratically led should be able to become too powerful. Representative democracy requires decision-making powers to be separated, while the linchpin ideal of headship reflected in the *National Standards* has the reverse effect, concentrating power in the hands of one or very few dedicated leadership experts. One way this can be addressed, drawing on the representative system of governance within which maintained schools are located, would be to delegate certain responsibilities up to a higher tier of governance than that of individual schools, either back to Local Authorities or to conglomerations or clusters determined by directly interested parties.

12.2.4 Preparation for leadership

Two different but complementary approaches will be required to prepare people for the respective demands of formal and informal school leadership. In the future, all citizens will receive preparation for informal leadership through civic education in any school with which they are directly involved, including opportunities to participate actively in decision-making. In the short term, contingency measures will need to be taken.

For example, the state should encourage through grants of additional resources projects in schools which are intended to build the capacity of shared decision making. Policies which seek to increase parental choice by enabling schools to opt out of local authority control, thus undermining the representative system of governance, should be abandoned. Where civic activity flourishes outside schooling already, for example in the home or in community organisations, aspects of preparation for leadership will take place, although it is not sufficient to rely on the

experience of civic participation on its own without the additional rigour of structured reflection provided by formal study (Chapter Eleven).

Dedicated and distinct professional development should continue to be provided for people undertaking positions of formal school leadership on behalf of others in society. As the expanding remit of the National College for School Leadership indicates, these roles are not confined to senior school leaders alone but include middle managers and leaders, school governors. To a more limited degree, students are formal leaders where they are elected to represent the student body in decision-making bodies within their school.

In each case the support and development needed to exercise these posts will be dictated on the sphere of competence demanded by a particular office, for example in the briefing information sheet (DfES, 2006) available to guide school governors. In the case of educational professionals there are several, potentially competing accounts of the sphere of competence, for example in professional standards documentation, the *Schoolteachers' Pay and Conditions Document* (DCSF, 2010) and the OFSTED Framework for School Inspection (OFSTED, 2009). These should be rationalised.

I identified economies of scale in the provision of national leadership development programmes by a dedicated college (Chapter Five). This should continue, through programmes informed by those principles I have established are necessary to the national framework (see above). Particular attention will need to be paid by providers to leadership development whether specifically professional or more general, which raises awareness and fosters development of practical wisdom (Chapter Seven) as a particularly significant and overlooked dimension to good school leadership. In the short term, this will need to take into account the problem that a widespread systematic and rigorous approach to civic education in schools has not yet had a chance to take hold (Chapters One and Eleven).

In addition to the common core of leadership development programmes, bespoke programmes will also be needed to suit the interpretations of school leadership

developed particular to the needs of individual schools. The value of local satellite centres networked to the National College for School Leadership and supported by the facilities for distance and e-learning (Chapter Five) has already been commended. These would be well-placed to offer specific advice and support.

12.2.5 Negotiated by citizens

I have argued that a constitutional style National Framework for School Leadership should be established (see above), to set out general principles that will define limits within which schools should be free to develop their own models of democratic leadership practice. While the discussion of those principles to date might have seemed to some tastes relatively "woolly", lacking in specifics, one academic with specialist knowledge should not seek to influence the precise contents of such a framework unduly, less still to determine it independently. Rather, such an important decision about maintained schooling in England should be reached through a thorough and inclusive process of consultation (Chapter Nine), "experts" within the educational establishment acting as servants to – not master of – the common interest, informing the debate without dictating its outcome.

When the *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004) were first compiled (see Chapter Five) a tightly controlled consultation process was conducted among relatively few people. A particular kind of expert in school leadership was commissioned by the national government of the day to formulate comprehensive standards for assessing the professional practice of all headteachers in England. The most recent *National Standards* were published after a process of "widespread consultation"; but even this was confined to those "within the profession" (: 2) while ordinary citizens were excluded from the formal consultation process. Once again, James Tooley's concern (1995, 1996) that too often too few members of an educational establishment enjoy disproportionate influence is realised (Chapter Nine).

With good school leadership no longer portrayed as something that experts can know about and which they should therefore control (Chapter Five), all directly interested parties are entitled to some influence in determining those ideals of school

leadership to be promoted in schools (Chapter Ten). While some aspects will be deduced from those commitments and beliefs that have characterised British society over time, in other respects a National Framework for School Leadership should be determined by a carefully devised, thoroughly conducted and inclusive consultation process led by the sub committee with responsibility for education in Parliament. Once agreement could be reached by a majority of citizens, or their elected representatives, this might be ratified by legislation in parliament.

Expert advice might be sought to good effect, for example, in providing public information style briefing papers based on relevant research literature and written in accessible, non technical language. The research information circulated might include findings from surveys and interviews conducted among practitioners as some understanding of their particular experiences might help citizens form opinions based on evidence. Assuming the separation of powers is observed, experts might support members of the local and/or national executive to draft legislation, to facilitate public discussion on the matter - or prepare others for a similar role - so that citizens could be clear about its implications.

Agreement over those general principles that are needed will be difficult but not impossible to reach. If the consultation process is conducted well, the process should inform the directly interested parties concerned and reflect the majority view. Once agreement can be reached, it is less likely, perhaps, where consultation has been thorough and inclusive, that the principles will be transgressed in practice or that major changes to them will be needed again in the near future.

13 CONCLUSION

13.1 Summary

In this thesis, I have explored a major paradox and contradiction (Grace, 1995) which remains at the heart of English schooling at the start of the twenty first century. While the National Curriculum (DfES, 2007) for maintained schools in England identifies schools as places which prepare the next generation for their future lives as citizens, undemocratic practice continues to be promoted through the dominant leadership discourse for those same schools. I have challenged the value of the particular view of leadership that is taken for granted in this system, and proposed a more suitable alternative.

Through my argument I have uncovered something of the history of this particular school leadership paradigm (Chapter Four), including its roots in Greek philosophy (Chapter Three). I have critiqued a policy document that plays a central role in shaping approaches to school leadership, the *National Standards for Headteachers* (DfES, 2004) and indicated its shortcomings (Chapter Five). I have argued that there is a very limited sense in which a widely used concept, "vision", is a suitable term to describe the distinctive qualities of very good school leaders (Chapter Six) and suggested as an alternative, the notion of practical wisdom (Chapter Seven).

I have reviewed examples found in research work – including a study focused on the professional work of so-called "Principled Principals" (Gold, et al., 2003) in Chapter Seven – and policy initiatives – including those that seek to promote shared or distributed school leadership (Chapter Eight) – that promise to break away from the conventional view of school leadership. I show in each case that while these go some way towards a more democratic conception, they do not go far enough. I have demonstrated the need for a more comprehensive account of the democratic alternative.

In earlier chapters I drew on literature in general philosophy to justify the hermeneutical approach I take in the thesis to the study of education (1985b, Taylor,

1985a). I then indicated the particular influence that one interpretation of Platonic thought has exercised on education in England (Chapters Three and Four). I return to philosophy in the final chapters, starting with an account of the characteristic values of political liberty and political liberty on which democratic practice rests (Chapter Nine).

Hence, I draw on general philosophical ideas to fill out a picture of democratic school leadership in line with those values highlighted, in particular considering the implications of respecting the equal right of citizens to consideration in decision-making, unless there are reasonable, relevant reasons to deny them this privilege (Chapter Ten). I go on to reflect on a pedagogical argument for democratic school leadership (Chapter Eleven) before proposing in the final chapter an alternative framework through which this alternative might be introduced and sustained within existing arrangements for schools in England.

The particular approach I have taken to develop this argument is both legitimate and unusual in the field of Educational Studies. The thesis I have presented is, of necessity complex, while it is argued in language that is intended to be widely comprehensible. In approaching my subject hermeneutically, I have sought to interpret leadership in ways that are socially and culturally appropriate to the particular context of maintained schooling in a democratic society, making particular – though not exclusive – reference to schooling in England. In this light, I have drawn on a variety of traditional subject disciplines including history, sociology, psychology and in particular philosophy of education, to review the dominant discourse of school leadership critically.

For example, I have applied a historical approach in order to identify principles that have been inherited from the past and which have influenced the ideals of school leadership reflected in the dominant discourse. Hence, in Chapter Four I demonstrated how a particular view of Thomas Arnold as a headmaster had been promoted, based on partial accounts recorded by influential people who were close to him. These included family members and former pupils, who drew particular attention to his perceived strengths as a leader, while down-playing his undoubted

failings. That myth of Arnold promoted a particular "Platonic" ideal of school leadership which stuck and which continues into the present.

Furthermore, I have drawn on sociological methods of educational research in order to make sense of concepts of leadership as they are practised in the context of schooling. In particular, I have found the work of German social theorist Max Weber helpful. The key distinction I draw between formal and informal school leadership (Chapter Two) develops from his original analysis of authority. I have found that difficulties which contemporary sociologists of education have identified in the dominant school leadership discourse (e.g. Ball, 1990, 1998, 1999, Hatcher, 2004, 2005) have influenced my argument, particularly in Chapters Two, Five and Seven. I have applied ideas from the psychology of education too where they have helped me to explain ideas about thinking and learning; for example in discussing the various ways in which people learn, including from their experiences, in Chapter Eleven

The philosophical dimension to this thesis has been critical. I have used general philosophy both to highlight the influence of Plato's ideas on the dominant school leadership discourse (Chapter Three) and to argue that these run counter to the spirit of a modern democratic society (Chapters Three and Nine). For example, I have used philosophical methods of conceptual clarification to criticise the use of the language of standards to capture beliefs about quality in educational practice (Chapter Five) as well as vision (Chapter Six). I have drawn on these various distinctive but complementary elements to build up my overall argument, making cross-references at many points, and to create a substantive and original contribution both to the Study of Educational Leadership, Management and Administration and to the Philosophy of Education.

13.1.1 Pursuing the case for democratic school leadership

I

I have introduced and developed significant ideas through the course of this thesis. Within the philosophy of education, the theme of democratic school leadership has been overlooked since Patricia White's work (e.g. White, 1982, 1983) in the early

1980s; Michael Fielding's consideration of school leadership as one aspect of more radical approaches to state education (e.g. Fielding, 1984, 2001, 2004) represents an honourable exception. I make a new contribution to the discipline in three ways.

First, I take Patricia White's earlier argument for democratic school leadership on direct or deliberative lines in *Beyond Domination: An Essay in the Political Philosophy of Education* (1983) and pursue a related but distinct argument for representative democratic school leadership. Secondly, I resolve a paradox identified by Gerald Grace (1995) between school leadership and learning, both at the level of theory and in relation to pedagogy. Thirdly, the interdisciplinary nature of the argument I make is relatively unusual in philosophy of education. I demonstrate both the value of working across the educational foundation disciplines, when seeking to interpret education policies and practices within the socio-political context in which they are situated; as well as the power of a theoretical argument informed by empirical data.

In this regard, my research also shows how theoretical argument can help to frame future study in the field of Educational Leadership, Management and Administration (ELMA) more coherently; as well as helping to interpret the results with greater logical clarity. For example, I do this by applying those methods of conceptual clarification that are well-established in the philosophy of education to notions of leadership, management and democracy that are confused in ELMA literature. I critically review ideas that are established descriptors of practice in ELMA research, for example shared and distributed leadership (Chapter Eight) as well as the moral art of leadership (Chapter Seven) and demonstrate how the relative worth of these different, potentially competing accounts of good school leadership might be evaluated on moral grounds (Chapters Seven to Ten).

I also apply ideas from general philosophy to my analysis of educational leadership practice. Concerned to establish what it is that makes school leadership *good*, I have demonstrated how the moral and political philosophy of Aristotle as he develops it in the *Nichomachean Ethics* (1953) – rather than an alternative account found in Plato's *Republic* – can help to explain those qualities that have been found (Gold, et al., 2003) to distinguish the very best formal school leaders from others (Chapter Seven).

Furthermore, while Aristotle's ideas have been applied before to describe the qualities of good school leadership (e.g. Bottery, 1992), my analysis is innovative because I tease out the distinguishing qualities of good school leaders, *given the democratic context in which their practice is situated*. Although various specific approaches to democratic school leadership are possible - hence the argument I have made for a national school leadership framework rather than a more prescriptive account of the best practice – I have highlighted how necessary a commitment to political liberty and political equality is to good leadership in this context. I have stressed the principle of an equal right to consideration (Chapter Ten) as a fair and reasonable, non-discriminatory grounds for determining who should, and who should not, be included in decision-making.

This being the case, I have qualified the common perception that good headteachers are *key* to school improvement. I agree that the professional competence of those in formal school leadership roles does matter (Chapters Five and Seven); but that this does not offer a sufficient account of good school leadership on its own. In a democracy it is wrong at the level of principle for the many to depend on the few for direction (Chapter Nine). Therefore, good school leaders need to hold certain moral commitments rather than others and be able to translate these beliefs into their professional practice (Chapter Seven).

Those qualities that are evident in people in positions of formal leadership who undertake their duties well should be recognised, but only in as far as they relate to the sphere of competence associated with the position. For example, vision does not distinguish the ability of a few people to intuit the future good of the school (Chapter Six), although it might be used to describe creative, imaginative thinking as another aspect of school leadership. Good informal leadership in a democracy requires this opportunity to be shared among directly interested parties in a school who are able to exercise personal influence on decision making (Chapter Eight).

II

In this thesis, building on the work of White and others, I identify a considerable and longstanding moral shortcoming in state maintained schooling. This is a matter of great disquiet to a great many people. Thus, not only do I pursue a theme that is of considerable intellectual interest, I construct a case for social reform. I do this in an area of great practical importance, not only in England or indeed the UK as a whole, but in any democratic country concerned with the moral education of its future citizens.

Too often, decisions about schooling are made by too few people. I agree that the detail of how schooling might best be run should be entrusted to the experts; these will include educational practitioners, policy makers and researchers. Meanwhile, at the level of strategy ordinary citizens are entitled to a greater say in determining what education is for, with particular regard for the needs and wants of individual children and young people and the communities to whom they belong. The Secretary of State has indicated his commitment to greater participation in decision making in education at a local level (e.g. Gove, 2010a). However, there are difficulties with the particular solutions that he offers to address the problem.

Rather than seeking to reform the system of representative school governance which has existed in England for over a century, Gove proposes to further undermine local democratic control of schooling, with the introduction of Free Schools and Academies (Gove, 2010a). Yet there are problems with distributing educational goods and services along these lines (see Chapter Nine), not least because this is a move for which there is no overwhelming or widespread public support. Meanwhile, I have identified reasons why existing arrangements could and in principle *should* be reformed, through civic education and a prudent investment of public resources in governing bodies and Local Authorities.

Good leadership concerns a process by which decisions ought to be made as an end in its own right, not just as a means to achieving other desired ends. The capacity to contribute to good leadership in this second sense is something all normal people

may achieve given the opportunity to learn how to do so. This requires a combination of lived experience, theoretical learning and structured reflection on practice. As well as the civic responsibility of participating in school leadership, education to support this role should be a right, with children and young people learning what leadership is while they are at school as well as how it is done, through both the taught and hidden curriculum (Chapter Eleven).

However, this sense of the future priorities for schooling is not evident in the plans for "radical" reform of schooling that have been revealed in the earliest policy announcements made by the coalition government elected in May 2010 (Chapter One). These appear to promote a narrow view of good education focused on the transmission of knowledge associated with academic subjects, for example with the introduction of the English Baccalaureate. Furthermore, there is a question mark over the continued inclusion of Citizenship as a statutory requirement of the National Curriculum (Chapter One).

III

Given the significance of these findings, in this final section of the thesis I consider how they might be pursued, beginning with future ideas for research to stem from this project. I have highlighted already (Chapter Seven) the potential value of the "Principled Principals" investigation but argued that while revealing, this study is conceptually flawed. Therefore one obvious project for future research would be to re-visit this enquiry, using the alternative conceptual framework focused on the alternative notion of practical wisdom that I have argued for in this thesis (Chapter Seven).

This could be of value to ELMA research as well as philosophers of education, policy makers and practitioners, indeed anyone concerned with the application of democratic principles to schooling. Were my hypothesis to be proved correct, such a study would provide insights into the nature of practical wisdom as it is applied in schools and case studies of how democratic school leadership works in practice. This

would also be an invaluable tool for the development of educational professionals, including formal school leaders (see below).

Throughout the thesis, I have noted research gaps that I have been unable to pursue in a general and interdisciplinary thesis. Nevertheless, they point to areas for research that would contribute to a better understanding at the level of theory and principle. First, as shown in Chapter Four, the literature on the history of school leadership remains rather thin and focuses on a narrow set of educational establishments. We still do not know enough in general terms about how leadership was practised, beyond the example of outstanding individuals, most notably Thomas Arnold.

There is also a pressing need for further research at the level of general principle into the philosophical arguments about democracy and school leadership I have highlighted. This was a vibrant area of research in earlier decades, but as I note above, it has been much neglected in recent years. Given the current political climate, where notions of improved leadership and enhanced accountability are being touted as the rationale for radical education reform, these need to be subjected to careful scrutiny. At this time, there is an urgent need for philosophers to make a contribution at the level of theory to issues in public policy concerning democratic governance and schooling (see below).

IV

At the level of policy and practice I note a number of issues that merit further investigation. First, leadership is often conceived of in terms of the agency of individuals and their effectiveness. This thesis has affirmed the importance of the effectiveness of individuals – qualities that individuals bring to formal leadership positions which do make a difference to the way in which they undertake their role – but argued that it is a moral matter not just an instrumental concern. This has implications for the continuing professional development of educational professionals, how this includes awareness of the moral and ethical dimensions of professional practice as well as more instrumental concerns.

For example, good school leaders need to be able to distinguish between actions informed by appropriate and inappropriate moral values, given the socio-political context in which their work is situated. Furthermore, good school leaders will need to be prepared for their role as civic educators through the hidden curriculum of the school. These programmes of Continuing Professional Development would be supported well by extending the existing bank of case studies which illustrate democratic school leadership at work. One source of studies would be created were the "Principled Principals" study revisited (see above).

While the quality of professional work undertaken by individuals in positions of formal authority is significant, I have emphasised that good leadership also depends on having the right structures in place and organisational ethos through which to govern the school. I have only had the opportunity to sketch out very briefly the principles that might inform a new National Framework for School Leadership; these ideas need to be developed further.

Finally, the ideas that I have developed in this thesis contribute to an ongoing public debate concerning the place of schools funded by the state within a system that the state controls and how far the future direction that schooling takes should be determined by market forces. This includes the question of the place of Local Authorities in the future, as well as Free Schools and Academies. My concern is that the existing system, based on the primacy of local government and school governing bodies, has been written off on the basis of its failings at a practical level, to be replaced by an ideologically motivated alternative. More effort could be made to address those practical failings (see Chapter Nine). Perhaps a number of the problems presented could be ironed out, given a realistic investment of resources among a community of people committed to making it work collectively.

13.1.2 The last word

English schooling culture in the twenty first century continues with a major paradox and contradiction at its heart. It is still designated the cultural agency for "making democracy work", still involved, at specific periods with explicit pedagogical

projects intended to enhance education for citizenship, yet its own practice – as this thesis has demonstrated – remains "largely undemocratic" (Grace, 1995: 65). This complex and demanding study has taken a long time to complete; at a personal level, I can rejoice that my thesis is as relevant today as it was at the end of the twentieth century and that no one else has completed a very similar project first.

Governments across the party political divide have made promises during that time to introduce radical change to state education and to invest in the quality of school leadership. Yet, in *moral* terms the ideal of leadership which dominates the discourse of schooling in England has changed very little in over a century. Without systems of political accountability in place to ensure consistency across a national system of schools, those values that are promoted through school leadership on an ad hoc basis depend on the personal commitments of those in positions of formal school leadership. Where their actions are informed by a commitment to democratic principles, their practice may be promising. This should be the case in every school.

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