

Should school leadership be 'shared'?

Janet Orchard

Department of Education, University of Oxford

15 Norham Garden,

Oxford OX2 6PY

janet.orchard@education.ox.ac.uk

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A cluster of initiatives developed by educationalists interpret school leadership as ‘shared’ (2002; KAGAN 1994) or ‘distributed’. ‘Shared’ leadership has attracted interest as a practical response to a problem that schools face recruiting and/or retaining suitable headteachers. Less often it is explored as a morally desirable account of school leadership.

However, a coherent understanding of ‘shared’ school leadership is hard to establish. 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; 2003; MACBEATH 1999; 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’.

What is ‘shared’ school leadership?

A number of educational leadership researchers or practice-based research projects (BUSH and GLOVER 2003; COURT 2003; HARRIS 2005; PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS 2007) have explored the premise that school leadership may be ‘shared’ successfully. Increasingly researchers have concluded from empirical studies of practice that the impact previously attributed to headteachers or principals on the improvement of schools may have been exaggerated (LEITHWOOD 2000; WALLACE 2002). A cluster of new leadership practices has been identified on the strength of this evidence, loosely linked by their advocacy of a team approach to leadership. These include: ‘participative’ leadership (LEITHWOOD et al. 1999), ‘teacher leadership’ (HARRIS and MUIJS 2005), ‘collaborative leadership’ (CLIFT 1995) and ‘dispersed leadership’ (CROWTHER 2002). Some go further, suggesting school leadership may be at its most ‘effective’ when it is ‘distributed’ (GRONN 2003; HARRIS and CHAPMAN 2002).

However, the main focus of attention in this paper will be another distinction debated within the educational leadership research literature between leadership ‘shared’ for ‘instrumental’ reasons on one hand and ‘intrinsic’ reasons on the other (COURT 2003; HATCHER 2005; WOODS 2004). An ‘instrumental’ reason is understood in this context to refer to leadership ‘shared’ for practical reasons, perhaps out of necessity because a school has failed to recruit and/or retain the services 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 with 'intrinsic' reasons for 'sharing' school leadership based on a commitment to the idea that decision-making power, and thus the accompanying responsibility, *ought* to be distributed. In this case the role of the headteacher within a school might be abandoned entirely, to be replaced with a 'teacher leadership collective' (COURT 2003) for example, 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.

Thus there are two reasons for choosing to analyse 'shared' leadership here with this distinction in mind.

[A] Were suitable examples of 'shared' leadership found in the existing practices of mainstream schools, these might offer support to a theoretical case for democratic school leadership. Commonly democracy is criticised (WOLFF 1996) as an attractive ideal that is nonetheless impractical, a perception that could be challenged – thus a stronger argument prepared to argue for radical change to the status quo – by counter examples of successful practice. However, given the wide range of practice embraced by the term 'shared' those examples used would need to be chosen carefully. Hatcher (2004), for example, 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 the term 'distributed' be reserved to describe 'shared' leadership practice justified on instrumental grounds. He notes that the expressions: 'shared', 'distributed' and 'democratic' leadership' are used interchangeably in the educational leadership and administration research literature so that examples of practice may be described as 'democratic' (for example in BUSH and GLOVER 2003 ; HARRIS and CHAPMAN 2002) that do not reflect consistently those values specific to the concept of 'democracy' (HATCHER 2005; WOODS 2004). 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; 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; 2005; WOODS 2004). 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, that 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 it is the distinction between particular values that motivate the 'sharing' of leadership that matter. Depending on what those values are, these models might be –or could be developed into – examples of 'shared' leadership that both work well and are morally desirable in schools in democratic contexts.

Five models of 'shared' school leadership

1. Federations

The term 'federation' refers to a cluster of schools who share a headteacher (COURT 2003). Traditionally headteachers have borne ultimate responsibility for one school only. On a federal model, day-to-day administration is managed by a 'senior' deputy while a very experienced and previously successful former headteacher of one school takes control at a 'strategic' level of all participating institutions. Federations were first introduced as a policy proposal intended to address problems faced in recruiting suitable leaders in normal circumstances (PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS 2007). With political priorities changing in response to an economic downturn, federations have been promoted more recently by UK policy makers as a means to make substantial savings to the education budget. The number of senior staff, including head teachers, deputies, assistant heads and heads of departments could be reduced "without damaging teaching quality" Schools Secretary Ed Balls has claimed (OLIVER 2009).

In practice federations have thus far proved unpopular. Glatter and Harvey (2006) located only two working examples of federations in England; a further report (SMITHERS and ROBINSON 2007) found school leaders and their representative organisations regarded them to be inappropriate and unworkable. If the demands of headship are so great already that they render the job unattractive to many potential candidates, federation heads shoulder more responsibility still. Little wonder, then, 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. While public sector workers should be open to the possibility of learning from private sector practices,

organisations are not of necessity more 'efficient' simply because they have a 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.

Comparisons between the management of organisations generally and schools particularly are of limited value given the peculiar nature of education. Learning cannot be equated satisfactorily to manufacturing because it is not just a 'product' *of* but embedded *in* a process; both 'means' and 'ends' matter. Teachers are trained in specific ways to provide them with the requisite specialist knowledge and understanding for that learning process to be conducted successfully (see below). Many aspects of formal school leadership draw on professional knowledge of teaching and learning; they cannot be delegated to generic leadership 'experts' (SMITHERS and ROBINSON 2007).

Another defence of the federation model has been attempted. Were leadership to be 'shared' across a group or cluster of schools it would allow them to benefit from economies of scale (PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS 2007). With a much larger pool of senior staff from which to draw – rather than a series of individual schools each seeking to recruit 'experts' with the requisite skills and interests to their respective senior management teams – specialist knowledge in areas such as human resources, finance and project management might be shared to the benefit of every school. Where technical professional knowledge outside the field of education was called for, this might be particularly cost effective; non-teachers with relevant expertise might be employed by several schools, an expense no one individual institution could justify.

Political choices were made from 1988 onwards to devolve responsibilities like these directly to schools so that they might act autonomously. The precise nature of the relationship between schools within the federal arrangement is unclear. Were it to be competitive, it might compromise the well-being of those people directly interested in the 'losing' institution(s). Safeguards would be needed to ensure the federal head did not favour one school in her strategic decision-making. There may be good short term reasons for schools to collaborate with each other on matters of mutual interest but other models of schooling allow for this without compromising the autonomy of each individual institution (see next section).

The responsibility for holding federations to account would fall in the first instance to Local Authorities, who retained this power over state maintained schools within their jurisdiction after Local Education Authorities were abolished, as 'commissioners' rather than 'providers' of educational services (DFES 2005b). But why, if the devolution of these services to individual schools has proved so impractical, cannot the responsibility for providing them be returned back to local governments as an alternative to federations? A review should be instigated of this reform (see below).

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.

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.

Alternatively, schools might ‘collaborate’ in responding to the ‘Every Child Matters’ (ECM) agenda (DFES 2005a). A need has been recognised by policy makers (DFES 2004) for schools to “network effectively”, both with each other and with professionals from other children’s services (p.11), in the interests of supporting specific children whose needs are complex. Networking between the schools would conform to the ‘collaborative’ leadership model where a locally based working party was established that included senior managers from each school delegated responsibility for ECM who ‘problem solved’ the issues together. Depending on the size of the schools involved, 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 would be afforded equal status on the working party.

This emphasis on collaboration makes it difficult to categorise according to the strict division of ‘distributed’ and ‘democratic’ leadership identified by 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 might 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 could be part of one were the egalitarian impulses that seem to inform collaborative leadership practice developed further.

For this to happen, the control of educational professionals would need to be broken down further still, so that a working party of the kind just mentioned 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.

Imagine, for example, 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 or an educational professional.

3. Co-headship

Next, three models of leadership are considered where ‘sharing’ takes place within the confines of one school. While, the practice is by no means widespread (GLATTER and HARVEY 2006) one way in which those responsibilities traditionally associated with the role of the headteacher may be broken down is through the employment of ‘co-’ or ‘dual’ headteachers (COURT 2003). ‘Co-headship’ is a second 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’ (COURT 2003; LEITHWOOD 2000).

The ‘co-headship’ model offers a response to criticism made of the ‘Standards’ (DFES 2004) that they make unrealistic demands on one person (GRONN 2003; ORCHARD 2002). The ‘supported dual leadership’ version of co-headship described by Court (2003 p.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, or to support the professional development of a younger, less experienced colleague. This positive assessment of co-headship assumes the parties involved have complimentary, rather than overlapping, professional skills and can co-operate with one another.

Another possible advantage of co-headship might be to ensure that where pressure is experienced by headteachers as a consequence of the ‘performance’ of their school being placed under scrutiny - by the Local Authority, OFSTED or Her Majesty’s Inspectors – this burden is ‘shared’, not the responsibility of an individual. Although formally this dubious privilege rests with the Chair of the Governing Body, rather than the headteacher, this is not the perception of senior teachers who were asked to account for their reluctance to seek promotion to the highest levels of school management (SMITHERS 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. Co-headship might prove a more attractive option to this key group of professionals.

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 focussed on the agency of one or very few individuals (e.g. GRACE 1995; WHITE 1983; 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.

4. Teachers as Leaders

Increasingly research concerned with their ‘improvement’ has found significant advantages accrue to those schools that recognise teachers as leaders (DAY et al. 2001; GRONN 2000; HARRIS and CHAPMAN 2002; HARRIS and MUIJS 2005; WALLACE 2002). 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 general, deliberately non-technical, phrase ‘teachers as leaders’ will be used here, as it is less likely to become confused with any account in particular.

In one sense at least, opportunities for teachers to exercise ‘formal’ leadership responsibility have opened up in maintained schools in England over the past decade. A government-sponsored “Leading from the Middle” (NCSL) initiative, for example, has supported the professional development of teachers as ‘middle level’ managers to encourage them to exercise more influence on decision-making in schools, including strategic planning. New job-titles for middle managers have proliferated as a result to include: “Lead teachers”, “Advanced Skills Teachers” and “Key Stage Co-ordinators” alongside the more familiar notions of pastoral heads and curriculum subject leaders.

However, Hatcher (2004) has been critical of the lack of impact strategies of this kind have enjoyed on the power afforded teachers to influence decision-making. While responsibilities, he suggests, have been delegated down to middle managers in the name of ‘distributed leadership’, very rarely have these been accompanied by any power to effect 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.

Further, the value ascribed to ‘teachers as leaders’ continues to be expressed in terms of ‘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; HATCHER 2005; WOODS 2004; WOODS 2005). Difficulties with ‘effectiveness’, as the basis for making judgements that one form of educational practice is ‘better’ than another, are well-established. The notion that simple, causal relationships may be traced reliably and predictably between the activities of leaders and the likely effects they will exercise on other people can be dismissed (ORCHARD 2002), even though claims that practice is ‘effective’ depend on this assumption. Nor is it meaningful to claim a practice ‘effective’ without identifying those ends to be achieved (SMITH 1999); but these matters are not entered into.

For Harris and Muijs (2005) the ‘formal’ leadership role teachers can play in schools on the basis of their professional status is only one, relatively insignificant part of their potential leadership influence. Far more potent, they suggest, is the capacity of teachers to influence decision-making ‘informally’ through their interactions, with each other and with other people in the school. Leadership in this ‘informal’ sense, they suggest, is a “dynamic” between individuals, a “by-product of social interaction and purposeful collaboration” (p.14). While the language in which their observations are phrased is hard to follow, they appear to suggest that teachers say things 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. We cannot predict this to be the case, however; it may or may not be true.

On the other hand, this idea is an attractive one in the quest for examples of practice that might contribute to a democratic account of school leadership. A shift in the idea of leadership may be noted away from those actions, skills or qualities to be identified with special or expert individuals and towards the influence all people may exercise through their interactions with other people. Not limited to the interactions of those holding 'formal' office, it may operate through interactions throughout a school. This hints, however, at a broader kind of 'shared' leadership, not one exclusive to teachers.

Harris and Muijs admit as much, stating 'teacher leadership' "encapsulates *all staff* engaged in supporting teaching and learning" (2005 p.17), thus suggesting many people may be 'leaders'. While this observation could be helpful to a case for democratic school leadership, why confuse further what promises to be a complex idea already- on the evidence of the language used to describe it - by describing it as 'teacher leadership'? Clearer, and more helpful, would be to distinguish more clearly between the 'formal' contribution teachers make to school leadership as professionals and the general contribution they make -as others may do – in an 'informal' sense.

This would appear consistent with a distinction Harris and Muijs' suggest elsewhere in their study (p. 55) between 'broad-based' and 'skilful' leadership. They conceive of 'broad based' leadership in similar terms to the 'informal' sense of leadership already described (see above). By 'skilful' leadership they draw attention to the authority that may be derived from skills and insight peculiar to positions people hold in an organisation, in this case a school. Teachers, for example, are trained as specialists in lesson planning; assuming they are competent they know and understand how to manage the learning of relatively large numbers of children in a classroom. This positions them with a particular insight in relation to decision-making.

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 to decision-making in education drawing on capacities developed through their paid work as well as other dimensions to their lives. The potential range of 'skills based' leadership beyond the narrow ranks of 'formal' leaders on a schools' senior management team should be explored.

Depending on the particular kind of democratic model envisaged, there may well be a place for delegating some decisions to groups of teachers who, on the strength of their specialist knowledge might make decisions efficiently and insightfully. 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. Once determined, it would be reasonable to entrust more detailed decision-making concerned with the implementation of those policies in practice to educational professionals. This distinction, with further conceptual work, could feature very helpfully in an account of democratic school leadership although it wouldn't be used to draw lines between democratic and non-democratic school leadership practice (see below). Nor is it related clearly enough to democratic values as it stands to be useful.

5. *'Distributed Leadership'*

Gronn, unlike Woods – who ascribes another specific meaning to the term (see above and below) – describes 'distributed leadership' in abstracted language of the kind also employed by Harris and Muijs (see above). It is a "synergy released when the sum effort contributed by members of the team is greater than the total of its parts" he suggests. Rather than being a quality ascribed to individual people, leadership is an 'emergent' quality, a power that is located in certain positive kinds of interaction between people that causes change to happen" (GRONN 2003).

This ineffable power is released, Gronn goes on to suggest, where groups of people are no longer conscious of the formal status each brings to the discussion table but this is put to one side in order that open and free discussion may take place of ideas that could be put into practice (GRONN 2003). That initiative, the capacity to have the 'visionary' idea does not rest with one person but passes from one member of the group to another.

Similar observations to these are made by Leithwood (1992) describing 'participative leadership' and 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 capture the kinds of mental events and psychological interactions it is assumed take place when those tasks associated with managing an organisation are shared across a team and not confined to a single leader. They attempt to describe what might be happening when teams of people are deemed to function 'well' in educational settings, based on data gathered through empirical study. They struggle to pin down with precision exactly what happens that is of value. The idea being grasped at is not dismissed on these grounds alone but more work seems to be needed to establish a clearer account of what it is that is claimed here.

In the meantime, a more coherent account of 'distributed leadership' could be devised from the distinction made by Weber (1947) between formal and informal types of authority. This would locate the concept within a well-established and authoritative theoretical framework that may be applied appropriately to this context. 'Informal leadership' might be used meaningfully to describe that personal authority any individual might exercise at any point on the direction of decision-making in a group regardless of their formal role or status.

Meanwhile, the term 'formal leadership' might be reserved to describe those positions in schools that in large part, though not exclusively, are undertaken by teachers and headteachers. Pupils on the School Council would be leaders in a 'formal' sense as would parents where, for example, they were elected as School Governors. On a democratic account, 'formal' leaders could not expect to dominate the 'informal leadership' capacity of the organisation, but take responsibility to ensure others can influence decision-making. This would require them to act in ways that were informed by democratic values, the next focus of the discussion.

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). More likely, they are found as exceptional examples within the independent sector, the most obvious being 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 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 that to allow their opinions exercise influence on decisions made at school is valuable.

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, as Michael Fielding (2004) observes, do schools allow pupils the 'courage and confidence to create new practices and proposals for a more just and vibrant society' (p.199) 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.

Woods' account of democratic school leadership requires further analysis

Finally, while there are promising aspects to the account of democracy Woods provides (2005) it would benefit from further development. It is dominated by one

particular 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 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 as 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.” (p.3)

Woods is right to highlight the importance of reason as a basis for establishing some kind of consensus in democratic societies with a view to addressing the problem of created by ideological difference fairly.

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 and may be united by a very particular belief of extreme significance that had 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.

Finally, as the radical dissenting congregation was a potentially volatile and unstable model of social organisation further limits should be placed on its use as a model of democratic practice for contemporary schools. While Ranters, Levellers and Diggers had largely disappeared by the end of the seventeenth century, those that survived – the Quakers, for example, Congregationalists, Baptists – did so as groups who compromised the authority of local congregations by agreeing to the discipline of belonging to a wider denomination structure, both 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 (ORCHARD 2010). Those people directly associated 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 (ibid).

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 offer some sense of how democratic leadership might be applied to maintained schools in England in the future.

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