

# Democratic Leadership

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## Summary

The idea of democratic leadership suggests that leadership can be conducted in ways that includes people rather than treating them simply as followers of the leader. Understanding what this means conceptually, and its implications for practice in schools and other educational settings, raises complex and challenging issues. The concept of democracy has a variety of meanings. The concept of leadership itself is much debated, with increasing attention being given to the idea that in practice it is a distributed and emergent phenomenon involving not only senior leaders but also numerous others who contribute to leadership through everyday interactions. A narrow, minimalist idea of democratic leadership sees it as a style of leadership that, say, a principal or headteacher might adopt so that others, such as staff and students, feel consulted and included. This does not have so much potential for transforming education. A broader conception, with greater relevance to education, sees democratic leadership as having a much richer and more ambitious focus. A rich perspective of democratic leadership not only promotes power sharing and transforming dialogue that enhances understanding (rather than entrenching people's existing views and self-interests), but also cultivates holistic learning as rounded, ethical 'citizens' of the organisation and relational well-being through a community that fosters both belonging and individuality. Democratic leadership that is rich in this way encourages a sense of agency across the school and addresses power differences so the practice of democratic leadership becomes a shared, collaborative process in which all as co-leaders contribute pro-actively in diverse ways to innovation and the life of the school. Equally, it recognises the importance of the structural context from which leadership as a complex, distributed phenomenon emerges. Democratic leadership grows from and is expressed through enabling structures, such as a culture that explicitly shows that inclusive participation is valued and institutional spaces and resources that provide opportunities for power sharing, transforming dialogue and the growth of holistic learning and relational well-being. The creation and nurturing of such enabling structures is as much a feature of democratic leadership as leadership agency that is in its style participative and empowering.

## Key words

shared leadership; distributed leadership; democratic community; democratic schools; holistic learning; power; dialogue; well-being

# Introduction

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The purpose of this chapter is to examine the idea of democratic leadership in order to understand better its implications for educational practice and policy. The chapter concentrates on exploring what it can mean for leadership to embody the principles and characteristics of democracy, recognising that the descriptor ‘democratic’ can sometimes be used interchangeably with other descriptors, such as ‘distributed’, ‘shared’ or ‘collaborative’.

The view taken of the concept of leadership – that is, how it is conceptualised – affects the approach taken to understanding democratic leadership. This is not the place to undertake an extended discussion of definitions, but it is important to explain the conceptualisation of leadership that underpins this chapter. This is done in the next section.

A challenge in examining democratic leadership is the fact that there is no consensus around the meaning of democracy. What democracy consists of, and the features seen as most important in conceptualising a properly democratic society, are much debated, with different models and perspectives proposed (see for example Cartledge, 2016; Held, 2006; Keane, 2009). Following the section on conceptualising leadership, conceptions of democracy are discussed through the perspectives of power, dialogue, growth and belonging. The chapter then considers democratic leadership from the viewpoint of the conduct or style of leadership it might imply. This foregrounds leadership as agency, which may take different forms, one of them being democratic. The agential viewpoint is followed by a discussion that foregrounds structure by considering leadership as a feature which reflects, is shaped by and constructs a particular structural context, namely that of democratic organisation or community.

The discussion is brought together by drawing on the concept of holistic democracy, in which the agential and structural aspects of democratic leadership are highlighted, and presenting a framework of the dimensions of holistic democracy and associated structures. In the conclusion, two key points are emphasised: that an expansive view of democratic leadership gives attention to the dimensions summarised in that framework - power sharing, transforming dialogue, holistic learning and relational well-being; and that democratic leadership is a product of the interplay of agency and school structures.

# Conceptualising Leadership

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In this chapter, leadership is viewed essentially as a distributed process. This understanding of leadership is influenced strongly by theories of complexity and distributed leadership and has two defining features. (Detailed discussion and arguments can be found in Woods and Roberts, 2018.)

Firstly, leadership entails both intentionalities and emergence. That is, the phenomenon of leadership is constituted through the relationship between organisational actors' expressions of intentionality and the interactions that give rise to emergence. Intentionalities are the deliberations and impulses by an individual or group that lead to action and the initiation of change and that fashion the ways (the conduct or style) in which such leadership actions are undertaken. Emergence, founded in theories of complexity and distributed leadership, denotes leadership as a phenomenon that simultaneously arises from complex and ongoing reciprocal influences as organisational actors interact with each other and with the cultural, institutional and social structures and artefacts in the organisational environment they inhabit. Leadership is not reducible to the intentionalities of individuals: whilst those intentionalities are analytically distinct, they are embedded in the interactions that give rise to emergence. This dual perspective, recognising both intentionalities and emergence, threads through the chapter. The discussion on leadership in organisational democracy and the presentation of the holistic-democratic framework that follows that discussion make clear the implications of this perspective ~~we~~ for understanding democratic leadership, by incorporating both its agential aspects and the structural factors that are constitutive parts in its emergence.

Secondly, reflecting a distributed perspective, leadership is exercised by both positional leaders, such as headteachers, principals and middle leaders in designated leader posts, and those without such formal designations. Non-positional leadership is not tied to formal roles and may be exercised by teachers, students, school support staff and others (Frost, this volume).

# Conceptions of Democracy

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In this section, a synthesis of diverse ways of conceptualising democracy is offered by distinguishing between four fundamental perspectives on what democratic

governance is most crucially about, and by highlighting the contrast between minimalist and rich conceptions of democracy.

## *Power, dialogue, growth and belonging*

For some the acute and arresting feature of democracy, in ancient and modern times, is that it is about ‘democratic power of decision and control’ (Cartledge 2016: 7). The ultimate right to make decisions about collective spending and policy and, in representative democracy, to install and replace rulers rests with the people; and people are enabled to do this through institutions that record and enact their decisions. The focus here is on democratic *power*. An innovative perspective on the nature of such power, developed by Keane (2009: pxxvii-xxviii), is the notion of monitory democracy. This posits a growth in modern times of public accountability through individuals and groups monitoring and challenging those in power, whether that be government departments, private companies or powerful individuals

For others, democracy is as much if not more about inclusive and productive public discussion that informs public decision-making. The central focus is the enabling of *dialogue*. It is about ‘the capacity to enrich reasoned engagement through enhancing informational availability and the feasibility of interactive discussions... and the extent to which different voices from diverse sections of the people can actually be heard’ (Sen 2009: xiii). This viewpoint can embrace the wider notion of dialogic democracy which extends reflexivity and democratisation into areas of social life that include organisations, such as schools, family life and social movements (Giddens 1994).

An additional perspective on democracy is to see it as a governance arrangement that facilitates people’s developmental *growth*, helping them to develop as full and ethical human beings and bring to fruition their innate potential (Norton, 1996). In modern times this surfaces during the struggles between parliament and King in the British Isles of the 17th century, as ‘democracy began to reawaken’ (Cartledge 2016: 283), with the argument that liberty facilitates spiritual development by allowing people ‘to discover themselves in their practice’ (Vane, quoted in Parnham, 1997: 116). The freedom entailed in democratic life creates, from this perspective, conditions for people to improve their character and grow as ethically flourishing human beings and good citizens. The nature of democratic society is such that it is essential to the educational aim of developing ‘continued capacity for growth’ and learning (Dewey 1916: 110): in such a society education encompasses development of practical competency as well as elevating characteristics such as ‘a cultivated imagination for

what men have in common and a rebellion at whatever unnecessarily divides them' (p132). Democracy in this view nurtures 'fully embodied learning' that feeds the heart, spirit, mind, physical health and the capacity and skills for practical action (Woods 2011, Woods and Woods 2010).

A further perspective highlights the value of *belonging* as a key and critical feature of the democratic social environment. From this viewpoint, democratic ways of living foster participation and mutual respect and through this help to generate a sense of positive identity and social well-being. They provide a societal 'home' which promotes equality of respect. Democracy in its ideal form has a therapeutic rationality that helps to forge social cohesion and foster esteem in all members of the democratic community (Chandler, 2001; Woods, 2005: 15). Importantly, a democratic social environment is not simply a means to an end of individuals feeling better about themselves. There is something inherently good about such an environment. In addition, the exercising of responsibilities to the collective good are part-and-parcel of what it means to be an ethical individual and citizen. The belonging and commitment to the collective good in such an environment are seen as intrinsically valuable and political participation a duty, as suggested by the perspective of civic republicanism (Stokes, 2002).

## *Dispositions to minimalist and rich conceptions of democracy*

Contributing further to the synthesis in this section of the many and complex conceptualisations of democracy, it is possible to contrast two dispositions. One is a disposition towards a minimalist conception of democracy. In this, the developmental and ethical expectations understood to be integral to democratic society or organisations are the least possible. People are conceived as interest-maximisers who are to be protected from untoward intrusions of the state and the powers-that-be. They can, through available democratic mechanisms, argue and vote for what they see as in their own best interests and exercise democratic power in this light. The minimalist approach is focused on power, particularly how collective power can be minimised and democratically controlled and people protected from the misuse of power.

The other disposition is towards a richer understanding of democracy and holds a more elevated and ambitious view of people and democracy. Its concern is equally with all four perspectives – power, dialogue, growth and belonging. It sees a synergy between democracy and relational freedom (Woods and Roberts 2018), the latter

referring to people's activation of their developmental capabilities for ethical growth and individual flourishing and for their action as social beings contributing to the common good and to enlarging the choice of others to seek their own good. Democracy reflects and cherishes this capacity for progressive human development through discussion, debate, listening and working with others to overcome harmful divisions and to create positive change.

The examination of democratic leadership in this chapter does not base itself on the minimalist position of democracy but builds up a richer understanding of democratic leadership through the following steps. Democratic leadership is explored firstly through the question of the conduct or style of leadership - that is, through thinking about democratic leadership as behaviour 'that influences people in a manner consistent with and/or conducive to basic democratic principles and processes' (Gastil, 1994: 856). The emphasis here is on leadership as a way of purveying influence and what it means to do this democratically. Democratic leadership is explored secondly as leadership in a democratic organisational context and as a feature of organisational democracy. Here democratic structure and context constitute the key focus. The concept of holistic democracy, which is a way of articulating the more elevated and ambitious view of democracy that contrasts with the minimalist position, is then used to construct a framework that draws together themes from these explorations.

## Leadership Style

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Democratic leadership as a style of leadership seeks to enhance the involvement and influence of others in decisions, encourage discussion and debate, and create a sense of identity as co-creators of a community. These aims reflect the perspectives on democracy of power, dialogue and belonging discussed in the previous section. The principles of democratic leadership are represented also in participative and collegial models of leadership which embrace collaborative practices and forms of shared power and decision-making (Bush 2006: 7-8, 2008: 14).

### *Leadership style and the senior leader*

Democratic leadership is discussed here initially as a style characterising the conduct of a senior leader. Gastil (1994: 956) explored democratic leadership as a practice that the leader or leaders enact in relation to their subordinates or 'democratic followers'.

Though he acknowledges that leadership can be distributed and that roles of leader and follower can be reversed, he argues that it is necessary to recognise the existence of both democratic leaders and ‘democratic followers’ (p963). Northouse (2018: 85) takes the view that,

Democratic leaders treat followers as fully capable of doing work on their own. Rather than controlling followers, democratic leaders *work with* followers, trying hard to treat everyone fairly, without putting themselves above followers. In essence, they see themselves as guides rather than directors.

Such a focus on what the senior leader - the school principal or headteacher for example - does might be seen as affirming the power and importance of the senior leader in a somewhat undemocratic way, seeing senior leaders as the creators and owners of democratic practice. However, the purpose and the impact of senior leaders’ leadership style are significant and there are reasons for valuing a democratic style in relation to these.

Let us turn first to purpose, expressed through the leader’s intentionality which affects the character and consequences of democratic leadership conduct. Two contrasting intentionalities are compared here - one with a narrower, functional purpose serving the ends of powerful interests; the other with a broader agenda for change in order to enhance participation and social justice. In the former case, purpose is instrumentally focused. Democratic techniques of leadership are deployed as a means of getting others to do what a senior leader wants and organisational interests are seen as requiring, because those techniques are considered by the senior leader to be more effective than an authoritarian style. The point here is to control subordinates more effectively. Any collegiality and belonging that are created by such an approach will tend to be contrived and run the danger of encouraging bland consensus (Bush 2006). Such an instrumental approach is also likely to take a minimalist view of others’ rights to participate and to concentrate on people as interest-maximisers.

The instrumental purpose, however, is but one possibility. Intentionality can embrace more radical purposes. For example, a senior leader’s democratic style may be part of a strategic intent on their part to facilitate collaborative change that transforms the school into a participative and inclusive learning community (Woods and Roberts 2018). Senior leaders are agents who have access to resources - symbolic and financial, for example - that others do not. Faircloth (2018: 52) argues that it is important for the school leader to enact ‘democratic leadership practices that serve to

establish and maintain a fair and just learning environment' as these practices 'help to facilitate student access to a wide variety of educational opportunities and increase the likelihood of positive post-school outcomes for students'. A strategic intent may be advanced through the planned deployment of resources and the development of ways of doing this that are democratic and participative, as well as by working with others to build a vision of change and modelling the desired change. Gross and Shapiro (2016) brought together accounts of exemplars of democratic ethical educational leadership in school education. These instances are not only about how leaders treat others but about leadership that changes the educational environment and organisation. So a democratic style of leadership is not necessarily an affirmation of senior power, since the purpose of such a style can be a key component in a process of more radical change.

Style of leadership also has interpersonal effects. How senior, positional leadership is exercised impacts upon others, affecting their sense of work satisfaction and well-being for example. Research indicates that negative emotions amongst followers are linked to abusive, aggressive, and autocratic leadership behaviours (Berkovich and Eyal 2015, Gooty et al 2010). Some studies suggest that in schools and other organisations leadership that consults, involves and empowers others can create enhanced feelings of self-confidence, self-efficacy, job satisfaction and of being valued and supported (Park et al 2016, Ngotngamwong 2012). The interconnection of these variables is complex, however, with the nature of relationships in the school, personalities, and the degree of trust and job routinisation affecting the respective effects of participative and directive leadership: in some circumstances greater participation may lead to increased strain amongst some teachers (Benoliel and Somech, 2010, Somech and Wenderow 2006). The effects of democratic leadership on others are mediated by the complexities of the organisational environment.

## *Leadership style and non-positional leaders*

The discussion of democratic leadership style in the previous section concentrated on the conduct of senior leaders. However, if leadership is a distributed phenomenon, then the leadership conduct of all those who lead or contribute to leadership is important. There are compelling reasons to recognise that leadership is a distributed and emergent process that arises from the countless and ongoing interactions across organisations and the numerous intentionalities that galvanise the practice of actors at every level in those interactions (Woods and Roberts 2018, Youngs this volume). The notion that leadership is a distributed phenomenon is underpinned by literature in educational leadership and complexity theory (e.g. Boulton et al 2015, Gronn 2002,

Hawkins and James 2017, Stacey 2012), though the notion of distributed leadership is not without its challenges (e.g. Gronn 2016, Hall et al 2013, Lumby 2016).

Distributed leadership does not mean that all contributing to leadership, whether non-positional or positional, necessarily enact a democratic style of leadership. Leadership that is shared in a team, for example, can entail different leadership styles by team members. Leadership conduct by team members can be traditional in style, characterised by directive, transactional and change-averse leadership behaviours, or they may exhibit more developmental, empowering and change-orientated leadership styles (Wang et al 2014). Critical analysis of what distributed leadership means in practice shows that it can involve non-positional and positional leaders exercising power through assumed authority and status that are not necessarily conducive to participation, empowerment or effective practice (Scribner and Bradley-Levine, 2010, Woods 2016, 2018). The styles of leadership exercised by non-positional actors in distributed leadership and co-leadership activities have significant consequences for others and may be impelled by varying purposes, just as with senior (positional) leaders. Distributed leadership that is positive and participative depends on non-positional and positional leaders exercising democratic leadership styles that promote shared power, dialogue and belonging and are sensitive to the complexities of the organisational environment.

## Leadership and Organisational Democracy

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We turn now to consider democratic leadership in a particular kind of organisational context.

This section discusses democratic leadership as a feature of a democratic organisational environment. Democratic leadership in such a context is an embedded part of organisational or workplace democracy, often referred to in educational literature as ‘democratic education, democratic schooling, or democratic community’ (Brooks and Kensler 2011: 60). Meanings of organisational democracy, generally and then in relation to schools, are discussed before turning to leadership specifically.

## *Organisational democracy*

Organisational democracy covers a wide range of institutional and governance arrangements and practices, including co-operative workplaces and staff ownership, forms of worker representation and shared governance between shareholders, unions and employees, autonomous and self-managing teams and departments, and the embedding into everyday practice of a culture of collaboration, participation and opportunities for initiating innovation (Clarke 2011, Cloke and Goldsmith 2002, Flowers 2008, Gratton 2004, Rothschild and Whitt 2009). There are substantial challenges in attempting to incorporate representative forms of democratically sharing power in organisations. For some, there is a fundamental contradiction between the bureaucratic and contractual relationship of organisations to their employees and the right to inclusion that arises from citizenship in a democratic society; others, however, argue that the position of staff is not reducible entirely to a legal contract but involves a psychological contract in which employee expectations of fairness, autonomy, fulfilment and being heard are legitimate (Clarke 2011, Woods and Gronn 2009).

Participation in decision-making through the election of group representatives (Poole et al 2001) is one way of seeking democracy in organisations. However, there are other, varied ways of enabling influence and agency by which greater democracy is sought. The latter include enhancing scope for individual choice and agency, fostering diverse forms of critical dialogue that influence practice and policy and creating an organisational environment in which relationships are collaborative, display mutual respect and are characterised by ethical behaviours. An emphasis on such approaches sees organisational democracy primarily as enhancing ‘individual autonomy and the legitimisation of processes’ that enable individuals to be ‘critically self-reflective’ and to ‘deliberate, judge, choose and act upon courses of action’ (Clarke 2011: 418) and that help to create collegial relationships. The essential features of autonomy in this kind of organisational democracy are summarised by Gratton (2004: 35): she emphasises people’s capability to choose freely and determine their obligations, which in organisations means, *inter alia*, individuals ‘actively building and deploying their human capital’, participating in determining the conditions in which they collaborate and recognising their accountability to themselves and the organisation. Autonomy involves agency that exercises discretion to initiate innovation, and an organisational context in which there are processes and opportunities that support autonomy. The collegial quality of relationships includes a sense of collective identity, collaborative working to enact shared commitments, and pro-social orientations ‘to help and support each other when in need, to take the other’s perspective when he/she is concerned by one’s intended actions as well as to practice direct solidarity toward

other employees' (Weber and Unterrainer 2012: 119). To summarise, key features are autonomy and collegial relationships, infused with ethical commitments and responsibilities that guide action.

## *Organisational democracy in schools*

These features, and how they can be expressed in specific contexts, are central to thinking about organisational democracy in schools. It is a challenge for democratic environments in schools to comprise more than formal processes of consultation that fail to facilitate collaboration and meaningful participation (Andersson 2018).

Furman and Starratt (2002: 116) conclude that democratic community in schools is 'processual and moral', exhibiting participatory processes of open enquiry guided by an ethical concern for the individual and the community. This kind of democratic educational experience helps to promote 'a way of living that requires the open flow and critique of ideas with an authentic concern for the interest of the individual as well as the common good' (Woods and O'Hair 2009: 427). A fundamental imperative of democratic community in schools is to recognise 'that each individual has the right to dignified and fair treatment' (Brooks and Kensler 2011: 60), a right that can be seen as part of the psychological contract helping to underpin the legitimacy of democratic community.

A radical vision of the democratic school is explored and articulated by Fielding and Moss (2011). The key, distinctive characteristics of democratic schooling that they set out are summarised briefly in this paragraph as they are indicative of the ways in which the creative interconnection of individual autonomy, collegial relationships and ethical purposes may be made manifest. In the democratic school there are shared discourses and narratives about the school that are imbued with energy and underscore a commitment to 'profound change in how we live and work now as a bridge to more just and creative futures' (p73) and a 'persistent affirmation of possibility' (p82). This vitality of culture is supported by spaces and structures that facilitate openness to opportunities and fluidity of roles. Ways of deepening participation are developed. For example, students may be involved by staff as 'co-enquirers', but in a democratic school the 'egalitarian thrust of the co-enquiry approach' is deepened through students being 'knowledge creators' in activities where 'the voice of the student comes to the fore in a leadership or initiating, not just a responsive, role' (p77). Extending this further, students and staff work as 'joint authors' in 'shared, fully collaborative' partnerships and, as democratic schooling becomes even more embedded and extensive, staff and students come to form a 'democratic fellowship' characterised by a shared, explicit 'commitment to the

common good' and by 'occasions and opportunities for an equal sharing of power and responsibility' (p77-78). The curriculum and pedagogy are radical in the sense that they focus on what is necessary for a sustainable, flourishing and democratic way of life. Curriculum and pedagogy are geared to equipping young people and adults 'with the desire and capacity to seriously and critically interrogate what is given and co-construct a knowledge that assists [them] in leading good and joyful lives together' (p81). The democratic school builds a reciprocal relationship with the local community, as well as with organisations regionally, nationally and globally to support democratic education. In contrast to technical accountability measures, democratic education in Fielding and Moss's exposition exercises accountability as a shared process of mutual responsibility imbued with an understanding of moral and educational purpose.

Some democratic schools may have equality of authority between staff and students, as with the Sands School in England where the school meeting, which all staff and students are entitled to attend as equals, is the sovereign decision-making body (Hope 2012, Woods and Woods 2012). In an important extension of radical thinking about democratic schools, Kensler and Uline (2017) add ecological awareness and action to the ways in which the local and wider connections of the school should be envisaged. The school is nested, they argue, not only in its social environment but also in ecological systems. In consequence, ecological and democratic principles are interconnected: the health of the natural environment is a necessary condition for a sustainable democratic community and the democratic practice of community helps to develop a sustainable concern for practice which supports that ecological health.

## *Democratic leadership in organisational democracy*

In considering democratic leadership in organisational democracy, it is important to reiterate the view of leadership that underpins this chapter - namely, that leadership is constituted through the relationship between intentionalities and emergence (Woods and Roberts 2018). A consequence of seeing leadership through these dual and interrelated lenses is that, if we ask what democratic leadership in organisational democracy means, we in fact ask two questions. One is an agential question, about intentionalities and the kinds of motives, goals and values that shape these. The second is about structural features of the organisational environment that are integral and influencing parts of the interactions constituting leadership emergence. Each of these is considered in turn here.

## Democratic leadership style in context: the politically adaptive role of leadership

Turning first to the question relating to intentionalities, the earlier discussion of leadership styles has already helped in giving some insights into the agential issue. At the conclusion of that discussion, it was noted that a positive and participative form of distributed leadership depends on non-positional and positional leaders exercising democratic leadership styles that promote shared power, dialogue and belonging and are sensitive to the complexities of the organisational environment. Such democratic leadership includes holding to a strategic purpose of transforming a school into a participative and inclusive learning community and modelling consultative, developmental and empowering conduct. A variety of capabilities are required for this kind of leadership, including communicative virtues enabling constructive and open exchange and relational capabilities such as skills in developing and sustaining community, working collaboratively and facilitating collaborative work, and conflict handling (Woods and Roberts 2018: 121).

In addition, recognising the interconnection between democratic leadership style and context, it is important to bring to the fore what might be described as the *politically adaptive* role of leadership agency in organisational democracy. This is a responsiveness to the ubiquity of power issues and the need to navigate differences, including the need to be responsive to differing school contexts. Compared with distributed leadership, one of the distinctive features of democratic leadership is a concern to ensure people are protected from arbitrary power (Woods and Gronn 2009). The politically adaptive aspect of democratic leadership is explored here through conflicts in interests and identities and in rationalities (the principles and values that guide everyday action), concluding with the suggestion that the sensitivity and adaptiveness of this aspect reinforces the significance of reciprocal learning as a feature of democratic leadership. Politically adaptive democratic leadership is therefore necessarily concerned with growth (people's development) as well as power, dialogue and belonging.

In relation to interests and identities, the value of studying political leadership in organisational democracy has been explored by Clarke (2011: 417), who observes that negotiating the tension 'between unity, rules and integration on the one hand, and diversity, autonomy and individual liberty on the other, lies at the heart of organizational governance'. Leadership conduct that negotiates such tensions is political in the sense that it recognises and addresses power issues that imbue organisational diversity, interests and conflict. Political leadership works to enable

diverse identities and interests, and their synergies as well as consequent tensions, to be expressed, understood and addressed practically.

Democratic schools aspire to ideals of practice that include relationships that are not hidebound by hierarchy and inflexible roles and distinctions, but are collegial and collaborative, characterised by open dialogue, and embrace critical reflexivity. Such schools wish to recognise the diversity of individuals and groups and the right of each and all ‘to dignified and fair treatment’ (Brooks and Kensler 2011: 60), whilst enabling fluid roles and boundaries and rights to be heard and to participate. The diverse interests, cultures, aspirations and social backgrounds in school communities give rise to differences, frictions, tensions and conflicts (as well as creative outcomes); but in a democratic school community these should not be repressed and settled by fiat and by a call to one, overriding authority imposing a uniform view.

The power issues involved are challenging to all who seek to exercise leadership democratically, as they are required to address differences within and between the school, the community, the system and their own personal values. For example, a headteacher concerned to advance social justice felt that she was imposing her values, those of ‘the educated’, onto the ‘less educated’, but justified this with a rationale that she was striving to enable students to have a choice and accompanied it with a commitment to the voices of students being heard (Potter 2017: 237). Who has the authority to judge values is a challenging question. The headteacher was confident of her rationale but also reflective concerning how she constructed her self identity and her leadership and how this changed in response to her school context. In one school with a highly multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious intake where she was headteacher, her leadership approach changed to one that she saw as ‘more political’ and sought to improve the lives of the students ‘through challenging the mindsets of other agencies in the local community’ (p240-241). The necessity to reflect on and respond to such power issues applies also to non-positional leadership, in classroom practice by teachers and students exercising collaborative leadership for example.

Rationalities are areas of contestation too, about what justifies, or authorises, the principles and values that guide everyday action. Particularly relevant in contemporary school education is the contrast between instrumental rationality associated with market and performative governance and substantive rationality which is committed to putting into practice values imbued with moral purpose and identity. Certain instrumental goals, such as relentless prioritisation of test results in order to advance the perceived standing of the school, may be seen as abhorrent to professional values that lay greater emphasis on the intrinsic value of learning and

which give substantive meaning and purpose to education. Unless one or other - instrumental or substantive rationality - is adopted to the exclusion of the other, there are likely to be struggles and conflict between the two. This is because 'the substantive purpose is the one that gives meaning and direction, and is not reducible to calculative processes which tend to reduce evaluation and success to numeric measures' (Woods 2011: 81) and because mediation has to be practical. Leadership involves dealing with the opportunities, constraints and everyday implications for practice of material and symbolic resources shaped by these different rationalities of education. There is, then, a need in leadership for adaptive strategies that mediate between instrumental and substantive goals. Such strategies are political in the sense of recognising and dealing with the powerful effects of differing claims to authority.

In addition to the specific challenges of instrumental and substantive rationalities, there are numerous everyday tensions and decisions that require judgements by non-positional and positional leaders. But it is not the role of democratic leadership in a democratic school to enforce a single interpretation of values and goals - acting as one unquestionable authority. This is to adopt 'idealised leader roles' (Griffin 2002) in which leaders set the vision and drive compliance down the hierarchy and divert 'people's attentions from the ethics of their daily actions' (p211). This atrophies reflexivity and shared learning.

Radical research on authority<sup>1</sup> might be helpful in considering the political challenges inherent to leadership that is democratic and concerned with social justice and in understanding that addressing these challenges is a collective task of non-positional and positional leaders. Rather than viewing authority as necessarily a top-down feature of organisational life, the approach taken in this research posits the notion of social authority, which is the product of negotiated and contested authorities that emerge through diverse social and organisational interactions (Blencowe 2013, Kirwan 2013). Even though there is no single and uncontested authority, meaningful authorities are constructed through everyday practices and relationships and potentially these have different, positive contributions to decision-making. Multiple authorities are numerous and include formal, professional, technical and experiential forms of authority. Examples of the varieties of authorities in schools are teachers' professionalism and specialisms, the technical expertise of support staff, and students' and parents' experiential knowledge (of student life, the local community and working life for example), as well as the formal authority that is associated with the posts that school leaders occupy (Woods 2016, 2018). Helping the emergence of social authority

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<sup>1</sup> See also <http://www.authorityresearch.net>.

whilst enabling multiple authorities to be articulated and negotiated is integral to the political role of leadership in democratic schooling.

In contrast to the ‘idealised’ leader driving compliance, democratic leadership as a distributed process amongst non-positional and positional leaders in a school aspiring to be democratic engages with ethical challenges, including the power issues that run through the daily life of the school. The ideal of democratic schooling is not an end to impose on teachers and students. It provides a common ethical yardstick and conception of the good life, which offers a ‘firm framing’ (Woods 2005: 87), but its practical meaning must be searched for in dialogical interaction (Dallmayr 2017) – that is, discussion, sharing of views, listening, debate: the transforming dialogue discussed in the next section. Democratic schooling is better characterised as an ongoing activity which involves the creation of new knowledge through people exercising democratic practice and co-leadership, making their learning visible and committing themselves to continual shared discovery (Woods and Roberts, 2018: 86-90). Democratic leadership is a ‘reciprocal learning relationship’ (p74) that encompasses all those who are engaged in non-positional and positional leadership and consists of not only facilitating learning in others and learning from others, but also ‘learning together and jointly generating and co-constructing new knowledge and understanding’ (p84).

#### Democratic leadership as structure: cultural, institutional and social structures

As an emergent outcome of continual interactions, democratic leadership is shaped by the constituent factors in those interactions. These include not only the intentionalities and actions of senior leaders, teachers, students and others which have been discussed in relation to leadership style in previous sections, but also the structural features of the organisational environment that constitute influencing factors in the interactions from which leadership emerges. This section examines the structural dimension of democratic leadership.

Three interconnected structural features of collaborative and democratic schooling, described in Woods and Roberts (2018), are posited - participatory culture, enabling institutional architecture and an open social environment (Figure 1). These features are enabling structures that contribute to and help to facilitate democratic leadership as an emergent property of the school. Each feature in turn is conceptualised, related to themes that are based in the discussion so far in this section on ‘Leadership and Organisational Democracy’, and illustrated through examples.

<b>Participatory culture</b>	<b>Enabling institutional architecture</b>	<b>Open social environment</b>
Cultural bank of ideas and values supporting democratic practice	Opportunities, procedures, spaces, structures, roles and resource allocations that facilitate democratic practice	Collegial and collaborative relationships; connectivity across status and other organisational boundaries

**Figure 1: Enabling structures**

*Participatory culture* is the cultural bank of ideas and values concerning democratic practice. The themes characterising such a culture include shared awareness and valuing of democratic principles, critical enquiry and ethical aspirations. Participatory culture encompasses an outward-looking perspective that promotes knowledge of and responsibility to the social and ecological contexts in which the school is nested.

An example of what can form part of participatory culture is the Statement of Co-operative Identity adopted by co-operative schools and its explicit values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity (Woodin 2015). This provides a cultural orientation with substance and, as one school leader puts it ‘clear words’ that ‘make it easier for us to move forward in the direction of co-operative learning’ (Jones 2011, quoted in Woodin 2015: 115). This is not to claim that the cultural statement of values leads seamlessly to democratic practice. The point to note here is that this cultural artefact, where it is made use of, is a material factor in the interplays between people and their structural environment that give rise to leadership: it has consequences through the way it features in the discourse of the school (including debates about interpretations of values) and the deliberations that lead to initiatives and change.

A different illustration of participatory culture is offered by the innovative idea of democratic governance adopted in a public high school and the discourse that enabled critique concerning how the ideals were being put into practice (Brasof 2016). The innovative idea was to model the school governance system after the US federal system of executive, legislature and supreme court. This was implemented - that is, the school’s governance institutional architecture modelled the US separation of powers. Having worked for several years, the discourse amongst student leaders then began to reflect a recognition that a renewal of practice was required, and this articulation and discussion of the problem led to a curriculum initiative to rebuild capacity amongst students for democratic governance.

*Enabling institutional architecture* concerns the organisational structures of the school. Themes relating to this include the processes, spaces and institutional structures that support democratic development and autonomy and matters such as the roles, format, frequency and criteria for joining and accessing meetings, professional development sessions and working groups.

An example of enabling institutional architecture are meetings designed into the structure and pattern of the school with the purpose of facilitating participation and influence. These vary greatly in character and scope. They can include regular staff forums which offer a collaborative space within the school. One such example is a weekly process, described by a senior leader as being ‘woven into the fabric of the school’ (Mylls 2017: 109; Woods and Roberts 2018), which provides a forum for staff to talk about teaching and learning and to share information and experience collaboratively. Student participation may be sought through student councils, but other institutional architectures include student project teams, regular all-school meetings and smaller gatherings where students lead activities within a planned structure of support from teachers and the school (Frost and Macbeath et al 2010, Mitra et al 2012). A federal model of democratic school governance arose from the innovative idea highlighted in the discussion of participatory culture (Brasof 2016). Another example of democratic governance architecture is provided by the school meeting of Sands School, noted in the section on ‘Organisational democracy in schools’, which is the site of authority in the school, with students and staff all being equal members of the meeting (Woods and Woods 2012). The aim of the school is to constitute an environment in which individuals exercise agency and take responsibility for how they use their freedom: the school meeting is the central forum for this and everyone (students and staff) is accountable to the school meeting if they break the agreed rules. The design of the built environment may also contribute to an enabling institutional architecture. A sense of ecological awareness and connection with nature (part of relational well-being, discussed in the next section), can be encouraged not only by enabling students to experience nature outside but by incorporating nature into the school’s built environment - for example, through living plants and other features in the building or ‘expansive windows that flood the interiors with natural light and views of nature’ (Kensler and Uline 2017: 169).

The point to note is that the institutional structure is a factor in the process of leadership. The school meeting in Sands School, for example, creates the context in which the whole membership of the school deliberate and come to decisions. Staff forums and spaces for students designed to be areas for inclusive participation,

dialogue and generating action contribute to creating a dynamic in which collaboratively inspired, teacher-led and student-led initiatives can emerge. To understand the degree to which there is democratic leadership in these schools, it is necessary to understand how people and their practices are influenced by and in turn shape the schools' institutional arrangements.

An *open social environment* concerns the nature and quality of relationships. The collegial and collaborative character of relationships established across status and other organisational boundaries are a particular theme here. Relationships are not hidebound by hierarchy and inflexible roles and distinctions, but are characterised by a sense of collective identity and a commitment to shared endeavour, open dialogue and mutual respect as well as critical reflexivity.

Examples of the features of an open social environment include connectivity characterised by active, ongoing processes that stimulate connections beyond usual circles of influence and create new links that trigger fresh thinking and learning (Woods and Roberts 2018). They also include the experience of working collegially with others in collaborative innovation, as reported by Drew et al (2016) for example. A further example is the Learning School Improvement Groups in a co-operative school which aspire to be collegial and show indications of generating a sense of well-being through attention to co-operative values and 'genuine power-sharing and purposeful and transformational dialogue' and by finding ways to allow tensions and conflicts to be resolved (Jones 2015: 77). The belonging experienced at Sands School is a further example (Hope 2012). It is the interaction between the experience of the quality of relationships in the school and the intentionalities and agency of leadership that it is important to note here. A student at Sands encapsulates it in this way: 'It feels as if you're part of it, and you actually want to contribute, and you want to be part of Sands, and you want to make it work because you've helped it happen' (p745).

## HOLISTIC-DEMOCRATIC VIEW OF LEADERSHIP

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In this section, the discussion in the foregoing sections is brought together by drawing on the concept of holistic democracy. This notion conceives democracy as a way of working together in which people participate in the co-creation of their social and organisational environment and, through this, are able to make the most of their innate

capacity to learn and to develop their highest capabilities, ethical sensibilities and meaning in their lives as individuals within a community (Woods 2011, 2017; Woods and Roberts 2018). The notion of holistic democracy is formulated as dimensions (Figure 2) that address each of the four perspectives on democracy set out in the section ‘Conceptions of Democracy’ - power, dialogue, growth and belonging. The participative dimensions concern power and dialogue and comprise power sharing and transforming dialogue, whilst holistic learning and relational well-being respectively concern growth and belonging and represent the meaning dimensions of holistic democracy. Democratic leadership is exercised through non-positional and positional leadership roles and advances and enacts each of the dimensions. Figure 2 summarises what these four dimensions mean for everyone in the school - teachers, students, schools leaders and others - and how all in different ways form part of a distributed process of democratic leadership across the school. A brief elaboration of each dimension is given next.

<b>Power sharing</b>	<b>Transforming dialogue</b>	<b>Holistic learning</b>	<b>Relational well-being</b>
Inclusive participation, having a say, exercising autonomy	Open exchange of views to enhance mutual understanding and seek out the greater good	Growth in the whole range of human capabilities, in knowledge and critical thinking	Feeling empowered, high self-esteem, belonging and deep relatedness in a community also valuing thinking for oneself

**Figure 2: Dimensions of holistic democracy**

*Power sharing* is about inclusive participation in shaping the social and organisational environment of the school and in having a say in decisions. It includes exercising autonomy to take initiatives and to lead and co-lead change within the parameters of agreed values and responsibilities. *Transforming dialogue* involves sharing and exploration of views and engagement in open debate characterised by mutual respect, with the aim of enhancing mutual understanding, reaching beyond individual narrow perspectives and interests, and seeking out the greater good.

*Holistic learning* is about growing in breadth of understanding and knowledge, including in relation to questions of enduring values, meaning and purpose as well as technical and scientific matters. It involves nurturing the whole range of human capabilities (spiritual, cognitive, aesthetic, affective, ethical, physical), developing critical thinking and learning collaboratively. *Relational well-being* refers to feeling empowered and developing high self-esteem as a member of a school community,

where there is a sense of belonging and a deep relatedness to other people, the natural world and features of life that feed the human spirit. In the community, the capacity to think for oneself is also valued.

These dimensions articulate the practice, feelings and aspirations in a school characterised by holistic democracy, as well as framing the structural conditions that help to give rise to holistic-democratic leadership. The two aspects are brought together in the framework shown in Figure 3. The framework reflects both the agential and structural aspects of democratic leadership and helps in emphasising and appreciating its duality - namely, as style or conduct and as the emergent outcome of interactions in which structures are influencing factors. Figure 3 offers examples of what these dimensions can mean in terms of the cultural, institutional and social structures that constitute the structural aspect of democratic leadership (introduced in Figure 1). Participatory culture can include articulation of agreed values and guiding ideas, statements of intent, and shared stories of professional practice that are discussed and interpreted in the school to support the aspirations of holistic democracy. Enabling institutional architecture may include forums and meetings designed to facilitate participation, roles with sufficient institutional flexibility to allow non-positional teachers, students and others to initiate and co-lead change, and availability of resources, such as time and funding, for professional development in areas such as holistic and collaborative learning. An open social environment involves collaborative relationships between teachers, students and other school members that become embedded and habitual, give a collegial atmosphere to the school and generate feelings of being welcomed and valued in participative forums. The practice of collaborative learning relationships includes respect and support for critical thinking and independence of mind.

	<b>Power sharing</b>	<b>Transforming dialogue</b>	<b>Holistic learning</b>	<b>Relational well-being</b>
Summary definition	Inclusive participation, having a say, exercising autonomy	Open exchange of views to enhance mutual understanding and seek out the greater good	Growth in the whole range of human capabilities, in knowledge and critical thinking	Feeling empowered, high self-esteem, belonging and deep relatedness in a community also valuing thinking for oneself
participatory culture (examples)	agreed statement of values of inclusive participation and scope for autonomous innovation	stated, shared commitment to principles of mutual respect, openness to listening to others' viewpoints and sharing of constructive critique; an active discourse about agreed values and their practice	curriculum guidance and shared stories of practice and innovation in holistic learning	stated, shared commitment to belonging and community and ecological awareness, and to the value of thinking critically for oneself
enabling institutional architecture (examples)	forums for participation and flexibility in roles and processes enabling students, teachers and others to initiate and co-lead innovation	opportunities and resources (time, funding) for professional development in the practice of transforming dialogue and its facilitation	opportunities and resources (time, funding) for professional development in holistic and collaborative learning	groups and communities for progressing innovation that diverse school members are welcome to join; a built environment that encourages belonging and connectedness
open social environment (examples)	welcoming and supportive experiences for school members taking part in participative forums and processes	forums and processes for participation that put into action principles of transforming dialogue	collaborative learning relationships between students and teachers that also develop critical and independent thinking	collaborative ways of working that support development of identity and feelings of being part of collective activity

**Figure 3: Framework of dimensions and enabling structures of holistic democracy**

The holistic-democratic framework in Figure 3 offers a way of viewing and reflecting on democratic leadership from the viewpoint of a rich conception of democracy and through a dualistic perspective that appreciates leadership as style or conduct and as an emergent structural process. Such a breadth of approach is necessary to do justice to the aspirations and challenges of democratic leadership that have been

demonstrated in this chapter. The framework can be applied in research (Bradley-Levine and Moser 2017) and used as a resource in leadership development by teachers, school leaders, students and others (Woods and Woods 2013).

## CONCLUSIONS

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This chapter suggested that it is helpful to view the complex question of conceptualising democracy through perspectives of power, dialogue, growth and belonging. An examination of democratic leadership was undertaken from this starting point. The chapter was underpinned by a dualistic view of leadership as a phenomenon that is the product of both intentionalities and emergence through ongoing, complex interactions across and beyond the school, with leadership a process that is exercised by positional leaders, in designated leader posts, and by those without such posts who exercise non-positional leadership.

Attention was given both to the agential aspect of democratic leadership, as style or conduct, and leadership as an emergent product of everyday interactions with and within structures enabling organisational democracy. Democratic leadership as a style of leadership means non-positional and positional leaders exercising leadership in ways that promote shared power, dialogue and belonging and involve communicative and relational capabilities. However, this only captures part of the story. In schools that seek to develop a democratic community, democratic leadership has to be politically adaptive. That is, it needs to be sensitive to and adopt strategies that address and mediate power issues and the demands of diverse identities, interests and authority claims. Integral to the politically adaptive role of democratic leadership is the process of reciprocal learning.

The chapter concluded by using the notion of holistic democracy as a framework to draw the discussion together. The fundamental argument enshrined in this conclusion is two-fold. The first point is that worthwhile democracy in schools is expansive in its meaning. That is, it aspires to democratic practice in all of the four perspectives on democracy - power, dialogue, growth and belonging – and the focus of democratic leadership is on the four dimensions of holistic democracy embracing these perspectives. These dimensions – power sharing, transforming dialogue, holistic learning and relational well-being (Figure 2) – offer a yardstick or, better still, a set of guiding lights. The strategic intentionality guiding the agency of democratic leadership is advancement in the direction of these lights.

The second point is that democratic leadership is a process of emergence through the complex interactions between agency and enabling structures. Democratic leadership is a product not only of agency but also the degree to which the structures of the school enshrine features of a participatory culture, enabling institutional architecture and an open social environment (Figure 1). Democratic leadership acts within and through these structural features and emerges from them, and it is engaged in changing school structures so they develop more of the features enabling of democratic practice. A framework relating the dimensions and enabling structures (Figure 3) was put forward as a support for reflecting on the interconnected aspects of democratic leadership. The framework is a reminder that the emergence of enabling structures is a feature of democratic leadership as a property of the school community, equally as much as styles of leadership that are participative and empowering.

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