

School Leadership Preparation and Development in England

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Summary

School leadership preparation and development in England has to be understood in the context of England's radically changing school system. Local democratic accountability of schools has been reduced and a range of new actors have entered the state school system to sponsor and govern schools. Since 2010, the numbers of such 'independent' state schools have increased rapidly. As the role of local authorities has diminished, the 'middle tier' of governance has been transformed and continues to evolve, with new forms of grouping schools emerging, such as multi-academy trusts (MATs) and teaching school alliances (TSAs). This and the influential idea in England of the school system as a school-led, self-improving system have implications for leadership and its preparation and development. System leadership, by national leaders of education for example, is seen as an essential layer of support for and a catalyst to school improvement, in addition to leadership of and within schools. In the first decade of the 21st century leadership preparation and development became more like a 'nationalised' service, with the creation of the National College for School Leadership (later the National College for Teaching and Leadership). With the abolition of the National College in 2013, the direction of travel is towards more plural and diverse providers of school leadership and preparation - some would say a privatised model of provision - including MATs, TSAs, schools and other providers. There are both potential strengths and weaknesses in this model. More autonomy is promised for providers and participants in preparing for and developing leadership, which could foster creativity in modes of provision. There are also tensions. Policy aims that promote the quantitative measurement of education on the basis of instrumental and economic goals sit uneasily with other policy aims that appear to value education as the nurturing of human development as a good in itself; yet different educational purposes have different implications for

the practice of school leadership and hence its preparation and development. A further tension is that between a positive recognition in the leadership discourse of the distributed nature of leadership and a tendency to revert to a more familiar focus on positional leadership roles and traditional, hierarchical leadership. Other issues include the practical consequences of a system of plural and diverse providers. The system may increase opportunities for innovation and local responsiveness, but it is not clear how it will ensure sufficiently consistent high quality leadership preparation and development across the system. There are questions to do with power and inequalities - for example, whether greater autonomy works well for some providers and participants in leadership preparation and development, whilst others are much more constrained and less able to find or create opportunities to develop their leadership practice. Space for critical and questioning research and professional enquiry, independent of the interests and priorities of providers and government, is essential. Such research and enquiry are needed to illuminate how leadership preparation and development practice actually evolves in this more plural system, and who shapes that practice in the differing local contexts across England.

Keywords

KEY WORDS: pedagogic frailty; distributed leadership; hierarchical leadership; regulative discourse; autonomy; control

Introduction

This chapter examines school leadership preparation and development in England, concentrating on the period from the late 1990s when leadership of schools began to attract unprecedented attention in central government policy in England. By preparation we are referring to activity and/or provision intended to enhance capabilities required to exercise leadership in the future; by development, we mean activity and/or provision intended to enhance leadership capabilities and undertaken whilst already exercising leadership.

Understanding leadership as a practice (Raelin 2016), rather than a characteristic of certain positions is of utmost importance, we would argue. Hence, both preparation and

development refer to leadership exercised in designated leadership roles (such as headteacher, principal or middle leader) and in other (non-positional) roles.

Activity and provision for preparation and development can take a range of forms, which include courses leading to qualification, short courses, coaching and mentoring, professional development sessions, sabbaticals, secondments, time for reflection and experiential learning (including interactions and experience that give rise to socialisation as a school actor exercising leadership). This broad appreciation of the forms of preparation includes groups and networks such as #WomenED and Women Leading in Education (WLE), as well as the resources and opportunities offered by initiatives such as ResearchED.ⁱ

The chapter begins by considering the fundamentally important question of the purpose of school leadership, followed by an examination of the policy context and radical changes that have occurred in the English school system affecting the nature of school leadership. The changes undergone in the arrangements and conditions for school leadership preparation and development are then discussed. Amongst the issues highlighted are tensions between control and autonomy, the attention given to distributed leadership and how far this shifts leadership development from a focus on traditional hierarchical leadership, and the changing character of the governance of leadership preparation and development, with the creation of a national system of provision and the subsequent development of more plural or fragmented arrangements. A critical examination of the systemic conditions in which school leadership preparation and development take place is offered, using an analytical model designed to frame the study of pedagogic frailty (Kinchin 2017) and strengths (Jarvis 2018). The final section suggests conclusions and implications for future research arising from the discussion.

Purpose

In this section, we discuss educational purpose as a key factor that shapes the understanding and practice of educational leadership. Any view of the hallmarks of effective educational leadership is based on a conception of what education is for. Hence a fundamental question is what type of leadership is necessary to fulfil the aims of education.

In discussing educational leadership, Begley (2008: 22), drawing on Hodgkinson (1991), distinguishes three kinds of educational aim: aesthetic, economic and socialisation. These are given variable expressions in different educational systems and each can be discerned in the articulation of educational policy in England.

The first aim - aesthetic - refers to a humanistic purpose of developing individual character, which includes such traits as self-esteem and critical thinking, capabilities that derive from understanding and appreciating culture, and moral and spiritual qualities. The articulation of educational policy in England gives recognition to such aims in so far as it highlights character education, citing the importance of traits such as resilience and the ability to collaborate, and the cultural dimension of education (DfE 2016a/b), introducing children ‘to the best that has been thought and said, and instilling in them a love of knowledge and culture for their own sake’ⁱⁱ.

Alongside this is a strong emphasis on the second kind of educational aim - economic.

‘Learning to earn’ is an aim that can be traced back to Roman times (Begley 2008).

However, how this is conceived in modern times is a reflection of the competitive, entrepreneurial activity and principles that are embedded in the market economies that characterise countries such as England and the importance that global competitiveness has come to have. Education is seen as ‘the engine of... economic growth’ and greater

productivity and innovation (DfE [Department for Education] 2016a: 5), with much importance being given to enterprise education (Gillie 2012, Woods 2011, Young 2014) and more recently an emphasis on improving apprenticeships and technical and professional education for students aged 16-19 (DfE 2016b). The embedding of competition and what is seen as the dynamism of the private sector into school education has been a longstanding feature in England (Woods et al 1998), reinforced by the rapid expansion of academies ('independent', state-funded schools) and a continuing commitment to 'support the establishment of new schools to drive up standards and stimulate competition' (2016a: 17).

The third kind of aim - socialisation - is concerned with social reproduction and the development of the attitudes, identity and practical skills that enable a person to be part of the community or society in which they live. A basic and universal purpose of education is 'to give the young the things they need in order to develop in an orderly, sequential way into members of society' (Dewey 1934: 12), though what this means differs between different kinds of society. Aims in England include promoting citizenship, expressed as making 'a positive contribution to society' (DfE 2016a: 20), and developing 'British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual tolerance and respect of those with different faiths and beliefs' (p97). This focus on British values - a response to extremist violence - is the most recent phase in citizenship education, which was made a statutory requirement in the English national curriculum in 2002ⁱⁱⁱ. The socialisation aim and the aesthetic aim (through ideas of what constitutes character education) overlap to a degree with the economic aim in a society dominated by economic values and priorities. If one of the most influential strands of education in England over past centuries was a 'gentleman ideal' which, amongst other things, valued qualities such as knowledge gained through travel and 'common-sense moderation' and a lack of dependence on undertaking manual labour (Mannheim and Stewart 1962: 40-44), a major strand in the late 20th and early 21st

centuries is an ‘enterprise ideal’ which nurtures the capabilities and values perceived as being required to be employees and entrepreneurs in the fast-changing, high-tech, competitive and innovative market economy envisaged for England.

A further educational aim, that of social justice, has been an avowed intent of successive governments in England. In 2016 it was summarised as the goal ‘to deliver real social justice by ensuring that *irrespective of location, prior attainment or economic or social background*, children and young people have access to high-quality provision... [and supporting] communities where underperformance and low aspiration have become endemic and ensure they can learn from those areas, leaders and institutions that are well on their way to realising *true* excellence for all their children’ (DfE 2016b: 9; emphasis in original). The degree to which progress has been made over recent decades is contested. In relation to England, work by Reay (2017) indicates that deep-seated inequalities persist and Lumby and Coleman (2016: 21) conclude that overall, the evidence suggests ‘that equality for both staff and learners may have suffered’ as a result of the negative effects of public policy, whilst research by Gorard (2014, 2016) illuminates ways in which reforms are failing to advance social justice in education.

A tension in the English school system is that between aims that prioritise educational outcomes that are instrumental and those which some would see as having intrinsic value. England’s educational policy has many features consistent with education being valued instrumentally as a commodity in a knowledge industry that puts greatest emphasis on market principles, competition and economic educational aims (Gidley 2016, Ward et al 2016). Outcomes of aesthetic and socialisation purposes are often seen as intrinsically valuable. For example, development of moral character and appreciation and enjoyment of culture may be seen as good in themselves, requiring no further justification than that

(though exactly which and whose conception of intrinsically good morality and culture should frame education is a matter for discussion and debate, raising issues of who controls and who should control education). Government acknowledges that outcomes such as character education and cultural development are difficult to measure (DfE 2016b: 9). This is a problem for educational policy that places enormous store by measuring success and holding school leaders and others to account by the quantitative outcomes of measures, even where the aim is to use ‘intelligent... carefully-balanced measures’ (DfE 2016b: 21). Narrow, easily quantified measures of performance, such as standard tests and examination results, come more readily to hand. This puts the accountability system for school leaders in tension with certain purposes of education, especially those concerned with aims of humanistic development and democratic citizenship (Gidley 2016, Woods and Roberts 2018b).

Policy Context and System Change

In this section, we place school leadership preparation and development in the context of the radically changing school system and policy context in England in which local democratic accountability of schools has been reduced and a range of new actors have entered the state school system to sponsor and govern schools. It is possible to discern significant phases since the Second World War (Simkins 2012). The 1940s to mid-1980s were the period of the tripartite partnership model of responsibility for school education - between central government, local authorities, and schools and the teaching profession - with fragmented provision of leadership preparation and development (Bush 2018, Cliffe et al 2018). This was followed by a growing emphasis on managerialism and the advance of central government until 1997, when the focus turned towards leadership and the creation of the National College for School Leadership.

Since the 1980s there has been a decisive break with the tripartite partnership model of responsibility for the school system dominant until then. This has been brought about through a process of fundamental and persistent reform. The key themes of this process of radical change are increased centralised direction or steering (through the introduction of a national curriculum and an expanded, high-stakes inspection regime for schools), a reduced role for local authorities in running schools, and shifts in the way schools operate with the goal of harnessing for the public sector what are seen as the benefits of competition and the dynamics of the private sector. These latter changes include the introduction of competitive forces (such as rights to parental choice), a policy discourse and encouragement of innovation and enterprise, and the creation of new types of ‘independent’, state-funded schools - described as ‘independent within the state sector’ (DfE 2016a: 68) - which enable the entry of different providers of school education (Woods and Simkins 2014).

Since 2010, the numbers of such ‘independent’ state schools have increased rapidly resulting in a dramatic refashioning of the school system (Bolton 2015, Nerys 2017, House of Commons Education Committee 2017, National Audit Office 2018, Woods and Simkins 2014). In this process, schools formerly under the auspices of local authorities have become academies - either sponsored academies (sponsored by businesses, faith groups, charities or educational institutions such as universities, further education colleges and ‘successful’ schools) or converter academies (that have opted out of LA control but, as they are deemed by government to be performing well, require no sponsor); and new schools (‘free schools’ - identical in legal status to academies) started and run by teachers, charities, parent groups, existing academy sponsors or other providers. Almost three-quarters of secondary schools, and just over a quarter of primary schools, were academies (which includes more than 400 free schools) by 2018 (National Audit Office 2018).

Headteachers and principals of schools are seen as occupying a crucial responsibility for the performance of their school. They are also seen as key actors in system-wide improvement. The view that the system should be school-led and constitute a self-improving system has become influential in educational policy (Bush 2018, Close et al. 2018, Gibson 2018, Greany and Higham 2018, Hargreaves 2011). And, as the role of local authorities has diminished, the ‘middle tier’ of governance has been transformed and continues to evolve (Woods and Simkins 2014). The 2002 Education Act allowed for a group of two or more schools with a formal agreement to work together to raise standards. These could take the form of ‘hard federations’ (legal entities, with a single governing body) or ‘soft federations’ (looser arrangements that give individual schools greater autonomy).

Other forms of grouping schools have also been facilitated by educational policy. There are over 500 teaching school alliances (TSAs). A TSA comprises a group of schools led by a designated teaching school that has responsibility for co-ordinating and providing initial teacher education and providing professional and leadership development across the alliance of schools (DfE 2016a, Greany and Higham 2018, National College for Teaching & Leadership 2017). Another significant development is the formation of groups of academies into chains. Since the first academy chain was created in 2004, numbers have risen rapidly (National Audit Office 2018). Most academies are in multi-academy trusts (MATs) which are expected to support school-led improvement. In these, the governance of the schools is through a single set of trust members and directors and the MAT. The number of MATs has grown significantly since 2010: by 2016 there were 1,121 MATs, overseeing around 5,000 academies, and 65% of all academies and free schools were in MATs (Greany and Higham 2018, House of Commons Education Committee 2017, Nerys 2015).

This direction of change has implications for the organisational focus of leadership - that is, the degree to which it is concerned with leadership of or within an organisation, or with leadership across a wider community or system of organisations and professional educators. It is most familiar to think of school leadership being about the headteacher or principal of a school and about leadership roles that take place within that school - that is, 'single-organisation leadership' with a 'primary focus' on one organisation (Briggs 2010: 236). As explained further below, from the late 1990s, leadership preparation and development came to be recognised as vitally important for school leaders - headteachers, but also middle leaders and others - due to the expansion of leadership roles within and the complexity of schools and a view that leadership is likely to make a difference to school and student outcomes (Bush 2013). Attention to teacher leadership grew as well, because of a belief in its benefits for improving learning in schools and because for some the development of individual agency is seen as intrinsically good (Bangs and Frost 2012, 2015; Frost forthcoming {a/b}, Macbeath et al 2018).

Since the late 1990s there has also been a growth in leadership roles that work across schools and support or lead developments in the system of school education. These include executive heads, responsible for groups of schools, and system leaders, such as recognised national leaders of education (NLEs)^{iv}, local leaders of education (LLEs) and specialist leaders of education (SLEs), who work beyond their own school to support others and influence thinking, policy and practice with the aim of improving school education (Hill 2011, NCSL 2010, Taylor et al 2017, Woods and Roberts 2014). A priority for educational policy is to strengthen system leadership, as well as more traditional school leadership (DfE 2016b). The newer development of executive and system leadership roles has implications for how leadership preparation and development are perceived and what constitutes good and effective leadership in those positions.

Leadership Preparation and Development: From National to Plural Control?

In this section, we provide an overview of school leadership preparation and development in England from the late 1990s.

National College

A major development in England was the creation of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in 2000, described as ‘probably the most significant global initiative for leadership development’ (Bush 2013: 454). The NCSL developed a range of courses, built round its ‘leadership development framework’ (Simkins 2013). Amongst these was the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), which had begun in 1997 and was made into a mandatory qualification for all new headteachers in 2009 (Bush, 2013). For some, the creation of the NCSL was part of the initiation of a distinctive period of ‘leaderism’ (Simkins 2012: 631). This term was coined by O’Reilly and Reed (2010: 962) who argued that replacing the instrumental rationality of managerialism with the value rationality of ‘leaderism’ addressed continuing concerns about the limited effectiveness of improvement strategies by ‘making the issue the establishment of a passion for a common goal between leaders and led’. A longitudinal analysis of the NPQH found overall a positive impact on skills perceived as necessary for headship, with particular impact on understanding strategic school development, coaching skills and understanding how to develop others, performance/conflict management and leadership and management (and least impact on budget and financial management skills and skills in respect of human resources and legal issues) (Diamond et al 2013).

The NCSL focused its work not only on positional leaders, such as headteachers and middle leaders, but also gave significant attention to researching and promoting distributed

leadership (NCSL 2007, Woods and Roberts 2013). It recognised the value of understanding that leadership does not equate with leadership roles and titles and commended the value of seeing leadership ‘as a collective capacity across the school rather than as the personal status of a few individuals’ (NCSL, 2004: 3). The College commissioned a considerable amount of research on distributed leadership, which led to a recognition that leadership, and therefore leadership preparation and development, encompasses ‘the conditions in which people exercise leadership - the organisation and culture, and the inter-relationships that enable leadership at every level to be exercised in line with the school’s strategy and purpose’ (NCSL 2004: 3).

A Plurality of Providers

A few years into the 21st century, a significant shift in the approach to provision began to occur. The NPQH ceased to be mandatory in 2012 and the NCSL became part of a National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) in 2013 (Bush, 2013, NCTL 2015). The NCTL was the product of a merger between the NCSL and the government’s Teaching Agency, and involved the activities of the NCSL becoming more closely incorporated into government as the NCTL was formed as an agency within the Department for Education. In 2018 the NCTL ceased to exist, its functions becoming absorbed into other parts of the Department for Education. This closure reflected the fact that ‘school leadership preparation has shifted from the National College and local authorities to teaching schools, their alliances and multi-academy trusts’ (Cliffe et al 2018), signifying a growing plurality of providers. With the rapid growth of academy schools and new forms of grouping schools, notably in MATs, there has been a change in the supply of leadership preparation and development providers (Gibson 2018). Providers include charities, a professional body representing school leaders, teaching schools and teaching school alliances, colleges and universities, church providers, and local and regional community providers, often working

in alliances and partnerships, as well as senior leadership teams as sites for leadership preparation in some schools (Cliffe et al 2018). The NPQH remains as a qualification, as well as national professional qualifications for middle leadership, senior leadership and executive leadership, with over 50 recognised providers^v. Central support for system leadership at the time of writing consists of attendance at an induction workshop and the opportunity to join local leadership groups where experiences and advice can be shared^{vi}.

Standards for Headship

In this more plural context, there are still defined national standards for headship (DfE, 2015). These constitute non-statutory advice, produced by central government for headteachers, governing bodies and aspiring headteachers, and tell us something important about the dominant, policy perspective of leadership preparation and development. The standards (DfE, 2015:4) are designed to:

- shape headteachers' own practice and professional development, within and beyond the school
- inform the appraisal of headteachers
- support the recruitment and appointment of headteachers
- provide a framework for training middle and senior leaders, aspiring to headship.

The standards see the role of the headteacher as determining the achievements of their school. Headteachers are accountable for the education of generations of children, as their leadership has a decisive impact on the quality of teaching and learning and therefore children's achievements. They are seen as leading by example the professional conduct and practice of teachers and securing a climate for the exemplary behaviour of students. The standards are set out in four domains, with six characteristics in each domain. The domains are: qualities and knowledge, pupils and staff, systems and process, and the self-improving

school system. Characteristics range from those which might denote an appropriate level of professionalism, such as ‘hold and articulate clear values and moral purpose’ (DfE, 2015:5), to those which might be deemed to be more skills-based, such as ‘ensure that the school’s systems, organisation and processes are well considered, efficient and fit for purpose, upholding the principles of transparency, integrity and probity’ (p6). Headteachers are also expected not only to demonstrate characteristics but also to model them for others. The standards are stated to be ‘developmental’, giving a view of headship as not static but developing as expertise grows, and hence they are not designed to indicate a level of competence or to be used to grade individuals against (p8).

Simkins (2012) provides a frame of theories of leadership preparation and development (functionalist, constructivist and critical) that is helpful in considering standards. In the functionalist theory, purposes of preparation and development can be objectively determined and agreed – for example, through the specification of competences, qualities or skills that effective performance requires – and ‘best practices’ sought (p627). It tends to marginalise consideration and debates about purposes and values, such as those discussed in the section on ‘Purpose’ in this chapter.

Constructivist theory casts leaders and aspirant leaders as subjects rather than objects of leadership preparation and development. A constructivist approach offers personalised provision and more radically involves co-constructing programmes and activities so that participants and providers create knowledge together, as claimed by the then NCSL’s New Visions programmes (p629). This approach is consistent with ‘joint practice development’ which entails practitioners working together to develop practice, rather than transferring what is deemed to be best practice, and is commended by Hargreaves (2012: 8) as an integral part of high quality professional development in a self-improving system. Simkins

(2012) draws attention to the decentring of the individual learner in the constructivist approach, its concern being as much with ‘leadership’ as with ‘leader’ development.

Critical theory as a philosophy of professional development challenges dominant perspectives and draws attention to questions they do not ask or do not encourage leaders and aspirant leaders to ask. It is based on a view that policy discourses serve ‘to constitute actors [in this case leaders] in particular ways, which preference particular forms of judgement and which are based on particular forms of power and knowledge’ (Newman, 2001: 30).

Although the standards are not presented as ‘an exclusive or complete’ list of skills (DfE, 2015, p10), they are predominantly reflective of a functional underpinning. That is, they comprise a set of domains and characteristics that are commended as necessary for headship and invite consensual agreement. It is recognised that there are implications for leadership within a system characterised by increasing numbers of ‘independent’ state schools and an ethic of school-led improvement across schools. This recognition is made through the inclusion of a specific domain concerned with being excellent headteachers in the self-improving school system and related competencies that require leading effectively in a self-improving system and leading successfully in a highly autonomous and accountable system. The avowed developmental nature of the standards, indicated in the standards (DfE, 2015) above, suggests a view of headship which recognises the individuality of those holding the role and the acceptance of a diversity of responses to enacting the headship role, and could be taken to hint at more constructivist possibilities. The value of critical reflection by leaders and aspirant leaders on the values and tensions, as well as opportunities, involved in the practice of such leadership is not highlighted, however - though it might be argued that

introducing a focus on critical reflexivity is the role of the plurality of providers and facilitators of leadership preparation and development.

Hierarchical and distributed models of leadership

There is a tension between the traditional, hierarchical model of leadership and distributed models. The UK has been in the forefront of interest in distributed leadership in the field of education (Bolden 2011), as evident in the NCSL's attention to this. However, leadership exemplified in the 'great' leader idea has a continuing attraction (Woods and Roberts 2018). There is still an emphasis on identifying 'rising stars' (House of Commons Education Committee, 2017: 8) and the standards for headship envisage headteachers communicating *compellingly, driving* strategic leadership, *demanding* ambitious standards, *instilling* a sense of accountability and being *the source of empowerment* of others (DfE, 2015, p5/6 - our emphases). Equally, there is encouragement of distributed leadership capacity in competency indicators for headteachers, who should identify leadership potential and build 'leadership capacity through the school' as well as 'collaborative professional learning across the school and within the school community' (NCTL 2012: 18). And the systems and process domain in the headteacher standards (DfE 2015: 7) highlights the importance of distributing leadership 'throughout the organisation, forging teams of colleagues who have distinct roles and responsibilities and hold each other to account for their decision making'.

Summary

In summary, it might be argued that in the first decade of the 21st century leadership preparation and development became 'nationalised' (Bush, 2009: 387). By 2013, Bush (2013: 295) concluded that the NCSL is 'now required to implement government policy. More than ever, leadership development is a vehicle for ensuring compliance with national imperatives'. Around 2012, such nationalisation begins to be edged out by the

encouragement and facilitation by government of more privatised models (Bush, 2016, Gibson 2018). The policy of the Conservative Government in office at the time of writing is that those in middle leadership positions and upwards ‘must be able to access sufficient formal and informal development to excel’, much of which ‘will be conducted by multi-academy trusts and within Teaching School Alliances’ (DfE 2016: 18). The rationale for current policy is summarised as ‘power in the hands of school’^{vii}. What this means is that within a nationally prescribed framework of aims, inspection and measures of success, there is some degree of discretion about how schools and school leaders undertake their work and how leadership preparation and development are provided and facilitated. The question is what this means in practice. A tension between control and autonomy runs through the English educational reforms since the 1980s: ‘increased autonomy for schools, but within a framework within which such autonomy has been heavily constrained and orchestrated’ (Woods and Simkins 2014: 327). The same characterisation applies to school leadership preparation and development. In terms of Simkins’ frame, if there is scope for constructivist leadership preparation and development and critical questioning, who is able and enabled to do this? Who shapes the learning relationship between participants and providers?

A Critical Examination of the Systemic Conditions for Leadership Preparation and Development

In this section we use an analytical model of the systemic conditions of ‘pedagogic frailty’ (Kinchin 2017) in order to apply a critical examination of the conditions generating school leadership preparation and development in England. Pedagogic frailty has been used to explain issues concerning learning and teaching in UK universities. It suggests there is systemic weakness in relation to: the regulative discourse on pedagogy; the locus of control of pedagogy; the separation of research from pedagogy and the separation of the discipline from pedagogy. Kinchin developed this model through the use of concept mapping to

explore academics' understanding of higher education practice. He sees this model as a way of making visible current systemic issues in higher education and as a framework that can be used for dialogue and practice development. We see the classification of issues, and the relationships between these depicted in the model, as a useful way of framing our discussion of leadership preparation and development.

Using this framework and building on contributions in the work edited by Kinchin and Winstone (2017), Jarvis (2018) has added a focus on 'pedagogic strength' to expand discussion on what might be attended to in order to address frailties. We consider each of the model's systemic conditions to discuss leadership preparation and development in England. In this context we are using the term pedagogy to refer to methods of school leadership preparation and development, discipline to refer to school leadership, and the research-teaching nexus to how leadership preparation and development are related to research.

Regulative discourse

Regulative discourse concerns the values and the fundamental normative purposes that underpin and are expressed in the policy articulations, local discourses and assumptions about leadership preparation and development and its practice. A notable development in England is the plurality of providers. According to Bush (2018), preparation and development in the fragmented, pluralist English system is likely to be highly variable. There is criticism that the approach to leadership preparation and development is inconsistent and fragmented (Cliffe et al 2018), and in relation to system leaders that there is insufficient systematic or long-term thinking about their professional development (Close et al 2018). There is a need, it is argued, to challenge the emerging structures to ensure

cohesive approaches to combat inequality and for policy and cultural shifts to establish the core purpose of preparation and development (Cliffe et al 2018).

To the extent that the regulative discourse is disjointed and characterised by tensions that distract from educational aims, there is a problem that weakens the pedagogic strength of leadership preparation and development. We highlight two tensions identified in the discussion in this chapter.

In terms of purpose, there is a tension between aims that prioritise educational outcomes that are instrumental and that commodify education and those that have intrinsic value, such as the learning of cultural knowledge as a good in itself. It is difficult to square the prioritisation of the former, through the testing measures that are dominant, with educational leadership that seeks to advance holistic learning that values intrinsic and more humanistic aims.

The second tension is between the traditional, hierarchical model of leadership and distributed models of leadership. There has been significant attention given to the latter, but how far is there sustained and genuine commitment to the leadership preparation and development that makes a qualitative shift in leadership practice throughout schools and the school system? The regulative discourse tends to revert to the familiar focus on positional leadership roles. There are good reasons to recognise that the ‘heroic’ model of leadership is a persistent one (Woods and Roberts 2018: 41), with much emphasis being given to seeking ‘great’ leaders (DfE 2016a: 14) in a regulatory framework that creates contradictory pressures (Baxter 2016). How this tension between strongly hiererarchical and distributed models of leadership plays out has implications for leadership preparation and development which are discussed further below.

Locus of control of pedagogy

Locus of control of pedagogy concerns where authority and power reside to shape leadership preparation and development - how far it is centralised or rests at local level or is distributed across various levels. The account presented in this chapter shows how there have been moves towards centralised control, through the creation of the NCSL, and then moves towards more privatised or localised models.

The encouragement of a plurality of providers, if taken at face value, suggests more dispersed control and opportunities for initiative and variance to suit local and personalised needs. However, these developments can be seen as another manifestation of the tension between control and autonomy that runs through the English educational reforms since the 1980s (Higham and Earley 2013). There is discretion within a nationally prescribed framework of aims, inspection and measures of success concerning how leadership preparation and development are provided and facilitated. Key issues are how much discretion there is in practice, and who exercises it and how. A plural model may in practice serve local organisational needs rather than allowing leaders and aspirant leaders to develop in and of themselves and to nurture agency and the capacity for autonomy as a good to be valued in itself. Quality assurance is a further issue. Is quality assured through agencies with a co-ordinating role or is it meant to be achieved through a marketplace or self-improvement model of provision (Bush 2018, Gibson 2018, Hargreaves 2012)?

Simkins (2012) argued for research into questions of power and how the developing landscape of schooling in England, with new and differing players (sponsors, system leaders, new institutional providers and alliances) and emerging patterns of relationships, is shaping leadership preparation and development on the ground. This argument is reinforced

by developments since the time that Simkins was writing. Gibson's (2018) study of one MAT and other empirical research (such as Cliffe et al 2018, Close et al 2018) highlight concerns about incoherence and fragmentation in current provision in some settings. Further research is needed of the different contexts and providers in the English system in order to understand how leadership preparation and development is being designed in practice and the actors and influences that are having most impact on the aims and pedagogy on the ground.

Pedagogy and discipline connections

Pedagogy and discipline connections is taken to mean here the degree of connection between the pedagogy of leadership preparation and development and the view taken of the nature and demands of leadership. As used in this chapter, pedagogy refers to the teaching or facilitation of leadership development, while the discipline is leadership and how this is conceptualised. The connections between pedagogy and the discipline concern how pedagogical purposes and teaching and learning approaches relate to the view of leadership.

The discussion in this chapter of standards, the regulative discourse and educational purposes underpinning leadership suggest a persistence of notions of strong linear leadership in the traditional hierarchical mode and a dominating if not hegemonic preference for functional leadership preparation and development primarily serving economic aims. There are, however, alternative trends in the discourse and practice of leadership which arguably offer conceptions of educational leadership more consistent with aesthetic or humanistic purposes of education that seek to foster a sense of agency, critical thinking and ethical development by integrating explicitly concerns with ecological, democratic and social justice issues (such as Angelle 2017, Gross and Shapiro 2015, Kensler and Uline 2017, Lumby and Coleman 2016, Western 2013, Woods and Roberts 2018a/b). Western

(2013) sets out the case for a growing discourse of eco-leadership which views leadership as dispersed across organisations and a practice that values ethics and the human spirit and treats organisational work as an interconnected part of ecological systems and human communities, rather than a controlling and mechanistic activity. Woods and Roberts (2018a/b) commend a notion of collaborative school leadership which sees leadership as being fundamentally distributed and argue that developing collaborative leadership involves being aware of this distributed character, deliberating and making conscious choices about the values that are implicated in leadership practice and engaging specifically with values of co-development that underlie leadership for holistic and democratic development.

Integrated into these conceptualisations of leadership is the pro-active agency and impact of those in non-positional roles, such as teachers, students and support staff in schools, as well as positional leaders. Such a distributed conception of leadership has implications for leadership preparation and development. For example, preparation and development not only involves a wider population of contributors to leadership (non-positional as well as positional leaders) but also attention to the organisational conditions in which leadership is exercised and developed (the school's culture, ethos, institutional structures and relationships (NCSL 2004, Woods and Roberts 2018)).

Simkins and Woods (2014) argue that the plural, or fragmented, school system in England requires conscious and critical agency and making choices self-consciously, with an awareness of the influences (values, micro-political issues and so on) that shape the system and leadership. This, and the kind of alternative conceptions of leadership highlighted, have implications for leadership preparation and development. There is a need for critical approaches in which opportunities for examining power, purpose, change and identity are created, as well as processes that are constructivist. This is consistent with recognising that

leadership is a complex process that has to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity, requiring capabilities for pro-active agency that include critical reflexivity, practical judgement and sensitive awareness (Stacey 2012, Woods and Roberts, 2018a). Sophisticated political and ethical understandings of policy and organisational contexts and processes of change are called for, and this applies both to single-organisation leadership as well as broader roles that involve system and executive leadership (Bush 2018a, Close et al 2018). Preparation and development of leadership for the latter, broader roles may require emphasis on strategic thinking, coaching and staff development, school-to-school consistency and collaboration, and looking outwards (National Foundation for Educational Research et al 2016), but they also need the critical approach that enhances questioning, reflexivity and political and ethical awareness.

As with power and the locus of control, focused research is needed on the ‘discipline’ of leadership - how it is and should be understood - and the implications for pedagogies of leadership preparation and development. This includes in-depth research into the ‘critical analysis of the content and processes embodied in [preparation and development] activities and the ways in which these influence leadership’ (Simkins 2012: 634). A key question is to what extent and in what ways constructivist and critical approaches are evident in the numerous and diverse preparation and development practices in the English system.

Pedagogy-research nexus

For our purposes, the pedagogy-research nexus concerns the relationship between leadership preparation and development (involving providers, facilitators and participants - leaders and aspiring leaders) and research. In constructivist approaches, participants are not passive subjects, but co-creators of knowledge and understanding. The issue raised here is the extent to which actors (providers, facilitators, participants) in leadership preparation and

development are also researchers and enquirers into leadership practice. To what extent is leadership preparation and development research informed? Being research informed can take the form both of being a researcher and enquirer and of being a user of research.

The creation of the NCSL, which later changed to become the NCTL, shifted the centre of gravity in leadership preparation and development towards a government-funded body and away from other providers including universities and their experience and commitment to research (Bolam 2004). Whilst the NCSL commissioned a good deal of research into leadership and into evaluating its programmes, and recognised the value of practitioner research (Coleman 2007), this in many ways followed a different agenda to the kind of independent and questioning research initiated by academic researchers. The NCSL undertook many evaluations of their programmes, often highlighting what participants found valuable in them, but such studies tended to be limited in their theorising and ability to explain any impact they had (Simkins 2012). Research from critical theory perspectives (such as Hall et al 2013 on distributed leadership) did not fit the NCSL paradigm. This is not to deny the value of the NCSL research, much of which was carried out by university scholars. The point is that the research landscape was skewed towards one that was more likely to be influenced by dominant policy concerns.

As the system of leadership preparation and development becomes more plural with many diverse providers, the role that critical research plays is a pertinent concern. The concern is not only about university research. Professional enquiry by practitioners to develop leadership capabilities and inform professional practice has a vital role. Leaders (non-positional and positional) in a range of contexts who research their own practice, can provide insights into leadership development practices. The current headteachers' standards commend the establishment of school cultures that draw on and conduct research to develop

teaching practice (DfE 2015: 6). Flinn (2018), drawing on his experience of working with leaders on developing their practice in different sectors, argues for taking a complexity approach to understanding leadership which requires sense-making, reflexivity and practical judgement in a continually changing context. Facilitators of leadership development, he proposes, must ‘share a plurality of perspectives with programme participants’ (Flinn, 2018:176) to enable a nuanced and critical exploration of human interaction in their organisation and to enhance their ability to act skilfully within it. Close et al (2018: 82) present a framework for system leader development in English education which involves a research-engagement approach. Expanding beyond a narrow focus on ‘skills’, SLEs (specialist leaders of education) interrogate their practice by working with university researchers, undertaking research reading and collaborating to discuss ‘stories from deployments’. Professional enquiry is a strategy that can be used by teachers and others exercising or aspiring to exercise non-positional leadership. Teacher Led Development Work (TLDW) in the HertsCam Network (a teacher-led, not-for-profit organisation supporting teacher leadership, primarily in Hertfordshire, England) pursues strategic action to bring about change and through this activity, supported by professional enquiry, fosters the practice and development of non-positional leadership by teachers and others school members (Woods and Roberts 2018).

Conclusions

This chapter has examined school leadership preparation and development in England, concentrating on the period from the late 1990s. The question of educational purposes and school leadership, the radical changes in the English school system and the trajectory of change in the arrangements and conditions for school leadership preparation and development were discussed. A critical examination of the systemic conditions in which school leadership preparation and development take place was then presented, using an

analytical model designed to frame the study of pedagogic frailty (Kinchin 2017) and strengths (Jarvis 2018). In this final section, we distil from the discussion in this chapter conclusions about pedagogic frailties and strengths and topics for future research in relation to each of the elements of this framework: the regulative discourse; the locus of control of pedagogy; the pedagogy and discipline connections; and the pedagogy-research nexus.

The *regulative discourse* concerns the values and purposes expressed in the policy articulations, local discourses and assumptions about leadership preparation and development. Tensions in the regulative discourse, whilst inevitable to some degree and even creative, foster pedagogic frailty in so far as they create inconsistency and detract from the fundamental aim of providing a broad education. A significant tension is evident between economistic aims, such as those that prioritise instrumental educational outcomes and commodify education, and aims that have intrinsic value, such as the learning of cultural knowledge as a good in itself which is consistent with an aesthetic purpose of education. There is also a tension concerning the traditional, hierarchical model of leadership and distributed models of leadership. The value of a distributed perspective on leadership is recognised in the discourse, with evidence of some practical commitment to its development. Such recognition is a source of potential pedagogic strength. However, commitment to a qualitative shift in leadership practice so as to enhance agency and the capacity for autonomy throughout schools and the school system is less robust than a tendency in the regulative discourse to revert to the familiar focus on positional leadership roles.

A topic for future research is interpretations of the policy discourse by leadership preparation and development providers and participants. What do they see as the dominant

purposes behind policy on school leadership and how do they interpret these and relate them to their educational and leadership values?

Further issues are apparent in relation to the *locus of control of pedagogy* - that is, where authority and power reside to shape leadership preparation and development. A more plural system of provision may offer scope for discretion and variety – elements which potentially feed pedagogic strength – but significant challenges and questions arise. One concerns quality assurance. Is it feasible to expect market-like forces amongst multiple providers to produce incentives that will achieve high qualities of leadership preparation and development? Or will the system operate as a self-improving one in which collaboration and partnerships within and between schools lead to the development of quality assurance skills and critical evaluation within the system (Hargreaves 2012)? In such a system, government does not set detailed quality measures and tests, but helps to create the conditions that foster a collective capacity for collaborative quality improvement. Pedagogic strength is potentially enhanced by such conditions, although any weaknesses in the process of quality assurance may conversely lead to pedagogic frailty.

Another issue relates to the practical power to exercise autonomy. How much discretion and innovation are exercised by providers? Are they all equally able to do so? What constraints do providers feel they work within? To what extent are the participants in leadership preparation and development able to find or create opportunities to develop in and of themselves and to nurture their agency and the capacity for autonomy? Inequalities in opportunities to collaborate in and influence leadership preparation and development tend to increase pedagogic frailty.

These are topics for future research on power and how it is concentrated or dispersed in practice in the changing field of leadership preparation and development in England. A variety of in-depth, critical studies into practice in the different contexts and providers within the English system would be valuable in building up a picture of who is most influential in shaping leadership preparation and development. Given a concern to advance social justice, highlighted in the section on ‘Purpose’, it is crucial that such research should include a focus on inequalities amongst participants (non-positional and positional) in access and in their involvement in developing opportunities appropriate to their aspirations and needs. To what extent in the more plural leadership preparation and development landscape do factors such as geography and the socio-economic character of school communities and characteristics of participants such as gender, ethnicity and social class impact upon access and participants’ involvement; and how much of the provision seeks to raise awareness and understanding of social justice issues and leadership?

In relation to *pedagogy and discipline connections*, three significant issues are highlighted here. First, as noted in the discussion of the regulative discourse, is the extent to which traditional, hierarchical and linear models of leadership remain influential or, alternatively, conceptions of leadership as distributed become a more prominent and widely accepted part of the discourse. Our view is that the latter fosters pedagogic strength. The more that distributed conceptions of leadership feature strongly in the leadership discourse, the more pressure there is for the pedagogy of leadership preparation and development to change in response. A distributed conception of leadership places as much value and emphasis on the pro-active agency in non-positional roles, such as teachers, students and support staff in schools, as positional leaders. Implications include not only a widening of the population for leadership preparation and development to include those exercising leadership in non-

positional roles, as well as those in positional roles, but also attention to the organisational conditions in which leadership is exercised and developed in schools.

The second issue is the growing significance of leadership that has responsibilities across schools and supports or leads developments in the system of school education, rather than a single-organisation focus. This includes executive heads and system leaders. Such leadership has challenges that include inter-organisational collaboration, the governance of collaborative groupings of schools (with some looser in their governance than others), and dealing with sometimes competing interests between the system and individual schools. These leadership demands reinforce the need for developing political and ethical understandings of policy and organisational contexts. Such recognition of both demands and their implications for leadership preparation and development is a contributory factor in the development of pedagogic strength.

The third issue concerns the dominating attention given to a functionalist approach to leadership preparation and development. Dominance of a functionalist approach fosters pedagogic frailty. Leadership in complex environments and serving multiple purposes requires critical reflexivity and developing the capacity for practical judgement, as well as ‘knowledge for understanding’ (Bolam 1999: 195). This suggests that to build pedagogic strength forms of constructivist and co-constructivist approaches to leadership preparation and development are of vital importance, offering opportunities for participants to examine power, purpose, change and identity and the policy contexts of schooling.

Topics for future research in relation to pedagogy and discipline connections therefore include in what ways, if at all, conceptions of leadership shift more towards a distributed perspective and how the needs of inter-school and system leadership evolve; and the degree

to which a distributed perspective and the needs of inter-school and system leadership are reflected in the aims and practice of leadership preparation and development. A further topic is the extent to which and in what ways critical and constructivist approaches are evident in preparation and development practices in England, including innovative and leading-edge changes in this regard.

In relation to the *pedagogy-research nexus*, a pressing issue is the kind of research that will be supported and possible as the system of leadership preparation and development becomes more plural with many diverse providers. Allowing space for critical and questioning research that is independent of the interests and priorities of providers and government creates the conditions which foster the building of pedagogic strength. Some of this is appropriately generated by academic researchers. There is also a vital role for research and enquiry by practitioners. This includes professional enquiry as a strategy for the practice and development of non-positional leadership by teachers, students and support staff in schools.

Forms of leadership preparation and development, including their underpinning values and pedagogy, will influence those leading our schools into the future. There are factors fostering both frailties and strengths in the developing and uncharted system of leadership preparation and development in England. For example, the current system appears frail in so far as there are tensions in educational aims and between central and local control. Perhaps these could also be seen as creative tensions, enabling multiple voices to be part of creating new practice: diversity in leadership preparation and development could be seen as a strength within a complex field. Research and professional enquiry capturing how leadership preparation and development practice evolves, and who shapes that practice in the differing local contexts across England, are essential.

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ⁱ Further details are available at <http://www.womened.org>, <https://tsCouncil.org.uk/women-leading-in-education-coaching-pledge/> and <https://researched.org.uk>.

ⁱⁱ The then Schools Minister Nick Gibb addressing the Education Reform Summit, 2015. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-purpose-of-education>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.youngcitizens.org/what-is-citizenship-education>

^{iv} <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-leaders-of-education-a-guide-for-potential-applicants>

^v <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-professional-qualifications-npqs-list-of-providers/list-of-national-professional-qualification-npq-providers>

^{vi} <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-leaders-of-education-a-guide-for-potential-applicants>

^{vii} “By bringing teacher recruitment, leadership and development into the core of the Department for Education, we will together provide a more joined up and responsive service to the profession. It continues the direction of travel over recent years, which has been to put the resources and power into the hands of schools – the people who know what works best for pupils. All over the country, schools are working in collaboration with others through teaching school alliances and MATs, drawing down funds in partnership with others, and training our future leaders through NPQ programmes. A school-led system has never been more important to help ensure that everyone, no matter who they are or where they come from, can get a world-class education and has the chance to go as far as their talent and hard work will allow.” (<https://ncl.blog.gov.uk/2017/11/14/an-autumn-update-the-school-led-system/>)