Pedagogical Leadership in the 21st Century: Evidence from the field.

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Introduction

The continuing emphasis in the twenty-first century on student attainment and achievement has opened a number of debates in relation to what makes an effective educational organisation and how learning processes are scrutinised to meet targets and outcomes. In this context various leadership behaviours are being promulgated in relation to a particular set of positions within the UK government agenda and a number of theories examining leadership constructs. One such example is 'Pedagogical Leadership', a phrase that frequently appears in literature relating to educational organisations and one seemingly referring to forms of practice which shape and form teaching and learning and how these can be integrated within leadership of these organisations. In this context the term 'pedagogy' is understood as a set of practices which shape educational organisations around teaching and learning in order to match externally applied standards and expectations of student outcomes. In this scenario leadership is integrated as an overarching process for effective functioning of these educational organisations. In this paper, however, we will argue that the term pedagogy is an ambiguous one when it is attached to the concept of leadership and requires further explanation beyond the seeming current determinism that pedagogical leadership is only about supporting teaching and learning. Our conclusions are informed by findings from research undertaken by us with headteachers and leaders/managers of early years settings in England during 2012.

Views on Pedagogy and Leadership

Educational leadership has received multiple examinations which have produced numerous concepts of prior knowledge of what is likely to be effective (e.g. van Manen 1991, Katz 1997, Sergiovanni 1996 & 1998, Emira 2010). Typically educational organisations endeavour to represent pedagogy as their core activity and purpose (Bruner 1996, Vygotsky 1997, Mortimore 1999, Webster 2009). The conventional assumption appears to be that if an educational organisation exists then the leaders within must subscribe to pedagogy and, therefore, are pedagogical leaders. For example, Sergiovanni (1998:38) claims that pedagogical leadership:

> … invests in capacity building by developing social and academic capital for students and intellectual and professional capital for teachers. Support this leadership by making capital available to enhance student learning and development, teacher learning and classroom effectiveness.

In his earlier work Sergiovanni (1996) relates pedagogical leadership to the teachers' pedagogical work with learners, purposing the term "leadership as pedagogy" (p.92) building on the work of van Manen (1991:38) who introduced the term "leading" in relation to pedagogy by justifying this connection through the etymology of the term (literal translation = 'leading the child', see below). Thus for Sergiovanni teachers act as leaders in the classroom (pedagogical leadership) as they are the ones who are in direct contact with children and their learning.

We dispute assertions that relate pedagogical leadership with the dual relationship of teaching and learning, however, as we consider this to be too simplistic in the context of the twenty-first century and consequently seek to examine the construct of pedagogical leadership more fully. Our contention is that the pace of cultural change is increasing in the current era and this has profound implications for the understanding of pedagogy and pedagogical practice, or *praxis* as we suggest, which is described as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it (Freire, 1986: 36). Praxis embodies certain qualities that require a person to "make a wise and prudent practical judgment about how to act in this (or as we will add each) situation" (Carr and Kemmis 1998:190). In view of this, there will be implications that will directly affect leadership behaviour in educational settings where leaders are committed to the development of opportunities for the student body in their community.

We argue that leadership should be context dependent rather than 'model'-dependent. As mentioned above, although the terms 'pedagogy' and 'leadership' have been put together many times in the past the use of these two terms in conjunction is still limited, relatively unexamined, ambiguous and focus only on the relationship between learning and teaching. We suggest leadership should be concerned with the exercise of reasonable and justifiable judgements or as Osberg (2010) claims "to act responsibly towards an incalculable future – to care enough to do justice to the future" (p:162). As will be demonstrated below, the role of leadership is to care about the future, not in a way that should influence the future with decision making as this is an illusion of power and control that derives from "ill" views of government agendas and would be an example of the 'modelisation' of effective leadership which insists on controlling the future where in reality this is not achievable. Instead, we align with Osberg in that leadership should be "incalculable" in terms of examining what is in the future and adopt "an emergenistic understanding of process, which is *not* oriented towards control and closure (choosing what to do) but towards the invention of the new (putting things together differently)" which allows the educational organisation and consequently leadership "the possibility to think about the future in non–teleological terms" (Osberg 2010: 163).

This way leadership can be seen not only to be associated with theoretical engagement around teaching and learning, but also as practical engagement of actions that are not simply mechanical as there is no prefixed/prior knowledge and

issues are situation related (Bernstein, 1983, 1971). By separating 'modelisation' we attempt to view leadership as a process that involves interpretation, understanding and application in making action as human beings and how these actions are directed at other human beings. Thus we suggest leadership as praxis. In praxis there can be no prior prefixed knowledge (models) of the right ways of acting or practice. Instead "the end itself (telos) is only specified in deliberating about the means appropriate to a particular situation" (Bernstein 1983:147). The notion of praxis for educational use is not a new one with theorists such as Freire (1972), Carr and Kemmis (1986), Gadotti (1979), Habermas (1973), Kemmis and Smith (2008) and Pascal and Bertram (2012) all providing a good account of praxis in education which place emphasis on curriculum praxis and teacher's role towards a critical education science.

Consequently here we revisit the topic of pedagogy and conclude that it is not a construct that relates theory and practice, a dual system. Instead praxis is additionally concerned with a continual interplay between theory, actions (practice), ends and means (or telos) entwined with their application when engaging with a set of social axes. We argue that unless we understand the term pedagogy and how it is enacted within educational organisations, leadership cannot take the centre stage in the process. This impacts at all levels of organisation as we consider that pedagogy should be shaping leadership behaviours and practices rather than the other way as current dominant leadership theories tend to claim. In conclusion we present a construct of pedagogical leadership as triangular social praxis shaped by theory, practice and the social axes relevant to the educational setting.

Understanding Pedagogy: An ekphrasis on the isolation of the word

As we argue above, the term pedagogy has been commonly used to refer to practices of teaching and learning, although this is a limited and reductive explanation of the term. Although the word stems from the Greek language (παιδί +ἄγω), literally meaning 'leading a child', the term has evolved in a number of ways in contemporary times (Knowles, 1980; Doyle, 1984, 1990; Best, 1988; Bruner, 1996; Marton and Booth, 1997; Watkins and Mortimore, 1999a). Pedagogy remains a term, however, which is shadowed by ambiguity as a number of interpretations and definitions of the term seem unclear, broad or merely limited to teaching and learning. From an examination of the literature it is evident that the nature of pedagogy is dominated by the views of parsimonious definitions that are based on "scientific" approaches (Watkins and Mortimore, 1999b: 2) with formulation of models and frameworks, neglecting the epistemological nature of pedagogy that stays faithful to the culture of families' involvement (Palaiologou, 2012).

Consequently there are views offered that try to define pedagogy as the dual relationship between teachers and their practice (or as they are normally referred to "teaching styles") and focus on limiting pedagogy to the attributes of teacher's role in the learning environment (Kounin, 1977; Doyle, 1984, 1990; Cuban, 1984, 1994;

Carlsen 1991). Another body of theorists are focusing on the relationship between knowledge and the learner (e.g. Giroux, 2011). Other examinations of pedagogy have defined it as the relationship between the engagement of learners and their socio-political and economical context (e.g. Lingard et al, 2003). Similarly, ideas such as "relational pedagogy" (Brownlee, 2004) or "inter-active pedagogy" (Taguchi, 2010) or meta-cognitive pedagogy (Bruner, 1996) subscribe to the idea of how knowledge is constructed in relation to the learner and they place emphasis on the how the learner is engaged for the construction of knowledge.

The notion of pedagogy is reflected in alternative traditions and bodies of literature in an attempt to explain this exact notion. For example, Cameron (2004:135) differentiates the use of the terms between England and Germany: "While in England pedagogy refers to how subjects are taught within formal education systems in Germany the definition of pedagogy, and its close relation to social pedagogy, has evolved and widened over time". Moss (2006:32) draws upon pedagogy as "relational and holistic approach to working with people" and Kyriakou et al (2009:75) extend this idea by emphasising the importance of pedagogy "going beyond subject learning". Similarly Yates (2009: 19) argues that "pedagogy suggests there is something bigger and more complex to be considered than terms like "teaching and learning" or effectiveness", whilst Smyth (2011: 19) suggests "questioning habitual pedagogical practices in this way necessitates asking other pointed questions that seek to unravel the social, cultural and political forces that have shaped our teaching and that actually prevent us from dislodging those deeply entrenched practices".

There is also a vast body of literature that adopts a critical stance towards the dichotomised explanations of pedagogy as teaching and learning and attempts to examine pedagogy in a wider socio-economical, political and cultural context. In an ideological examination of teaching and learning the relationship between knowledge and social elements produce a plethora of views which pose questions about definitions and nature of pedagogy. For example, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire 1972), Pedagogy of Liberation (Shor and Freire 1987), Pedagogy of Poverty (Haberman 1991), Pedagogy of Hope (Freire 1996), Pedagogy of Indignation (Freire 2004) and Pedagogy of Relations (Sidorkin 2002) - a view that has been well documented in many places such as United States (Fine, 1991), England (Willis 1977), Ireland (Fegan 1995), Canada (Dei et al 1997), Australia (Smyth et al 2004). Thus in the wider, non Anglo-Saxon landscape of literature on pedagogy there is a shift from the simplistic approach of pedagogy as the teaching of subjects and learning to critique "ill defined dichotomies (Bennett and Jordan 1975), to examining teaching styles (Cuban 1984), the contexts that this teaching and learning takes place (Kounin 1977, Doyle 1990, Sabers et al 1991, Bruner 1996), the role of all participants (Johnston 1990) and the role policy. Pedagogy is explained more and more in increasingly complex ways drawing attention to the conceptualisation of pedagogy as human systems highlighting concepts surrounding practice in education. Davies (1994: 26) illustrates all these views:

> Pedagogy involves a vision (theory, set of beliefs) about society, human nature, knowledge and production, in relation to educational ends, with terms and rules inserted as to the practical and mundane means of realisation.

It may be argued that the definitions mirror some of the issues that have arisen when researchers have approached the study of pedagogy, but in the ontologies of all academicism about pedagogy it is conveyed that pedagogy no longer occurs in isolation or solely in educational settings; it is part of a wider socio-economic, political, philosophical, psychological and educational dialogue (Palaiologou, 2012).

Pedagogy in the twenty-first century

Knowles (1980: 40) was conscious of the need for a fuller definition of pedagogy than one being based on teaching in order to transmit knowledge and skills that "have stood the test of time". He cited the work of the twentieth century philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, who questioned the validity of such an approach in a fast changing world. Education based on transmittal approaches was only appropriate, Whitehead argued, when the time span of major cultural changes was greater than the life-span of individuals. Such an assumption "is false and today this time-span is considerably shorter than that of human life, and accordingly our training must prepare individuals to face a novelty of conditions." (Whitehead, 1931, p. 10). He supplemented these thoughts with the accompanying diagram which demonstrates the principle across the ages:

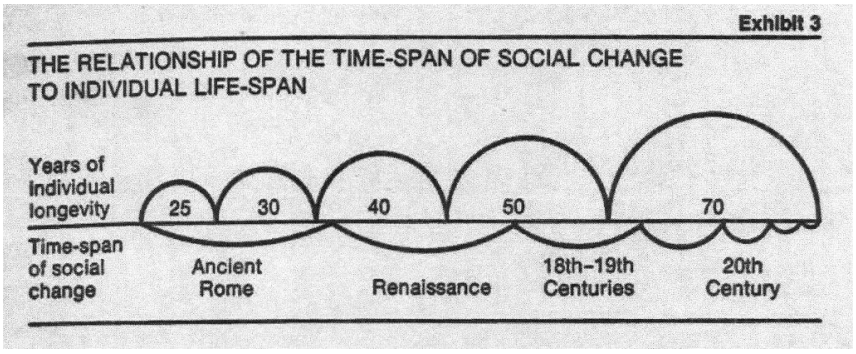

Figure 1: Major cultural changes and the life-span of individuals (Whitehead, 1931)

This led Knowles to conclude that:

> […] in the twentieth century […] knowledge gained at any point of time is largely obsolete within a matter of years; and skills that made people productive in their twenties become out-of-date in their thirties. So it is no longer functional to define education as a process of transmitting what is known; it must now be defined as a lifelong process of continuing inquiry. (Knowles, 1980: 41)

In the twenty-first century, learning environments are changing even faster and are more and more now concerned not only with teachers, but with the learners and their

context. One claim is that pedagogy in twenty-first century has shifted from transmissive pedagogies, where the main focus of its action is to transmit knowledge to learners, to participatory pedagogies that "involve a break away from the traditional pedagogy to promote a different view of the learning process, and the image and roles of children and educators" (Oliviera–Formosinho and Formosinho, 2012: 9). It requires "a painful process of radically examining our current positions and asking pointed questions about the relationship that exists between these positions and the social in-depth search for alternatives to these almost unconscious lenses we employ and an ability to cope with an ambiguous situation for which answers can now be only dimly seen and which will not be easy to come by" (Apple 1975: 127). This led us to conclude that educational settings thus also have to take account of families, policies, reforms and a number of other services such as health, social work and local and national global issues which we refer to as 'the ecology of the community' (Palaiologou, 2012). Consequently there is a need to seek an in-depth understanding of these relationships in order to be able to discuss what pedagogy is in the 21st century and its implications for educational leadership.

Pedagogy and Leadership in the twenty-first century

> Effective education settings are those which have developed productive and synergistic relationships between learners, families, the team and the community, because the context, the locality and the culture in which learners live are vitally important (Palaiologou, 2012: 112).

Consequently we consider that pedagogy in the twenty-first century should be about offering the capacity to learners to challenge existing knowledge, to exercise 'logics' of emergence and deconstruction and to be cognisant of the notion of an "incalculable future" referred to by Osberg (2010:162). We also argue that pedagogy in the twenty-first century should move beyond the simplicity of a literal functional description of the dichotomised theme of teaching and learning and should be concerned to subvert authority, bridge disciplines and cross fragmentations of axiologies, ontologies and epistemologies in an attempt to transcend disciplinary boundaries and move beyond a visionary learner environment where the contemporary is set against traditional, acceptance versus denial or standard versus visionary classrooms. More than ever educationalists "are increasingly free to choose from a range of alternative perspectives on themselves and their social world. This freedom of choice requires the ability to see one's own views of what is good or right, possible or impossible, true or false, as problematic, socially constructed, and subject to social political influence" (Berlak, 1985:2) or as we have called them the set of social axes. Thus we suggest the view of pedagogy as the triangular incorporation of practice that mirrors on theory and the set of axes that influence a social setting.

In this environment pedagogical leadership is an ethical approach which respects values and does not engage in any project that will only benefit the individual, but instead looks after the ecology of the community. This is similar to the work of Arendt (1951, 1958, 1978) who argued for the importance of active life as the highest ekphrasis of praxis and suggested the capacity to engage in active praxis and to the neologism introduced by Bourdieu (1998) who gave us theories of practical reason and 'praxiology' as a way of referring to the influence of the environment. Wenger (1998) meanwhile emphasised communities of practice as dialogical and empathetic whilst Eikeland (2008) focused on the search for understanding the notion of pedagogy as being conveyed by a broader holistic approach rooted in social complexities.

We conclude, therefore, that pedagogy is a triangulated concept based on the relationship of social praxis that is concerned with theory, practice and a set of social axes. Pedagogy, therefore, is essentially now the creation of learning environments in which the centrality of interactions and relationships among learners, teachers, family and community (i.e. their values, beliefs, culture, religion, customs and economic circumstances) interact with external elements (such as the global economy, climate and social phenomena that additionally influence the life of the community) in order to jointly construct knowledge. This understanding enables us to identify aspects of the environment that are pedagogical (social) axes:

- Internal axes (values, beliefs, culture, religion, customs & local economy), and
- External axes (societal values, global economy, mass media, social networking, information communication technologies, national curriculum, the 'academic press' of student test scores).

In that sense leadership becomes praxis, and in particular pedagogical praxis, which goes beyond the simplicity of actions/practice and their causality. Leadership as pedagogical praxis is a set of actions imbued with theoretical substance and supported by a system which we claim as the ecology of the community of education settings. As illustrated in Figure 2 the ecology of community is defined as the active participation of learners, teachers, family and the local community and shaped in turn by all the internal axes (values, beliefs, local economy) and external axes (societal values, global economy, mass media, information communication technologies and social networking). The ecology of the community is also influenced by other relevant external pedagogical axes relating to education such as the national curriculum and the 'academic press' of student test scores.

Pedagogy in the twenty-first century can thus be seen as the justifiable belief that the process for teaching and learning is cultivated in an environment (i.e. education) where situational and doxastic (common beliefs) justify the construction of knowledge. Pedagogy, therefore, is cultivated by the quest for understanding the being of the learners (the ecology of their community), the experiences of the

learners and their community and the meaning making and problem solving required in that context for creating effective educational interactions and relationships. In that sense pedagogical axes serve as foundation elements of the praxis that is the key activity of educational organisations. In that context leadership in the twenty-first century is an aspect of pedagogical axes, thus we call it *Pedagogical Leadership*.

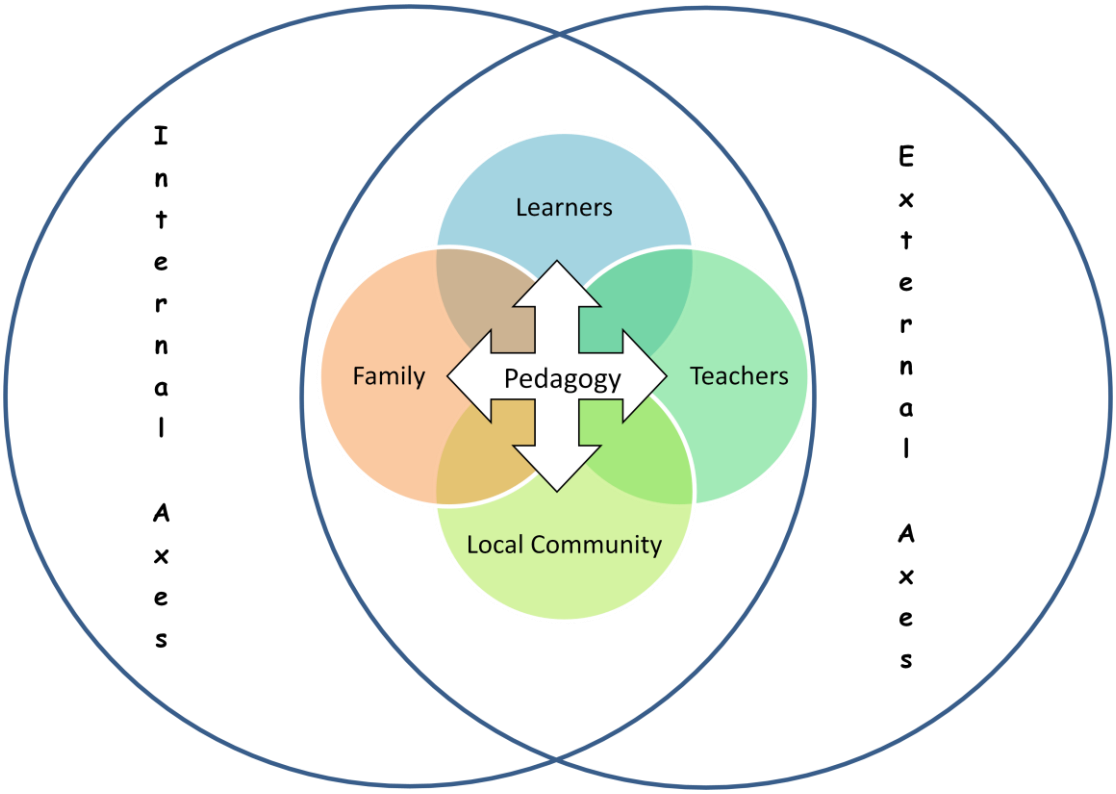

Figure 2: The Relationship between Pedagogy and Social Axes

Throughout the above discussion we have attempted to re-examine the term pedagogical leadership and we argue that although the term has been associated with the leading role of the teachers in their learning environment, in this paper we conclude that pedagogical leadership is praxis that goes beyond the practice within the immediate learning environment and the key focus is a threefold development of:

- interactions in the ecology of the community;
- activities with all participants;
- the construction of knowledge using all available resources such as technology.

Thus in this research project we have a dual aim:

1. To investigate the views of leaders in the field;

2. To investigate the validity of the social set of axes and whether we can add other axes to pedagogy.

The Research

This investigation undertaken for this paper explores the views and experiences of highly effective headteachers in schools and leaders/managers in early years settings in England. The participants were a purposive sample selected on the basis of reputation (e.g. sustained record of success) and recommendation from academic colleagues and local authority advisers familiar with their work. Our intention in working with these participants was to see how they dealt with the components of the internal and external axes which shaped the community and to evaluate to what extent this construct of pedagogical leadership was valid.

This study draws parallels with work conducted earlier on a small sample of headteachers whose work "delivers the results the establishment wants [and] transformed standards in the most challenging circumstances" (Hay Group, 2002). That small-scale study explored the work of five headteachers in England who had done something dramatic or impressive in their schools and had achieved the scale of change that would justify the description of 'breakthrough' and sought to extract common themes of thought, behaviour and context that would enable them to sketch a model of how these heads achieved their results. Key findings of the 'breakthrough' investigation found that the heads in that study considered that they were:

- driven by a deep personal conviction that what they were doing was morally right and that the ends justify the means;
- not in charge of examination machines and not merely professionals living by a set of national standards;
- believing that the welfare of entire communities rested within their responsibility;
- at considerable pains to establish a culture and devoted time early in their headship to establishing the values that underpinned the culture;
- most commonly characterised by an almost complete indifference to other agendas – they were more likely to comment on being freed from a restriction or requirement (like the national curriculum, for example) than of achieving a particular target;
- able to establish goals for their schools and their communities, which seem so much more relevant, exciting and important than those posed from outside. (Hay Group, 2002)

The study showed that the five headteachers repeatedly confronted poor performance from the earliest days of their headships until they had established such strong values in their schools that the culture did most of the work for them. Goals were expressed in terms of changing communities or generations; in terms of improving self esteem and aspirations rather than exam results; and in terms of the

greatest good for the greatest number rather than individual achievement (Hay Group, 2002: 21).

Our own study, based on the conceptual paper we published last year (Mal and Palaiologou, 2012), coincidentally sought to identify similar leadership behaviours and established eight lines of enquiry which bear a good deal of similarity to those listed above. In other words our study was not driven by the outcomes of the Hay Group report, but there was a strong possibility that comparisons would exist. These will be examined in more detail later in the paper.

Methodological approach

These lines of enquiry were examined in the subsequent empirical research with the participants being asked to consider the following aspects of practice in their setting prior to us meeting with them and to discuss these with us during interview:

- Examples of workforce and family participation in establishment of organisational vision and in decision-making;
- The type of structures and internal processes you have established to allow your workforce to lead and manage learning;
- Examples of productive and synergistic relationships where learners, teachers, parents, community and government have worked together to support learning in a manner natural to the learner's locality;
- How you are using digital technologies to bridge the gap between home and school. Any examples of use of Web 2.0 technologies (e.g. social networking)?
- Any comments you have on the 'Academic Press' (the drive for enhanced levels of student and teacher performance particularly in regard to outcomes required by education systems). Do you seek to avoid your school being a data driven professional community? If so what do you do?
- How far do you acknowledge the interplay between theory and practice, teaching and learning? What do you encourage in terms of CPD for your workforce?
- Have you got examples of how you encourage the construction, examination, deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge where learners try to answer and explain the world with questions?
- Examples of practice where the emphasis is on learners working together to achieve aims each could not achieve on their own.

The leaders explored in this phase of our investigation consisted of two from secondary schools, four from primary schools and two from early years settings in England. There was wide variety in the type of organisation in terms of social settings and performance indicators. In other words these organisations were not necessarily high performing in terms of standard measures applied to educational

settings and exhibited a wide range of socio-economic factors and inspection grades. The key feature linking the organisations was, therefore, the perceived quality of leadership, as discussed above.

The views and experiences of our sample were examined through a semi-structured interview conducted during April, 2012 in an environment, mostly their workplace, where interruptions were kept to a minimum. Each interview lasted approximately one hour per participant: field notes were taken by one of the research team at each interview. Interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed by secretarial support, with each transcript subsequently being checked for accuracy by the research team and returned to the participants who have all indicated subsequently these to be an accurate record of the meeting. Subsequent content analysis was undertaken on the final version of interview transcripts through adaptation of the original lines of enquiry to align the findings to the internal and external axes of pedagogy illustrated above.

Further analysis was undertaken through the use of open coding systems which enabled unexpected elements of the data to be analysed (Strauss, 1987). This allowed us to determine whether further unexpected aspects of the pedagogical axes would be revealed. Resulting codes were refined by repeated analysis undertaken by the two researchers and then used to define recurring themes and patterns, resulting in the creation of separate categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This inductive process enabled emergent elements of the data to be analysed.

Findings

Internal Axes

As indicated above, the internal axes of pedagogical leadership were deemed to be determined by the values, beliefs, culture, religion, customs and local economic circumstances relevant to the community served by the educational setting.

Our investigation showed that explicit core values that exceeded the simple expectations of a performance culture were central to the desire of our sample of leaders, as summed up by the headteacher of a primary school in a village school which had doubled its numbers during his tenure and served a community with a population that was partly rural and partly professional/technical in nature:

> We've created an ethos and a culture […] ahead of any safeguarding agenda. Our spiritual morals, social and cultural atmosphere was genuinely inclusive.

This approach to establishing core values was echoed by the headteacher of a primary school which had evolved from one of concern in the early 1990s to become one of outstanding capability a decade later, giving them national recognition that led

to them being invited to brief the national inspectorate as to the reasons for their success:

> I believe that we can't all be academics, we can't expect the children all to be academic, but what I'm pretty certain of is that every child has something special to offer and it our duty to find out what that is. If all we are going to do is teach literacy and numeracy, with the rest of it all squashed into a small amount of time, we are letting those children down. We are never going to find out what that special skill or talent is that they have.

Another primary school headteacher in an area rated on the deprivation indexes as the least deprived catchment area in the local authority, nevertheless was dealing with an 'on entry' that was broadly average. His school, however, was consistently above the expected 'value added' quotient in terms of outcomes and had moved from a school that reminded him of "a 1950s hospital mentality that was desperately in need of enlivening". His aim, therefore, was to "facilitate these people to be able to do what they really want to do", leading to the situation where the school vision is encompassed within a central motivational motto:

> Our vision is summarised by our motto which is 'Everybody Cares, Everybody Learns and Everybody Matters'. That is the core belief of the school. Now many schools have vision statements, and mission statements, but the last Ofsted inspector said had she never had that quoted to her by so many people. I always say if that everybody does care and everybody is learning and everybody really does matter then you can do anything.

On the economic front, however, the headteacher of a secondary school which is the sole provider to a town with a long history of endemic high unemployment and poor job prospects was more focused on the needs of the local economy. In our interview she was proposing radical changes to internal structure in order to provide greater employment opportunity for their students:

> I think our driving vision and mission is that we are here for the kids and that's the only reason why we want to make changes in the school. If it wasn't going to be for the improvement of the young people here we wouldn't have done it! That moral purpose is exactly what drives us and it's the moral purpose that we agreed as a senior team very early on. We then agreed it with the entire staff team and every one of them came down to the same kind of vision for the school, which I think is great!

In this instance the school was looking for greater correlation between the world of education and the world of work, "because what we are finding is that kids don't really understand why they are in a school and what these qualifications are all about, and what it should lead to". In this way they were trying to do the best they can for the students and to raise the aspirations of the community.

Meanwhile the head of our fourth primary school involved in this stage of the research, whose school was located in an area of continuous economic deprivation lasting over three generations, indicated that the economic needs of the community were better served with an ethical approach that was designed to change children's perspectives. Although a designated Church of England school, in this instance religion was described as a 'backdrop' to the mission statement:

> We spent a long time coming up with an ethos statement which was that we will work together to be the best people we can be. So I have no picture of taking them out of the situation, I just want them to have a horizon that is other than this locality. So that if they end up somewhere that is other than here that would be good. I don't think it's a case of having to come out of that to do that, however, I think it can be done here.

Her ambition for the school, therefore, was to improve life chances within the local community rather than to move children out of the community in order to be successful. This principle was endorsed by the secondary school seeking to improve employment opportunities for their students (cited above) as explained by the Deputy Headteacher:

> On first moving into the area the new, major employer took our students on because they thought there was a readymade workforce here. Then they let them all go as their attitude and the skills were so poor that they ended up firing a load of them. We recognised that for a long period there were no adult skills in the area which, of course, affected our vision. If this school doesn't transform this community then who is going to? We are one of the last establishments that can make that happen. Certainly the link between business and our school is massive because people won't invest in an area if they think there is not a workforce ready to deliver and actually be able to work, so that drives us on.

External Axes

External axes were defined as: societal values, global economy, mass media, social networking, information communication technologies, national curriculum and the 'academic press' of student test scores.

The participants in this study were chosen specifically because they had managed not only to sustain equilibrium between the influence of internal and external axes, but had systematically managed to maintain a preferred focus on matters relating to the ecology of their community. Leaders in these educational settings, therefore, had moderated expectations of the national and local stakeholders and adapted the vision and mission of their setting in favour of the local community and the student body. The freedoms emerging from this determination to create such a development space are perhaps best exemplified by the primary school headteacher in the school that had grown from one of concern to one of national recognition:

> One of the things is that we are not bound to what people see as 'must do', 'have to do'. There is very little actually, if you do explore the primary national curriculum, that you 'have' to do. Actually if we look at the bits that you 'have' to do it fits very nicely with our philosophy, because it is not as dictatorial as people would believe. […] My philosophy is based on, children being engaged in practical, first-hand experiential, investigative activities. So the idea was if we free ourselves from a timetable we were allowing the children the time and space to be able to see an activity or an investigation, or a problem solving activity, through from beginning to end, and in that way there was real deep learning and understanding, rather than skimming across the top. (Headteacher – rural setting with social challenges)

This approach to establishing a provision to the local community needs security and stability, particularly in the face of external accountability and scrutiny. In English settings the two principal concerns of educational leaders are national inspection teams and the mass media (often manifested through local newspapers, radio and television). Our research demonstrated how these leaders worked to establish their 'space' which allowed them to focus on internal axes. Based on the capability to "turn average students out well above average" the headteacher of the primary school serving the village with the rural/professional population found he was effectively left alone by external agencies, particularly as Ofsted grades were consistently outstanding. This favourable position was echoed elsewhere (although not universally) in a way typified by the leader of a privately owned early years setting:

> Obviously I've got to remember the proprietors, Ofsted and the local authority, but since we have a 'good' Ofsted grade we're kind of just left to ourselves. It's more about whether I've got the energy to do it and if I've got the vision to push it forward. As long as I've got a reason and justification to do it, the proprietors and local authority are more than happy to help me, so we hardly see any of them. You've sometimes got to run things by them, but for a lot of things I can, to a point, do what I like.

Although this was not always the case, nearly all educational settings also had been able to capitalise on a type of systemic good will engendered by rapid improvement followed by sustained success. The headteacher of a primary school from an ostensibly middle-class village, but one that has also had a number of social challenges, indicated that her opportunity to create an alternative path was enhanced considerably by being able to make the school successful after a 'bad' HMI report in pre-Ofsted days:

> I've been here long enough to admit that I had the luxury of the early days of there being no Ofsted, no SATs, there wasn't the pressure on the schools to produce the results that there are nowadays […] The other bonus was that when I came to the school it had, a couple of years before that, a very bad HMI report so the only way was up, and it very quickly moved the children up. In fact it was phenomenally quick and the parents just see the difference, they

> see the children enjoying coming to school, they see the children advancing and progressing at a speed that they had not seen before. So it's a win, win, they were on our side and then success breeds success, those parents would tell the next generation of parents that things are different but it's really good what they do, and success goes on.

Similarly the headteacher of a large secondary school in a challenging urban context with a history of under-performance was able to become more self-determining following a batch of short exclusions on an 'epic' scale' for 400 pupils which, he enigmatically indicated gave him "the chance to meet the parents/carers". As a consequence he not only earned the respect of the local community, but also was later recognised through the award of a national honour. More importantly, from his point of view: "not only was this an efficient way of meeting the local community, but I was subsequently left alone to get on with what was important to students".

Conversely, however, the other secondary school continued to be judged only as 'Satisfactory' by Ofsted which not surprisingly angered them:

> When we prepared for Ofsted we knew exactly where we are as a school. Every single performance indicator has gone up since we were inspected last time, every single one […] everything has moved forward, but this time we were 'satisfactory' instead of 'good'! They didn't tell us, however, and they couldn't tell us one thing that we didn't tell them. We know our school, we knew what we needed to improve.

Consequently the school felt they were being prevented from delivering their chosen mission by the need to satisfy Ofsted which meant that drive and enthusiasm had to be sustained by the senior leaders, but without the haven for development space described above. Their choice of action was interesting in that they opted to become an Academy as it gave them greater flexibility and far more control over finances and curriculum.

They were not alone in opting for that status, although their reasons were perhaps more expedient than the primary school in our study that also chose to become an Academy. Of the 'carrots' offered by Secretary of State Michael Gove it was only the additional finance that attracted this headteacher who had no interest in changing start and finish times of the day or term, was not the subject of much attention from the local authority (so did not need additional freedom) and had absolutely no intention of changing the terms and conditions of staff. His motive was simple "[it gave us] that little bit of extra budget - about eight to nine per cent on top - to run the same shop". That financial flexibility allowed him to prevent potential cuts in staffing and sustain provision. In other words his motive was expedient rather than political in nature which, in his words was: "changing to stay the same". This, together with his success in maintaining his focus on internal axes, had allowed him to develop a curriculum that was meaningful to him and to the students in his local community:

> I think the beauty of the curriculum is nearly there. The freedom to create a more beautiful curriculum, a more creative, more innovative, more relevant curriculum, needs to flow through peoples veins naturally and not be something that they have to quiz and worry about. We've had 20 odd years now of being told precisely what they had to do, except not here! We tore the good pages out and stuck them in our own book, cut it about and jiggled it and we're nearly there, very nearly. I think we now have the ability to work intelligently to make our curriculum as relevant as the old integrated day was in the 1970s, when we didn't quite get it right because there was no accountability with it! We are moving much towards a good skills base, rather than knowledge based, so we are giving skills!

Conclusions: Praxis as the Locus of Leadership

In this project we aimed to investigate the views of the leaders in the field regarding pedagogy, also to see whether we can validate the social pedagogical axes and whether we can add any other ones. Data suggest clearly that all these leaders are not only concerned with the life in the classroom as they recognise that there is a complexity of interactions of pupils, teachers and the ecology of the community. The data revealed that key element in the views of all those leaders is that the classroom context was only one aspect of the variety of features of their role in their educational institutions. They suggested that leading educational organisations effectively requires a highly developed ability to "hear" the events, the social circumstances, understand the individual subjectivities and have the capacity to respond with fluidity to unpredictable events. In their view pedagogy was not only about the capacity of how teachers plan their learning environments, but what is more how they respond to the complexity of the activities rather than using a "model" or "how to do" approach. These people were the ones who continuously lead with fluidity, with passion that drives their vision and were responsible for taking risks with the curriculum and the construction of knowledge, helping their educational institutions to move beyond the classroom and enabling their "staff to do it for themselves […] figure out how to do it for themselves" by setting goals, moving through planned actions and flexibly meeting outcomes that are drawn by justifications of the needs of the community with main aim "to achieve a difference in the community". Here the parallels with 'breakthough' leaders mentioned earlier is evident. The leaders we spoke to clearly had similar motives as these five 'maverick' headteachers, but most importantly had the capability to manage the external pedagogical axes to the benefit of their learning community. This is a critical point for as was pointed out on the cover of that earlier report (Hay Group, 2002: 2):

> There is a brand of leadership, active in schools today, which makes the establishment nervous. It is also leadership that delivers the results the establishment wants – transformed standards in the most challenging circumstances. Should we really encourage it?

We are of the firm opinion, based on our research, that such a leadership approach should be encouraged through the construct of Pedagogical Leadership, whilst not forgetting the importance of being accountable to the wider educational community, as well as the local one.

Extending the work of van Manen (1991), Sergiovanni (1996, 1998), Kemmis and Smith (2008) and Andrews (2009) our data also suggests that effective leadership is not about dichotomising teaching and learning, but accepting the interactivity and integration of these two with the set of social axes. In that sense leadership for learning contexts is not the exercise of a set of practices that is fostered through a guided model suggested by external axes (i.e. the academic press) to the educational context, but it is the activity and the process of negotiating actions between learners, knowledge and their personal contexts, cultures and ecology of their community. Thus leadership, and in particular pedagogical leadership, is praxis as it is concerned with the actions and the processes of constructing or deconstructing knowledge according to the context of the learning groups and individuals (ecology of the community) and recognising the set of social axes. Such a view offers an increasingly integrated conceptualisation which specifies relations between its elements: teachers, classrooms ecology of the community and the set of social axes and refuses the reductive "modelisation" of leadership or clusters of relations between the elements of effective leadership models. It is suggested that praxis as the locus for pedagogy is moving beyond the simplicity of actions impregnated in the learning process and draws attention to the creation of learning communities in which knowledge is the focus, but is situated in theory and supported by the set of social axes.

We are anxious not to provide another model or standardised fragmented application of leadership, however, but instead are eager to exclude models of leadership that are divorced from social praxis that ignores the complexity of the needs of the community of the educational organisation. As in previous work (Male and Palaiologou, 2012) we claim that we adopt an inclusive approach to pedagogical leadership which was characterised as drawing attention to the triangular relationship of pedagogy as an alternative way of thinking about leadership which is not a model or framework, but an approach suggested by the leaders who have been interviewed in this project and who recognise the limitations of government agenda, the uncertainty of the future, the limits of predictability and the challenge of existing knowledge by overturning it:

> They do this through affirming existing knowledge *without allowing it to overrule what is to come*. By acknowledging but not *following* existing knowledge, both deconstruction and strong emergence seek to negotiate a passage between knowledge that has been and that which is still to come (Osberg and Biesta, 2007:45, italics in original).

Considering previous studies and ideological views on leadership (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Van Manen, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1996 & 1998; Katz, 1996; Kemmis and Smith, 2008; Andrews, 2009) and in the light of our findings, this study claims, therefore, that effective leadership is not a function or an activity or a practice, but in essence it is praxis. In that sense, we do not dismiss the view that educational process should be characterised by the relationship between outcomes and learning. However, data from this project suggest that positions on how an educational organisation should be led has a number of levels of complexity and it needs to be acknowledged that it should be understood that educational process ought to be characterised with what Osberg and Biesta (2007) describe as "sites of emergence" which should be the central quest of leadership in educational organisations. On the one hand pedagogy needs to be understood beyond the simplistic position of the process of teaching and learning, and on the other hand pedagogical leadership should strive not to follow models of effectiveness, but to seek links between educational outcomes and the set of social realities that these outcomes need to be measured.

There is a need to acknowledge, however, that this dialogue will never be complete in any discussion about pedagogy: "stable and finalised; there is no final point of permanent and perfect equilibrium" (Dahlberg and Moss, 2010 : xix). We claim that the quest for "standardised, finalised theoretical models of pedagogy might entail the danger of limiting practice rather than developing practices which expound alternative ways of doing things with children and to the enrichment of […] pedagogy" (Male & Palaiologou, 2012:11). In other words the construct of pedagogical leadership is a work in progress, but the leaders explored in this investigation are exemplars of leadership praxis within current criteria.

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