

# COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

## A CRITICAL GUIDE

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PHILIP A WOODS | AMANDA ROBERTS



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# PREFACE

What *is* leadership? What *should* leadership be? How these questions are answered has vital implications for leadership practice. The first invites us to identify critically important features about the nature of leadership. The second requires us to decide what is of greatest significance in defining the purpose and values of leadership practice and essential to making leadership worthwhile.

In response to the first question, there is much evidence that leadership is best conceived as a distributed, complex and emergent process, rather than simply a linear, top-down activity. Leadership is also an outcome of people's intentions, which embrace their creativity, blindspots, goodness and frailties. They give the human spark to leadership, as individuals and through shared intentions. Recognising this, we argue that leadership is the product both of intentionalities and emergence. Intentionality is the will, feelings and reflections that forge the intent to make a difference, with and through others. Emergence is the momentum and energy that arise from countless interactions between organisational members across and beyond an organisation. A consequence of leadership being emergent is that it is a process, whether we like it or not, that involves both non-positional and positional leadership – that is, those without and those with formal authority to act as a leader.

An implication of the answer to the first question – that leadership is a distributed phenomenon and the practice of leadership involves intentionality and emergence – is that all who contribute to leadership (in either non-positional or positional roles) need to work with this fact about the nature of leadership.

This claim about what leadership is says nothing in itself about the purpose and values of leadership. Yes, leadership is a distributed and complex process, but this can include all kinds of leadership styles and ethical aims. The complex processes and interactions that give rise to leadership may include directive and highly authoritarian styles, collaborative and participative styles, as well as transactional and other kinds of leadership practices.

The second question is equally important. The 'should' question has to be answered. In response to this necessity, our argument is that leadership practice needs to embrace an explicit commitment to holistically democratic and social justice values. Through this it nurtures a fundamental ethical good, which is relational freedom – that is, growth towards self-awareness and self-determination for the self and others, which might also be termed 'freedom with others'.

We elaborate the responses to the two questions in this book. These make up a philosophy or overarching view of leadership that is intended to inform the practice of leadership. This overarching view constitutes what we mean by collaborative leadership. It understands leadership as an emergent process in which the intentionality and actions of non-positional and positional leaders, as well as commitment to values of holistic democracy and social justice, are integral and explicit features of how leadership should be conceived and practised. Our conception of collaborative leadership does not prescribe one particular practice or style for all times and circumstances; rather it offers a framework for understanding leadership, for building a culture of collaboration and for reflecting critically on the decisions – small and large – that everyone who contributes to leadership makes through their intentions and actions. It is true that this view encourages or looks most kindly upon styles of leadership that are collaborative and participatory; a predisposition to such practice underpins the leadership. Nevertheless, we recognise too that the exigencies of everyday life may require at times different, more directive styles where these are justified as being necessary in the light of values such as social justice (e.g. to protect the vulnerable). A key point is that the explicit commitment to values of holistic democracy and social justice builds into the distributed concept of leadership an impetus to critical reflexivity. Individual and collective questioning of the extent to which leadership practice advances these values is inherent to the overarching view of leadership expounded in the book.

In summary, the book elaborates and illustrates two things. Firstly, leadership is a distributed, complex and emergent process in which the individual and collective intentionalities of non-positional and positional leaders are integral and active elements. A crucial implication is that it is important to recognise and work with this emergent and intentional nature of leadership. Secondly, leadership practice, to be worthwhile, needs to be framed within an explicit value-base in which leadership is committed to values of holistic democracy and social justice that underpin aspirations to relational freedom. Collaborative leadership is the product of the way we answer both the ‘is’ and ‘should’ questions.

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Chapter structure

- About this book
- Challenging prevailing leadership assumptions
- The promise of distributed leadership
- Our first proposition: Intentionality and emergence
- Our second proposition: Integrating a philosophy of co-development
- Structure of this book

### About this book

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This book is fundamentally about freedom as an essential part and goal of educational leadership. It is about how educators and learners can act with autonomy and play an active part in leadership as an emergent process arising out of people's everyday actions and interactions. Education is not, of course, about providing the freedom for everyone to do exactly what they want. We are not referring to the hedonistic freedom of a completely unfettered, individualistic free will. We are referring instead to social or relational freedom, in which a person's awareness and critical reasoning enable a significant degree of self-direction as an individual and as a social being who has a felt sense of connection with groups and organisations such as a school, professional community, family, class and friendship groups (Woods, 2017a). Relational freedom entails both the self and others growing towards autonomy. A fundamental purpose of an educational system and its leadership, in our view, is to nurture the capabilities that support such relational freedom.

In a world in which talk of state steering and domination of education proliferates, this may seem a provocative or potentially naive intent. But this starting point is also a recognition that relational freedom is essential to widely shared commitments to ideals of social justice.

Freedom is a necessary condition of justice. For what justice, including social justice, means and what we have to do in order to approximate it cannot be decreed in paternalistic fashion but can only be found through intensive democratic discussion. (Inaugural speech of Joachim Gauck, Federal President of Germany, 23 March 2012, quoted in Dallmayr, 2016: 136)

In addition, we argue that being guided by an ideal does not automatically mean that thinking and practice have to be unrealistic. Instead, it means fully understanding the underpinning values from which appropriate leadership intentions and actions can grow. It is this fundamental value-base that gives meaning to educational leadership and which we both advocate and seek to explore in this book. The term 'critical' in the book's sub-title refers to the central importance we give to an explicit, value-based framework, essential for the kind of questioning integral to leadership committed to relational freedom. We offer the book as a guide, a resource to support the critical thinking about leadership necessary to develop collaborative leadership practice.

This introduction would be quite different if we conformed to the definition of education offered by the standards agenda. In this case, the horizon of our ambition would be to focus on identifying and exploring ways in which schools could be supported in 'driving up' standards of attainment. This book is instead a testament to a broader view of educational purpose, one which seeks to understand how to support young people to develop the totality of capabilities which enable human flourishing. Such flourishing, we would argue, can only be achieved in a context in which freedom is recognised, nourished and championed. The exercise of such freedom involves agency which is not unreflexive and oppressively confined, but is characterised by questioning and an informed degree of self-determination. So, recognising work examining leadership and agency, such as Frost (2006) and Raelin (2016a), we explore how we might better understand the kind of agency (pro-active agency) associated with leadership committed to freedom.

One of the most influential developments in recent understandings of leadership is the growing appreciation of its distributed character and its emergence from a host of actions and interactions across organisations. This is well documented in reviews and accounts within and beyond education (for example, Bennett et al., 2003; Bolden, 2011; Fitzgerald et al., 2013; Gronn, 2002; Tian et al., 2016; Woods and Roberts, 2013a). The concept of leadership refers to the influences, arising from human intentions and actions, that make a difference to what a group or organisation does – its direction, goals, culture, practice – and

how it is seen and experienced by those who work in or relate to the group or organisation. Appreciating the distributed character of leadership, we use the term 'leadership' to mean the practice of all who contribute to leadership both through individual and collective actions. This includes not only positional leaders, such as senior and middle leaders, but also non-positional leaders – namely, all those who, without possessing formal authority as a leader, use their agency to influence others and the school (its direction, goals, culture, practice), such as students, teachers, support staff and parents.

Within this discourse, many different labels are given to alternative approaches to leadership – distributed, shared, democratic and so on. Where we append a single adjective to the term 'leadership', we use the term 'collaborative', although it is not an adjectival label that we seek to promote above others.

The book is based on our experience of developing and researching non-positional leadership, together with our critical reading of discourses of leadership within and outside education that view leadership as emergent and distributed (e.g. eco-leadership, complexity theory and leadership-as-practice), and reviews and critiques of distributed leadership. It draws on our research on democratic leadership and distributed leadership for equity and learning (e.g. Roberts, 2011; Roberts and Nash, 2009; Roberts and Woods, 2017; Woods, 2005, 2011, 2015a/b, 2016a/b, 2017a/b; Woods and Roberts, 2016; Woods [G.J.] and Woods, 2008, 2013; Woods and Woods [G.J.], 2013; Woods et al., 2016), including our work in international projects investigating cases of school leadership and collaborative teacher learning (Roberts and Woods, 2017; Woods, 2015a; Woods et al., 2016).

The EU-funded projects include the European Policy Network on School Leadership (EPNoSL) ([www.schoolleadership.eu](http://www.schoolleadership.eu)) and the European Methodological Framework for Facilitating Teachers' Collaborative Learning (EFFeCT) project (<http://oktataskepzes.tka.hu/en/effect-project>).

## Challenging prevailing leadership assumptions

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The idea of leadership as a hierarchical phenomenon is a familiar one, most readily associated with people's experience. Here, leadership is seen as linear and as the source of power flowing down a pyramidal organisational structure. As Fink (2005: 102) puts it: 'instrumental leaders lead from the apex of a pyramid'. It envisages a top-down flow from policy formulation and decision-making to implementation, from the senior, positional leaders to the people who operationalise policy and decisions. From this perspective, leadership is what the boss or senior people in an organisation do. It is associated with decisions, instructions and guidance, cascading down a hierarchy of authority and power, with 'one fixed power centre at the zenith of the hierarchy' (Tian, 2015: 56).

Such a view not only offers a description of leadership in action but predicates this on a particular set of values. Hierarchy has a symbiotic relationship with the view that people are fundamentally dependent on being directed and provided with instructions and definitive guidance in order to know what to do. This viewpoint can be summarised as a philosophy of dependence (Woods, 2016a). Not everyone in rigidly hierarchical organisations embraces such a philosophy of dependence, although reliance on hierarchical leadership tends to cultivate it. At the centre of this philosophy lies a conviction that an elevated authority is necessary to show the majority the way to awareness, learning and right action. The task for followers is to make sure they are following the right leader who can make this choice of the right way. Reliance on a top-down, command-and-control type of leadership, where the 'heroic', charismatic leader is seen as the gold standard, is an unsurprising corollary of such a perspective.

Diverse ways of expressing and exploring the idea that leadership is not the exclusive province of the senior leader can be found in the discourse around shared leadership, eco-leadership and democratic leadership, in ideas such as leadership-as-practice and in work about the changing nature of organisations and leadership within them.<sup>1</sup> As Donna Ladkin (2010: 5) puts it, there is an emerging post-positivist conversation 'about ways of engaging rigorously with the leadership terrain'.

Heroic leadership has a long history. In pre-modern times, people tended to see the world as fixed according to a necessary, and rightful, hierarchy of authority – such as God, then King, then nobility and, finally, people. The philosopher Charles Taylor (2007: Chapter 4) suggests that a fundamental shift has taken place in modern society, where the underlying way of thinking is to see all social arrangements as contingent on the benefit they are deemed to bring. By this token, whether to have hierarchy, and how it should be formed and who should be recruited to which levels in it are matters for decision in the light of circumstances, values and perceived benefits. Conceiving of leadership as an emergent process is in this modern spirit of questioning organisational arrangements in search of better ways of leadership practice. A key argument for seeing leadership as a distributed phenomenon is that it is a more valid representation of actual leadership practice in organisations. This does not mean that dependence on or predispositions in favour of hierarchy have gone away. Arguably, an assumption of a primeval need for it remains strong in the modern imagination, as we discuss in Chapter 3.

Complexity theory, distributed leadership and decentred agency feed the discourse of leadership as an emergent phenomenon, questioning reliance on a

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1 See Wang et al. (2014) on shared leadership, Western (2008, 2013) on eco-leadership, Woods (2005, 2015b) on democratic leadership, as well as Gratton (2004, 2007), and Raelin (2016b) on leadership-as-practice. Ulhøi and Müller (2014) map the 'landscape' of shared and distributed leadership.

hierarchical view of leadership (Bates, 2016; Caldwell, 2006, 2007; Griffin, 2002; Harris and DeFlaminis, 2016; Stacey, 2012). From this viewpoint, numerous organisational actors initiate, influence and co-create change, the outcome of which forges the character and direction of the organisation. Complexity theory has introduced a new and keen appreciation of the uncertainty that characterises the complicated and ongoing interactions that make up organisations, including schools (Boulton et al., 2015; Hawkins and James, 2017). It has also explored the implications of such an organisational view for leadership (Bates, 2016; Flinn and Mowles, 2014; Griffin, 2002; Stacey, 2012). Individuals are unable to plan the actions of others and the myriad of interactions between the plans and actions of others, and so they cannot ‘plan and control population-wide “outcomes”’ (Stacey, 2012: 18). Decisions by a senior leader or a senior leadership team are mediated and interpreted by people across the organisation, who themselves may initiate changes as they go about their everyday practice. Viewing leadership as emergent is often associated with questioning the all-knowing character of single or elite, heroic leaders and the legitimacy of seeing them as the exclusive fount of good leadership.

This discourse of leadership as complex, emergent and distributed is having widespread influence in thinking about leadership and its development in many organisations and sectors, including public services such as education and health (West et al., 2015), and in numerous countries, such as the US and China, as well as the UK, Finland and other parts of Europe.<sup>2</sup> Such attention to leadership as distributed and emergent has led to advances in understanding and practice. There remain, however, serious limitations in the current field, to which we make brief reference in the section which follows and in more detail in Chapter 3. A key purpose of this book is to maintain what is valuable in the idea of distributed leadership, to address its limitations and to give a boost to widening educational leadership’s horizon of ambition so that it embraces the fundamental educational aim of nurturing relational freedom.

## The promise of distributed leadership

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Distributed leadership appears to promise an alternative to the unjust power differences and inequalities that condition effective participation in leadership. However, the field of distributed leadership has itself yet to convincingly address these issues. Even where it is believed that leadership is or should be distributed,

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2 In the UK examples of attention to the practice of distributed leadership are apparent in the work of the RSA (Hallgarten et al., 2016) and the National College for School Leadership (Woods and Roberts, 2013a). Examples in the US include DeFlaminis et al. (2016) and, in Finland and China, Tian (2015, 2016). Evidence of European interest is in Kollias and Hatzopoulos (2013) and Woods (2015a).

in practice traditional hierarchies of formal authority, with people occupying senior leadership positions, endure in most organisations. Many studies recognise this of course, and there have been attempts to conceptually capture the practical comingling of senior leadership relations and distributed leadership, in the notion of hybrid leadership, for example. Some exploration of the different forms of authority has also been undertaken.<sup>3</sup> However, more needs to be done to integrate an understanding of asymmetrical relationships into a conceptualisation of leadership as distributed and emergent. An inadequate hybridisation is likely to fuel Jacky Lumby's allegation that hybridisation is simply 'a get-out clause for those needing to justify their adherence to [distributed leadership]' (Lumby, 2016: 12).

In some respects, Lumby is right: there are limitations in the way that distributed leadership is often understood and practised (Woods and Woods [G.J.], 2013), and it takes many forms (Gronn, 2002; Tian et al., 2016). However, we would argue that this 'hybridisation' (Lumby, 2016: 164) is not a clever device to deflect criticism but instead results from authentic attempts to understand leadership complexity in order to mine its potential to support school improvement and student learning. Peter Gronn concludes that distributed leadership 'provides merely part of the story of what goes on in educational organisations' (Gronn, 2016: 169). Our view is that the proper response to the impetus of criticism is therefore to ask: how do we better deploy and develop the concept of distributed leadership, and our understanding of the wider practice of leadership distribution (Chapter 2) within which it sits, so that its value in illuminating practice is realised? Our intention is to suggest how such a question may be addressed through offering two propositions about leadership. These are briefly introduced in the two sections which follow, before being discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

## **Our first proposition: Intentionality and emergence**

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The first proposition is that we need to see leadership through two lenses,<sup>4</sup> intentionality and emergence, which then allow us to explore issues of agency and power and the complexities of change. Leadership is not a 'thing' in itself, hence

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3 See Day et al. (2009) and Gronn (2009) on hybrid leadership, and Woods (2016b) on authority, power and distributed leadership.

4 By using the term 'lens' we are highlighting how the concepts used in the propositions enable us to see and understand different aspects of the phenomenon of leadership. This is what concepts do. They provide an approximate account (perpetually provisional, subject to continuing research) of what some aspect of the world is like. In using the term 'lens' we are highlighting that our propositions and concepts are the result of a choice (a reasoned and plausible one, we would argue). The term 'lens' is not meant to imply that those lenses can merely be adopted or discarded at will without argument or evidence.



there are difficulties in seeking to define it conclusively. It is helpful to think about leadership as encapsulating a relationship between two kinds of phenomena leading to purposeful, if not straightforwardly predictable, influence and change in societies and organisations.<sup>5</sup>

The first, intentionality, is the will or intention to make a difference, with and through others, which leads to action. As agents of action, people express meaning, purpose and goals. This is true in whatever way or at whatever level the person contributes to leadership – whether as a non-positional or positional leader, for example. The ‘genesis of human actions’ lies ‘in the reasons, intentions and plans of human beings’ (Bhaskar, 2010: 62). Intentionality is this genesis – that is, the concerns, purposes, deliberations and awareness of the potential for agency that lead to a person doing something. In leadership, intentionality gives rise to doing things that influence the group or organisation – its direction, its goals and culture, and its practice.

A basic sociological proposition about people’s agency is that individuals engage in continual reflexivity and have the ‘power to deliberate internally upon what to do in situations that were not of their making’ (Archer, 2003: 342). This proposition is important because it highlights the fact that an individual’s capacity for conscious initiation of action is not submerged and lost in the distributed and emergent process of leadership. Instead, it is an integral part of it. Whilst we recognise the value, indeed the necessity, of the perspective that is ‘concerned with how leadership emerges and unfolds’ through the everyday practices of interacting organisational members (Raelin, 2016a: 3), we want to underline the importance of also retaining a focus on individuals and their agency. This is crucial to our argument that intentionality, and the effects of intentionality, infuse distributed processes of leadership.

The capacity of individuals and groups for conscious and influential intentionality varies. One factor affecting this is the context in which people are placed. Opportunities are needed in that context for intentionality to be turned into action. Numerous internal factors affect the degree to which a person or group may feel able to formulate independent ideas and plans. These include feelings of confidence, assumptions of what is possible and the information and knowledge they have access to, which all impinge on capacity for conscious and creative intentionality.

The second lens, emergence, is the perpetual process of complex interactions in which intentionalities and their consequent actions take place and which they become part of.

Ralph Stacey (2012) turned to the sciences of uncertainty and complexity to develop an understanding of the turbulent context in which leadership occurs.

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5 The account in this paragraph of leadership as not a thing in itself but a way of talking about a relationship between two aspects is in part informed by reading William James’ (2004) discussion of consciousness.

He uses complexity theory to suggest that the features and outcomes of organisational life emerge from a mass of human interactions, a radically different picture, as we noted earlier, to the common, linear, hierarchical view of leadership in which powerful organisational leaders enforce strategic plans, underpinned by their own value systems. Emergence – that is, the ongoing interactions and their effects that constitute leadership processes – is at the heart of an understanding of leadership as distributed and complex.

Complexity theory highlights the way in which intentions do not necessarily, or even often, lead to the planned end; and they certainly do not do so in a neat, linear process of cause and effect. The detail and sweep of organisational life – both stability and change – arise from the perpetual interplay of people, ideas, social structures, artefacts, environmental conditions and relationships. Outcomes are unplanned, in the sense that they arise as the result of countless variables which intervene during the interplays that constitute organisational life and are thus beyond detailed monitoring and control. Intentions are interpreted, changed and fashioned during these ongoing interplays.

The sociologist Margaret Archer honed the argument that social life is an emergent process in order to identify the essential character of emergence – namely, the interplay of the people (whose dispositions, motivations, intentions and actions constitute agency) and the parts (social structures).<sup>6</sup> This elemental understanding enables the examination of social stability and change. The interplay of people and parts can be studied to understand or illuminate why a society or an organisation is like this rather than like that – to explore ‘why matters are so and not otherwise’ (Archer, 1995: 167). In other words, there are patterns and continuities in organisational life and outcomes. Some actors are more influential and powerful than others in sustaining or disrupting these patterns and continuities whilst some structures are more constraining than others. However, as discussed above, intentionality, by opening the possibilities for difference, change and innovation, demonstrates that people are not wholly determined. Emergence embraces both continuity *and* change; it helps us understand ‘*both* the regular patterning of wants in different parts of society *and* ... the personal differences which ... make actions something quite different from mechanical responses to hydraulic [societal] pressures’ (Archer, 1995: 132).

From the discussion so far, it is clear that intentionality and emergence occur simultaneously. They are intertwined, or, to put it another way, intentionality is

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6 See for example discussions in Archer (1995) on pages 15, 63, and Chapter 3. The concept of ‘people’, the creators of agency, denotes individuals who are each characterised by a stratified set of features according to Archer’s analysis – actor, agent, person. The individual is an actor (an occupant of social roles) whose access to such roles is shaped by their being an agent (a member of social groups, such as a gender type or social class), and both of these roles as actor and agent are anchored in the individual’s condition as a person with capacities common to being human. See Archer, 1995: 255–256.

embedded in the process of emergence. Agency (people) and structures (the parts) interact with each other. People exist within social structures by which they are shaped and which they, in turn, mediate. From this position, people give rise to intentions which they go on to live out through actions and practices, which in turn sustain or change those social structures, constituting a perpetual trialectic process, involving the person (who engages in intentionality), action and structure (Woods, 2016a). Intentionality and emergence are put forward as two lenses, not because they denote separate entities but because, for the purpose of understanding and practising leadership, we need to ensure that the intentional individual is not subsumed and lost within emergence.

## **Our second proposition: Integrating a philosophy of co-development**

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Our second proposition is that that a social justice and democratic values position, encompassed within what we term a philosophy of co-development (Woods, 2016a), needs to be integrated into the dual perspective on leadership discussed above. We refer to this as a *philosophy* of co-development – and similarly to its contrasting position as a *philosophy* of dependence – because the term ‘philosophy’ for us denotes a fundamental orientating position concerning the nature of human beings. These very different philosophies each describe a viewpoint on what people are capable of and what is of value and ethically preferable.

Leadership as a practice that impacts upon people and the environment inherently involves the expression of values or ethical priorities, either explicitly or implicitly, through that practice. Any understanding of leadership therefore has to be critically examined from the perspective of the values it promotes or implies. The approach to leadership we are advocating has a clear ethical orientation grounded in a specified value-base. In this section we consider the kind of ethical orientation to others that is most important and indicate how our second proposition is a response to one of the weaknesses in the field of distributed leadership.

Aristotle provides a useful conceptual typology for reflecting on what we consider to be most worthwhile. Three types of friendship are proposed by Aristotle, which can be utilised to explore the different purposes and reasons that may underlie the *philia* – the affinity, liking, mutual affection – in positive and valued relationships. These types have been examined and used by Stockwell et al. (2017) in the investigation of educational partnerships and they can help to clarify for our purpose what kind of ethical orientation best supports good education and good living.

The functional or utility-based relationship is one where the chief source of that *philia* is the gain that each party derives from it. A contractual arrangement is an example of such a functional or utility-based relationship, where there is

an exchange, such as money for goods or a service. The pleasure-based relationship is where the chief value is the enjoyment, delight and positive feelings that each of the parties finds through the relationship. The gain from the pleasure-based relationship, and hence its felt value, is affective or aesthetic gratification that comes to each party.

The third type – the virtuous relationship – is where the parties value the enhancement of virtues and ethical growth that occur through their shared activities and interconnection. In the virtuous partnership, the source of *philia* between the parties is not benefits such as gain or pleasure which are external or incidental to the person with whom one is in relation; rather, it is the flourishing as human beings that the parties to the relationship experience and that occur as they share important parts of their lives. The partners value each other for who they are, and they value the relationship for its nourishment in each of them of intrinsically worthwhile virtues such as fair-mindedness, care, patience, diligence, courage, temperance, wisdom, honesty and integrity.<sup>7</sup>

We see an ethical orientation which prioritises the value of the third type of relationship, the virtuous relationship, as vital to good education and good living. It follows, therefore, that the flourishing of human beings and the nurturing of ethical sensibilities integral to that flourishing should be the paramount aim of leadership. The assumption underlying such philosophical reflections is that people are capable of some degree of choice and self-directed agency. The enhancement of freedom and a sense of empowered agency – that is, increasing the degree of control over actions and their consequences<sup>8</sup> – is an ethical aim of fostering leadership as a shared and distributed process. As we emphasised at the outset of this chapter, we are not referring here to individualistic freedom and the idea of ‘freedom from’ – the absence of all restraints and obstacles so that the person is free to do whatever they like. We are referring to relational freedom and what can be called ‘freedom with’ – the capability, nurtured with and through others, to shape one’s character and actions in ways that help the self and others flourish (Woods, 2017a).

To date, the field of distributed leadership has insufficiently addressed this question of values and where it places itself. Much of the field is framed within school effectiveness and improvement concerns that are associated with dominant policy

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7 Carr (2011: 175–176) provides an interesting analysis of pedagogical virtues in teaching which illustrates the range and nature of virtues. These comprise intellectual virtues (such as intellectual honesty, integrity, scrupulousness, persistence, open-mindedness, fair-mindedness, accuracy), procedural virtues (such as care, patience, attention to detail, application, industry, diligence), and moral virtues (such as courage, temperance ‘in order to act in a calm, patient and controlled way under stress or provocation’, wisdom, honesty, integrity and ‘above all ... justice to be and to be perceived by pupils as fair’).

8 For a discussion in the field of psychology, see Moore (2016).

priorities, giving rise to the critique that distributed leadership has been harnessed to marketising and performative agendas that narrow educational purpose (for example, Hall et al., 2013; Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain, 2011; Woods and Woods [G.J.], 2013). This is not to say that researchers in these fields lack values,<sup>9</sup> but it is to observe that the formulation of a robust and challenging ethical stance and policy critique is not usually seen as a necessary component of this approach. We judge the idea of distributed leadership as weakened by this absence of a radical, conceptual orientation to social justice and inclusion.

Founding our conceptualisation of leadership on a philosophy of co-development (Woods, 2016a) addresses this weakness through encompassing the ideas of holistic democracy and an expansive view of social justice. From this philosophical perspective, we learn and work best collaboratively, bringing together the different experiences, expertise and ideas as diverse people in a group or organisation. An underlying commitment to social justice and a rich conception of democratic values underpins effective mutual support of this kind.

The notion of holistic democracy places value on both meaning and participation (Woods, 2011; Woods and Woods, 2012; Woods and Woods [G.J.], 2013). It is about enabling people to be co-creators of their social environment and, through this, make the most of their innate capacity to learn and develop their highest capabilities and ethical sensibilities and to feel a meaningful connection with the world they live in. Central to the practice of holistic democracy, therefore, is the opportunity for people to grow as whole persons, able to evolve a meaningful life for themselves and with others. To create opportunities for such growth, the facilitation of participation should be based on principles of mutual respect, critical dialogue, independent thinking and a sense of belonging and connectedness (in the group, community, organisation and the wider human and natural world).

Bound up with holistic democratic practice is an expansive notion of social justice. This interrelates with principles of holistic democracy and spans four dimensions. The dimensions are concerned with the fair distribution of respect, participation, development opportunities (that is, the opportunity to learn and grow as a person with a capacity for independent thinking and connectedness with others) and resources (including the material supports of learning such as IT, books and digital resources) (Woods, 2012; Woods and Roberts, 2013a).

Leadership founded on a philosophy of co-development integrates into its conceptualisation these values of holistic democracy and social justice. An unmistakable ethical commitment is thus, crucially, built into the notion of leadership – a commitment to a set of values that leadership should be aiming to realise. This specificity provides a framework for critical reflection on leadership practice.

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9 Researchers such as DeFlaminis et al. (2016) and Harris (2012) for example, are committed to enhancing leaning and educational achievement and reducing inequalities in attainment.

## Structure of this book

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Research giving insight into potential benefits and factors that are conducive to leadership distribution working well is discussed in Chapter 2, whilst in Chapter 3 challenges and critiques are considered. These include difficulties in the conceptualisation of distributed leadership as well as critiques of the purpose and use of distributed leadership. Critiques concern the extent to which distributed leadership serves economic and performative aims, promotes learning confined by a constricted view of what it means to grow and flourish as a person and fails to address unjust power differences and relational inequalities that condition effective involvement in leadership. These questions surface issues of acute importance to attempts to improve leadership by enhancing the awareness and practice of leadership distribution.

Chapters 4 and 5 are pivotal. Mindful of the benefits and challenges of leadership distribution identified in the previous two chapters, we articulate in these chapters our conception of collaborative leadership that is intended to maintain what is valuable in the idea of distributed leadership and address its limitations. This conception is founded on the two propositions about leadership introduced above. The first of these, explained in Chapter 4, concerns intentionality and emergence and helps in exploring both issues of agency and power on the one hand and the complexities of change on the other. The second, explained in Chapter 5, concerns the necessity of integrating core critical values into this dual perspective, articulated for us through a philosophy of co-development. Chapter 5 explains the constituent ideas of holistic democracy and social justice, and argues that a particular kind of intentionality – critical intentionality – is integral to relational freedom and pro-active agency.

This leads us to Chapters 6 and 7 in which the intimate relationship between leadership and learning is explored. In Chapter 6 we emphasise the importance of understanding leadership as a process that inherently involves learning. We then argue that collaborative leadership is a reciprocal learning process that is discursively and collectively created by the leadership population across the school – by both non-positional and positional leaders. People who are engaged in collaborative leadership are contributing to and facilitating each other's learning. With the philosophy of co-development as a value-base, the practice of reciprocal learning aims to enhance freedom and involves ethical reflexivity and learning.

Chapter 7 turns to the day-to-day operation of leadership as a reciprocal learning process and presents its essential principles as a learning model of change that supports the growth of collaborative leadership in schools. The learning model brings to the fore the importance of critically reflexive personal self-activity as part of collaborative learning and the centrality of the values of co-development which encourage questioning of who might be marginalised or excluded in processes of leadership development.

The remaining chapters of the book explore implications for the development of collaborative leadership. Chapter 8 explores the structures and emergent spaces that facilitate learning and critical intentionality. It considers how we might make sense of the complex interplays that are characteristic of emergence. Rather than attempting to provide a blueprint for change which would run counter to the cautionary insights of complexity theory, it offers an overview, to inform change in schools or other settings, of interacting structures and spaces that help to promote collaborative leadership. The chapter sets out the kind of structures and their specific characters that are likely to enable collaborative leadership: a participatory culture, enabling institutional architecture and an open social environment. It also recognises the importance of internal processes of the subjective spaces in people and how these are affected by the kinds of outer supports, including socially constructed free spaces, available to help facilitate critical reflexivity and pro-active agency.

Chapters 9 and 10 are about change and the development of collaborative leadership, with an emphasis in Chapter 9 on change from across the school and in Chapter 10 on identity change. Chapter 9 considers challenges inherent in the role of senior, positional leaders in seeking to develop the role of both non-positional and positional leadership in advancing collaborative leadership. It argues that it is essential to make a fundamental shift beyond a primary focus on the senior leader granting or supporting a collaborative leadership culture or delegating responsibilities: leadership development and change should focus on leadership as a pedagogical, reciprocal learning process which involves actions and interactions by a range of organisational members in non-positional and positional leadership roles across a school leadership landscape.

Chapter 10 recognises that collaborative leadership practice involves changes in how those in both non-positional and positional leadership roles see themselves and the kinds of attitudes and capabilities they see as important for them to foster and develop, and that these changes have an impact on identity. Four practices are discussed that we suggest are integral to leadership development for collaborative leadership and are constituent elements of ongoing identity change: clarifying values, reframing leadership, nurturing of key capabilities and the construction of identity as a shared and collective process. As a support to critical reflexivity, questions framed by the values of holistic democracy are offered towards the close of the chapter.

Chapter 11 draws together key ideas presented in the book and uses them as a basis for a series of catalysts for reflection and action offered in the chapter. The catalysts comprise questions that can be used or adapted by both individuals and teams. They are designed to help facilitate values clarification, leadership reframing, and evaluation – through comparative reflections on practices associated with ‘dependence’ and ‘co-development’ – of priorities and progress in developing collaborative leadership.