

Citation for published version:

Philip A. Woods, and Amanda Roberts, 'Distributed leadership and social justice: images and meanings from across the school landscape', *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, Vol. 19 (2): 138-156, March 2016.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2015.1034185>

Document Version:

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Journal:	<i>International Journal of Leadership in Education</i>
Manuscript ID:	TEDL-2014-0058.R1
Manuscript Type:	Research
Keywords:	Democracy and Education, Educational Administration, Organizational Culture, Equity, Policy, Leadership theory and Development

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Distributed Leadership and Social Justice

Images and meanings from across the school landscape

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Bionotes

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Abstract

This paper reports data from a study investigating distributed leadership (DL) and its relationship to social justice and democratic values. The research comprised a case study of a UK secondary school, which describes itself as having a finely distributed leadership culture, and involved teaching staff, non-teaching staff, senior leaders and students who took part in an arts-based method of data generation (collage creation) and interviews. The study examined participants' meanings and perceptions in relation to leadership and social justice. Our analysis of the data highlights contrasting image patterns (hierarchical and holarchic); a dominant view of DL as the exercise of pro-active agency, but also awareness of ways in which this is unequally spread across the school; and the value of seeing DL as comprising multiple features each of which may be distributed differently. This paper concentrates on participative and cultural justice. It suggests that work on further delineating multiple aspects of DL would be valuable, and that attention needs to be given not only to developing flexibility of institutional structures, but also core cultural values (social justice and democracy) and holarchic social environments in which relationships are fluid, supportive and encourage belonging and independent thinking.

1. Rationale and research aim

The concept of distributed leadership (DL) is influential, attracting much scholarly exploration and research (Bennett *et al.* 2003, Bolden 2011, Gronn 2002, 2009, MacBeath *et al.*, 2004a/b, Raelin 2011, Woods 2013, Woods *et al.* 2004). Our understanding needs deepening conceptually and practically, however, to ensure that DL advances social justice and democratic values. The intention of the research reported in this paper is to contribute to that deepening.

Three key concepts used in the study are briefly defined for the purpose of this article before proceeding further. Social justice (Cribb and Gewirtz 2003, Woods 2012, Woods and Roberts 2013a) is defined in a four-fold scheme as the lessening or elimination of unfair inequalities in

- socio-economic resources, (distributive justice)
- participation in decisions (participative justice)
- respect for identity and beliefs (cultural justice)
- opportunities for learning and personal development (developmental justice)

Democratic values are defined as inclusive participation, transforming dialogue and growth as whole persons with a feeling of connectedness socially, ecologically and spiritually, in line with the concept of holistic democracy (Woods 2011). Holarchy is defined as a social environment where there is a shared, equal 'social authority' amongst organisational members to initiate and be involved in change, even though there may be distinctions in formal authority and other differences, and where people are valued for what they each individually bring to the work of the organisation (Woods 2014).

A review of research into DL and social justice conducted by the authors from a UK perspective (Woods and Roberts 2013a) provides the foundation for the study. The review distinguished between analytical and applied conceptualisations of DL. It concluded, *inter alia*, that the most important analytical understanding of DL is the view that leadership is *emergent* and that it arises

1
2 through *complex, interactive processes*, rather than being the preserve of senior roles designated
3
4 with leadership authority. This offers a more valid **conceptual** lens by which to understand actual
5
6 leadership practice and is a foundational theoretical perspective for this study.
7
8
9

10
11 Following Woods and Woods (2013), the review proposed the following working definition of ap-
12
13 plied DL, representing the understanding of DL advocated in much contemporary policy:
14
15

16
17
18 a *culture* that

- 19
20 ‣ views leadership as emerging from ongoing flows of interactions across the organisation and its
21
22 hierarchy, not simply the actions of the single leader or small leadership elite
- 23
24 ‣ values leadership contributions from across the organisation and its hierarchy
- 25
26 ‣ recognises that this view of leadership can be deployed in order to improve organisational effec-
27
28 tiveness

29
30 accompanied by

31
32 an *institutional structure* that

- 33
34 ‣ spreads leadership opportunities beyond formal senior roles to enable different sources of ex-
35
36 pertise and perspectives to influence the organisation's work, development and innovative
37
38 changes
- 39
40 ‣ facilitates flexible, collaborative working relationships across traditional boundaries and hierar-
41
42 chies
- 43
44 ‣ tends towards the creation of flatter hierarchies.

45
46 (Woods and Woods 2013)
47
48
49

50
51 This definition, however, does not specify the values and view of learning which should guide DL
52
53 practice. Recognising the distributed nature of leadership does not necessarily **result in democratic**
54
55 **leadership - that is leadership practices that promote social justice and exhibit democratic values**
56
57 | (see, **for example**, Hall 2012, Scribner and Bradley-Levine 2010, Woods 2004). Again following
58
59 Woods and Woods (2013), the review concluded that DL needs to be deepened through an elabo-
60
ration of the values and learning which guide DL practice; and that research is needed that investi-

1
2 gates what forms of DL can promote social justice and **aspire to democratic values** (Woods and
3
4 Woods 2013). The review noted that DL is typically combined with hierarchically distributed leader-
5
6 ship authority, though the steepness of hierarchy and the extent of centralised leadership power
7
8 varies between organisational settings. It also concluded that there is considerable scope to ex-
9
10 tend methods of researching DL to include more arts-based methods.
11
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14
15 In light of these conclusions, the study's aim was to investigate - in the context of one case study
16
17 (secondary) school - DL and perceptions of whether and in what ways DL promotes or otherwise
18
19 social justice and democratic practices.
20
21
22

23 24 **2. Research design**

25 26 **i) Methodological stance**

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30
31
32 **A case study approach was chosen, recognising the efficacy of cases studies in promoting deep**
33
34 **learning about a particular case (Stake, 1995) whilst simultaneously supporting the development of**
35
36 **a broader theoretical perspective (Cohen et al., 2007). Given our wider research interest in democ-**
37
38 **racy and democratic practices, we were also concerned to find a collaborative research strategy**
39
40 **which would allow participants a degree of agency. A research process which involved the capaci-**
41
42 **ty to tell stories through words and images appeared to fulfil this (Bruner, 1991, Barone and Eisner,**
43
44 **2012), having the capacity to break down barriers between researcher and researched (Clandinin**
45
46 **et al., 2009, Gale and Wyatt, 2006, Gourlay, 2009). We believed that such narratives would sup-**
47
48 **port us in understanding the sense which individuals make of leadership policy and practice within**
49
50 **their school, providing us with 'a window into people's beliefs and experiences' (Bell, 2002: 209),**
51
52 **whilst allowing the potential for theorising (Silverman, 1998).**
53
54
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57

58
59 In attempting to convey meanings such as understandings of leadership there are often points
60
where words fail (Frosh, 2002, cited in Leitch, 2006), where it is difficult to express the most pro-
found understandings in propositional form. Images give participants the opportunity to explore the

1
2 subtleties of their experience of leadership in creative, non-linear ways (Black, 2002, Leitch, 2006,
3
4 Loads, 2009, Spouse, 2000) or indeed to release new forms of understanding (Eisner, 1993). In-
5
6 deed, critical arts-based research specifically aims to bring to the surface social inequities and in-
7
8 justices embedded in the status quo (Bagley and Castro-Salazar 2012).
9

10
11
12
13 Within the wider sphere of arts-based research we were particularly interested in the use of col-
14
15 lage. We wished to free participants from the challenge of drawing, which often evokes previous
16
17 success or failure in artistic representation as a school student, and to offer participants the poten-
18
19 tial to try things out, to move pieces around and create a new way of expressing original thoughts
20
21 or new ways of seeing, stimulated through the making process (Gauntlett, 2011).
22
23
24

25
26
27 We were aware that, in order to understand participants' stories, we needed to ask them to explore
28
29 their collages with us. The format and roles implicit in traditional interviews did not fit our aims.
30
31 Rather than a one-way information channel, effectively controlled by the interviewer, we wanted to
32
33 create an opportunity for dialogue. The informal conversational interview (Patton, 2002), or un-
34
35 structured interview (Fontana and Frey, 2003), was a useful method for developing a collaborative,
36
37 non-hierarchical research process.
38
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40
41

42 **ii) Data generation**

43
44 The data generation took place in a building in the school grounds, separate from the main build-
45
46 ing, on 18th and 19th July 2013. We achieved our aim of involving participants from four groups
47
48 within the school: teaching staff; non-teaching staff; senior leaders; and students (aged between 11
49
50 and 19). The numbers of participants are shown in Table 1, which also shows the groups that they
51
52 were in when creating and explaining about their collage.
53
54
55
56
57

58 [INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]
59
60

1
2 The authors worked together as a team to facilitate collage creation, the explanation by the partici-
3 pants of the meanings of their collage and the informal conversational interviews. This was an im-
4 portant feature of the research method which was practically helpful in efficiently organising groups
5 of participants and allowed one of the team to take the lead at certain times whilst the other lis-
6 tened and attended to the equipment used. It also facilitated both researchers sharing the whole
7 data production and collection experience, enabling full immersion in the data which was valuable
8 for later analytical discussion and triangulation from two researcher perspectives.
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20 Participants were grouped according to role within the school e.g. member of the leadership team,
21 student. Each group was briefed about the research and asked to create an individual collage
22 which they then explained to the group. They were told that this collage should
23 “represent visually your view of leadership in your school. By ‘leadership’ we do not mean just the
24 headteacher or the senior leaders but everyone and everything which you see as contributing to
25 leadership in your school.” A box of assorted materials, such as pieces of tissue paper, straws, felt
26 shapes, wooden discs, brightly–coloured feathers and gems, was provided for each group. Each
27 participant used a free selection of these materials to create their collage on an A3 sheet of paper.
28 This provision of materials by the authors bears critical commentary. The criteria for choosing the
29 materials were that they were stimulating, varied and, pragmatically, portable. The judgement
30 against these criteria remained the authors’ rather than the participants however. We did not ask
31 the participants to bring materials with them but instead provided restricted materials which may
32 have, unwittingly, framed participants’ responses. However, it did not appear that the collage’s role
33 as a stimulator of thinking and understanding was adversely affected by these issues. Instead, the
34 participants took observable delight in using common materials in distinct and original ways to
35 convey their unique response to the provocation given.
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58 After participants had made their collages, participants were asked to explain their collage as a
59 stimulus to an informal discussion which followed amongst the group and researchers. Formal
60 paired interviews were then conducted with staff participants, guided by the following questions.

1
2
3
4 To what extent do you feel distributed leadership is a feature of the school's leadership phi-
5
6
7 losophy and practices?

8
9 How do you define social justice in a school context?

10
11 To what extent do you feel distributed leadership in the school

12
13
14 (a) supports social justice (If so, how?)

15
16
17 (b) is democratic? (If so, how?)

18
19
20 What factors in the school's external environment (including government policy) support or
21
22 hinder distributed leadership in the school?

23
24
25 The questions on distributed leadership and the meanings they attached to the collages were a
26
27 means of exploring what they understood by distributed leadership. Collage-making and the sub-
28
29 sequent explanations were video and audio recorded. Interviews were audio recorded only.

30
31
32
33 Following our initial analysis of the data, an interactive seminar was held involving research partic-
34
35 ipants, to ensure that we were capturing the particular in a recognisable way, portraying percep-
36
37 tions of leadership within the school so that others could relate to it. This allowed us to test and
38
39 refine the trustworthiness of the case study and to enrich findings through shared reflection with
40
41 participants. Only participants who were teaching staff took up the invitation to attend this seminar.
42
43 Participants' comments made during the seminar were used to refine our initial understanding of
44
45 the data.
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50

51 **3. Background of case study school**

52
53
54 The case study school, which we have given the fictitious name of Heathvale, is one of five sec-
55
56 ondary schools serving a town of approximately 38,000 residents, situated in the East of England.
57
58 The school is an 11-19 co-educational Academy, a publicly-funded independent school, with 1,400
59
60 students on roll and judged by Ofsted, the government department which inspects schools in Eng-
land, to be a good school in May 2010.

1
2
3
4
5 The strategic intent of Heathvale School is to provide outstanding educational opportunities for all
6 and to be a great school. GCSE examination results, the public examinations taken by students at
7 age 16, have improved steadily year-on-year. In 2012 this achievement was recognised by Ofsted
8 and the Department for Education which awarded the school the *Top 100 most improved schools*
9 award.
10
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18 The majority of students in Heathvale School stay into the Sixth Form, to study post-16. They
19 study predominantly for advanced level qualifications (A-Levels) with the intention to apply for a
20 university place. In 2013, all students passed their A-Levels with 56% of students achieving the
21 top (A*-B) grades.
22
23
24
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28

29 The school has been led by the same headteacher for the last 13 years. It seeks to support stu-
30 dents not only in attaining strong academic qualifications but also in becoming well-rounded indi-
31 viduals with a sense of responsibility and a willingness to contribute to both the economy and soci-
32 ety in general. This is partially achieved, according to details on the school's website, through a
33 finely distributed leadership culture. This culture resonates through the school's policies and prac-
34 tice. The Behaviour for Learning policy, for example, promotes self-leadership and regulation
35 whilst individual staff at any level in the school are supported to lead change through a teacher-led
36 development work group.
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49 **4. Process of Data Analysis**

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51
52 In analysing the data, we combined analytical procedures which identify patterns and break up the
53 data into pieces for labelling, collation, comparison and so on, and empathetic understanding, i.e.
54 creative reflection on data which encourages affective understanding.
55
56
57
58
59
60

Images are often used in research as secondary to text, in an illustrative role (Prosser, 1998). In
this study, we view images instead as conveyers of meaning, as an alternative way of gaining in-

1
2 sight into participants' understandings. In addition to engaging with the exploration of individual sto-
3
4 ries by listening to the accounts of each collage given by its maker, we read across collages to get
5
6 the essence of the experience they were collectively representing (Butler-Kisber and Poldma,
7
8 2008).

9
10
11
12
13 Our analysis involved a number of steps. In order to understand what we were learning from the
14
15 images we spread all of the collages out on the floor and discussed them. Such a dialogic ap-
16
17 proach to making meaning is not much discussed in the literature yet remains a legitimate, three-
18
19 dimensional approach to gaining understanding of artistic forms (Bresler, 2006). **Surveying** col-
20
21 lages from all participants, **we discussed our impressions of the different shapes and colours used**
22
23 **and looked for any possible patterns - noting, for example, a contrast between shapes that were**
24
25 **hierarchical and those that suggested a network or circular pattern.**

26
27
28
29
30
31 Following this joint analysis, one researcher focused on the staff data and the other, the student
32
33 data. Using a template, we constructed a commentary on each collage and its associated expla-
34
35 nation and interview. **Each commentary comprised the** researcher's notes **and comments** on
36
37 **emerging** concepts and themes, **a photo** image of the collage and illustrative quotations from the
38
39 video and audio tapes. **Commentaries** were structured under the headings of description (of the
40
41 image and its meanings); leadership; social justice; and contextual factors. Summaries of the
42
43 commentary on each collage, as well as photos of **the collage**, are available in Woods and Roberts
44
45 (2013b).

51 **5. Interpretative account**

52
53
54 In this section we present an interpretative account of the perceptions of leadership in Heathvale
55
56 School, based on **the report** in Woods and Roberts (2103b). For the purposes of this paper, the
57
58 interpretative account concentrates on issues of participative and cultural justice, democracy and
59
60 images of leadership as hierarchical and holarchic.

DL & SJ

1
2 The first part (A story of holarchy) features one selected image of holarchy and the story (or narra-
3 tive) that gives it meaning as explained by the collage's creator. The presentation of one story hon-
4 ours our commitment to present the sense which individuals make of leadership policy and prac-
5 tice within their school, whilst exemplifying the research approach outlined above.
6
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10
11
12 The second part (Analytical discussion) provides an analytical discussion identifying themes and
13 concepts to help in understanding the perceptions and meanings of DL and its relationship to so-
14 cial justice. Some of the themes and concepts were used to frame our analysis (such as the four-
15 fold scheme of social justice, mentioned **above**); others arose from our analysis (such as the
16 theme of holarchy).
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26

27 **i) A story of holarchy**

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31 [INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]
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34

35 Participants in the case study put forward the images and meanings of leadership in Heathvale
36 School that they most wanted to communicate. They were not asked to attempt to produce a
37 comprehensive 'picture' of leadership in the school but chose to highlight a certain aspect or
38 aspects of leadership as they created their collage. Some featured a hierarchical image emphasising
39 the location of power and authority at senior levels. Others featured more holarchic images
40 which tend to be more circular and fluid, giving an impression of a network rather than a hierarchy.
41
42 The collage shown in Figure 1 **is an example of the latter**, produced by a participant (A3) who was
43 seconded to the senior leadership team. His explanation of his collage illuminates the complexities
44 of the concept of holarchy in practice. This choice and his explanation of it illustrate the plural fram-
45 ing of leadership practice within the school, where different aspects of leadership operate simulta-
46 neously in the flow of day to day school life.
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1
2 This participant wanted to show a clear structure within the school. However, the image is not in-
3 tended to represent a 'vertical' structure indicative of a hierarchy (although A3 recognised that
4 there is also a hierarchy in the school). Instead, he chose to show the layers which make up the
5 school community and the connections between them as a more (in our terms) holarchic image.
6
7 The wider community in which the school sits is represented by the outside circle of the collage.
8
9 The students feature as the next circle in, represented as blocks of wood 'which can be shaped'.
10
11 They are dominant in the collage and are described by the collage creator as the people 'we
12 serve'. Diamonds are scattered through this circle of wood, as students can also be seen as 'dia-
13 monds in the rough'. Working inward from the circle of wood, the collage shows the senior leader-
14 ship team, middle leaders and teachers. A3 did not want to differentiate between these different
15 groups (teachers, senior leadership, etc.). In this collage, leadership is seen as distributed
16 throughout the school in an organic manner, rather than wholly through the exercise of power
17 gained through positional roles - 'As a school we survive and grow because everyone is different'.
18
19
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32

33 The shape and structure of the collage is important to A3. The circles represent a structure which
34 is supportive and facilitative, allowing for pro-active agency and valuing initiative and enterprise
35 from teachers and students. The spaces in the collage also have relevance, indicating the spaces
36 for communication within the school. These spaces are not always fully utilised however. This
37 participant sees middle leaders as having a 'regularity of vision' and of being a force for develop-
38 ment within the school. Teachers are not always in a position to be fully involved with decisions
39 taken at middle or senior leadership level however. And, although A3 did not want to differentiate in
40 the middle of the collage between teachers, senior leaders and so on, he also talked of there being
41 a 'buffer' in the collage between the senior leadership team and the rest. A3 believes that en-
42 hanced communication by both middle and senior leaders of the thinking behind decisions might
43 further enhance teachers' leadership potential and get more out of the 'jewels' that are in the
44 teachers.
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1
2 Students are seen by this participant as having multiple opportunities for leadership within the
3
4 school. He sees these opportunities as being fairly distributed with a social justice agenda enacted
5
6 through particular encouragement given to students who may not naturally put themselves forward.
7
8
9

10 11 **ii) Analytical discussion**

12 13 14 15 **Perceptions and meanings of distributed leadership in Heathvale School**

16
17 In this section, we provide an analytical discussion which identifies themes and concepts from the
18
19 data which support a developing understanding of the perceptions and meanings of DL and its re-
20
21 lationship to social justice. We begin with an analysis of perceptions of distributed leadership with-
22
23 in the school.
24
25
26
27
28

29 *Participant perceptions of DL*

30
31 Many staff and students perceive distributed leadership as a positive within the school. The shape
32
33 of the collage images provided a helpful early initial indication of the diversity and depth of this per-
34
35 ception. Of the 29 collages, 13 tended towards the hierarchical image and 11 towards the holarchic
36
37 image (with 5 not fitting either tendency). Most staff images (9 out of 14) tended towards the hol-
38
39 archic: most student images (9 out of 15) to the hierarchical. The meanings of the hierarchical and
40
41 holarchic collages are more complex than this linear division between the two types suggests,
42
43 however. There are often elements of hierarchy exhibited in the holarchic images and vice versa.
44
45 Supportive structures are a key feature of holarchic images, whilst hierarchies have room for indi-
46
47 vidual expressions of leadership within a clear pattern of roles and responsibilities. In each case -
48
49 hierarchical and holarchic - the collage creator is choosing to foreground the dominant, and not
50
51 necessarily the exclusive, impression of leadership policy and practices within the school that they
52
53 want to share.
54
55
56
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It is more helpful to see hierarchy and holarchy as complementary rather than binary themes whilst
recognising there may be tensions between them and in particular the sharp difference between

1
2 staff and students in the balance of hierarchical and holarchic images. Our data also indicate that
3
4 hierarchy is not necessarily seen negatively. For example, many students liked the fact that they
5
6 could see a clear hierarchical structure within which they had some freedoms and agency.
7
8
9

10 11 *DL as the exercise of proactive agency*

12 Participants see the school as valuing a pro-active, agential approach amongst staff and students.

13 Such an approach distributes the opportunity to take initiative and to influence. A Group D student

14
15
16
17 comments: 'The more you engage, the more you tend to enjoy because you are more open to op-

18
19
20 portunities and if you are not open to opportunities how do you know if it is going to be a good

21
22 one?'. Student D3 saw individual students as having the potential to exercise leadership, without

23
24 the benefit of a leadership position or role, whilst D4 believed that teachers help students 'con-

25
26 tribute towards leadership'. This is interesting, given the fact that students are more likely to show

27
28 hierarchical images of leadership than holarchic images. For students, however, hierarchical im-

29
30
31 ages with their associated barriers and pyramids are associated with safety in addition to power.

32
33 Student E1 depicts the headteacher as 'the king of the school' and represents the teachers as

34
35 shields and swords, showing that they 'have power over the students'. Student D5 refines this un-

36
37
38 derstanding however, with his image of the headteacher as a fire-breathing dinosaur emphasizing

39
40 his protective role – 'courageous and strong, like a Tyrannosaurus Rex'.
41
42
43
44

45 | Many teaching staff and middle leaders highlighted the ways in which they are encouraged to think

46
47 creatively and to lead innovation within the school (C1-6). **An important opportunity for this is**

48
49 **through being part of a teacher-led development work group.** The power of such activity is cumu-

50
51 lative. Participant C3, in explaining the waterfall of ideas and balloon rides which featured in his

52
53 collage, commented 'if you have an idea or want to take on a leadership role, in my view at [this

54
55 school] you go through a process, whether that's speaking to people, line manager etc, then you

56
57 come into the pool and then when you've got an idea and it's talked through then you jump onto

58
59 the balloon ride and it can go, but you collaborate with others, so you're not on your own'.
60

DL & SJ

1
2 Senior staff concur with this view of the empowering nature of the school ethos and structures (A1-
3
4 4). This nurturing of agency does not mean that ultimate authority and accountability are dispersed
5
6 throughout the school, however. A senior leader who created a holarchic shape saw the retention
7
8 of authority at senior level as freeing staff to be more creative, an approach confirmed by a middle
9
10 leader (C5). A teacher (C4) put it this way: day-to-day leadership is very distributed, but this takes
11
12 place within a more centralised 'overt leadership' which provides the purpose for the school and is
13
14 set by the senior leadership. The provision of clear structures underpins this freedom to innovate.
15
16 The importance of this clear framing for democratic practice is highlighted in the literature (Woods
17
18 2005, Woods and Roberts 2013a, Woods and Woods 2013): **for example**, shared goals and val-
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20 ues, trust and the co-ordination and planning of roles, expectations and ways of working collabora-
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22 tively **are found to be** particularly significant **for DL to work well** (Day et al 2009, Leithwood et al
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24 2006, Louis et al 2010). As one middle leader put it (C6), there is structure and hierarchy, but
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26 these are also flexible and changeable according to need, and this is a 'real strength'.
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33 This 'firm framing' is to some extent a product of the culture **and relationships** of the school. A
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35 teacher (C2) showed in her collage a 'blanket cover of protection' for the whole school which is
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37 'holding us together'; a middle leader (C6) talked of the school feeling a safe and secure place
38
39 within which leadership could be expressed. These perceptions point to the significance of a sense
40
41 of belonging and self-esteem in a community, which is part of the 'holistic well-being' that makes up
42
43 a broad kind of democratic community (Woods 2011). There are other aspects to holistic well-be-
44
45 ing, however, which include independent-mindedness and critical thinking. The middle leader (C6)
46
47 who praised the safe and secure feeling also wondered if at the same time the school was too in-
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49 sular and inward-looking, suggesting it might be helpful to reflect critically on the nature of belong-
50
51 ing and protection that many see as characterising the school.
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58 Other participants highlighted the importance of respect in agential activity. One of the support staff
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60 (B4) said that 'I feel people are respected, I feel very respected in the school', but also gave an ex-
ample of being shocked when a senior member of staff did not see her as a member of the team.

1
2 The emphasis given to respect by some participants suggested that we should explicitly recognise
3
4 the significance of the distribution of respect, which links with the importance to successful DL of
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6 trust and other relational factors identified in the research literature (Woods and Woods 2013). Par-
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8 ticipants distinguished between these factors and the distribution of authority and accountability
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10 which were more centralised in the school.
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15 In the light of the above analysis, we suggest that to understand in what ways the leadership at
16
17 Heathvale School is distributed (and in what ways concentrated) it is helpful to see it as being
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19 characterised by multiple distributions. There are, for example, social aspects (which include the
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21 distribution of respect), institutional aspects (in which there are some elements that are less dis-
22
23 tributed, like authority and external accountability, than others, such as access to resources for
24
25 professional development), and cultural aspects (such as a widespread view promoted in the
26
27 school that distributed leadership is about the exercise of pro-active agency and innovation and
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29 that opportunities to exercise 'influence and initiative' are distributed).
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35 From the discussion to this point, it is possible to suggest that:
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- 38 - DL is felt to be real within the school, and is meaningful in a positive sense for many of the
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40 staff.
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- 43 - The idea of multiple distributions helps us to understand the nature of leadership as a dis-
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45 tributed phenomenon in the school.
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- 48 - The dominant view of DL is one that sees it as the exercise of pro-active agency, creating
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50 and taking initiatives to lead change and innovation.
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54 55 **Distributed leadership and social justice** 56

57 We were particularly interested in **what ways DL might be seen as supporting** a social justice
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59 agenda within the school. **The four-fold definition of social justice summarised at the start of the**
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article was used to frame our analysis. For the purposes of the selected interpretative account in

1
2 this paper, we focus on participative justice (concerned with patterns of association which prevent
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4 some people from participating fully in decisions which affect them) and participants' perceptions of
5
6 participation and democracy; and cultural justice (concerned with cultural domination, non-recog-
7
8 nition and disrespect).
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10 11 12 13 *Participative justice*

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15 With regard to participative justice, there were strong positive expressions of distributed opportuni-
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17 ty. A middle leader (C5), for example, considered that there is social justice in the school in that
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19 anybody who wants to lead on anything has the opportunity to suggest it and talk it through with
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21 somebody, a view supported by other participants.
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26
27 One of the student groups (Group D) felt that all students had the opportunity to lead in school,
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29 though not all - because of lack of confidence or an unwillingness to commit to the responsibilities
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31 of leadership - would take these opportunities. This group also felt that students' voices are heard
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33 within the school, and that being given a voice and having their views heard had a positive impact
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35 on both personal development and on the enjoyment of education.
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40 Critical views, recognising deficiencies in the actual spread of leadership activity, were also evi-
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42 dent. One student (E4) questioned the legitimacy and authenticity of the leadership roles offered to
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44 students and which only a minority of students held: 'They just made them up. They are trying to
45
46 give people roles and stuff but they don't really have any substance'.
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51 One teacher (C1) pointed to some of the variables that affect actual participation and voice: al-
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53 though there is a culture of DL in the school on a number of levels, some are better placed to know
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55 the right channels through which to enable ideas to come to fruition. For example, one member of
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57 staff (C1) and some students (Group D) commented that there is variable access to the leadership
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59 team. Similar issues are raised in terms of student leadership, with the less confident having less
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opportunity to lead than their more confident, and often, academic, peers (C1).

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4 Support staff are included in the aspiration to a DL culture and have particular challenges in this
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6 regard. A member of the support staff (B4) expressed the view, 'I do believe I have a voice. I do
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8 believe that I can voice things that I feel particularly concerned about. There are people I can go to.
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10 I wouldn't say that I feel particularly heard... I don't think everything's heard and taken on board.
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12 But that possibly is the right of leadership' since the senior leadership have the power and access
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14 to a lot more information. Senior leaders A1 and A2, considered that support staff were not suffi-
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16 ciently involved in exercising voice and leadership, although A1 also recognised that some support
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18 staff simply wish to fulfil their contractual duties and no more.
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25 Participants were asked if they felt the DL approach in Heathvale School was democratic. Re-
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27 sponses varied. Some said that it was 'to a point', 'partly' or that the answer was 'yes and no' (A1,
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29 senior leader; B3 and B4, support staff; C3, C5 middle leaders). Democracy in this context was
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31 not associated with voting on decisions but on consultation and being heard. A1 (senior leader)
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33 explained that they consult whenever possible, and others affirmed there was consultation (e.g.
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35 C1, teacher; C6, middle leader) and that they were listened to (C4, teacher; C5, middle leader).
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37 C5, echoing the recognition above of the importance of structure, firm framing and multiple distrib-
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39 utions, felt that leadership is 'partly' democratic 'but not always completely. But then it can't always
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41 be... because in the end the head and the governors are responsible for the school, so there has
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43 to be him making the final decision, and he will listen to our reasons, he will listen to what we want
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45 to do, and if it is reasonable and acceptable and we can argue our case enough and he can see the
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47 value of it, then he will take on board our views'.
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54 Democracy as opportunity to exercise leadership - the pro-active agency and chance to exercise
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56 initiative referred to in the previous sub-section - was a connection that several participants made,
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58 such as B4 (support staff), C3 (middle leader) and C2 (teacher).
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60

1
2 Group E students felt that the school was not a true democracy but that there were routes to get
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4 their voices heard and that these voices are 'counted' as important. Not all students would agree
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6 with this. Student F1, for example, felt that 'They don't actually listen to us. We have a Student
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8 Council but I don't feel that they listen to us'. In Group F students' discussion it appeared that stu-
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10 dents in the main feel that they do have a voice, in that there are systems which allow them to put
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12 their views forward, but that there is a problem arising from a lack of understanding of the reasons
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14 for decisions made at higher levels and then fed back to students.
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20 *Cultural justice*

22 Cultural justice links with cohesive culture and trust, factors which encourage feelings of respect.
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24 Strong expressions of feeling valued and being respected have been acknowledged in the previ-
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26 ous sub-section on perceptions of leadership, **as well as** the experience of belonging that con-
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28 tributes to feelings of holistic well-being. Nevertheless, respect is not necessarily equally experi-
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30 enced or practiced. A student (D2) explained that the size of the spaces between teams and indi-
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32 viduals in her collage indicated the levels of respect shown to different groups within the school,
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34 and that these vary in terms of progress 'up' the school: 'Teachers have a lot and sixth formers
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36 have quite a lot and compared to the other years - it's just way more'.
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42 Another support staff member (B3) felt she was at the bottom of the 'pyramid of power' as she de-
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44 scribed it in her collage, suggesting some negative issues. She explained that the rules meant that
45
46 she was not in senior support staff meetings. Equally, she considered that the school had been
47
48 transformed under the current head teacher, that more people were involved in leadership and that
49
50 she felt involved in the leadership 'in my own little world' where she managed one of the school-
51
52 wide schemes. A2 (senior leader) considered that support staff see themselves as 'second class
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54 citizens', a situation that he did not like.
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60 From the discussion on social justice and democracy, it is possible to suggest that:

- Distribution of opportunities is a pronounced feature of the school leadership culture, with all groups within the school having access to leadership opportunities.
- DL, nevertheless, does not necessarily involve all equally: views expressed suggest it is strongest amongst senior and middle leaders and weakest amongst support staff and students.
- Exercising 'influence and initiative' and experience of respect varies according to individual and structural variables: these include a person's motivations, interests, how they are responded to by individuals, a person's networks within the school, students' peer group influences, maturity towards self-leadership, perceptions of status, and so on.
- The scope of exercising 'influence and initiative' tends to be restricted to the means of achieving given ends, rather than including opportunities to consider questions of the school's educational purpose and goals.
- DL is generally seen as to a degree democratic, in so far as it enables staff and students to be consulted, have a say (about means if not ends) and exercise opportunities for leadership.

6. Conclusions

Participants in the case study put forward the images and meanings of leadership in Heathvale School that they most wanted to communicate. They were not asked to attempt to produce a comprehensive 'picture' of leadership in the school, but to convey how they saw the school's leadership. **The constraint of using materials chosen by the authors to develop their collage appeared to strengthen their resolve of portraying very personal narratives of their experience of leadership.**

We found a dominant view of DL as the exercise of pro-active agency, but also awareness of ways in which this is unequally spread across the school. Some, especially students' collages, featured a hierarchical image, thus emphasising the location of power and authority at senior levels. Others featured more holarchic images which tended to be more circular and fluid. Hierarchical and hol-

1
2 archic depictions are not necessarily mutually exclusive perspectives of leadership practice in the
3
4 school. They each bring to the fore different elements, **providing** plural framings of leadership prac-
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6 tice, each expressing aspects of leadership that operate simultaneously and **interactively** in the
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8 flow of practice.
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13 The holarchic aspect of leadership was the most prominent in the staff discourse around leader-
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15 ship. This is the aspect that encourages and facilitates pro-active agency - valuing initiative, enter-
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17 prise, innovation and collaborative working. This is a more fluid organisational environment than
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19 bureaucratic hierarchy. The metaphors of 'water' and 'flow' therefore strike a chord.
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25 Our analysis also suggests that it is helpful to see DL as comprising multiple features each of
26
27 which may be distributed differently. Participants within the school's DL culture understood that
28
29 some aspects are distributed more or differently than others. This plurality of leadership and its
30
31 distributive character are articulated conceptually in the idea of 'multiple distributions'. By this we
32
33 mean that distributing leadership has a number of dimensions that include social aspects (such as
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35 respect), institutional aspects (such as access to resources for professional development and op-
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37 portunities to take and share initiatives) and cultural aspects (such as how leadership is **under-**
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39 **stood**).
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44 **The dimensions of leadership** are not necessarily distributed fairly or in ways that best benefit the
45
46 learning of all, however. Our interpretative account of the data in this case study leads us to sug-
47
48 gest two factors that are associated with lower levels of involvement in DL. The first is social posi-
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50 tioning - that is, the relative placing of individuals in relation to others through a process in which
51
52 people not only do this by drawing on existing social structures and ideas, but also are able to
53
54 make their own interpretations concerning how they position individuals with whom they form work-
55
56 ing relationships (Archer 1995, 2003). One example is the relative positioning of school members
57
58 **according to where they sit** in the organisation's hierarchy of authority. Another example involves
59
60 perceptions of significant organisational and social boundaries that divide the school population -

1
2 such as the placing of students outside the main, adult-defined school organisation, or younger
3
4 students having lower status as compared with the higher status of older students. However, these
5
6 should not be viewed as static 'givens', but rather as patterns that emerge and are reinforced (or
7
8 challenged) through continuous processes in which people interact create and interpret the organi-
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10 sation's stated aims and discourses about leadership and education. Senior leaders' aspirations to
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12 involve and respect support staff as leaders, for example, is a process that seeks to challenge and
13
14 change accepted positioning within the school.
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20 The second, related to social positioning, is the distribution of 'capitals'. **These are properties of**
21
22 **people and groups which influence perceived relative worth, social positioning and the exercise of**
23
24 **influence and power, and include social capital (for example, networks within the school) and pro-**
25
26 **fessional capital (for example, educational qualifications) (Noordegraaf and Schinkel 2011). We**
27
28 **found examples of participants with limited social capital in terms of links with senior leaders, which**
29
30 **was seen as restricting their influence concerning** allocation of resources and decision-making.
31
32

33 The absence of professional capital with **regard to** support staff (who are not members of a de-
34
35 gree-based occupation) **helped in understanding their more marginal position in relation to leader-**
36
37 **ship in the school.**
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41
42 On the whole, teachers, support staff and students were seen as less involved in the leadership of
43
44 the school than senior and middle leaders, despite the strong aspiration of the school over several
45
46 years to create a widely spread culture of DL. The challenges in achieving the latter concern not
47
48 only institutional changes in roles and ways of working, but also strongly embedded social and cul-
49
50 tural features such as social positioning and **inequalities in the** distribution of capitals. Our find-
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52 ings suggest that these challenges are not simply to be interpreted as the product of a continuing
53
54 hierarchical authority structure. Problems or limitations in DL were not perceived by participants to
55
56 be associated with a hierarchy of authority per se. Many were able to move between different or-
57
58 ganisational logics (Thornton 2012) of hierarchy and holarchy. What emerges - from staff particu-
59
60 larly - are shared aspirations to create a social environment which is creative, positive for the learn-

1
2 ing of students and staff and characterised by relationships that are fluid, supportive and engender
3
4 a sense of belonging. This is represented by the images that are more holarchic in shape.
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9 The DL we found in the case study therefore involves formation of a specific kind of social change
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11 in the school - a holarchic social environment requiring the distribution or sharing of numerous fac-
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13 tors that include mutual respect, confidence in being pro-active and opportunities for development,
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15 and which helps engender a sense of holistic well-being (Woods 2011). This exists alongside the
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17 hierarchy of authority relationships. To develop DL that seeks to enhance social justice, it is neces-
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19 sary to recognise and address inequities and feelings of hurt and marginalisation which we also
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21 found to be embedded in the day-to-day processes of dispersed leadership as perceived by partic-
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23 ipants.
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29 We believe it will be helpful for future research to delineate more clearly DL as a phenomenon with
30
31 multiple aspects (institutional, cultural and social), and suggest that it would be useful to explore
32
33 these aspects in the context of three questions.
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35
36

37
38 Firstly, to what extent does the institutional structure, as referred to in the working definition of DL
39
40 (Woods and Woods 2013) (roles, resources and authority relations) spread leadership and facili-
41
42 tate flexibility and collaboration? Formal authority may be hierarchical (i.e. relatively undistributed),
43
44 yet in other ways flexibility, individual and group autonomy and cross-boundary working can be fa-
45
46 cilitated by institutional structures and the hierarchy may be more or less steep.
47
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51 Secondly, to what extent does the culture of the organisation make explicit and espouse values
52
53 that promote the DL, social justice and democratic values, and to what extent are these shared
54
55 across the organisation? This refers to the cultural dimension of the working definition, but adds to
56
57 it core values that explicitly foster a broad conception of social justice that includes cultural justice
58
59 (respect), participative justice and developmental justice (concerned with staff and student's learn-
60
ing), as well as combatting the effects of distributive injustices (Woods and Roberts 2013a).

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Thirdly, to what extent is the organisation characterised by a holarchic social environment, in which relationships are fluid, supportive and encourage independent thinking as well as a sense of belonging? This social aspect adds to the institutional and cultural aspects of the working definition. The social environment and its day-to-day relationships are where the espoused cultural values and the distribution of factors such as respect and supportive, collaborative relationships are enacted.

We are continuing to work on developing these multiple aspects as a way of understanding the diverse forms and effects of distributing leadership. In doing this, it is important to recognise both the possibilities of DL (promoting innovation and deeper learning, for example) and its tensions (such as those between hierarchical structures and holarchic social relationships), and the value of arts-based methods in uncovering meaning about these issues.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the school, its staff and students who participated in the study and to the EU-funded European Policy Network on School Leadership for enabling this research to take place.

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Table 1: Research participants

	number of participants	group
teaching staff	6	C
non-teaching staff	4	B
senior leaders	4	A
students	15	D, E, F
TOTAL	29	

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Distributed Leadership and Social Justice

Images and meanings from across the school landscape

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Bionotes

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Abstract

This paper reports data from a study investigating distributed leadership (DL) and its relationship to social justice and democratic values. The research comprised a case study of a UK secondary school, which describes itself as having a finely distributed leadership culture, and involved teaching staff, non-teaching staff, senior leaders and students who took part in an arts-based method of data generation (collage creation) and interviews. The study examined participants' meanings and perceptions in relation to leadership and social justice. Our analysis of the data highlights contrasting image patterns (hierarchical and holarchic); a dominant view of DL as the exercise of pro-active agency, but also awareness of ways in which this is unequally spread across the school; and the value of seeing DL as comprising multiple features each of which may be distributed differently. This paper concentrates on participative and cultural justice. It suggests that work on further delineating multiple aspects of DL would be valuable, and that attention needs to be given not only to developing flexibility of institutional structures, but also core cultural values (social justice and democracy) and holarchic social environments in which relationships are fluid, supportive and encourage belonging and independent thinking.

1. Rationale and research aim

The concept of distributed leadership (DL) is influential, attracting much scholarly exploration and research (Bennett *et al.* 2003, Bolden 2011, Gronn 2002, 2009, MacBeath *et al.*, 2004a/b, Raelin 2011, Xxxxx 2013, Xxxxx *et al.* 2004). Our understanding needs deepening conceptually and practically, however, to ensure that DL advances social justice and democratic values. The intention of the research reported in this paper is to contribute to that deepening.

Three key concepts used in the study are briefly defined for the purpose of this article before proceeding further. Social justice (Cribb and Gewirtz 2003, Xxxxx 2012, Xxxxx and Xxxxx 2013a) is defined in a four-fold scheme as the lessening or elimination of unfair inequalities in

- socio-economic resources, (distributive justice)
- participation in decisions (participative justice)
- respect for identity and beliefs (cultural justice)
- opportunities for learning and personal development (developmental justice)

Democratic values are defined as inclusive participation, transforming dialogue and growth as whole persons with a feeling of connectedness socially, ecologically and spiritually, in line with the concept of holistic democracy (Xxxxx 2011). Holarchy is defined as a social environment where there is a shared, equal 'social authority' amongst organisational members to initiate and be involved in change, even though there may be distinctions in formal authority and other differences, and where people are valued for what they each individually bring to the work of the organisation (Xxxxx 2014).

A review of research into DL and social justice conducted by the authors from a UK perspective (Xxxxx and Xxxxx 2013a) provides the foundation for the study. The review distinguished between analytical and applied conceptualisations of DL. It concluded, *inter alia*, that the most important analytical understanding of DL is the view that leadership is *emergent* and that it arises through

1
2 *complex, interactive processes*, rather than being the preserve of senior roles designated with
3
4 leadership authority. This offers a more valid **conceptual** lens by which to understand actual lead-
5
6 ership practice and is a foundational theoretical perspective for this study.
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11 Following Xxxxx and Xxxxx (2013), the review proposed the following working definition of applied
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13 DL, representing the understanding of DL advocated in much contemporary policy:
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18 a *culture* that

- 19
20 ‣ views leadership as emerging from ongoing flows of interactions across the organisation and its
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22 hierarchy, not simply the actions of the single leader or small leadership elite
- 23
24 ‣ values leadership contributions from across the organisation and its hierarchy
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26 ‣ recognises that this view of leadership can be deployed in order to improve organisational effec-
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28 tiveness

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30 accompanied by

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32 an *institutional structure* that

- 33
34 ‣ spreads leadership opportunities beyond formal senior roles to enable different sources of ex-
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36 pertise and perspectives to influence the organisation's work, development and innovative
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38 changes
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40 ‣ facilitates flexible, collaborative working relationships across traditional boundaries and hierar-
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42 chies
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44 ‣ tends towards the creation of flatter hierarchies.

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46 (Xxxxx and Xxxxx 2013)
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51 This definition, however, does not specify the values and view of learning which should guide DL
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53 practice. Recognising the distributed nature of leadership does not necessarily **result in democratic**
54
55 **leadership - that is leadership practices that promote social justice and exhibit democratic values**
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57 | (see, **for example**, Hall 2012, Scribner and Bradley-Levine 2010, Xxxxx 2004). Again following
58
59 Xxxxx and Xxxxx (2013), the review concluded that DL needs to be deepened through an elabora-
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tion of the values and learning which guide DL practice; and that research is needed that investi-

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2 gates what forms of DL can promote social justice and **aspire to democratic values** (Xxxxx and
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Xxxxx 2013). The review noted that DL is typically combined with hierarchically distributed leader-
ship authority, though the steepness of hierarchy and the extent of centralised leadership power
varies between organisational settings. It also concluded that there is considerable scope to ex-
tend methods of researching DL to include more arts-based methods.

In light of these conclusions, the study's aim was to investigate - in the context of one case study
(secondary) school - DL and perceptions of whether and in what ways DL promotes or otherwise
social justice and democratic practices.

2. Research design

i) Methodological stance

A case study approach was chosen, recognising the efficacy of cases studies in promoting deep
learning about a particular case (Stake, 1995) whilst simultaneously supporting the development of
a broader theoretical perspective (Cohen et al., 2007). Given our wider research interest in democ-
racy and democratic practices, we were also concerned to find a collaborative research strategy
which would allow participants a degree of agency. A research process which involved the capaci-
ty to tell stories through words and images appeared to fulfil this (Bruner, 1991, Barone and Eisner,
2012), having the capacity to break down barriers between researcher and researched (Clandinin
et al., 2009, Gale and Wyatt, 2006, Gourlay, 2009). We believed that such narratives would sup-
port us in understanding the sense which individuals make of leadership policy and practice within
their school, providing us with 'a window into people's beliefs and experiences' (Bell, 2002: 209),
whilst allowing the potential for theorising (Silverman, 1998).

In attempting to convey meanings such as understandings of leadership there are often points
where words fail (Frosh, 2002, cited in Leitch, 2006), where it is difficult to express the most pro-
found understandings in propositional form. Images give participants the opportunity to explore the

1
2 subtleties of their experience of leadership in creative, non-linear ways (Black, 2002, Leitch, 2006,
3
4 Loads, 2009, Spouse, 2000) or indeed to release new forms of understanding (Eisner, 1993). In-
5
6 deed, critical arts-based research specifically aims to bring to the surface social inequities and in-
7
8 justices embedded in the status quo (Bagley and Castro-Salazar 2012).
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13 Within the wider sphere of arts-based research we were particularly interested in the use of col-
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15 lage. We wished to free participants from the challenge of drawing, which often evokes previous
16
17 success or failure in artistic representation as a school student, and to offer participants the poten-
18
19 tial to try things out, to move pieces around and create a new way of expressing original thoughts
20
21 or new ways of seeing, stimulated through the making process (Gauntlett, 2011).
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27 We were aware that, in order to understand participants' stories, we needed to ask them to explore
28
29 their collages with us. The format and roles implicit in traditional interviews did not fit our aims.
30
31 Rather than a one-way information channel, effectively controlled by the interviewer, we wanted to
32
33 create an opportunity for dialogue. The informal conversational interview (Patton, 2002), or un-
34
35 structured interview (Fontana and Frey, 2003), was a useful method for developing a collaborative,
36
37 non-hierarchical research process.
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42 **ii) Data generation**

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44 The data generation took place in a building in the school grounds, separate from the main build-
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46 ing, on 18th and 19th July 2013. We achieved our aim of involving participants from four groups
47
48 within the school: teaching staff; non-teaching staff; senior leaders; and students (aged between 11
49
50 and 19). The numbers of participants are shown in Table 1, which also shows the groups that they
51
52 were in when creating and explaining about their collage.
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58 [INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]
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1
2 The authors worked together as a team to facilitate collage creation, the explanation by the partici-
3 pants of the meanings of their collage and the informal conversational interviews. This was an im-
4 portant feature of the research method which was practically helpful in efficiently organising groups
5 of participants and allowed one of the team to take the lead at certain times whilst the other lis-
6 tened and attended to the equipment used. It also facilitated both researchers sharing the whole
7 data production and collection experience, enabling full immersion in the data which was valuable
8 for later analytical discussion and triangulation from two researcher perspectives.
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20 Participants were grouped according to role within the school e.g. member of the leadership team,
21 student. Each group was briefed about the research and asked to create an individual collage
22 which they then explained to the group. They were told that this collage should
23 “represent visually your view of leadership in your school. By ‘leadership’ we do not mean just the
24 headteacher or the senior leaders but everyone and everything which you see as contributing to
25 leadership in your school.” A box of assorted materials, such as pieces of tissue paper, straws, felt
26 shapes, wooden discs, brightly–coloured feathers and gems, was provided for each group. Each
27 participant used a free selection of these materials to create their collage on an A3 sheet of paper.
28 This provision of materials by the authors bears critical commentary. The criteria for choosing the
29 materials were that they were stimulating, varied and, pragmatically, portable. The judgement
30 against these criteria remained the authors’ rather than the participants however. We did not ask
31 the participants to bring materials with them but instead provided restricted materials which may
32 have, unwittingly, framed participants’ responses. However, it did not appear that the collage’s role
33 as a stimulator of thinking and understanding was adversely affected by these issues. Instead, the
34 participants took observable delight in using common materials in distinct and original ways to
35 convey their unique response to the provocation given.
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58 After participants had made their collages, participants were asked to explain their collage as a
59 stimulus to an informal discussion which followed amongst the group and researchers. Formal
60 paired interviews were then conducted with staff participants, guided by the following questions.

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4 To what extent do you feel distributed leadership is a feature of the school's leadership phi-
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7 losophy and practices?

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9 How do you define social justice in a school context?

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11 To what extent do you feel distributed leadership in the school

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14 (a) supports social justice (If so, how?)

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17 (b) is democratic? (If so, how?)

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20 What factors in the school's external environment (including government policy) support or
21
22 hinder distributed leadership in the school?

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25 The questions on distributed leadership and the meanings they attached to the collages were a
26
27 means of exploring what they understood by distributed leadership. Collage-making and the sub-
28
29 sequent explanations were video and audio recorded. Interviews were audio recorded only.

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33 Following our initial analysis of the data, an interactive seminar was held involving research partic-
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35 ipants, to ensure that we were capturing the particular in a recognisable way, portraying percep-
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37 tions of leadership within the school so that others could relate to it. This allowed us to test and
38
39 refine the trustworthiness of the case study and to enrich findings through shared reflection with
40
41 participants. Only participants who were teaching staff took up the invitation to attend this seminar.
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43 Participants' comments made during the seminar were used to refine our initial understanding of
44
45 the data.
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51 **3. Background of case study school**

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54 The case study school, which we have given the fictitious name of Heathvale, is one of five sec-
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56 ondary schools serving a town of approximately 38,000 residents, situated in the East of England.
57
58 The school is an 11-19 co-educational Academy, a publicly-funded independent school, with 1,400
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60 students on roll and judged by Ofsted, the government department which inspects schools in Eng-
land, to be a good school in May 2010.

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4 The strategic intent of Heathvale School is to provide outstanding educational opportunities for all
5 and to be a great school. GCSE examination results, the public examinations taken by students at
6 age 16, have improved steadily year-on-year. In 2012 this achievement was recognised by Ofsted
7 and the Department for Education which awarded the school the *Top 100 most improved schools*
8 award.

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18 The majority of students in Heathvale School stay into the Sixth Form, to study post-16. They
19 study predominantly for advanced level qualifications (A-Levels) with the intention to apply for a
20 university place. In 2013, all students passed their A-Levels with 56% of students achieving the
21 top (A*-B) grades.

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28
29 The school has been led by the same headteacher for the last 13 years. It seeks to support stu-
30 dents not only in attaining strong academic qualifications but also in becoming well-rounded indi-
31 viduals with a sense of responsibility and a willingness to contribute to both the economy and soci-
32 ety in general. This is partially achieved, according to details on the school's website, through a
33 finely distributed leadership culture. This culture resonates through the school's policies and prac-
34 tice. The Behaviour for Learning policy, for example, promotes self-leadership and regulation
35 whilst individual staff at any level in the school are supported to lead change through a teacher-led
36 development work group.

49 50 **4. Process of Data Analysis**

51
52 In analysing the data, we combined analytical procedures which identify patterns and break up the
53 data into pieces for labelling, collation, comparison and so on, and empathetic understanding, i.e.
54 creative reflection on data which encourages affective understanding.

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Images are often used in research as secondary to text, in an illustrative role (Prosser, 1998). In
this study, we view images instead as conveyers of meaning, as an alternative way of gaining in-

1
2 sight into participants' understandings. In addition to engaging with the exploration of individual sto-
3
4 ries by listening to the accounts of each collage given by its maker, we read across collages to get
5
6 the essence of the experience they were collectively representing (Butler-Kisber and Poldma,
7
8 2008).

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13 Our analysis involved a number of steps. In order to understand what we were learning from the
14
15 images we spread all of the collages out on the floor and discussed them. Such a dialogic ap-
16
17 proach to making meaning is not much discussed in the literature yet remains a legitimate, three-
18
19 dimensional approach to gaining understanding of artistic forms (Bresler, 2006). **Surveying** col-
20
21 lages from all participants, **we discussed our impressions of the different shapes and colours used**
22
23 **and looked for any possible patterns - noting, for example, a contrast between shapes that were**
24
25 **hierarchical and those that suggested a network or circular pattern.**

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31 Following this joint analysis, one researcher focused on the staff data and the other, the student
32
33 data. Using a template, we constructed a commentary on each collage and its associated expla-
34
35 nation and interview. **Each commentary comprised the** researcher's notes **and comments** on
36
37 **emerging** concepts and themes, **a photo** image of the collage and illustrative quotations from the
38
39 video and audio tapes. **Commentaries** were structured under the headings of description (of the
40
41 image and its meanings); leadership; social justice; and contextual factors. Summaries of the
42
43 commentary on each collage, as well as photos of **the collage**, are available in Xxxxx and Xxxxx
44
45 (2013b).

51 **5. Interpretative account**

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53
54 In this section we present an interpretative account of the perceptions of leadership in Heathvale
55
56 School, based on **the report** in Xxxxx and Xxxxx (2103b). For the purposes of this paper, the inter-
57
58 pretative account concentrates on issues of participative and cultural justice, democracy and im-
59
60 ages of leadership as hierarchical and holarchic.

1
2 The first part (A story of holarchy) features one selected image of holarchy and the story (or narra-
3 tive) that gives it meaning as explained by the collage's creator. The presentation of one story hon-
4 ours our commitment to present the sense which individuals make of leadership policy and prac-
5 tice within their school, whilst exemplifying the research approach outlined above.
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12 The second part (Analytical discussion) provides an analytical discussion identifying themes and
13 concepts to help in understanding the perceptions and meanings of DL and its relationship to so-
14 cial justice. Some of the themes and concepts were used to frame our analysis (such as the four-
15 fold scheme of social justice, mentioned **above**); others arose from our analysis (such as the
16 theme of holarchy).
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27 **i) A story of holarchy**

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31 [INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]
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35 Participants in the case study put forward the images and meanings of leadership in Heathvale
36 School that they most wanted to communicate. They were not asked to attempt to produce a
37 comprehensive 'picture' of leadership in the school but chose to highlight a certain aspect or
38 aspects of leadership as they created their collage. Some featured a hierarchical image emphasising
39 the location of power and authority at senior levels. Others featured more holarchic images
40 which tend to be more circular and fluid, giving an impression of a network rather than a hierarchy.
41
42 The collage shown in Figure 1 **is an example of the latter**, produced by a participant (A3) who was
43 seconded to the senior leadership team. His explanation of his collage illuminates the complexities
44 of the concept of holarchy in practice. This choice and his explanation of it illustrate the plural fram-
45 ing of leadership practice within the school, where different aspects of leadership operate simulta-
46 neously in the flow of day to day school life.
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DL & SJ

1
2 This participant wanted to show a clear structure within the school. However, the image is not in-
3 tended to represent a 'vertical' structure indicative of a hierarchy (although A3 recognised that
4 there is also a hierarchy in the school). Instead, he chose to show the layers which make up the
5 school community and the connections between them as a more (in our terms) holarchic image.
6
7 The wider community in which the school sits is represented by the outside circle of the collage.
8
9 The students feature as the next circle in, represented as blocks of wood 'which can be shaped'.
10
11 They are dominant in the collage and are described by the collage creator as the people 'we
12 serve'. Diamonds are scattered through this circle of wood, as students can also be seen as 'dia-
13 monds in the rough'. Working inward from the circle of wood, the collage shows the senior leader-
14 ship team, middle leaders and teachers. A3 did not want to differentiate between these different
15 groups (teachers, senior leadership, etc.). In this collage, leadership is seen as distributed
16 throughout the school in an organic manner, rather than wholly through the exercise of power
17 gained through positional roles - 'As a school we survive and grow because everyone is different'.
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33 The shape and structure of the collage is important to A3. The circles represent a structure which
34 is supportive and facilitative, allowing for pro-active agency and valuing initiative and enterprise
35 from teachers and students. The spaces in the collage also have relevance, indicating the spaces
36 for communication within the school. These spaces are not always fully utilised however. This
37 participant sees middle leaders as having a 'regularity of vision' and of being a force for develop-
38 ment within the school. Teachers are not always in a position to be fully involved with decisions
39 taken at middle or senior leadership level however. And, although A3 did not want to differentiate in
40 the middle of the collage between teachers, senior leaders and so on, he also talked of there being
41 a 'buffer' in the collage between the senior leadership team and the rest. A3 believes that en-
42 hanced communication by both middle and senior leaders of the thinking behind decisions might
43 further enhance teachers' leadership potential and get more out of the 'jewels' that are in the
44 teachers.
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2 Students are seen by this participant as having multiple opportunities for leadership within the
3
4 school. He sees these opportunities as being fairly distributed with a social justice agenda enacted
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6 through particular encouragement given to students who may not naturally put themselves forward.
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10 11 **ii) Analytical discussion**

12 13 14 15 16 **Perceptions and meanings of distributed leadership in Heathvale School**

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18 In this section, we provide an analytical discussion which identifies themes and concepts from the
19
20 data which support a developing understanding of the perceptions and meanings of DL and its re-
21
22 lationship to social justice. We begin with an analysis of perceptions of distributed leadership with-
23
24 in the school.
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29 *Participant perceptions of DL*

30
31 Many staff and students perceive distributed leadership as a positive within the school. The shape
32
33 of the collage images provided a helpful early initial indication of the diversity and depth of this per-
34
35 ception. Of the 29 collages, 13 tended towards the hierarchical image and 11 towards the holarchic
36
37 image (with 5 not fitting either tendency). Most staff images (9 out of 14) tended towards the hol-
38
39 archic: most student images (9 out of 15) to the hierarchical. The meanings of the hierarchical and
40
41 holarchic collages are more complex than this linear division between the two types suggests,
42
43 however. There are often elements of hierarchy exhibited in the holarchic images and vice versa.
44
45 Supportive structures are a key feature of holarchic images, whilst hierarchies have room for indi-
46
47 vidual expressions of leadership within a clear pattern of roles and responsibilities. In each case -
48
49 hierarchical and holarchic - the collage creator is choosing to foreground the dominant, and not
50
51 necessarily the exclusive, impression of leadership policy and practices within the school that they
52
53 want to share.
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It is more helpful to see hierarchy and holarchy as complementary rather than binary themes whilst
recognising there may be tensions between them and in particular the sharp difference between

1
2 staff and students in the balance of hierarchical and holarchic images. Our data also indicate that
3
4 hierarchy is not necessarily seen negatively. For example, many students liked the fact that they
5
6 could see a clear hierarchical structure within which they had some freedoms and agency.
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10 *DL as the exercise of proactive agency*

11 Participants see the school as valuing a pro-active, agential approach amongst staff and students.

12 Such an approach distributes the opportunity to take initiative and to influence. A Group D student

13 comments: 'The more you engage, the more you tend to enjoy because you are more open to op-

14 portunities and if you are not open to opportunities how do you know if it is going to be a good

15 one?'. Student D3 saw individual students as having the potential to exercise leadership, without

16 the benefit of a leadership position or role, whilst D4 believed that teachers help students 'con-

17 tribute towards leadership'. This is interesting, given the fact that students are more likely to show

18 hierarchical images of leadership than holarchic images. For students, however, hierarchical im-

19 ages with their associated barriers and pyramids are associated with safety in addition to power.

20 Student E1 depicts the headteacher as 'the king of the school' and represents the teachers as

21 shields and swords, showing that they 'have power over the students'. Student D5 refines this un-

22 derstanding however, with his image of the headteacher as a fire-breathing dinosaur emphasizing

23 his protective role – 'courageous and strong, like a Tyrannosaurus Rex'.
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45 | Many teaching staff and middle leaders highlighted the ways in which they are encouraged to think

46 creatively and to lead innovation within the school (C1-6). **An important opportunity for this is**

47 **through being part of a teacher-led development work group.** The power of such activity is cumu-

48 lative. Participant C3, in explaining the waterfall of ideas and balloon rides which featured in his

49 collage, commented 'if you have an idea or want to take on a leadership role, in my view at [this

50 school] you go through a process, whether that's speaking to people, line manager etc, then you

51 come into the pool and then when you've got an idea and it's talked through then you jump onto

52 the balloon ride and it can go, but you collaborate with others, so you're not on your own'.
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1
2 Senior staff concur with this view of the empowering nature of the school ethos and structures (A1-
3
4 4). This nurturing of agency does not mean that ultimate authority and accountability are dispersed
5
6 throughout the school, however. A senior leader who created a holarchic shape saw the retention
7
8 of authority at senior level as freeing staff to be more creative, an approach confirmed by a middle
9
10 leader (C5). A teacher (C4) put it this way: day-to-day leadership is very distributed, but this takes
11
12 place within a more centralised 'overt leadership' which provides the purpose for the school and is
13
14 set by the senior leadership. The provision of clear structures underpins this freedom to innovate.
15
16 The importance of this clear framing for democratic practice is highlighted in the literature (Xxxxx
17
18 2005, Xxxxx and Xxxxx 2013a, Xxxxx and Xxxxx 2013): **for example**, shared goals and values,
19
20 trust and the co-ordination and planning of roles, expectations and ways of working collaboratively
21
22 **are found to be** particularly significant **for DL to work well** (Day et al 2009, Leithwood et al 2006,
23
24 Louis et al 2010). As one middle leader put it (C6), there is structure and hierarchy, but these are
25
26 also flexible and changeable according to need, and this is a 'real strength'.
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33 This 'firm framing' is to some extent a product of the culture **and relationships** of the school. A
34
35 teacher (C2) showed in her collage a 'blanket cover of protection' for the whole school which is
36
37 'holding us together'; a middle leader (C6) talked of the school feeling a safe and secure place
38
39 within which leadership could be expressed. These perceptions point to the significance of a sense
40
41 of belonging and self-esteem in a community, which is part of the 'holistic well-being' that makes up
42
43 a broad kind of democratic community (Xxxxx 2011). There are other aspects to holistic well-being,
44
45 however, which include independent-mindedness and critical thinking. The middle leader (C6) who
46
47 praised the safe and secure feeling also wondered if at the same time the school was too insular
48
49 and inward-looking, suggesting it might be helpful to reflect critically on the nature of belonging and
50
51 protection that many see as characterising the school.
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58 Other participants highlighted the importance of respect in agential activity. One of the support staff
59
60 (B4) said that 'I feel people are respected, I feel very respected in the school', but also gave an ex-
ample of being shocked when a senior member of staff did not see her as a member of the team.

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2 The emphasis given to respect by some participants suggested that we should explicitly recognise
3
4 the significance of the distribution of respect, which links with the importance to successful DL of
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6 trust and other relational factors identified in the research literature (Xxxxx and Xxxxx 2013). Par-
7
8 ticipants distinguished between these factors and the distribution of authority and accountability
9
10 which were more centralised in the school.
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15 In the light of the above analysis, we suggest that to understand in what ways the leadership at
16
17 Heathvale School is distributed (and in what ways concentrated) it is helpful to see it as being
18
19 characterised by multiple distributions. There are, for example, social aspects (which include the
20
21 distribution of respect), institutional aspects (in which there are some elements that are less dis-
22
23 tributed, like authority and external accountability, than others, such as access to resources for
24
25 professional development), and cultural aspects (such as a widespread view promoted in the
26
27 school that distributed leadership is about the exercise of pro-active agency and innovation and
28
29 that opportunities to exercise 'influence and initiative' are distributed).
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35 From the discussion to this point, it is possible to suggest that:
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39 - DL is felt to be real within the school, and is meaningful in a positive sense for many of the
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41 staff.
42
43 - The idea of multiple distributions helps us to understand the nature of leadership as a dis-
44
45 tributed phenomenon in the school.
46
47 - The dominant view of DL is one that sees it as the exercise of pro-active agency, creating
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49 and taking initiatives to lead change and innovation.
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55 **Distributed leadership and social justice**

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57 We were particularly interested in **what ways DL might be seen as supporting** a social justice
58
59 agenda within the school. **The four-fold definition of social justice summarised at the start of the**
60
article was used to frame our analysis. For the purposes of the selected interpretative account in

1
2 this paper, we focus on participative justice (concerned with patterns of association which prevent
3
4 some people from participating fully in decisions which affect them) and participants' perceptions of
5
6 participation and democracy; and cultural justice (concerned with cultural domination, non-recog-
7
8 nition and disrespect).
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10 11 12 13 *Participative justice* 14

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16 With regard to participative justice, there were strong positive expressions of distributed opportuni-
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18 ty. A middle leader (C5), for example, considered that there is social justice in the school in that
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20 anybody who wants to lead on anything has the opportunity to suggest it and talk it through with
21
22 somebody, a view supported by other participants.
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26
27 One of the student groups (Group D) felt that all students had the opportunity to lead in school,
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29 though not all - because of lack of confidence or an unwillingness to commit to the responsibilities
30
31 of leadership - would take these opportunities. This group also felt that students' voices are heard
32
33 within the school, and that being given a voice and having their views heard had a positive impact
34
35 on both personal development and on the enjoyment of education.
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40 Critical views, recognising deficiencies in the actual spread of leadership activity, were also evi-
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42 dent. One student (E4) questioned the legitimacy and authenticity of the leadership roles offered to
43
44 students and which only a minority of students held: 'They just made them up. They are trying to
45
46 give people roles and stuff but they don't really have any substance'.
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51 One teacher (C1) pointed to some of the variables that affect actual participation and voice: al-
52
53 though there is a culture of DL in the school on a number of levels, some are better placed to know
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55 the right channels through which to enable ideas to come to fruition. For example, one member of
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57 staff (C1) and some students (Group D) commented that there is variable access to the leadership
58
59 team. Similar issues are raised in terms of student leadership, with the less confident having less
60
opportunity to lead than their more confident, and often, academic, peers (C1).

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4 Support staff are included in the aspiration to a DL culture and have particular challenges in this
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6 regard. A member of the support staff (B4) expressed the view, 'I do believe I have a voice. I do
7
8 believe that I can voice things that I feel particularly concerned about. There are people I can go to.
9
10 I wouldn't say that I feel particularly heard... I don't think everything's heard and taken on board.
11
12 But that possibly is the right of leadership' since the senior leadership have the power and access
13
14 to a lot more information. Senior leaders A1 and A2, considered that support staff were not suffi-
15
16 ciently involved in exercising voice and leadership, although A1 also recognised that some support
17
18 staff simply wish to fulfil their contractual duties and no more.
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24
25 Participants were asked if they felt the DL approach in Heathvale School was democratic. Re-
26
27 sponses varied. Some said that it was 'to a point', 'partly' or that the answer was 'yes and no' (A1,
28
29 senior leader; B3 and B4, support staff; C3, C5 middle leaders). Democracy in this context was
30
31 not associated with voting on decisions but on consultation and being heard. A1 (senior leader)
32
33 explained that they consult whenever possible, and others affirmed there was consultation (e.g.
34
35 C1, teacher; C6, middle leader) and that they were listened to (C4, teacher; C5, middle leader).
36
37 C5, echoing the recognition above of the importance of structure, firm framing and multiple distrib-
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39 utions, felt that leadership is 'partly' democratic 'but not always completely. But then it can't always
40
41 be... because in the end the head and the governors are responsible for the school, so there has
42
43 to be him making the final decision, and he will listen to our reasons, he will listen to what we want
44
45 to do, and if it is reasonable and acceptable and we can argue our case enough and he can see the
46
47 value of it, then he will take on board our views'.
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54 Democracy as opportunity to exercise leadership - the pro-active agency and chance to exercise
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56 initiative referred to in the previous sub-section - was a connection that several participants made,
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58 such as B4 (support staff), C3 (middle leader) and C2 (teacher).
59
60

1
2 Group E students felt that the school was not a true democracy but that there were routes to get
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4 their voices heard and that these voices are 'counted' as important. Not all students would agree
5
6 with this. Student F1, for example, felt that 'They don't actually listen to us. We have a Student
7
8 Council but I don't feel that they listen to us'. In Group F students' discussion it appeared that stu-
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10 dents in the main feel that they do have a voice, in that there are systems which allow them to put
11
12 their views forward, but that there is a problem arising from a lack of understanding of the reasons
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14 for decisions made at higher levels and then fed back to students.
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20 *Cultural justice*

22 Cultural justice links with cohesive culture and trust, factors which encourage feelings of respect.
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24 Strong expressions of feeling valued and being respected have been acknowledged in the previ-
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26 ous sub-section on perceptions of leadership, **as well as** the experience of belonging that con-
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28 tributes to feelings of holistic well-being. Nevertheless, respect is not necessarily equally experi-
29
30 enced or practiced. A student (D2) explained that the size of the spaces between teams and indi-
31
32 viduals in her collage indicated the levels of respect shown to different groups within the school,
33
34 and that these vary in terms of progress 'up' the school: 'Teachers have a lot and sixth formers
35
36 have quite a lot and compared to the other years - it's just way more'.
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42 Another support staff member (B3) felt she was at the bottom of the 'pyramid of power' as she de-
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44 scribed it in her collage, suggesting some negative issues. She explained that the rules meant that
45
46 she was not in senior support staff meetings. Equally, she considered that the school had been
47
48 transformed under the current head teacher, that more people were involved in leadership and that
49
50 she felt involved in the leadership 'in my own little world' where she managed one of the school-
51
52 wide schemes. A2 (senior leader) considered that support staff see themselves as 'second class
53
54 citizens', a situation that he did not like.
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60 From the discussion on social justice and democracy, it is possible to suggest that:

- Distribution of opportunities is a pronounced feature of the school leadership culture, with all groups within the school having access to leadership opportunities.
- DL, nevertheless, does not necessarily involve all equally: views expressed suggest it is strongest amongst senior and middle leaders and weakest amongst support staff and students.
- Exercising 'influence and initiative' and experience of respect varies according to individual and structural variables: these include a person's motivations, interests, how they are responded to by individuals, a person's networks within the school, students' peer group influences, maturity towards self-leadership, perceptions of status, and so on.
- The scope of exercising 'influence and initiative' tends to be restricted to the means of achieving given ends, rather than including opportunities to consider questions of the school's educational purpose and goals.
- DL is generally seen as to a degree democratic, in so far as it enables staff and students to be consulted, have a say (about means if not ends) and exercise opportunities for leadership.

6. Conclusions

Participants in the case study put forward the images and meanings of leadership in Heathvale School that they most wanted to communicate. They were not asked to attempt to produce a comprehensive 'picture' of leadership in the school, but to convey how they saw the school's leadership. **The constraint of using materials chosen by the authors to develop their collage appeared to strengthen their resolve of portraying very personal narratives of their experience of leadership.**

We found a dominant view of DL as the exercise of pro-active agency, but also awareness of ways in which this is unequally spread across the school. Some, especially students' collages, featured a hierarchical image, thus emphasising the location of power and authority at senior levels. Others featured more holarchic images which tended to be more circular and fluid. Hierarchical and hol-

1
2 archic depictions are not necessarily mutually exclusive perspectives of leadership practice in the
3
4 school. They each bring to the fore different elements, **providing** plural framings of leadership prac-
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6 tice, each expressing aspects of leadership that operate simultaneously and **interactively** in the
7
8 flow of practice.
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13 The holarchic aspect of leadership was the most prominent in the staff discourse around leader-
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15 ship. This is the aspect that encourages and facilitates pro-active agency - valuing initiative, enter-
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17 prise, innovation and collaborative working. This is a more fluid organisational environment than
18
19 bureaucratic hierarchy. The metaphors of 'water' and 'flow' therefore strike a chord.
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25 Our analysis also suggests that it is helpful to see DL as comprising multiple features each of
26
27 which may be distributed differently. Participants within the school's DL culture understood that
28
29 some aspects are distributed more or differently than others. This plurality of leadership and its
30
31 distributive character are articulated conceptually in the idea of 'multiple distributions'. By this we
32
33 mean that distributing leadership has a number of dimensions that include social aspects (such as
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35 respect), institutional aspects (such as access to resources for professional development and op-
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37 portunities to take and share initiatives) and cultural aspects (such as how leadership is **under-**
38
39 **stood**).
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45 **The dimensions of leadership** are not necessarily distributed fairly or in ways that best benefit the
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47 learning of all, however. Our interpretative account of the data in this case study leads us to sug-
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49 gest two factors that are associated with lower levels of involvement in DL. The first is social posi-
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51 tioning - that is, the relative placing of individuals in relation to others through a process in which
52
53 people not only do this by drawing on existing social structures and ideas, but also are able to
54
55 make their own interpretations concerning how they position individuals with whom they form work-
56
57 ing relationships (Archer 1995, 2003). One example is the relative positioning of school members
58
59 **according to where they sit** in the organisation's hierarchy of authority. Another example involves
60
perceptions of significant organisational and social boundaries that divide the school population -

1
2 such as the placing of students outside the main, adult-defined school organisation, or younger
3
4 students having lower status as compared with the higher status of older students. However, these
5
6 should not be viewed as static 'givens', but rather as patterns that emerge and are reinforced (or
7
8 challenged) through continuous processes in which people interact create and interpret the organi-
9
10 sation's stated aims and discourses about leadership and education. Senior leaders' aspirations to
11
12 involve and respect support staff as leaders, for example, is a process that seeks to challenge and
13
14 change accepted positioning within the school.
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20 The second, related to social positioning, is the distribution of 'capitals'. **These are properties of**
21
22 **people and groups which influence perceived relative worth, social positioning and the exercise of**
23
24 **influence and power, and include social capital (for example, networks within the school) and pro-**
25
26 **fessional capital (for example, educational qualifications) (Noordegraaf and Schinkel 2011). We**
27
28 **found examples of participants with limited social capital in terms of links with senior leaders, which**
29
30 **was seen as restricting their influence concerning** allocation of resources and decision-making.
31
32

33 The absence of professional capital with **regard to** support staff (who are not members of a de-
34
35 gree-based occupation) **helped in understanding their more marginal position in relation to leader-**
36
37 **ship in the school.**
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42 On the whole, teachers, support staff and students were seen as less involved in the leadership of
43
44 the school than senior and middle leaders, despite the strong aspiration of the school over several
45
46 years to create a widely spread culture of DL. The challenges in achieving the latter concern not
47
48 only institutional changes in roles and ways of working, but also strongly embedded social and cul-
49
50 tural features such as social positioning and **inequalities in the** distribution of capitals. Our find-
51
52 ings suggest that these challenges are not simply to be interpreted as the product of a continuing
53
54 hierarchical authority structure. Problems or limitations in DL were not perceived by participants to
55
56 be associated with a hierarchy of authority per se. Many were able to move between different or-
57
58 ganisational logics (Thornton 2012) of hierarchy and holarchy. What emerges - from staff particu-
59
60 larly - are shared aspirations to create a social environment which is creative, positive for the learn-

1
2 ing of students and staff and characterised by relationships that are fluid, supportive and engender
3
4 a sense of belonging. This is represented by the images that are more holarchic in shape.
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9 The DL we found in the case study therefore involves formation of a specific kind of social change
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11 in the school - a holarchic social environment requiring the distribution or sharing of numerous fac-
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13 tors that include mutual respect, confidence in being pro-active and opportunities for development,
14
15 and which helps engender a sense of holistic well-being (Xxxxx 2011). This exists alongside the
16
17 hierarchy of authority relationships. To develop DL that seeks to enhance social justice, it is neces-
18
19 sary to recognise and address inequities and feelings of hurt and marginalisation which we also
20
21 found to be embedded in the day-to-day processes of dispersed leadership as perceived by partic-
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23 ipants.
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29 We believe it will be helpful for future research to delineate more clearly DL as a phenomenon with
30
31 multiple aspects (institutional, cultural and social), and suggest that it would be useful to explore
32
33 these aspects in the context of three questions.
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35
36

37
38 Firstly, to what extent does the institutional structure, as referred to in the working definition of DL
39
40 (Xxxxx and Xxxxx 2013) (roles, resources and authority relations) spread leadership and facilitate
41
42 flexibility and collaboration? Formal authority may be hierarchical (i.e. relatively undistributed), yet
43
44 in other ways flexibility, individual and group autonomy and cross-boundary working can be facili-
45
46 tated by institutional structures and the hierarchy may be more or less steep.
47
48
49

50
51 Secondly, to what extent does the culture of the organisation make explicit and espouse values
52
53 that promote the DL, social justice and democratic values, and to what extent are these shared
54
55 across the organisation? This refers to the cultural dimension of the working definition, but adds to
56
57 it core values that explicitly foster a broad conception of social justice that includes cultural justice
58
59 (respect), participative justice and developmental justice (concerned with staff and student's learn-
60
ing), as well as combatting the effects of distributive injustices (Xxxxx and Xxxxx 2013a).

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Thirdly, to what extent is the organisation characterised by a holarchic social environment, in which relationships are fluid, supportive and encourage independent thinking as well as a sense of belonging? This social aspect adds to the institutional and cultural aspects of the working definition. The social environment and its day-to-day relationships are where the espoused cultural values and the distribution of factors such as respect and supportive, collaborative relationships are enacted.

We are continuing to work on developing these multiple aspects as a way of understanding the diverse forms and effects of distributing leadership. In doing this, it is important to recognise both the possibilities of DL (promoting innovation and deeper learning, for example) and its tensions (such as those between hierarchical structures and holarchic social relationships), and the value of arts-based methods in uncovering meaning about these issues.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the school, its staff and students who participated in the study and to the EU-funded European Policy Network on School Leadership for enabling this research to take place.

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