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Governance and educational leadership: Studies in education policy and politics

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Short bio

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Chapter summary

In this chapter we describe and critically analyse the relationship between governance and educational leadership. The aim of making explicit such a relationship is to show the application and value of governance to the study of educational leadership. Taken in its widest sense, governance can be loosely characterized as a political and economic strategy aimed at perfecting the design of accountability relations and structures. Decreased government involvement in the running and monitoring of education provision means that public servants, be they school leaders or school governors, are called upon to make themselves accountable to stakeholders and evaluation and funding bodies, typically through horizontal and vertical relations of accountability that rely on performance benchmarking, external inspection and high-stakes testing. Governance (broadly conceived) concerns the extent to which these relations and structures of accountability function successfully within a narrow definition of rational self-management.

Definition

Governance refers to the ways in which government and non-government entities intervene, both formally and informally, to shape the way organisations and individuals conduct themselves. These interventions are designed to facilitate certain kinds of change (change in individual behaviour or organisational structure) or limit the possibilities for change in order to maintain the status quo. In both cases, governance is designed to improve conditions by which change can be affected or limited to serve different political, economic and environmental aims.

By implication educational leadership (and management) is a function and condition of governance since it provides a set of vital relays for linking the formally

autonomous operations of schools with the political ambitions of the state and the interests of the wider public. The relationship between governance and educational leadership, we argue, is therefore crucial to mapping the current political moment, namely to detail the specific rationalities and configurations that bear upon the development of schools as organizations and the different interests served or excluded by these configurations.

A further, related aim of the chapter is to trace empirically the application and value of governance to the study of educational leadership so that other researchers may utilize similar or adapted and revised analytical strategies. To achieve this, we deploy two distinctive formulations of governance to show how governance-in-practice (in this case, educational leadership practices) can be differently conceptualized and understood. These two formulations of governance are *instrumental-rational* and *agonistic-political*. In a pragmatic sense, governance can be understood as a blueprint or model for producing schools that are 'publicly accountable' (narrowly conceived) – properly audited and monitored, high achieving, financially sustainable, law compliant, and non-discriminatory. Governance, in this sense, can be considered a technical, even apolitical dimension of the leadership and management of schools as organizations – it is about striving to generate critical mass to meet certain strategic and operational priorities that enhance the quality and standards of schools. This is an *instrumental-rational* formulation of governance. But educational leadership, as an expression of governance, is deeply politicized in this sense. For educational leadership to be considered legitimate for example, it must, for the most part, conform to a dominant account of what educational

leadership and its purpose is (to be discussed later). But who gets to decide the purpose and design of educational leadership?

Definition

Leadership is defined here as discourse. It is a dynamic and culturally and historically-specific body of knowledge and practices that are concerned with influencing the conduct of others and self to specific ends. The meaning, practices and effects of leadership (including educational leadership) are shaped by social and political interests and power, and therefore the field and exercise of leadership are both sites of contest and struggle.

We therefore require a second formulation of governance: *agonistic-political*. Such a view is important to contesting the supposedly politically neutral aims and language of governance and opening up analytic spaces in which the politicized nature of governance, and by implication educational leadership, reveals itself through the different interests served and excluded by such programmes. Later in the chapter we draw on two case studies of education reforms taken from two national policy contexts – the academies programme in England and the Independent Public Schools (IPS) programme in Australia – to illustrate how the same phenomenon can be analysed differently using these two formulations of governance.

The chapter is structured as follows. In the first section, we offer a historical account of the development of the concept and practice of governance through an examination of the changing role and responsibility of government. Following this we illustrate the significance of governance to educational leadership through a consideration of key global education trends and reforms, notably school autonomy and the relentless drive for self-improvement and self-management within a context

of devolved education service planning. The next section draws on case study material taken from England and Australia to show the value and application of governance to educational leadership research, specifically how governance can be traced empirically and conceptualized differently through educational leadership practices using two distinct formulations of governance: *instrumental-rational* and *agonistic-political*. In the final section we draw together these various perspectives and insights to reflect on some of the dilemmas and tensions inherent to theorizing governance in the context of educational leadership research.

Governance

The political and economic significance of governance can be richly theorized and understood when analysed in the context of the recent history of the development of government. In this section we provide a definition of governance by way of a brief economic and political history of the changing role and responsibility of government, specifically the transformation of government in some Western countries during the 1980s and the subsequent reconfiguration and repurposing of different governments around the globe. These changes in the formation of government have direct implications for the configuration of state practices as well as the relationship between citizens and the state. As we intend to show, governance can be understood as both a condition and response to these changes.

The late 1970s and 1980s represent a watershed moment in the history of politics and economics. Spearheaded by the free market principles of liberal economists

and political conservatives, the 1980s ushered in a new era of government for many Western countries – a model of government that would later be replicated by countries around the globe. Against a background of high inflation and economic stagnation during the 1970s, the post-war social democratic state came under fierce opposition from right-wing economists and politicians who declared policy initiatives and redistribution programmes underpinned by strong government intervention to be oppressive, cost-ineffective and demoralizing. Instead, the role and responsibility of government was gradually reimagined and repurposed during the 1980s to compliment a new vision of welfare, citizenship and the economy, one in which the vitality of market forces, the circulation of capital and the rights of individuals as consumers took precedence over previous social and economic goals, specifically the need to protect individuals and groups against the unintended consequences of capitalism and to secure the unconditional welfare rights of citizens.

Proposals for a small state underpinned by deregulated industry, decreased public spending, conditional citizenship and individual responsibility attracted widespread support among right-wing think tanks, politicians and economists during the late 1970s. It was not until the 1980s with the rise of Thatcherism in England and Reganism in the US that proposals for a small state were transformed from a collection of ideas into a governmental programme. The institutionalization of 'economic liberalism' under Thatcherism and Reaganism was integral to this mobilization as it helped to carve out a new role and responsibility for government in the macroeconomy, one that gave legitimacy to the small state. The post-war social democratic state, with its emphasis on economic protection and government-subsidized mass social programs, was effectively curtailed to make way for new

government priorities: global alignment, capital mobility and fiscal responsibility. These same economic and political imperatives continue to shape and inform the role and responsibility of governments today. The scaling back of the welfare state and the contracting out of public utilities and resources to private companies and charities capture the essence of a small state.

Yet despite reluctance among governments to own and manage their public utilities and resources, governments appear no less active in setting rules and managing expectations intended to shape and inform how public organizations govern themselves – what Cooper (1998: 12) calls ‘governing at a distance’. These rules and expectations are enshrined through the formulation of professional guidelines, performance targets, strategic objectives and contractual obligations against which public organizations are compared and judged to be efficient, cost-effective, consumer-responsive, industry-facing, and high-performing. Designed to make organizations more knowable and governable, these technologies and techniques enhance the capacity of governments and other non-government bodies to exercise control over the internal operation of public organizations or, at the very least, limit the choices public organizations have in terms of how they self-evaluate. Consider the important role played by test-based accountabilities, comparative-competitive frameworks and data management systems at the level of the school. These forms of punitive intervention and self-management are typically carried out by school leaders and governors on themselves and others, yet they are principally designed to make schools more amenable to scrutiny by external authorities and evaluation bodies, especially national para-government agencies like the school’s inspectorate,

the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), who evaluate schools on behalf of government and the consumer public.

On this understanding, a useful definition of governance offered by Rhodes (1996: 652) is 'government without governing'. In other words, governance can be used to characterize both the absence and presence of state power: the weakening of traditional structures of government and the strengthening of the continuation and exercise of state power over and through organizations. It is therefore misleading to characterize government and governance as separate forces or technologies since governance can be understood to be a form of 'government': 'modes of action, more or less considered or calculated, which were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people' (Foucault 1982: 790).

While the term governance lacks a precise meaning, it is typically used in political science, public policy and sociology literature to describe societies and economies in which vertical structures of top-down government are replaced (or supplemented) by the development of horizontal, flexible networks of bottom-up government. Here the term governance is used to capture the ways in which key roles and responsibilities for service planning – specifically the appraisal, monitoring and budgeting of public services – have shifted from government entities to para-government organizations, management groups, leadership teams and even communities. These new forms of bottom-up government, sometimes called small government or devolved government, are often celebrated within policy documents and political speeches as levers for community empowerment and downward accountability since they work to

shift power away from national governments, even local governments, to produce contexts in which service planning and delivery is managed through the 'spontaneous' interaction, cooperation and co-influence of multiple stakeholders rather than the planning committees of political authorities and their 'vested interests'. In 2011 the former British Prime Minister David Cameron set out a vision of a 'Big Society' in which he made similar claims about the strong relationship between devolution and community empowerment, the idea being that devolution enriches opportunities for community and citizen participation in service planning and delivery.

Viewed from a different perspective, governance is designed to weaken the influence of traditional structures of government and bureaucracy, even democratic processes, so that opportunities arise for improved public-private partnerships and the management, delivery and monitoring of public services by non-government, 'non-political' entities, such as charities, businesses and social enterprises. Governance therefore refers to qualitative changes to the design, management and ethos of public services, specifically the use of narrow, instrumental definitions of quality and accountability to measure the cost effectiveness and impact of public services. The shift from government to governance also signifies something unique about the exercise of modern forms of state power, namely the desire to govern through improving conditions for self-organization and self-improvement. Not to be confused with government and at the same time not to be analysed separate from it, governance can be described as a political and economic strategy aimed at supporting contexts in which the governing of the health, happiness, wealth,

education and welfare of the population is achievable in the absence of any direct, coercive government intervention.

Related to this concept of governance is a very specific understanding of the nature and exercise of responsibility. No longer exclusively the domain of state intervention and protection, matters of public interest including duties of care and responsibility for others and to the self (broadly conceived) are purposefully reimagined under governance as matters of private interest and individual responsibility. Economic stability and job security emerge as goals and moral obligations to be satisfied by individuals and organizations for example. Governance therefore signals the abrogation of state responsibility and its reluctance to protect individuals and organizations against some of the worst excesses of unregulated markets. At the same time, governance can be viewed as a political strategy or policy programme designed to foster the adaptive capacities of citizens and communities to operate within this new risk environment and the vulnerabilities and insecurities it engenders. Governance is concerned with improving conditions in which individuals and organizations are best placed to navigate and respond to these uncertainties and their attendant calculations and risks. Governance therefore operates at the intersection of two distinct processes: 'dis-embedding' and 're-embedding' (Keddie and Mills 2019). Take schools in England for example. Under proposals to improve conditions for a self-improving school system, many schools are granted autonomy and flexibility to function outside the bureaucracy and politics of local government as administratively self-governing entities or 'state-funded independent schools'. Yet this process of 'dis-embedding' requires those same schools to anchor themselves more rigidly to new relations and fantasies of market discipline and competition as

well as complimentary state-mandated directives, provisos and obligations – a process of ‘re-embedding’ that strengthens relations of accountability between schools and central government through the prism of a market logic (see Wilkins 2016).

Reflection

Every person occupies different roles in their daily life: citizen, employee, parent, student, teacher, consumer, activist, patient, carer, leader, community member.

Consider the different roles you occupy, either voluntarily or involuntarily, and reflect on:

What kinds of responsibilities underpin that role?

Do you choose these responsibilities, or have you been chosen to perform them?

Who or what compels you to perform these responsibilities?

How and why did you learn to perform these responsibilities effectively?

How can you be sure you have inhabited and performed these responsibilities?

Leadership

Informed by positivist scientific approaches, the mainstream field of Educational Leadership, Management and Administration (ELMA) is construed here as contributing a scientific understanding of administration and the structures and functions of organizations. More recent scholarship on leadership has focused on the desirable traits and behaviours of leaders, characterizations of heroic and exceptional leaders and organizational change in the context of universally prescribed categories of ‘best practice’. Increasingly, this field is inhabited by critical voices that stress, rather than diminish, ELMA’s relationship to wider political, social and cultural forces and their continuing impact on education (Bates 2010). The mainstream field of ELMA has been critiqued for its instrumentalist and individualist models of leadership, its lack of theoretical and philosophical engagement, and the

epistemological realism that leads it to accept the dominant education reform context as a mere uncontested backdrop of leadership. We now direct our attention to the critically-informed analysis of leadership's relationship to politically-driven structural and performative reform.

As discussed above, the rationale of 'government without governing' has engendered models of self-directed service planning and delivery. In education, this has taken the form of school autonomy and self-management. Imagined by its proponents as a condition of school improvement, school autonomy is endorsed by global governance bodies like the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, although there is no conclusive evidence that school autonomy improves educational outcomes for students. Nevertheless, the centralized and hierarchical coordination and management of schools has given way to local decision-making and network governance, framed by economic logics that model schools on the corporate competitive enterprise (Courtney, McGinity and Gunter 2018). Through the process of contractualization, the freedom accorded to schools as service providers is disciplined by market competition and the requirement to demonstrate improved performance to governing bodies and other regulatory agencies. This means that school autonomy is largely conceptualized and exercised through the logic of competitive performativity; that is, through systems of accountability that evaluate and report school, student and staff performance, often narrowly measured through quantifiable performance benchmarking and testing.

Educational leadership is a strategy of this New Public Management (NPM) reform project. While adherence to (and the efficient administration of) centralized policies and procedures were valued in the case of bureaucratically-managed school systems, different kinds of principal agency are required for the autonomous school. Governance promotes and compels new kinds of visionary, empowered, innovative leaders equipped to independently and strategically lead and solve organizational problems in flexible, rapidly changing and insecure market and policy settings. Such a corporate model of leadership and its associated notions of 'best practice' has been successfully operationalized by a cadre of bureaucrats and policy entrepreneurs who promote the use of private consultancies, certain popular books, governmental agencies and reports, and school leadership bodies like the National College for School Leadership in England.

In this sense, leadership performs governance-in-practice. Notions of leadership and the practices of leading are refashioned around this system of governance that diminishes state-directed, hierarchical forms of power by facilitating the conditions of local empowerment and self-governance. With private business and corporate leaders being models for school governance, principals are charged with creating strategic and business plans, collecting and evaluating data and performance, monitoring and managing teacher performance, managing school finances, diversifying income streams, and promoting schools to users as consumers. School leaders are expected to establish and manage external partners and stakeholders to improve performance and accountability. In England, for example, school governors have been spotlighted as integral to school leadership by holding school leaders to account for financial and educational performance (Wilkins, 2016).

Viewed within the discourse of governance, educational leadership is a largely technical, universal and politically neutral know-how for optimizing organizational processes, calculability and outputs. This is the dominant view of the mainstream field of ELMA, which advances ahistorical, apolitical and functionalist accounts of leadership. Socially critical scholarship, however, brings into the analysis of educational leadership the historical and cultural relations of power 'which shape and pattern school leadership in particular periods and in various cultural settings' (Grace 1995: 3). For this knowledge-base, which is concerned with politicizing the technical, educational leadership represents a vital relay that links the changing political objectives of the state to the management of schools. Leadership, as both a body of knowledge and practice, is therefore constituted through governance and tactically deployed in political strategies of 'governing at a distance'.

Activity

Leadership is often trapped in the discourses of organizational efficiency, performance and accountability.

Consider your ideas about leadership by engaging with the following:

Are leaders born or made?

What makes a 'good' school leader?

Where do your ideas about leadership come from?

How might the social and cultural context of a school influence what 'good' school leadership is?

To what extent can and should school leaders challenge the dominant ways of thinking about and doing educational leadership?

Case study one: England

Experiments in market-based reforms to education in England since the 1980s have not only strengthened the status and importance of educational leadership to schools but carved out normative spaces in which certain kinds of educational leaders and leadership styles are, by choice or necessity, more widely practised. Borrowing from business practices and scientific management theory more generally, the internal operation of the school now more closely resembles a business with all the trappings and incentives that accompany setting up and running a business, namely output controls, performance indicators and private-sector styles of management practice. The imprint of business ontology on school culture is nowhere more visible than in the use of standardization and testing. Standardization and testing function, on the one hand, as tools for defining and measuring self-improvement, the principal means through which school leaders and governors (those tasked with the responsibility of holding senior leaders to account for the financial and educational performance of the school) evaluate pupil's educational performance and make judgements about the quality of teaching. On the other hand, standardization and testing are tools for satisfying performance benchmarks and baseline assessments defined by the national school's inspectorate (Ofsted), external regulators and international assessment bodies (see Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA).

From this perspective, educational leadership can be considered a tool of governance to the extent it recalibrates schools as navigable spaces according to data management systems that register their explicitness and transparency as performative entities. As we demonstrate in this section, the movement towards greater devolved management and school autonomy in England, as exemplified through the academies programme, means that large numbers of schools operate as

managers and overseers of their own provision with professional discretion over funding allocation, admissions and staff pay and conditions. This raises the issue of a 'regulation gap' with local government no longer acting as the principal management group for schools. Unwilling to concede too much control to schools, central government and para-government agencies have intervened by compelling school leaders and governors to adopt certain roles and responsibilities in order that their actions are knowable and governable from the perspective of external funders and regulators. Participation in school leadership and governance therefore tends to be limited to those who are technicians of 'best practice' or 'what works' and those who are effective translators for the realization of government-mandated initiatives and performance-driven objectives (Courtney, McGinity and Gunter 2018).

Since the 1980s both Labour and Conservative governments in England have continued (much less discredited or disrupted) the ideological work of creating an education system in the image of the market. This includes new legal arrangements to improve conditions for privatization management of education services. City Technology Colleges (CTCs) introduced under the terms of Education Reform Act 1988 and the Local Management of Schools (LMS) enabled some publicly-funded schools to pursue such an arrangement, that is, a form of administrative self-governing unimpeded by the politics and bureaucracy of local government. Later in the 2000s, the New Labour government introduced the City Academies programme to enable alternative providers, specifically charities, universities and social enterprises set up as private limited companies, to oversee management of underperforming schools in disadvantaged, urban areas, thus removing certain schools from local government jurisdiction. In 2010 the Coalition government (a

cooperation between the Conservative and Liberal Democratic party) revised the academies programme to enable all schools to convert to academy status by joining or creating their own foundations or trusts (see the Academies Act 2010). At the time of writing, statistics released by the Department for Education (DfE) indicate there are 7,317 open academies representing 30% of the total number of primary, secondary, special and alternative provision schools in England.

Research suggests that the conversion of local government-run schools into academies (or 'academisation') has implications for the way schools are organized internally, especially among 'sponsored academies' that are run by large management groups called multi-academy trusts (MATs). Key changes include a stricter focus on performance management, centrally-mandated contractual obligations and market discipline to enhance upward accountability to funders and regulators with restrictions placed on who gets to participate in school governing bodies, usually determined by skills audits and competency frameworks (Wilkins 2016). Against a background of diminishing local government support, school leaders and governors increasingly find themselves entrenched by bureaucratic-managerial roles and responsibilities spanning oversight of premises management, succession planning, budget control, resource allocation, and employment disputes.

As already alluded to in the introduction, we propose two ways through which to interpret these changes to educational leadership. On the one hand, educational leadership can be understood from the narrow rational perspective of an *instrumental-technical* account of governance. A key role for school leaders and

governors in the current education landscape is to maintain the long-term sustainability of the school as a high-reliability, high-performing organization, one that maintains reputational advantage in the local education marketplace and strengthens accountability upwards to funders and regulators. On the other hand, these approaches to educational leadership typically fail to acknowledge the different sets of political and economic interests served and excluded through these configurations of the school, key among them being the smooth function of the school as a corporate competitive entity. NPM techniques, such as the ones outlined above, help to render the internal operation of the school more amenable to the scrutiny of others and more readily calculable in the context of webs of 'commensurability, equivalence and comparative performance' (Lingard, Martino and Rezai-Rashti 2016: 542). Viewed from an agonistic-political perspective, governance as a strategy in rational self-management serves to strengthen relations of accountability between central government and schools, making governance a 'key fidelity technique in new strategies of government' (Rose 1999: 152).

Case study two: Australia

Australia's system of education is composed of a public system of schools which educates approximately 65% of the nation's school students, and a government-subsidized private system made up of Catholic and independent religious and non-religious schools. Each of Australia's states and territories is constitutionally responsible for their education system, with each having their own education departments and regulatory bodies. Since the 1960s and 1970s, Federal Governments have increasingly exerted influence over state education policy and practice, often using funding to tie the states to national political priorities. This

control has tightened over the past decade with the establishment of mandatory national curriculum and testing, and professional standards and accreditation agencies. At the same time, Federal governments have endorsed an agenda for greater principal and school autonomy.

For over a century, Australia's systems of public education have been highly centralized, with state-based education bureaucracies planning and coordinating compulsory school education across Australia's vast geography. This orthodoxy was challenged in the 1990s by the Kennett Government's decentralization agenda for the state of Victoria. The Kennett government devolved administration, planning and resource allocation to schools. It introduced stakeholder governance through school councils and facilitated competition by deregulating student enrolments. Business planning, managing school budgets and the recruitment and employment of staff became key responsibilities of school leaders. Despite these reforms, most Australian states remained largely resistant to school self-management reform until the late 2000s with the introduction of the Independent Public Schools (IPS) initiative in Western Australia (WA) and its subsequent adoption in the state of Queensland.

The WA government and Department of Education promote IPS as a tool for empowering schools and the local community through improved conditions for devolved decision-making. For schools that opt into the program, principals assume responsibility for recruiting and employing staff, determining a staff profile/positions, financial and resource management (a 'one-line budget'), managing small contracts, and developing business and strategic plans. This autonomy however is disciplined by contractual accountability, whereby each school signs a Delivery and

Performance Agreement (DPA) with the Director-General of the Department. This agreement stipulates the responsibilities of the school and the Department, and the performance targets to be achieved and reported on as part of a three-year cycle (through a Department review). Overseeing the school's progress towards its performance goals is the school board, which provides input into the school's business plan and signs off on the DPA. The board does not intervene in or manage the school, nor does it exercise authority over or performance manage school staff. Rather, it performs an accountability function that strengthens the alignment between central government objectives and schools.

Importantly, IPS does not accord schools full autonomy. Schools are subject to union-negotiated industrial agreements, must teach the mandated curriculum, must submit themselves to external accountabilities, have their student enrolments regulated by 'catchment zones', and must comply with Department and public sector policies and standards. Nevertheless, responsibility for the management of performance has been devolved to schools and this freedom to self-manage has proved so appealing that, at the time of writing, 577 of 809 public schools have opted into the program over the past decade. Over the years, criticism of the unfair advantages gained by IPS schools has resulted in the Department extending some key features of IPS to non-IPS schools, including full responsibility for financial management.

Approached from an agnostic-political perspective, a critical issue for school autonomy reforms like IPS is how governance transforms the meaning and practices of principal autonomy and leadership. The promotion of corporate knowledge and

the stress placed on demonstrating improved performance in the context of competition for resources and students, is resulting in some principals modelling their professional identities on the Chief Executive Officer role of private enterprise (Gobby 2013). This corporatized and entrepreneurial form of leadership, along with the increased administrative burden associated with self-management and accountability requirements, is resulting in a values-drift. In this situation, corporate, financial and resource objectives, management and processes are prioritized over pedagogical and curriculum leadership. Therefore, when undertaken in the context of performative and market-based relations, school autonomy does not induce freedom but instead compels the exercise of entrepreneurial, corporate and accountable forms of self-governed conduct.

While this governance approach to the management of schools was promoted in the rhetoric of school and community empowerment, this has not materialized for many stakeholders. For principals and teachers, schools are operating according to the logics and priorities of central governments, their regulatory bodies and the forces of market competition, regardless of the needs of local contexts. There is limited opportunity for principals, teachers and other stakeholders to act outside of these legitimated ways of conceiving and leading schools. School boards, for instance, are being used by principals to select members with business and expert knowledge to shore up the corporate and governance know-how of schools. The effect is that boards avoid discussing substantive issues about educational purpose, curriculum and pedagogy, and those without governance know-how are excluded from school decision-making.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have introduced the concept of governance as an analytical tool through which to interpret and understand educational leadership, but also to engage with the field of educational leadership research more generally. In order to nuance our analysis of what educational leadership is (or what different people claim it to be or should be) and compliment a multi-dimensional conception of educational leadership, we provided two formulations of governance: instrumental-rational and agonistic-political. Each formulation offers a specific orienting position to framing the concept of educational leadership as governance-in-practice, as evidenced in our discussion of the academies programme in England and the Independent Public Schools (IPS) programme in Australia.

The first formulation of governance offered here – instrumental-rational – lends itself to a functionalist account of educational leadership, by far the more dominant framing of the two in terms of its impact on education policy and practice globally. Global discourses of ‘good governance’, where they relate to the strategic management of organisations according to the explicitness of performance indicators and output controls, communicate a view of organisations as necessarily governable, answerable and transparent. A requirement of ‘good governance’ is not only that organisations make themselves accountable in this way, but more importantly, that there are universally-prescriptive conditions and indicators by which organisations can be judged and compared as accountable, usually within a framework of market discipline that values corporate, performative and contractual measures of accountability. Where educational leadership performs this function, an

instrumental-rational account of governance is appropriate. Yet certain techniques and technologies are required to flourish, namely on the ground and among frontline staff, especially among those responsible for leadership and management, in order for organisations to be 'recognizable' as exemplars of good governance. It is here, then, that an agonistic-political formulation of governance is necessary, one that attends to the intrinsic links between governance and governmental programmes more generally.

When theorised through the lens of an agonistic-political formulation of governance, educational leadership can be conceptualised as sites of struggle over meaning as morally-charged requirements to make decisions 'locally' and in the best interests of students sometimes conflict with compulsory, government-mandated requirements to make the internal operation of the school more business-like in terms of its value structures and normative commitments. The idea here is that governance is a process of abstraction or reification by which schools and related educational organisations are de-socialised from their immediate contexts to serve wider political and economic interests, usually through tools and technologies of performance and compliance checks. This process of abstraction does not always succeed in the way that government entities and intergovernmental organisations would like it to, however, as educational leadership is the everyday labour of socially situated actors. Yet, the prevalence of images and discourses of 'heroic', entrepreneurial, corporate, managerially-adept leaders, both in England and Australia, should be a reminder that educational leadership is vulnerable to capture from a market determinism which produces opportunities and legitimacy for the state to intervene in the running of schools.

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