



**Contesting the reform of school governance in England:
Contrasting modes of governance and accountability**

Discutiendo la reforma de la gobernanza escolar en Inglaterra:

Contrastando los modos de gobernanza y rendición de cuentas

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ABSTRACT

Public services can develop two contrasting practices of accountability: the conventional model emphasises that to be accountable is to be *'held to account'*, to be expected to answer questions about performance and that the answers are then evaluated by superiors measured against some standard or expectation following which praise or blame is meted out and sanctions applied. This mode of accountability is expresses hierarchy of authority. A very different process encourages dialogues of accountability between practitioners and publics, who *'give an account'* offering a story that interprets and explains what has happened and why it has taken place. This paper

observes these contrasting practices in the development of school governance in England and argues for the importance of dialogue to enhance learning and democratic responsiveness.

KEYWORDS: accountability, England, governance, dialogue, sanction

RESUMEN

Los servicios públicos pueden desarrollar dos prácticas contrapuestas de rendición de cuentas: el modelo convencional hace hincapié en que ser responsable es "tener en cuenta", que se espera responder a preguntas sobre el rendimiento y que las respuestas son evaluadas por los superiores medidos en función de algún estándar o expectativa, seguido de la alabanza o culpa correspondiente y se aplica la sanción. Este modo de rendición de cuentas expresa la jerarquía de autoridad. Un proceso muy diferente alienta el diálogo sobre la rendición de cuentas entre los profesionales y los públicos, que "dan cuenta" ofreciendo un relato que interpreta y explica lo que ha sucedido y por qué ha tenido lugar. Este artículo observa estas prácticas contrapuestas en el desarrollo de la gobernanza escolar en Inglaterra y aboga por la importancia del diálogo para mejorar el aprendizaje y la capacidad de respuesta democrática.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Rendimiento de cuentas, Inglaterra, gobernanza, diálogo, sanción

1. INTRODUCTION

Underlying the discourses about the governance of schools in England has been a fundamental disagreement about its purposes and practices of accountability: whether they should be modelled as business answerable to the market place or constituted as democratic public forum accountable to a learning community of citizens. At the centre of this debate about school governance, begun in the modern era with a

series of major reforms to schools in the late 1980s, have been disagreements about who should control the development of schools and especially what role parents and members of the community should have in running schools.

The modern tradition of school governance and accountability was established by the *1988 Education Reform Act* which transformed the local government of education in England and Wales, according school governing bodies new delegated powers for budgets and staff as well as responsibility for the strategic direction of the school in a quasi market place of parental choice. To take up these new responsibilities the earlier *1986 Education Act* had created over 350,000 volunteer citizens in England and Wales to occupy reformed governing bodies: it was the largest democratic experiment in voluntary public participation. The governing bodies were constituted on the principle of partnership between all the groups with a 'stakeholder' interest to hold the school to account: parents, teachers and support staff would be elected, while other governors would be appointed by the local authority, and drawn from the local community (including local industry and commerce). All the interests would be regarded as equal, one no more important than another. The principle underlying the constitution of such stakeholder governing bodies had been that schools will only work well when the different constituencies which have an interest in the success of the school are provided with a space to express their voice and reach agreement about the purpose and practices that will shape the education of children in the school. The function of the governing body was to have regard for the overall strategic direction of the school acting as the trustee of the community while taking into account national and local policies. 'The governing body is the custodian in perpetuity of community interests and ensures that developments and changes proposed by the school are in line with community aspirations and needs' (Barton et al, 2006).

The paper begins by developing an analytical framework for accountability, then in Section II sets out the different models and phases of public policy making about school governance and accountability, the first (2004-2010) emphasising community governance of schools and the second (2009-2016) prioritising the importance of corporate efficiency and performance. The body of the paper is then devoted to arguing the case for governing the accountability of schools as a learning community which provides the most favourable environment for educating young people.

2. UNDERSTANDING ACCOUNTABILITY¹

Accountability is a multi-layered concept whose meanings need unravelling if sense is to be made of its emerging form (Ranson, 1986; Ranson and Stewart, 1994; White, 1999) and its connection to trust, the rationality of which Dunn (1988, 1996) regards as the central question of the polity². To be accountable can reveal very different social relationships, of regulation as against deliberation, and relations that express different evaluative practices and criteria, of external or internal goods. These relationships and criteria embody potentially divergent modes of securing trust in the public sphere.

Relations of regulation or reason

To be accountable, conventionally, is to be *'held to account'*, defining a relationship of formal control between parties, one of whom is mandatorily held to account to the other for the exercise of roles and stewardship of public resources. Such a report, moreover, is always an evaluation of performance according to established

¹ This section draws on Ranson, 1986 and Ranson, 2003

² For John Dunn (1988), trust as 'the capacity to commit oneself to fulfilling the legitimate expectations of others, is both the constitutive virtue of, and the key causal precondition for, the existence of any society', also, Dunn, J (1996) '...what politics consists in.... is a huge array of free agents coping with each others' freedom over time. In politics so understood the rationality of trust will always be the most fundamental question.' (p. 98). See also Ranson and Stewart, 1998

standards (Elliot, 2001). A canonical elaboration of this central, judgmental dimension of 'answerability' has been Dunsire's (1978):

'Being accountable may mean ... no more than having to answer questions about what has happened or is happening within one's jurisdiction ... But most usages require an additional implication: the answer when given, or the account when rendered, is to be evaluated by the superior or superior body measured against some standard or some expectation, and the differences noted: and then praise or blame are to be meted out and sanctions applied. It is the coupling of information with its evaluation and application of sanctions that gives "accountability" or "answerability" or "responsibility" their full sense in ordinary usage'. (p. 41)

This understanding locates accountability in the hierarchical practices of bureaucracy. Being held to account is experienced as a specific event, such as the annual appraisal, or departmental review, or the annual shareholders (or parents') meeting, in which data on performance is presented for evaluation. Public trust is secured by specifying performance and regulating compliance. It is this form of accountability, with its potentially punitive image, that has become anathema to professional communities who reject its instrumental rationale and techniques. Professionals become subjected to a process that denies their agency (cf. Elliott, 2001; Fielding, 2001; Gleeson and Husbands, 2001).

Yet, even this conception of formal accountability is rendered problematic in many parts of the public sphere given the complexity and multi-lateral nature of 'accountable' relationships. Teachers are accountable to governors and the local education authority (LEA) but also to parents and the students. Moreover, the patterns of expectation and answerability are reciprocal. If teachers are required to account to parents about the progress of their children they in turn can have legitimate

expectations that carers reinforce the learning process. Such complexity denies any simple linearity of answerability.

More subtle interpretations follow from the usage of *'giving an account'* which emphasises the discursive relations of accountability. Any request 'to account' for performance is likely to lead to the giving of an account, that is, to offer a story that interprets and explains what has happened and why it has taken place. 'To be accountable for one's activities is both to explicate the reasons for them and to supply the normative grounds whereby they may be justified' (Giddens, 1984). The 'partners' to education – ministers, LEAs, teachers, parents and students – may bring different interpretive schema of what is to count as the purposes and conditions of effective achievement. Once accountability is rooted in exchange of accounts of meaning and value in contexts of multiple and reciprocal answerabilities, conflicts of purpose are likely to follow. For Day and Klein (1987) their 'starting point is that accountability is all about the construction of an agreed language or currency of discourse about conduct and performance, and the criteria that should be used in assessing them.' Public trust will be established when the different participants and constituents of an institution strive to reach shared understanding and accounts about its purposes and practices. Thomas and Martin (1996) helpfully call this the 'dialogue of accountability', which proposes that the dialogue between governors and the governed as the best means of democratic accountability.

External or internal goods

The relations and purposes of accountability are inescapably evaluative, but the criteria and judgements vary according to the mode adopted, whether of hierarchical answerability or communicative reason. The differences are captured in MacIntyre's (1982; 1988) distinction between 'the extrinsic goods of effectiveness' (for example,

wealth, status, power) and 'the internal goods of excellence' (such as realising the virtues of justice, courage and friendship). These goods remain endlessly in tension within institutional settings.

When the emphasis is on 'holding to account' the orientation is towards instrumentally rational goods of effectiveness (Power, 1999), creating the culture and technology of 'performativity' that strives to 'optimise performance by maximising outputs (benefits) and minimising inputs (costs)' (Lyotard, 1997). What begins as an approach to assessing quality gravitates to evaluation of efficiency (Elliott, 2001). Measures of productivity are created to judge and control the performance of organisational 'units' rendering them continually accountable. Yet as Foucault argues the accounts produced typically become 'fabrications' of performance, manufactured for their effect as 'accountability' (Ball, 2001a). Such regimes of accountability deny our agency, turning us into inauthentic subjects pursuing and resisting the imposition of extrinsic goods alone.

Practices of communicative rationality, on the other hand, the mutual giving and taking of accounts, can presuppose a very different habitus of accountability. They entail pursuit of the goods of excellence included in MacIntyre's (1982) understanding of 'socially established co-operative activity(ies) through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended'. Members of the community of practice (embracing the public as well, as the profession) recognise and draw upon the authority of standards which they can trust for evaluating performance because they have been tested in deliberation. In the pursuit of excellence, internal goods replace extrinsic controls, agency supplants alienated routines. Reflexive questioning of

achievement informs the practice of mutual accountability: things can be done better, the process implies, even when they are done well. The accounting for (present) performance and the discursive negotiating and agreeing of (improved) performance are interrelated processes in the practice of excellence.

I want now to apply this framework of understanding governance and accountability to education policy making over the last ten years about school governance which reveals two contrasting models of public accountability.

3. COMMUNITY OR CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

By the turn of the 21st century questions began to be raised about the stakeholder model of governing schools: whether they were effective in leading schools and holding them to account, whether their composition and size was appropriate, and whether too much was expected of volunteers in terms of time and responsibility. A series of major research projects assessed the effectiveness of governing bodies and government (DCSF, 2008), in reviewing this research, concluded overall that the 'evidence suggests that there is a relationship between good governance and pupil's achievements, the quality of teaching, as well as the quality of leadership and management.' Nevertheless, the context of schools was changing and school government was expected to respond to two significant developments in public policy. The first, prompted by a tragic incident of failed child protection, led to a national inquiry into the role of public services in support of children at risk: especially social care, health and education. Reform focused on the need to establish collaborative partnerships to enhance the provision of services that will support and engage children and better ensure public accountability (*Children's Plan, 2007*). The second development was the growing policy commitment to transform schools from being run

by local authorities into independent state funded academies that would be governed by self-governing trusts. It was believed this change would strengthen the practices of school government and performance accountability (cf. *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All*, 2005).

Two very different models of reform emerged from these changes: a model of community governance and accountability in response to the first and a business model of answerability in response to the second (cf. Ranson and Crouch, 2009). The discussion will begin by describing the debates that surround school governance and accountability before setting out the rationale for governance to secure the collaborative practice of giving accounts in learning communities.

3.1. THE COMMUNITY MODEL OF GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Concerns about vulnerable families and underperformance of children in areas of disadvantage at the turn of the new century encouraged an accelerating programme of reform that sought nothing less than a cultural transformation in the purposes of education, its professional organisation and governance. The Government's many sided agenda for change grew out of an analysis presented in *The Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* (DfES, 2004), which set out their claims about the principal underlying problems and flaws of the Education Service: disengaged pupils and the need to personalise learning, the compartmentalising of services, lack of accountability and the unbroken link over fifty years of policy development between class disadvantage and underachievement. Many schools have been unable to engage not only these youngsters but also their parents and carers.

If these concerns were to be addressed, the Government argued, a new system of education would be needed. The Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (2003) and the ensuing legislation (*Children Act*, 2004, *Education and Inspections Act*, 2006; *The*

Children's Plan, 2007) began the most significant reconstituting of education as a Children's Service, integrating aspects of education, health and social services to constitute a new framework of holistic care for young people. Profound change would be needed 'in the culture and practice of working with children towards a system organised around children, young people and families....This must be a long term programme of change and should embed new principles and relationships across the system – between centre and localities, between sectors and between children, young people, families and service providers' (*Every Child Matter: Next Steps, 2004*).

The government's policy agenda sought to prescribe a new community of practice of collaborative accountability for the education service to support all the needs of all young people and their families, but also to re-imagine the organization and governance of schools. The near universal tradition of providing an education service had been to conceive the object of learning as the child in the classroom of a school detached from the community. Now the focus was on creating a more inclusive learning community embracing family and neighbourhood, with teachers, health and social workers collaborating to support all the learning needs of all children throughout their lives.

Policy initiatives have necessitated the re-configuring of school, children's centres and agencies into *collaborative 'localities and clusters'*: in particular, the policies of *extended schools*. Because all the services and curricular opportunities required by these policies cannot be provided by each institution alone, they will need to be offered in consortia arrangements. This new direction for school government was

favourably received by many schools and local authorities. A leading member of a national association of governing bodies commented:³

The localities model is the future. Collaborations have been growing for different purposes to enable community engagement and cohesion. We need governing bodies to broaden their remit, to engage more broadly with the community, to engage with the underachieving. Examine what are the obstacles, and identify those in the community who can help remove the obstacles to learning. This develops the role of governing bodies as leaders and enablers of community development. There is also a growing recognition that the new partnership agenda requires a process of accountability to the community for public services.

Joint governor arrangements are needed. At one level this is straightforward, requiring agreements to be minuted, but the next level it is the need for joint committee arrangements. These joint committees in 5-10 years will become locality boards. Education Improvement Partnerships use collaborative arrangements to create Joint Committees, not just for 3 or 4 schools but for the whole of a town. When partners want to speak to schools they will speak to the Joint Committee. That will become the mechanism for collective decision-making. Money in the future will be devolved to these Joint Committees.

People are ready for this. It is not being resisted by heads. But it must be owned by governing bodies themselves: it should not be imposed on them.'

The governing body leaders believed that the new education agenda needed a dimension of governance and accountability at the level of the school area but it would be a mistake, they argued, for this new community oriented governance to be implemented top-down by central government according to uniform regulations. The model needed to develop flexibly in response to emerging local needs and local groups and the Local Authority is the appropriate layer of governance to take the lead in creating the emerging system of responsive community governance.

³ See research of Ranson and Crouch (2009). The quote below was taken from my unpublished study in 2010 of a group of national school governing body leaders reflecting upon the policy changes of the period.

'The Local Authority is the appropriate lead on this: flexible development bottom up. My Local Authority is not inventing one model to impose on all. It is responding to the agenda as developed by different heads and governor groups around the Authority. If schools want a committee for 14-19 the Authority supports it, sees how it goes. It is not like a federation taking ages to set up. It is a way of trying to work together and then develop. It is building on experience, and building on trust.'

The emerging model of governance and accountability would turn governing bodies into leaders of the community. Advocates for this model recognized that the challenge posed by their reforms would be to grow the new model out of current best practice and to develop the capability of parents to contribute to this extended community form of governance. They encouraged the development of Parent Councils as a way of engaging the parent body and establishing a more secure relationship of mutual deliberation with the governing body.

3.2. THE CORPORATE MODEL OF GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

There had always, perhaps, been a strain of thinking about school governing bodies that wished them to be small boards of efficient decision-making and answerability rather than spaces of endless deliberation. The period of austerity following the 2008 financial crash increased pressure upon schools to make their governing bodies more business-like, to create an executive board of governors or trustees to replace the democratic stakeholder model that elects parents and teachers to a governing body of representative interests. The report from the Ministerial Working Group on School Governance (DCSF, 2010) proposed improvement in efficiency could be attained by relaxing the stakeholder proportions and improving the relevant skill set of governing body members. One national leader of school governors was an advocate of the movement to model governing bodies on the private sector board (Ranson and Crouch, 2009). As the roles and responsibilities of governing

bodies had increased it became unreasonable, he argued, 'to operate multi-million pound businesses on the basis of people 'helping out'.

What is needed is to create a business model of a board of non executive directors. My feeling is that we need to get closer to a sort of more, if you like – hierarchical style, we need to move, I suppose in a way, to a business model of a board. My view now is that it's the head teachers' responsibility to manage the school and it's the governor's prime responsibility to manage the head teacher.

The emphasis would be on a smaller board of accountable non- executive directors, nominated and appointed, who will bring dimensions of social capital to the school, particularly the experience of running businesses, and with networks into the public sector and business worlds.

The move to turn schools into self-governing trusts only accentuated this orientation to a business model of governance that made the governing body accountable to parents as consumers in the market place. The great project of the government since 2010, to free schools from local authority control and reconfigure them as independent state academies, this being the principal action that would transform the performance of schools, became public policy in 2016 with the publication of a White Paper, *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, the principal purpose of which was to convert all schools into academies by 2022, with all schools converted or in the process of converting by 2020. The Secretary of State would take further powers to accelerate the conversion to academy status in local authorities deemed to be underperforming. By 2020 the role of local authorities in maintaining schools, begun in 1870, would have been terminated, including their responsibilities for the governance, organisation and improvement of teaching and learning in maintained schools, together with ownership and asset management of school buildings and land. Residual roles for local authorities were proposed in planning school places, in

ensuring the needs of vulnerable children and those with special educational needs, and in championing the cause of parents, children and the local community.

The work of local authorities is being replaced by 'Multi-Academy Trusts' (MATs), informally known as academy chains which will replace the local authority as the middle tier management of the national system of governance. In January 2016 there were 936 MATs which included 68% of all academies. These MATs vary in size and scope across the country. The largest MAT, Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) has 63 schools while 748 MATs included fewer than five schools. While the AET incorporates academies in eight of nine English regions and 25 local authorities across the country, others MATs are more local in scope. Perhaps the principal rationale of MATs for the government is to enable good practice to be shared not just between high and low performing local schools but also between schools in different local authorities achieving contrasting levels of performance. The White Paper argues that MATs: '(a) Prevent geographic monopolies with different MATs operating in a given area, increasing diversity of provision and giving parents more choice and competition. If performing well, MATs can scale their success nation-wide, taking effective models from one part of the country to the toughest areas in a way that no high performing local authority could; (b) Provide opportunities to bring together educational expertise with business and financial skills in innovative and efficient organisations that can deliver better outcomes from the resources available; and c) Offer a clear, single point of accountability where the leader of the MAT has the powers and funding to bolster standards...'⁴

A distinctive feature of the White Paper is that it would no longer be a requirement to elect parents to serve on the governing bodies of schools. The stakeholder model of school governance, in which all those with a significant role in the work of a school – for example, teachers, parents and community, the local authority – are represented on a governing body,

⁴ Department for Education, *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, p. 59

is to be replaced by a model which places emphasis on skill and experience in the business of leading organisations. Leading education lawyers advising the *Times Educational Supplement* describe the nature of the new legal framework of school governance:

- (i) 'A school that converts to become a standalone academy will sign a funding agreement with the Department for education that transfers control over the school to an academy trust – essentially an individual company with a corporate structure.
- (ii) School governors may remain in name, but will lose any legal responsibility for and control that they had over the school unless they are part of the new academy trust.
- (iii) With standalone, single academies, school governors are likely to be part of the trust.
- (iv) When a school joins a multi-academy trust (MAT), it signs itself over to the existing overall trust.' Each school will have its own 'supplemental funding agreement', but these agreements are between the MAT and the secretary of state.
- (v) The local governing body can have as much or as little say over the school as the MAT decides.
- (vi) The more schools that are in the MAT, the less likely it is that their governors will be represented on the controlling trust.
- (vii) Because a school loses its separate identity when entering a MAT, there is currently no way that it can leave unilaterally.'⁵

At least one trust, E-Act, has scrapped local governing bodies altogether in favour of 'academy ambassadorial advisory bodies. A specialist in education law, David Wolfe a QC with Matrix Chambers, has commented that 'a school in a MAT has no legal identity and will become a mere local branch of the trust. It has no existence independent of the MAT, in the same way as your local Tesco Metro has no existence separate from Tesco. A school in a MAT has no more ability to move to another MAT

⁵ This is taken from Richard Vaughan's article in the *Times Educational Supplement* (15 April, 2016) discussing the implications for school governance of the legal framework of the White Paper.

than a branch of Tesco can decide to become Sainsbury's. For 'school' read 'local branch'."

This incipient corporate takeover of public service schools is only one aspect of a much broader corporatizing of the governance and accountability of local education that has been reported principally in the research of Stephen Ball (2003, 2007, 2009), but also in the work of Mahony et al (2004); (Hatcher, 2001; Whitfield, 2000, 2001). Ball (2009) describes the growth of education businesses which sell programmes of training, support and improvement to schools (as well as other educational institutions). These new educational entrepreneurs, moreover, 'mediate between policy and institutions by offering (at a price) to make policy manageable and sensible to schools and to teachers' and, one might add to their governing bodies who will sanction such commissioning. These, often private sector, businesses carry the language and practices of the private sector into the public sphere of schools, modelling them on the efficient firm. Through this 'recontextualisation of business and management language, the work of governance is pursued and contributes to changes in everyday social relations in schools...' (Ball, 2009, p. 86).

Two models for improving school governance and accountability – one emphasising the virtues of business and the other those of collaboration and community participation – have competed for public support. Now it appears that the corporate model has vanquished its rival. Experience of running organisations, especially businesses, is regarded as more important than knowledge of the social and cultural character of the communities in which schools are located and are to serve. The value of governance, it is presupposed, lies in organisational leadership and resource accountability. This fails, I shall argue, to understand the significance of governance in education and the wider public sphere. The nature of school governance must be related to the distinctive purposes, tasks and conditions of learning and the wider purposes of education. It is to this task of establishing the argument

that the case for and role of governance grows out of an understanding of the need for democratically accountable learning communities that I now turn.

4. TOWARDS A LEARNING COMMUNITY OF MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Over the past decade a discourse on a 'new learning' has begun to emerge which challenges the dominant paradigm of learning and teaching. Education has traditionally pursued too narrow a conception of purpose based on forms of knowledge and competence rather than preparing young people for the practice of living in society. A number of studies (Wells, 1999; Moll et al, 2005; Hasan, 2005; Lingard et al, 2011) have argued for more active approaches to learning beyond the classroom which serve to prevent schools and colleges becoming islands of socialisation detached from the families and communities they are supposed to serve. The new learning emphasises the significance for learners of recognising the journey they are making between worlds. Understanding this nature of learning has implications for schools, the learning communities they create and the forms of governance and accountability they practise. The need for governance as the mutual giving of accounts grows out of a line of argument that begins with understanding conditions for children's motivation to learn lying in webs of meaning and recognition of capability.

Learning from meaning and recognition: motivation grows out of a sense of purpose that derives from the relevance of the activities for the learner and the life she is leading, because we are embodied beings, shaped by the forms of life and culture that give our experience value and make our actions intelligible (Mulhall, 2001; Wittgenstein, 1953). When learning connects with the 'webs of significance' which shape our lives (Geertz, 1975), we perceive its meaning and its relevance. Meaning has such significance for learning because living does.

The pedagogic task, argues Bruner (1990, 1996, 2000), is thus to recognise this significance of the meaning of students' different accounts for their learning: and thus the importance of connecting activities of school and college to the ways of life and thought which shape the everyday lives of young people. Children are not deprived of 'culture'. They are cultural beings from the first, active agents striving to develop a way of being in the world drawing on the language and resources in a form of life to make sense of themselves, the particular form of life they live and their place within it.

Learning as the construction of meaning implies recognition of the distinctive qualities and capabilities of the learner. Recognition of who we are, our identity, is the source of self esteem and confidence, which provide the condition for developing autonomy. Our self-realisation grows out of relationships of mutual recognition (Hegel, 1977; Taylor, 1992; Honneth, 1995, 2007). The precious parts of the learners' lived experiences, identity and history need to be recognised and valued within the school. As Richardson (1990) argues: 'their culture, language and dialect, and countless experiences, stories and memories of their families, communities and friends, including in particular stories of oppression and injustice' (1990, p. 101; cf. Richardson and Miles, 2003). If learning is to connect with learners' own history and experience schools will need to learn to value the cultural capital which students bring and devise a socially and culturally relevant curriculum (Collins, Harkin and Nind, 2002).

Between worlds: The learner, therefore, cannot be educated effectively independently of a community's webs of significance, its account of what is important. The school has to develop detailed knowledge of an individual's uniqueness that grows out of attention and care to their needs, valuing and nurturing the distinctive identity and voice of each (Fielding, 1997, 2001). Supportive relationships (as provided by mentors and tutors) in the learning process are vital to securing this attentive

understanding of individual learning needs, and securing emotional commitment to learning.

Yet the process of learning is inescapably a journey between worlds, which connects the language of home and community with the language of the public space. Learning is always a bi- (or multi) lingual experience, as we learn to move between genres and codes of the tacit and particular and the explicit and universal. The challenge for the school as Fielding proposes is to create the dialogue and the pedagogic materials that enable this co-construction of accounts and meaning, grounding learning in the personal and familiar while tying it in to worlds of difference. The curriculum, the approach to learning and teaching, the processes of assessing progress all need to form bridges between worlds (Hasan, 2005; Wells, 2008; Young, 1998, 1999, 2000).

A school cannot achieve its purposes without mediating worlds - remaking itself as an institution in and for its communities of difference, understanding the interdependent nature of learning and living, and yet encouraging the capabilities that enable learners to flourish between cultures in a cosmopolitan public world. The medium of potential tension in this learning is reflective dialogue (Wells, 1999) that enables the give and take of accounts to negotiate a frame of shared meanings and agreement in the space of reason. It is the elaborate code of communicative accountability within a community of practical reasoners able to examine and evaluate their common goods (Habermas, 1984, 1990).

Learning communities: That learning grows out of motivation grounded in co-configuration of meaning between worlds requires a school to create a learning community of mutual recognition and accountability that embraces institutions, parents

and their communities as well as the codes of the public sphere. Wenger (1998; 2000) suggests that learning communities can play this role because of the bridges they form:

Learning communities require enough structure and continuity to accumulate experience, and enough perturbation and discontinuity to continually renegotiate meaning. They transform our identities by building personal histories in relation to the histories of our communities and create bridges between our multi-membership of various communities (eg. home, school, work).

Learning communities form the condition for recognition and becoming. Learners require the support of others if they are to learn and to realise what they can become. But what are learning communities? They are characterised by qualities of relationship, rather than being defined by any particular social or educational form. A family, a firm, a profession, or a governing body can be a learning community as much as a school, and the latter can only be described as a learning community if it reveals specific processes at work rather than because it is an 'educational' institution. As a *community* it will be characterised by expressive as well as purposive (non compartmentalised) relationships, enable a sense of identity and belonging (memory), and enable mutuality and friendship through collaborative endeavour. A more expanded understanding of the object of learning locates the social form (for example, school-in-its-communities) in its local communities and seeks to examine the nature of their interdependence.

The learning that takes place in the community could focus on the extent to which its members are engaged in learning, are supporting the learning of others (nurturing), and learning from others, from difference (reciprocity). Once more, however, an expanded understanding of the object of learning would grasp learning as a collective activity through which members were working to transform the community,

to become a community. In this perspective a learning community is a community of inquiry, in search of itself, acknowledging plural identities and voices that can be accommodated only by enabling all to participate in deliberation of common concerns in pursuit of shared understanding and mutual accountability.

4.1. GOVERNANCE MEDIATING LEARNING BETWEEN WORLDS

The unfolding argument proposes that learning grows out of motivation which depends upon recognising and valuing the distinctive qualities of each and the cultural traditions they embody. If learning expresses a journey between worlds, the challenge for the school is to create a learning community that brings together local and cosmopolitan in its pedagogic practices. This configuration of the school and its communities, by interconnecting the symbolic orders of each, creates the conditions for relevance, motivation and learning. Excellent teachers have always sought, as a defining principle of their individual practice, to relate activities within their classroom to the interests of the child. But the argument being developed here proposes that this configuration is a strategic and systemic task for the school as a whole institution.

Understanding this interdependence of learning and living leads to a conclusion that it is the function of governance to constitute the structures of mutual accountability within and between the school and its communities. The professional specialist will have a vital role to play in judging the appropriate learning materials that will forge the connection of meaning between cultures. But the task of creating the learning community to include worlds of difference, cannot alone be the responsibility of the knowledgeable specialist. It is, principally, a function of governance to constitute the forms of life in the public sphere and, in so doing, constitute the springs of motivation and the conditions of learning (Ranson, 2004, 2008). Realising achievement depends on reciprocal accountability as the condition for recognition and motivation.

The purpose of the governance of learning is thus twofold. The first is to constitute the public goods of educating all children and young people to develop their potential so as to contribute fully to the communities in which they will live and work. In so doing, governance constitutes what it is to be a citizen. Because an education is about the unfolding of a life, rather than the induction of a skill-set, decisions about the purpose and content of an education are likely to reflect differences of belief and become the subject of contestation and debate.

An essential and related purpose of the governance of schooling, therefore, is to constitute the spaces and processes of accountability that enable the relevant interests and voices to deliberate the purposes of learning and capability formation. This dialogue cannot be a technical task of calculation, but will need to be governed by the principles of public discussion – the giving and taking of reasons – that can resolve differences and secure public agreement. This process should include not only those directly involved in a school, such as parents and teachers, but take into account the interests of the wider community, because all will be affected by the public good of educating every child.

4.2. CALIBRE AND CAPABILITY: CAN VOLUNTEER CITIZENS GOVERN?

The evidence that governing bodies can make a difference to school improvement was important but only focused the gaze on the variation in good governance. Have volunteer citizens the capability to govern a major public institution such as a (large secondary) school? Can amateurs, like 'ordinary' parents, rule over a professional community?

This problematises what is to count as capability, and which capabilities count. If schools are to be accountable for managing themselves – their finances, land and staff – they have indeed many of the dimensions of a business in the private sector.

They will need governors, as well as professional leaders, with the capability to understand and make decisions about resources and infrastructure that will necessarily influence their primary purposes of educating young people. Many heads and governing schools have sought in recent years to strengthen their capacity to provide the leadership of these business aspects of their institutions by including members with appropriate expertise. They have endeavoured to accumulate *social capital* by appointing governors who bring their networks of information, knowledge and resource contacts to enrich the practice of a school.

Yet although 'business' is an inescapable dimension of the work of a school, it is not its principal rationale. It is a means to their primary purpose of enabling learning and expanding capability. These are public goods, activities and achievements that are of value to all in society: when the potential of an individual child flourishes, all benefit. It is because these goods of education are universal, as well as individual, that schools have been regarded as such a significant *public service*. Teachers, school leaders, and professional specialists will be needed to advise formal deliberation within the forums of governance about the forms of learning that a school should develop, taking into account national policies and research.

Nevertheless, an education is not in the end a technical activity about procedure but has to take into account considerations about the kinds of lives families and communities believe it is appropriate for their young people to lead and the capabilities they ought to possess. Discussions about the ends of learning cannot be separated from the purposes of living, the *making* of lives, and these considerations are social, cultural and political in nature rather than technical procedures. This is so because an education is a journey between worlds – parochial and cosmopolitan – and the challenge for the governance of a school, as well as for teachers is to mediate these worlds, if young people are to become engaged in learning and commit themselves to

developing their potential. The practice of organising and governing education, therefore, does not depend alone on *techne* (technical knowledge) but on *phronesis* (wise judgement about the purposes and practices that will unfold the potential and capabilities of lives).

The analysis here suggests that the arenas of governance may need to include different kinds of knowledge, generalists as well as specialists, but shaping and governing the deliberations should be an understanding of the universal goods that a public service should be providing and be accountable for. The qualities that are indispensable to forming judgements about the purposes and practices of learning will be provided by the wisdom of reflective citizens who will bring critical understanding about the qualities required to make the journey between worlds. This background understanding of the cultural conditions of learning will enable them to ask the questions that bring the necessary scrutiny to professional practice: the engagement of young people in learning will be in proportion to the capacity of schools to listen and respond sympathetically to the voices and accounts of the community.

This argument suggests that the case for the continuing relevance of the stakeholder model of governance and accountability, of including the different voices in a deliberation of the purposes of learning. At best the model needs amending to respond to aspects of change, rather than being redundant because its fundamental principles are no longer appropriate.

5. CONCLUSION

The stakeholder model, therefore, remains crucial to the effective practice of accountable school governance. By deliberating and reconciling social and cultural differences, governance constitutes the practices for mediating particular and

cosmopolitan worlds and thus the conditions for engaging young people in their learning, as well as in the preparation for citizenship in civil society.

What do we learn from these questions that need to be taken into account in further developing the practices and organising of school governance? First, that governance matters because: it strengthens the practices which secure institutional accountability; it mediates the social and cultural conditions that engage young people in their learning; and it constitutes the practices of participation and deliberation which secure that mediation. Second, the participation of volunteer citizens matters because practical wisdom is as, or more, important than technical expertise or networks of social capital. Finally, the object of governance should include the community as well as the individual institution. The purpose of governance is to develop the public goods of learning and citizenship, and to mediate differences so as to secure public agreement about those goods of educational opportunity. A public education cannot be left to chance and contingency, nor to the interested decisions of a corporate club or association. It is the responsibility of civil society as a whole.

The conditions to support multi-level community accountability.

Developing the capabilities of volunteer citizens; linking the ecclesia and the agora. The dilemma facing the governance of schools, and implicit in the unfolding analysis, is the anxiety on the one hand that many volunteer citizens may lack the capabilities to contribute to the exacting tasks demanded of contemporary governance of schools. On the other hand, the argument has proposed that families and their communities must be major stakeholders in the arrangements of governance because their participation is essential if schools are to develop understanding of the social and cultural conditions of learning. A child cannot be educated independently of her community's webs of significance. The challenge for governance, as has been argued

is therefore to mediate the lifeworlds of children and the public world into which they are journeying. Governance is not a technical task, it constitutes the conditions for effective learning.

How is this dilemma to be reconciled? There will be a need, a senior HMI reported, for a school 'to grow a governing body' if it is to fulfil the demands of constituting a learning community. Parents from disadvantaged communities are more likely to develop the confidence to become members of the governing body when they have been involved in the life of the school. When they are invited to become mentors for young people, use their local knowledge and cultural capital to support the school, in helping to organise festivals, concerts, plays and musicals and artistic events, parents will give expression to their varied capabilities. A school that creates forums for parents (in addition to those for children) at the level of the class, year group and school creates arenas that encourage and support the capabilities of voice, deliberation and collective judgement that are the defining characteristics required for capable participation as volunteer citizens in the governance of schools.

In this way governance is not a separate assembly detached from the life of the school. Rather, governance is integrally connected to and grows out of the life of the school as an expanded learning community. There is not a crisis of capability in the community. Most governing bodies, even in areas of disadvantage, are well governed. There is a rich pool of volunteer citizens who have the experience and capability to grow into community leaders of cluster and locality governance. Schools, by expanding parent involvement throughout, become the nurseries of capability for knowledgeable citizenship participation and leadership in civil society.

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