

# 1 | Values and their place in educational leadership

If you approach your thinking about values by way of your experience of leadership or your reading about it, you may bring various preconceptions with you. There is already a mass of ideas available in the academic literature and the professional literature about what leaders should do and how they should think. This chapter, after a brief opening section, will reverse the order: it will ask you to think about values in general, before thinking about educational leadership or even about education. Later in the chapter we will bring the discussion back to education by looking directly at a number of ways in which values can make a difference to educational thinking.

This chapter will help you to:

- understand why values are vital in educational leadership;
- articulate what you take values to be, and which values are important to you;
- be aware of a variety of answers to the question ‘where do values come from?’;
- reflect on the difference between moral or ethical values, and other values;
- be aware of a variety of ways in which values can impinge on educational decision-making.

After a brief introduction reviewing why values are important in educational leadership, this chapter has four main sections: what are values? where do our values come from? morality and ethics; how do values make a difference in education?

## ***Why are values important in educational leadership?***

It is not difficult to find answers to this question within the academic literature on leadership and management, but many answers give only part of the picture. For instance, the following statement by Willower has been quoted by a number of writers:

Because a significant portion of the practice in educational administration requires rejecting some courses of action in favour of a preferred one, values are generally acknowledged to be central to the field. (Willower, 1992, quoted in Begley and Leonard, 1999: 51. Willower is using the term 'administration' in the American sense which, in educational contexts, approximately equates to 'leadership')

Willower's statement is not false, but it does illustrate the sort of preconception to which I have already referred: in this case, the idea that values are important because they come into *decisions*. Certainly the decisions we make turn on values, but is that the only way in which values come into our lives – either our professional or our personal lives? There is more to educational leadership than making a decision from time to time, and it would be surprising if values only made a difference when there is a decision between alternatives to be made (as if everything else in educational leadership is somehow a value-free sphere). By the end of this chapter you should be aware of a number of other ways in which values are important in educational leadership.

First, though, we need to understand more about values in general. The following sections will ask you to think about your own values, personally as well as professionally.

## What are values?

In entering on a distinct area of enquiry it is natural to want some clarification about exactly what we are meant to be studying. Sometimes we find that a definition of terms is helpful. But definitions need to be treated with some caution. 'Values' is not a technical term. In talking about values, we are talking about something which is part of the experience of everyone. You already in your life have a lot of experience of values, though you may not have spent a lot of time in thinking about your values or articulating them. This chapter will encourage you to do that. So it is best to start, not by giving you a definition, but by asking you to think about what you recognise as the values that you take to be important.

*Before you read any further, try to call to mind some values that you are sure are important. Then see if you can write down two lists:*

- *Values that you think are important for anyone;*
- *Values that you take to be especially important for you, in your own life.*

(Later we shall come to values that may be especially important in educational leadership. It does not matter if some of the same items come into more than one list.)

It is often easier to list examples of some kind of thing than it is to give a definition. For instance, you would find it easy to list some examples of fruit; but more difficult (unless you happen to be a botanist) to give a definition of fruit. The same applies to values, though even to list examples of values may be more difficult than listing examples of fruit.

I do not know, of course, what you will have listed, but I can make some guesses, and these underlie the next few paragraphs.

In the first list, it is possible that you have written down some abstract terms such as 'justice', 'truth', 'goodness', 'health', 'happiness', 'love' – of course there could be many other such terms.

In the second list, you may have repeated some items. But you may also have mentioned some things that are more personal to you. This might be doing well in your job, or having a good relationship with your family, or many other things.

Is there anything in common so far about all the things you have listed? One guess is that you have probably not included in your lists any concrete physical objects. For instance, while it may be important to you to live with your family in a comfortable house – this may be something you value – you have probably not written 'my house' in your second list.

I may be wrong about this. Some of the writers in the literature of educational leadership, when they talk about values, have included physical objects in their lists. To me, while there is no doubt that we can value particular objects – a vase which I have inherited from my grandmother might for instance have great sentimental value to me, and my computer may have great usefulness to me (another word for 'usefulness' here is 'instrumental value', and we shall come back to that idea) – it would seem odd to me to include 'my grandmother's vase' or 'my computer' in a list of my values.

You will have to see if you agree with this. We are talking for the moment – as philosophers often do – about how we use words, and words can be used rather differently by different speakers, especially by different speakers of an international language like English. To me, a value has to be something less tangible than a physical object: it might be justice, it might be my relationship with my family, it might be having a comfortable house, but it is not actually the house itself.

In a moment I shall ask you to think whether you can suggest a definition of values. Before that, there are two more points worth thinking about. One is about importance. I asked you to list values that you take to be important. That leaves open the possibility that there may be unimportant values. In their book on *The Ethics of School Administration*, the authors Strike, Haller and Soltis (1998: 36–7) give as an example of a value statement:

'Pickles are better than olives.'

This example has nothing to do with school leadership, of course, and there is nothing wrong with that. If we are trying to get as clear as we can about our *concept* of values, it is best not to get involved at the same time in contentious questions on which people might have serious disagreements. That can come later. It often helps our understanding if we start with easy examples and then move on to more difficult ones. The problem in this case is that I am not sure whether most people would count 'pickles are better than olives' as a value statement at all. It is certainly, as the authors say, an expression of a personal preference. We shall have to say more later about the relationship between values and preferences. For the moment, you could say either of two things: *either* this expression of a preference is so clearly just that – an expression of a preference and nothing more – that we would not seriously count it as a value statement at all; or it is an example of a value statement, but the value in question is a thoroughly trivial one. It does not matter which of these things you are inclined to say, provided you recognise that if we can count this claim 'pickles are better than olives' as a value statement at all, it is a trivial case. Outside of academic examples, we are more likely to talk about values – actually using that word – when we think there is something of importance at stake.

The second point for the moment is that values can affect what people do. Even in the trivial case just mentioned, if someone thinks pickles are better than olives, she is likely to choose pickles when offered a choice between the two. In more important cases, if you value harmonious relationships within your family more than success in your job, or the other way round, this is likely to make a difference if you have to choose, say, whether to apply for a promotion which will take you further away from your home.

*Keeping in mind the points about values made so far, see if you can suggest a definition of values.*

Here is a definition, attributable in its original version to the sociologist Kluckhohn, which has been cited by several writers on values in educational management:

'Values are conceptions, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influence the selection from available modes, means and ends of action.' (Quoted with minor changes from Begley 2003: 3)

*Compare this with the definition you have thought of. Does Kluckhohn's definition seem to fit your own understanding of values? If not, what would you want to change in the definition?*

Here are some comments on Kluckhohn's definition, following the order of the points mentioned in it:

- That values are conceptions seems to fit the examples we have mentioned so far. We have suggested that values are not physical objects but ideas about what is important or what matters to us.
- Values may be explicit or implicit. If you say that one of your values is justice or truth then you are making this value explicit. But in your choices and actions you will be influenced all the time by what you take to be preferable or important, whether or not you spell out to yourself or to anyone else exactly what ideas are influencing you.
- Values may be distinctive of an individual: perhaps some personal experience has given you an aspiration for your own life which other people do not share. But values can also be distinctive of a group. A religious community, for instance, may hold certain values which are different from those of other groups. (It is important here that values, like ideas generally, do not exist just in the heads of individuals. Ideas are recorded in writing and in symbolism of many kinds – in religious ritual, for instance.)
- Values are conceptions of what is desirable. 'Desirable' means something like 'worthy to be desired', and this may be different from what actually is desired. If you are a smoker, but you think you ought to give it up, then you will often desire a cigarette but what you think is desirable is that you stop smoking and cease to have a craving for cigarettes. Then being free of such a habit is one of your values – one of your conceptions of what is desirable.
- Kluckhohn says that values 'influence the selection from available modes, means and ends of action.' This makes the important point that there is a link between values and motivation. Whenever we are doing something deliberately – and not only when we are consciously deciding to take one course of action and reject another, as the statement from Willower might suggest – our values will be influencing us in what we do and how we do it, even though we may not have spelled out our reasons for acting in one way rather than another.

*At this point there is another question for you to think about. Do our values always influence us?*

You are probably familiar with the idea of paying *lip service* to values. This means that someone says that something is important but does not act accordingly. For instance, a male head teacher may say that gender equality is important, but actually take no action to prevent practices that discriminate against girls and women. Does he, then, recognise the importance of gender equality at all?

Possibly he does, in a sense. Perhaps we should not be too ready to say, without further details about the case, that such a teacher neglects the value of equality altogether. The idea that there is a connection between values and actions is correct, but it is not a straightforward connection.

## Where do our values come from?

This is a question often asked about values. It is one way of expressing a set of concerns about values that often worry people. Can we be confident that the values we are following are the right ones?

If we *are* confident, then how should we respond towards people who appear to hold different values from our own?

If we are *not* confident, then can we find some sort of firm grounding for the values we are following? If not, then is it alright just to follow our own values in our own way? In private life this might be possible. But for anyone working in education there are further questions. Many decisions are made which make a difference to the lives of young people as they grow up. Are teachers perhaps just imposing the values they happen to hold onto these young people? And are educational leaders imposing *their* values onto teachers?

Because such questions can always be raised, we need to look further into where values come from and what sort of justification they can be given.

On this issue, in the context of educational leadership and administration, the work of Christopher Hodgkinson has been influential for several decades. He has offered a framework for thinking about the sources of people's values that has been adopted for different purposes by various writers (e.g. by Begley (2003) in an article already cited) and criticised by others (see Richmon (2003 and 2004) for an appreciative but critical stance).

It is useful to have some acquaintance with Hodgkinson's ideas because other writers in the field so often refer to him. And his framework is useful for addressing the question we have asked here, about where values come from and how they can be justified. The most important point to grasp here is that there is no single answer to this question: instead there are several kinds of answer, each of which will seem to fit different cases. On this point Hodgkinson and his critics would agree, even though they would offer some different ways of dividing up the whole field of values.

Hodgkinson introduced and discussed his framework in several places (e.g. Hodgkinson, 1991: ch. 5) with some variation in the details. He categorises several sources of values. At one end of the framework are values based simply in preferences. We do not usually expect people to give reasons for their simple preferences (for example, I would not ask you for your reason for preferring your coffee black). Hodgkinson calls values that are simply a matter of preference 'subrational'.

Next there are values that Hodgkinson thinks can be given a rational justification, by appealing either to consensus or to consequences. Then at the other end of the framework there are values that are matters of principle, expressing commitments that (in Hodgkinson's view) go beyond the possibility of rational grounding. Hodgkinson calls these values 'transrational'. They might include principles of justice, equality or dignity.

In ordinary English we may think of the principles that Hodgkinson calls 'transrational' either as fundamental principles that underpin all our other values, or as high-level principles that are somehow placed above all our other values. Both of these ways of thinking involve a spatial metaphor. So if we represent Hodgkinson's framework in a diagram, we can put the transrational values either at the bottom or at the top (you may find diagrams of both sorts in the leadership literature). Here, because it is convenient to say more about preferences first, we can use the following table as a reminder of the framework:

Hodgkinson's categories of values:	
1.	No rational basis (subrational): values based in preferences
2.	Rational basis: values based in
	(i) consensus
	(ii) consequences
3.	No rational basis (transrational): fundamental principles

## Preferences

First, then, some values may have no basis other than personal preference. I have already mentioned the example from Strike, Heller and Soltis of a 'value statement' which is simply an expression of a preference: 'pickles are better than olives.' I questioned whether we would really, outside academic discussion, be likely to see this as a *value* statement at all. Nevertheless, in order to see how statements that we do think are about important values are different from this one, we need to be explicit about several points:

- that people do have preferences;
- that these preferences do influence people's choices and actions;
- that at least some preferences really do rest in nothing but individual taste.

The last point means that if one person says 'pickles are better than olives' and another says 'olives are better than pickles' there is no point in their arguing. There is no evidence or reasoning that one could appeal to show that the other is wrong. It really is just a matter of preference.

Some people, including some philosophers, have thought that all values are like this, in that they have no basis other than personal preference. In philosophy, slightly different versions of such views are known by the terms 'emotivism' and 'subjectivism', which you may come across in your reading. (For an argument that certain approaches to school leadership are flawed because they rest in emotivism, see Smith (2002).

Most people think that there are many questions of values that cannot be reduced to personal preference. Suppose you came across someone who said he enjoyed smacking children, especially small children, and that he would take every opportunity he could find to do this.

That is his preference. But if you want to get him to stop doing this, you surely want to do more than tell him that your own preference is for him not to smack small children. You will think that he is doing something wrong, that he is offending against values that in some way are not just matters of personal preference.

## Morality and ethics

It is at this point that we are beginning to talk about matters of right and wrong, about values that people *ought* to follow regardless of their actual preferences. So far in this section I have not said much about morals or ethics, because it is better not to assume in advance that the fields covered by 'values', 'ethics' and 'morals' or 'morality' are all the same. On this point there is no consistent practice across the literature on educational leadership. Some writers may use the term 'values' very frequently and the terms 'ethics' and 'morality' quite rarely. As Begley points out:

In the school leadership literature, there is a pronounced tendency to adopt the word *ethics* or *moral* as an umbrella term for anything values-related. ... In contrast, other scholars ... reserve the term *ethic* or principles for a particular and very special category of transrational values and employ the word *values* as a generic umbrella term for all forms of 'conceptions of the desirable'. (Begley, 2003: 4).

In this book, the usage I shall follow will be closer to the second of these patterns. This is because it does make sense to speak of values that are not moral or ethical. If you are decorating the walls of your school with pictures, you may be following certain aesthetic values in deciding which pictures to choose. This might seem to be just an exercise of personal preference, but it is not necessarily so. Art critics and teachers of art may find a lot to say about why one picture is better than another; they can give reasons for their judgements. But we would not say that their judgements are moral or ethical ones.



Look back at the lists of values you made above. Can you divide these into two categories: those that have something to do with ethics or morals and those that do not? (You may think that all the values you listed come under the same category.)

What is the difference between the two categories? What is it about one value that makes it a moral or ethical matter while another is not?

There are various ways in which people may try to separate what is a moral or ethical matter from what is not. For some purposes it may be useful to draw a distinction between 'moral' and 'ethical'. The term 'ethics' has some specialised uses. It is used to refer to professional codes or responsibilities, in the phrase 'professional ethics', though there is perhaps no good reason why the standard phrase could not be 'professional morality'. 'Ethics' is also the name of the branch of philosophy that deals with matters of morality; in this sense 'ethics' is equivalent to 'moral philosophy'. For the purposes of this book we do not need to draw a systematic distinction between morality and ethics, and I shall keep to 'morality' or 'moral values' in the following discussion.

In distinguishing moral from non-moral matters, here are some considerations that may have occurred to you:

- Moral matters seem to be about how people are treated – how people behave towards each other. So judgements about one picture being better than another are not moral judgements.
- While moral values, like other values, are conceptions of the desirable, they often seem to be more than just that. We may want to say, for instance, that being kind rather than cruel is not just desirable – it is obligatory. We have the idea that morality is binding on people in ways that other conceptions of the desirable are not.

Morality, then, cannot ultimately be a matter of personal preference (despite what some people may say about it). If there is something that it would be right for me to do (even in the face of my preferences or inclination), or something that it would be wrong for me to do (though it might suit my convenience) then by and large the same things will be right or wrong for other people too (of course, personal circumstances may make a difference, but not all the difference).

Since morality is not a matter of personal preference, it is possible to argue about what is right or wrong. We expect to be able to give some sort of reasons to back up opinions about right and wrong. But at the same time, as the example of aesthetic values shows, not just any kind of reason will make something a moral matter.

What kinds of reason, then, are relevant to *moral* judgements? At this point we can go back to Hodgkinson's framework.

## Consensus

We have said that values are conceptions or ideas. While you can be entertaining a particular idea consciously at a particular time, it is clear too that ideas can exist independently of any individual's thinking. Conceptions or ideas about things are built into language and culture. Values, as conceptions of what is desirable, can be shared among people. When a particular conception of what is valuable is shared quite widely within some group of people, we can say there is a consensus on it.

Consensus is one of the bases that Hodgkinson gives for values. Sometimes we see consensus as sufficient backing for a value. If a community collectively considers that something is to be done in a certain way, often, at least within that community itself, that will be sufficient reason for doing it this way. Norms get established within a community, and the community comes to expect conformity to its norms.

While consensus is important, we can also see that an actual consensus within a particular community does not have to be accepted as the final answer on the question of where norms come from and how they can be justified. This is clear partly because there may be a different consensus in different communities. For instance in some places it may be accepted or even expected that a person in a position of authority making a professional appointment will give some preference to his or her own associates or family members; in other places this will be called *nepotism* and frowned on as violating norms of professionalism and equity.

People sometimes suggest that ethics is relative to cultures. What is certainly true is that different cultures are different from each other in *some* of their values and norms (that is part of what makes them different cultures). If consensus were the last word on whether particular norms should be followed, then we could accept that all norms are relative. But in fact we can see that consensus does not have to be the last word, because a particular consensus can be criticised. If, for instance, there is a consensus within a particular community that women's place is in the home, then it is still possible for that consensus to be criticised by appealing to some other considerations.

What other considerations might these be?

## Consequences

One sort of consideration is an appeal to consequences. In this particular case we might argue that a condition of society in which women's talents are not fully used does not in the long run bring the best consequences for everyone concerned.

People sometimes think that appealing to consequences is not giving a *moral* argument. But when you are thinking about what you ought to do

in some situation, wouldn't you usually give some attention to what the consequences will be of one course of action or another? If you are thinking morally about what you ought to do, of course you should not be concerned *only* about the consequences *for yourself*, but you certainly should be concerned about the consequences for other people who will be affected by your action. We often consider that someone has acted *irresponsibly* if they have not taken the consequences for others into account.

The point about consequences is important in education, and not least in educational leadership, because education always has to have an eye to the consequences for students of one way of teaching rather than another, one syllabus rather than another and so on, and educational leaders have to look to the consequences of their decisions for all the people they are trying to lead.

Some philosophical theories about ethics have argued that all ethics is ultimately about consequences; the best known of these theories is *utilitarianism*, which says, roughly, that all morality eventually comes down to consequences for people's happiness (John Stuart Mill's book *Utilitarianism*, written in the mid-nineteenth century, as still a good and readily available introduction). But even if we do not go that far, we can recognize that thinking about consequences must at least be a part of ethical thinking.

### **Fundamental principles**

What else may be involved in ethical thinking? Here we come to Hodgkinson's third category, values that he calls transrational. What Hodgkinson seems to have in mind are broad principles such as appeals to justice, equality or dignity, which we may take as underlying more specific ethical norms and which we can appeal to when we are justifying more specific judgements. For instance, if we were criticising a community that believed in women's place being in the home – whatever the arguments from consensus or consequences might suggest – we might appeal to equality or to human rights.

Hodgkinson is surely right in recognising that that there are ethical principles that outweigh – or should outweigh – other sorts of consideration when we are deciding what to do. If we were going deeper into moral philosophy here, we might want to ask what it means to say that these principles exist. For our purposes here, it is enough to say that these principles do exist in the human world in which we live, they are recognised in many human cultures and we can actually make use of these ideas in conversation and argument. Suppose some policy that you are proposing to pursue is in line with your own preferences, it has in its support a consensus across your professional community and it looks as if it will involve the best consequences on balance for everyone concerned – *but* it involves

treating one person in a way that violates principles of justice and dignity. If you consider that this policy must be ruled out, then you are recognising the principles of justice and dignity as ethically fundamental. Appeals to human rights are examples of principles functioning in this kind of way; they are meant to outweigh appeals to consensus or to the general consequences. In a metaphor from card games that some philosophers have used, human rights and perhaps some other fundamental principles can trump other considerations.

Hodgkinson refers to such principles as 'transrational'. We might take this to mean that reasons do not *need* to be given for them: in many contexts that will be true, because the people concerned will already accept some fundamental principles (we shall look below at a case in which an underlying concern for equality of opportunity seems to be accepted among the staff of a school). But that is different from saying that no reasons *can* be given for it. Hodgkinson sometimes seems to be saying that the highest principles are beyond rational justification. This comes close to taking an subjectivist or an emotivist view of such principles, which, as mentioned above, is to say that if we decide to put weight on, say, a principle of equal opportunities, then ultimately this is just our preference. But that would be a surprising conclusion from someone who clearly – as his schema shows – wants to distinguish matters of principle from preferences. And it would be an unsettling conclusion for education, since it means that if, for instance, you encounter people who say they do not care about equal opportunities, you cannot give them any reasons why they should take equal opportunities seriously.

Though it may be difficult to give further argument for fundamental ethical principles – partly because many people are not used to thinking in that way – that does not mean it is impossible. To religious believers there may be arguments available that depend ultimately on the existence of God, but for obvious reasons not everyone will accept such arguments. Philosophers have offered a variety of secular arguments – which means in this context, not that the arguments depend on denying the existence of a God, but simply that they do not depend on accepting God's existence; they are arguments that do not use religious discourse at all. To try to give firm arguments for a range of fundamental principles – and to consider objections to the arguments – would take us too far into moral philosophy for the purposes of this book. But in at least some cases a rational justification does not seem too hard to find.

In the case of equal opportunities, we could argue as follows. Where there is any selection to be done – for example, of staff for positions or of students for access to courses – then *discrimination* takes place in an ethically neutral sense of the term, where 'discrimination' simply means 'differentiating according to criteria'. Such discrimination is rational when it is made consistently according to criteria that are relevant to the matter

in hand; if the discrimination rests on irrelevant criteria then it is irrational and thereby unjustified. If, for instance, places were being allocated on an advanced course in philosophy, then having taken a preliminary course in the subject, or having shown interest and aptitude in it, would be relevant factors. Ethnicity, gender, physical disability and so on would be irrelevant. So to make the selection in a way that gives weight to these irrelevant factors would be irrational.

It may be said that being able to give a rational justification for a principle such as equality of opportunity does not show an educational leader or anyone else what they actually need to do to put it into practice. That is true. Understanding why we should hold a principle in the first place *may* give us a clearer view of what it is we are trying to achieve and in that way may help, but in any concrete situation there will always be many considerations to take into account besides the principle itself. (For a discussion of how the leadership of a school may try to put equal opportunities into practice see Coleman (2002)).

Apart from having a clear view of the principle in question, educational leaders need to take as clear a view as they can of the likely consequences of their decisions (because, for instance, a strategy that might appear to have good consequences in terms of equal opportunities could also have less desirable side effects), and they need to consider how far there can be a consensus in the school about a given strategy (partly out of respect for the other people concerned, and partly because lack of consensus may itself tend towards undesirable consequences). Even if Hodgkinson is right in putting certain fundamental principles in a different category from values grounded in consequences or in consensus, it certainly does not follow that consequences and consensus can be neglected. Actually it is debatable whether those principles should be in a quite separate category. To refer to the consequences of following a principle is, on the face of it, a rational way of justifying it; indeed for utilitarianism it is ultimately the only way that a principle can be justified. And where a principle is one that, if it is to make a difference in practice, must be followed by everyone in some group, then to appeal to a consensus also seems rational. Indeed it is possible to combine considerations of both kinds within one theory. For instance, the German theorist Jürgen Habermas (1990) has developed an approach he calls discourse ethics or communicative ethics, which holds that norms are justified only when they can meet with the approval of all those who would be subject to the consequences of their application.

The points made in the last few paragraphs are about the *justification* of principles. The question of *motivation* is a different one, since very few human beings are motivated purely by considerations of rationality (and people who were motivated solely in that way would not necessarily be very nice people to know). Since the question of why people are – or are

not – motivated by fundamental principles seems to be a question about individuals, I shall come back to it in Chapter 3 when focusing on the qualities of individuals in leadership roles. For the moment, as a prelude to the following chapters, it will be helpful to look at the variety of ways in which values can make a difference in educational leadership.

## **How do values make a difference in education?**

The following case study is one in which equality of opportunity is clearly important, but is by no means the only value that features in the case or that may be relevant to your thinking about it. The case, supplied by Derek Glover, shows something of the concrete complexity of leadership activities within schools.

### **Case study: Red Meadow School**

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The starting point here is action research within Red Meadow Junior School into gender differences in achievement. The material for this has emerged from senior staff consideration of pupil achievement and the use of Cognitive Ability Test results on entry and an attempt to see whether pupils are performing at their potential level. The identification of discrepancies led the staff to a consideration of the ways in which their attitudes to boys and girls differed. At Red Meadow this was an uncomfortable process because it touched many staff on a raw nerve. The school, formerly a traditional primary school serving an area of white population, had developed its ethos from that origin. There was high respect for learning, strong competitive sport for the boys and musical activities for the girls, ability grouping arrangements for all years and a curriculum that favoured the more academic pupils. All were expected to wear the school uniform: pinafore dresses and blouses for the girls and short trousers and shirts for the boys. Parents had reported difficulty in securing willing acceptance of the uniform by the boys because it was 'old fashioned'.

When the staff met to consider the emerging disparity between boys' and girls' achievements at the end of their time in the school, the immediate observation from a group of male staff was that 'the boys need to be kicked into action ... the school has got too soft'. This was challenged by two of the younger female staff who urged that 'not all boys are the same and some need more gentle encouragement' and 'there are some for whom the macho image creates considerable unhappiness'. When the battle lines had thus been drawn it was clear that there were underlying problems. These included resentment by the women staff that most of the men took part in inter-school staff cricket or football matches on Friday evenings and then adjourned to a local bar with the male deputy headteacher; a feeling that the girls were always put into the situation of 'doing the housekeeping bit for any school activity', and that 'there is more to life than academic success and some boys and girls need to be recognised for their social and creative skills'. It was noted that the boys were only encouraged on the sports field if they were capable in the classroom.

The headteacher was aware that some constructive way forward had to be found and gained the agreement of staff to the use of an attitudinal survey that had been developed to test opinion on the way in which girls and boys were treated within a community. The aim of this was to see whether the school was really doing what the parents wanted and was giving an education appropriate to the changing conditions in a more ethnically mixed area. On the basis of the report the head proposed that the values of the school should be re-examined and that only when that had been satisfactorily achieved could strategies for improvement for all pupils be suggested. A technique of 'smiley faces' was also used to gain some picture of the level of happiness of boys and girls.

The reports showed that the girls and their parents perceived that they were fulfilling gender stereotypes and that the attitudes of male staff were such that the girls felt embarrassed by the way in which the boys were treated. It was a surprise to a hard core of male staff when the results from boys and their parents showed that they felt they were treated in a rough way by many male staff and indulged by some female staff. Possibly more likely to affect long-term results was the fact that both boys and girls objected to the way in which their working groups within classes were separated into boys and girls by ability at the start of each term, and that any attempt to integrate the groups or change their composition was resisted by most staff. In the words of one eight-year-old boy 'once you are in your group (Lions, Tigers and Leopards for the boys, Gazelles, Antelopes and Zebu for the girls) you are there for good, so what's the use of trying?', and of one girl: 'there just is no way you can win because we have been told that girls are no good at arithmetic and that is that!'

After lengthy discussion between parents, staff, community representatives and the headteacher it was subsequently agreed that the common values of the staff of the school would be restated as:

- We value all pupils irrespective of ability, gender and individual personality.
- We recognise that the staff are the biggest influence on student attitude and determine to offer role models that are non-threatening and do not reinforce traditional stereotypes.
- We recognise that pupils change over time and agree to consider how we can provide greater flexibility in learning approaches and arrangements.
- We recognise that there is an entitlement curriculum for all pupils and that this should be experienced, as far as ability allows, irrespective of gender or handicap.

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*Identify the references to values that you find in this account. Which of these are the head or other teachers explicitly referring to in their own thinking and discussion? Are there other values influencing the school that the staff do not themselves identify?*

This school is making an attempt to pay explicit attention to its values. We can see that one particular value, or interrelated cluster of values, lay behind the initial concern that led to discussion about the gender discrepancies. The

school later expressed this value in the words 'We value all pupils irrespective of ability, gender and individual personality.' We might sum this up as the principle of equal respect. The final item in the school's statement of its values could be called a principle of equal opportunities. Indeed one could say that these four statements together amount to a strong statement of a concern with equality of opportunities.

Of course, there are other values referred to in this account. Given the nature of values – as conceptions of what is desirable – there is no correct answer to the question: 'How many values are referred to in this account?' What one person counts as two distinct values, another may count as two aspects or two ways of stating the same value. The first and the fourth items in the school's statement of values might be expressions of two values or of one. And what of the second and third items? Perhaps strictly speaking they are not statements of values. The second states a matter of fact – that the staff are the biggest influence on student attitude – and a commitment that the staff make, but in the process it certainly refers to the ideas – about what is desirable – that it is better to be non-threatening and to avoid traditional stereotypes. The third item again states a matter of fact – that pupils change over time – and recognises that flexibility is desirable. Even in the statements of fact, values are being expressed, since it is implied that these facts are important ones to take into account.

There are other values that are referred to by the author of the account but not – so far as we are told – by the staff. The mention of high respect for learning, strong competitive sport for the boys and musical activities for the girls shows some of the things that the school values (and also leaves it uncertain whether the value attached to the musical activities is as great as that attached to the competitive sport). The existence of school uniform must have something to do with the school's values; we are not told exactly what values underpin the policy of having a uniform, but we are shown in relation to uniform that there is some discrepancy between the school's policy and the attitudes of some of the boys.

The next paragraph shows that some of the teachers value a certain kind of masculinity on the part of the boys. For two of the female staff, if there is anything positive about this macho image at all, its value is certainly outweighed by the importance of the boys' happiness; they rate unhappiness as a very important *negative* consideration (in this respect that are agreeing, as it happens, with utilitarianism). Probably most if not all of the staff agree on the positive value of happiness, since they put some weight on the result of the 'smiley faces' exercise, but it may be that different teachers would make a different balance between the importance of the children's present happiness and the importance of their future 'success' in life.

Other values emerge in the account that are nowhere directly expressed. It appears that the head values the opinions of the staff. Either the head, or the staff generally, think it is worthwhile to spend time in discussion



with parents and community representatives. One could say that the school is making an effort to be democratic in the process by which it arrives at its new statement of values (though the pupils are apparently involved only indirectly, being consulted but not actually joining in the discussions). This effort may seem, however, to be coming rather late. It appears that there has not prior to this exercise been ongoing discussion between the staff; the ethos of the school seems to have been set largely by some of the male staff.

The school's new statement of values acknowledges that all are in principle valued equally and that attention will be paid to individual needs. On the other hand, it does not indicate that there will be any change in future in the way that school policy is arrived at and put into practice. This leaves it unclear how far the practices of the school actually will change in line with its new set of stated values.

Even on this, relatively superficial, analysis the account shows something of the complexity of the issues of values that a headteacher has to take into account. Values have to enter into the head's thinking in a number of ways. There are some relatively long-term aims to which the school is committed (academic success appears to be an important aim for this school). On the other hand, if some of the children are actually being made unhappy now by their experiences in the school, this fact may be allowed to put some constraints on the way the aims are pursued.

One thing we are not directly told about is the personal qualities of the head. The head is aware that a constructive way forward has to be found. It is not very clear whether the head is proactively leading the school in the direction of greater equality of opportunity rather than responding to events at a time when problems are emerging. No doubt someone who actually knew this headteacher would be in a better position to comment on their qualities as a leader.

We can finish this section by listing more systematically some of the ways in which values make a difference to decisions and actions.

- *Goals and purposes.* Values enter into our goals and purposes in action. When we act deliberately there is something we are aiming at. Sometimes what we are aiming at is to promote a certain value. So educational policy-makers may, for instance, be aiming to promote social justice. Perhaps more often, we are aiming at some complex state of affairs, and our values come into our judgements that this state of affairs rather than some alternative is the one we should be aiming at. We shall look further at goals and purposes in the next chapter.
- *Constraints on action.* Values can put constraints on what we do in order to achieve our goals. A good set of exam results for the whole school may be a valuable goal to aim at, but some ways of trying to achieve this goal – ways that involve falsifying the results, for example – may be ruled out.

- *Personal qualities.* Taking values into account in our actions, whether in setting goals or recognising constraints, is still not the only way in which we use values. It is also important to recognise that we appeal to values, implicitly or explicitly, when we make appraisals of persons. Suppose you think of one person as honest, fair-minded and generous, while another person might be dishonest, biased and mean. Then you are certainly working with values in the sense of our definition, i.e. conceptions of the desirable (it is desirable to be honest and fair-minded, undesirable to be dishonest and biased). But these are conceptions, not directly about what is to be done or not done, but about personal qualities. In Chapter 3 we shall look at the ways in which certain personal qualities may be important for educational leaders.
- *Qualities of organisations.* It is important to notice that we can attribute desirable or undesirable qualities to groups and organisations as well as to individuals. We can speak, for instance, of a caring school as well as of a caring person. We shall return in Chapters 5 and 6 to the question of what is involved in attributing desirable (or undesirable) qualities to a whole school.

Finally in this chapter, some cautionary notes about ways in which we should *not* think about values for educational leadership (drawing in part on Foster, 2003).

- We should not put all our reliance on empirically based approaches to thinking about values – looking at how people try to pursue their goals and to put their values into effect – because while such approaches can give us a sense of what is possible and show effective ways of achieving given ends, they cannot tell us which ends we *should* be pursuing.
- We should not expect that values can be handled by erecting a set of rules for educational leaders to follow. Values are not like that (and therefore this book will not attempt to give you a set of rules for good leadership).
- We should not think that looking into values in the context of educational leadership is entirely about looking at the values of individual leaders; we need to take into account the interpersonal and cultural contexts in which people in leadership roles are working.

## Summary

This chapter has concentrated on understanding the nature of values and why values are important in educational leadership. Recognising that there is no definitive correct definition of values, I have tried to clarify the nature of values by asking you to reflect on your own understandings prior to reading this book and to examine these in the light of ideas in the literature.

You should now be in a position to see that our discussion in the following chapters will have to include:

- the way that values affect what we are aiming at – this will be a major theme in both Chapter 2, on educational aims and purposes, and Chapter 4, on vision in education;
- the way that some states of affairs can be incompatible with certain values – in Chapter 5, for instance, you will encounter an example of a school culture that seems clearly undesirable in the light of values of respect, equality and personal well-being;
- the way that we value not just states of affairs but also qualities of persons – chapter 3 will ask whether we can identify desirable qualities of individual leaders, and Chapter 5 will look at desirable qualities of schools as organisations.

### Suggested further reading

- Begley, P. (2003) 'In pursuit of authentic school leadership practices', in Begley, P. and Johansson, O. (eds), *The Ethical Dimensions of School Leadership*. Dordrecht: Kluwer. A useful introduction to the field, including consideration of the nature of values and of Hodgkinson's contribution.
- Blackburn, S. (2001) *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. A very accessible guide by a philosopher to thinking about values and ethics. Also published under the title *Ethics* in the Oxford University Press *Very Brief Introductions* series.
- Haydon, G. (2007) *Values in Education*. London: Continuum. Not focusing on leadership, but has more than the present book on the nature of morality.
- Hodgkinson, C. (1991) *Educational Leadership: The Moral Art*. New York: State University of New York Press. As this chapter has indicated, Hodgkinson is perhaps the best known of writers on values in leadership and this is probably the best of his books for getting an overview of his position. Some brief extracts from this book are used in the next chapter.
- Richmon, M. (2004) 'Values in educational administration: them's fighting words!', *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 7 (4): 339–56. Combines an overview of the academic debates on values in leadership with a sympathetic but critical assessment of Hodgkinson.