

1 *Meanings of democratic leadership*

The essence of democracy is how people govern themselves, as opposed to how they are governed by others (Williams 1963: 316). It is a hotly debated issue that has generated a large variety of meanings concerning the nature of democratic societies, organisations and groups (Held 1996; Saward 2003). Different conceptions of democracy imply differing conceptions of the individual and of human purposes, of norms and values and, not least, of the aims and significance of education. Some conceptions of democracy are narrow, such as liberal minimalism, one of the models of democracy discussed below. Others are broad. Carr and Hartnett, for example, describe the classical conception as a 'critical concept incorporating a set of political ideals and a coherent vision of the good society' (1996: 53) and encompassing a substantive conception of the person. This chapter, having briefly considered the origins of modern democracy in the democratisation of access to religious knowledge, discusses models of democracy which are progressively richer and more challenging, culminating in the developmental model.

A modest narrative

The origins of modern democracy lie in the recognition that neither the *capacity* nor the *right* to interpret the most important truths are necessarily confined to an elite. Indeed, seeking the true and good path came to be conceived as an obligation of everyone. The roots of the Western conception of democracy lie in the idea that the generality of people are able to detect and discriminate between fundamental values which give meaning to life and place into perspective transient, mundane passions. The religious revolution of the Reformation advanced the proposition that everyone has the capability of accessing truths about God. The notion of dispersed, individualised authority is encapsulated in Martin Luther's idea of 'a priesthood of all believers' (Hill 1975: 95). Overcoming the fear that one's salvation is in the hands of an ecclesiastical elite, to whom deference

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is required in order to avoid eternal punishment, paved the way for democratic ideals. As one historian put it, 'Theories of democracy rose as hell declined'.¹ And as Richard Coppin, an itinerant preacher in the seventeenth century claimed – anticipating British Idealism and the developmental model of democracy which we examine below – God is within each person, and God is both teacher and learner (op. cit.: 221). For many believers – too many – their truth became *the* final truth – the truth that everyone else ought to embrace, even be compelled to accept.

The deeper breakthrough, however, was the surrendering of theological finality and the democratisation of religious knowledge. This democratised access to truth was not intended to be an individualistic licence declaring all opinions as equally true. Hill observes: 'Emphasis on private interpretation was not ... mere absolute individualism. The congregation was the place in which interpretations were tested and approved ... a check on individualist absurdities.' (1975: 95; see also Hill 1997: 101–2)

This is a 'story' of a turn in social development towards democratic governance, which we should see as a *modest narrative* rather than a grand narrative.² There are other narratives – non-Anglo-Saxon, non-Western – about participation, shared leadership and democracy, which are to be valued and explored and which will be relevant in some or many educational contexts. For example, amongst the Bagandan people of Uganda, democracy is translated as *obwenkanya na mazima*, which means 'treating people equally and truth' and places the emphasis on being dealt with fairly and equally (Suzuki 2002). Wolof speakers in Senegal have added to the Western-derived association of democracy with elections and voting, an emphasis on consensus, solidarity and even-handedness (Saward 2003: 112–13). Islamic scholars debate the relationship between Islam and democracy, one viewpoint being that the association of the two is inevitable as Islam has an inherent theoretical affinity with the rule of law, equality and community involvement in decision making (op. cit.: 111–12). Much can be learnt from what is common and different amongst diverse understandings of democracy.

It is sufficient here, however, to note the importance of roots in the religious and political revolution of the seventeenth century. This is not because democracy has progressed steadily and smoothly from that point. Rather, what is crucial is that this modest narrative reveals the emergence of an awareness of something crucial to the idea of democracy. The modest narrative marks the breakthrough, or at least the beginnings of a breakthrough, of the *person as creative agent*. As Touraine puts it

Democracy serves neither society nor individuals. Democracy serves human beings insofar as they are subjects, or in other words, their own creators and the creators of their individual and collective lives. (1997: 19)

Moreover, democracy is anchored in a particular philosophical anthropology – a particular idea of what it means to be human and of the potentialities in human beings that make them human. For Marx, the creativity of humankind was the essential spark which made humanity what it is and, more significantly, what it could become. The problem in societies prior to the revolution envisaged by Marx is that the products of that creativity are out of human control. Humankind, most especially under capitalism, is alienated from its own character.

Man's self-esteem, his freedom, has first to be reanimated in the human breast. Only this feeling, which vanished from the world with the Greeks, and with the Christians disappeared into the blue haze of the heavens, can create once more out of society a human community, a democratic state, in which men's highest purposes can be attained. (Marx, quoted in Lowith 1993: 108)

The essential point to hold on to does not require acceptance of the theoretical details of Marx's work, or indeed any particular religious perspective borne of the revolution in religion. Rather, the point is the intimate connection between democracy and creative human potential – and, more particularly, the potential for benign creativity. The latter is the very foundation of the broad and rich conception of democracy, which underpins the understanding of democratic leadership in this book.

The same might be said of democratic governance as Herbert Spencer said of republican governance: 'The Republican form of Government is the highest form of government; but because of this it requires the highest type of human nature – a type nowhere at present existing.'³ Indeed, enrichment of people's lives is integral to some of the most enduring strands of democratic thinking, back to Aristotle. This principle of democracy is

that society exists not merely to protect individuals but to offer them an enriched form of existence; so that a democratic society is one which seeks to provide positive rather than merely negative advantages to all its citizens and is to be judged by the degree to which it seeks, and is able, to do this. (Kelly 1995: 24)

Liberty for liberty's sake is not the ultimate value. Some notion of positive liberty is implied (P.A. Woods 2003). Integral to broad and rich conceptions of democracy is some sense of *unity* around universal ideals, and respect for reason and the potentialities of all people to live the good life with others. It entails the development of human beings towards some common ideal. With this there is a danger *within* democracy – a dark side we might say. An idea of positive liberty entails an idea of what is good for people, which

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some may then feel justified in imposing on others. Thus, what originally begins as a celebration of human identity and creativity may lead to a domination of the individual by a detailed, prescriptive and imposed conception of what the true and good path is.

Bearing this in mind, it has to be emphasised that seeking a deep conception of democracy is a delicate and demanding project. Democracy requires 'a sophisticated moral system which seeks to accommodate, even celebrate, moral and cultural diversity' (Kelly 1995: 23). A balance needs to be sought between:

- unity (around a sense of common ideals);
- liberty;
- diversity (the ideals and identities that are integral to particular groups, cultures and societies).

The defining feature of democracy is

not simply a set of institutional guarantees of majority rule but above all a respect for individual or collective projects that can reconcile the assertion of personal liberty with the right to identify with a particular social, national, or religious collectivity. (Touraine 1997: 13–14)

Models of democracy

Table 1.1 summarises four models of democracy and their distinctive principles. These are based on Stokes (2002), who, from the array of theories of democracy, describes models which highlight the key characteristics, concerns and normative principles of the main types of democratic theory. Stokes's own outline of the models provides a starting point. In discussion of each model, I elaborate from this starting point and suggest some of the model's distinctive implications for thinking about leadership (see the right hand column of Table 1.1). The models are not entirely separate. Many of the concerns and normative principles carry forward from the narrower, more philosophically bare notions of democracy (starting with liberal minimalism) to be part of or combined with the broader notions (deliberative and developmental democracy). Hence, certain principles thread their way through all the models.

Liberal minimalism is a protective model of democracy. Its main purpose and justification is protection of the individual citizen from arbitrary rule and oppression from other citizens. Key importance is attached to procedures that curtail abuse of leaders' power, based on an individualistic conception of human beings as 'private individuals who form social

Table 1.1: Models of democracy

	Distinctive principles (based on Stokes, 2002)	Implications for leadership <i>Leadership...</i>
Liberal minimalism	Protection of individual from arbitrary rule Procedural focus: process for choosing governments Equal formal political rights Calculation/promotion of own self-interest	... is restricted to small minority ... articulates and represents interests
Civic republicanism	Civic virtue, prioritising public good over own interests Obligation to active political participation Commitment to political community	... encourages political participation and dialogue ... entails search for public good
Deliberative democracy	Enhancement of quality and use of deliberative reasoning Recognition of contemporary pluralism, inequality and complexity Regulative ideal for managing difference and conflict	... facilitates deliberation ... is dispersed amongst participants in deliberative activity ... respects diversity and acts against inequalities
Developmental democracy	Extensive political participation Enhancement of individuals' human capacities through political participation and collective state action Social justice Democratisation of civil society	... is encouraged in dispersed sites ... entails search for common human good ... contributes to own and others' growth towards human potential

relationships in order to satisfy their own personal needs' (Carr and Hartnett 1996: 43). Formal equality of political rights is emphasised and the importance of procedures for choosing governments. This brings into the frame two fundamental principles that thread through all the models. The first is political equality. Democracy is about 'the rule of equals by equals' (Kelly 1995: 6), as citizens before the law. The second is liberty, which has a dual aspect (Berlin 1969):

- negative freedom (freedom of constraint imposed by other people);
- positive freedom (the wish to be one's own master independent of external forces).

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The model of liberal minimalism seeks to enable people to follow their interests in an ordered political and social framework, facilitating what C.B. Macpherson (1962) calls ‘possessive individualism’, which sees people as private owners of their own selves and of their own economic resources, protected by property rights (see also Olssen et al. 2004). Following Schumpeter, democratic politics is seen as ‘a competitive struggle analogous to the competition of the economic marketplace’ (Saward 2003: 44). It reduces democracy to a ‘political supermarket’ (Touraine 1997: 9). Leadership in liberal minimalism is confined to political elites competing for votes, and the main concern of leaders is to articulate and represent interests within society.

If we were to ask what is the key, distinguishing word associated with liberal minimalism, and what its prime interests-focus is, the respective answers would be ‘protection’ and ‘self-interest’. These are shown in Table 1.2, together with the key words and the primary interests-focus of each of the other models, which will emerge from the discussion below.

Table 1.2: Key words and interests-focus of models of democracy

	key word	interests-focus
Liberal minimalism	protection	self-interest
Civic republicanism	belonging	interest of the polis
Deliberative democracy	unity in diversity	transforming interests
Developmental democracy	human potential	essential human interests

Because of the minimal democratic activity ascribed to citizens and assumptions of self-interest, an assumption shared with economic theories of markets, liberal minimalism can evolve into a notion of *consumer democracy*. If political participation is minimal, a logical step is to attach greater significance to where people are more active in modern society – namely, as self-interested actors in the market. Consumer democracy reinterprets the main focus of democracy, by shifting it from participation in politics to participation in the market. In this interpretation, people achieve influence primarily as consumers who convey their needs and preferences through their buying decisions. Such a view has influenced educational policy in countries such as the UK, New Zealand and the USA. Grace sums up well the central assertion of proponents of this view: ‘Market democracy by the empowerment of parents and students through resource-related choices in education has the potential ... to produce greater responsiveness and academic effectiveness’ (1995: 206). But this kind of assertion redefines democracy: ‘Freedom in a democracy is no longer defined as participating in building the common good, but as living in an unfettered commercial market ... ’ (Apple 2000: 111).

Civic republicanism is about belonging. It emphasises interests and concerns beyond the individual or family. Its defining features are 'the importance given to the public interest or the common good ... and [the] key role given to citizen participation' (Stokes 2002: 31). Identification with the political community (paradigmatically the nation state) is also central. Political participation by citizens is valued for its own sake. Indeed, engagement in political debates and other activities is considered a civic duty. Leadership in civic republicanism involves encouraging political participation and dialogue, and seeking to identify that which serves the public interest of the political community.

The deliberative and developmental models assimilate key features of the first two theories, such as the importance of rights and procedures that protect individual citizens (liberal minimalism) and the active role of citizen participation (civic republicanism). But they enrich democratic theory by augmenting these, as will be seen in the discussion of each of these models.

The *deliberative model* is about the collective search for unity amongst diversity. It arises from the most recent contributions to democratic theory, having been 'the dominant new strand in democratic theory over the past ten to fifteen years' (Saward 2003: 121). Its concern is that existing arrangements 'do not address sufficiently the various problems, including those of pluralism, inequality and complexity, that are a condition of contemporary society' (Stokes 2002: 39–40). Its aim is to expand 'the use of deliberative reasoning among citizens and their representatives' (p: 40) and enhance the quality of deliberation. Deliberative democracy entails individuals, in cooperation with others, seeking out the greater good for themselves and the community. This means reaching beyond one's own narrow perspective and interests, and being strengthened by this shared endeavour.

By now we have moved a long way from the competitive and minimal participation of liberal minimalism. Differences of view and conflicts of interest are recognised, but ways also have to be found to overcome them. Deliberation implies recognition of the interconnection of identity and difference. The one (identity with a national society, for example) implies the other (differences as and between local and cultural communities); identity with a group implies and encompasses differences as individuals. The point about deliberative discussion is that the realisation of unity from this difference has to be worked for. Deliberative discussion should

deepen participant knowledge of issues and awareness of the interests of others, and help to instil the confidence to play an active part in public affairs. Deliberative democracy looks to *transform* people's (possibly ill-informed) preferences through open and inclusive discussion, not merely to design electoral procedures to *reflect* them. (Saward 2003: 121; original emphasis)

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Leadership in the deliberative model involves finding ways to facilitate and sustain deliberation, which includes addressing obstacles to free and equal participation in the discourse of deliberation. In order to enable active participation by all, diversity of cultures, views and values has to be respected by those in both formal and informal leadership positions. Leadership is not confined to a small minority, unlike liberal minimalism. Opportunities for taking initiative, and responsibility for seeking out the greater good and respecting diversity, are dispersed among participants in the flow of discourse between people that comprises deliberative activity.

The *developmental model* attaches key importance to the realisation of human potential. It emphasises the positive impact that democratic participation has on personal development, and how that development is influenced or conditioned by social opportunities, constraints and relations. The intellectual roots of this model comprise the tradition which includes the Oxford political philosopher, T.H. Green, and British Idealism. Hence it views human beings as possessing inherent potentialities – for intellectual reasoning, aesthetic sensibilities, and so on – which represent the ethically good towards which it is in people's nature to aspire, provided they have a will to do so. It puts some flesh on the observation that democratic society requires a 'positive view of humankind as capable of self-directed moral behaviour' (Kelly 1995: 18).

Inherent in the developmental model is the interconnection between social action, people and the structures which order social living. It entails a view of human society which can be described as social organicism: that is, the view 'that the parts of an organism [are] mutually dependent, and thus that the value and definition of each part [is] derived from the whole; and also that the whole [is] in some way different from the sum of these parts' (Den Otter 1996: 156). This view is not meant to imply subservience of the person to the larger group. People have *both* their individual identities and interests and their unifying identity as part of the larger polity and, ultimately, humanity. The developmental model embraces the view that a cosmopolitanism which unites all is compatible with communitarianism that forges local identities.⁴

For British Idealism there is bound up with social organicism an essential *moral component*: the interconnection of self and community is essential for the genesis of the moral self. Individual and community are to be in harmonious development since the good of each person and the good of all are inherently bound up with each other. Whilst British Idealism emerges from a Christian cultural tradition, the ethical tenet at its centre is by no means unique to it. Ghandi, for example, described the same principle simply as 'the good of the individual is contained in the good of all' (1949: 250).

The developmental model implies some view of human potentiality which embraces what it means to be a good person in a good society. Real-

ising this human potentiality is about *substantive liberty*. Substantive liberty is concerned with gaining knowledge and self-awareness which enables action in pursuit of that which is of most significant ethical value and which helps in weakening impediments to this realisation (P.A. Woods 2003). The view taken of human potentiality and of what it is to be goodly human provides a reasoned and felt understanding of what unites people as human beings. If deliberative democracy emphasises the dialogic method of reaching unity across diverse interests and identities, developmental democracy expresses the importance of a philosophical and social basis for an underlying unity which involves some substantive idea of ideals and potentialities applicable to all.

In other words, developmental democracy encompasses a sense of what it is to be human and brings an additional, unifying substance to the 'unity in diversity' of deliberative democracy. Hence I use the term *organic belonging* to describe 'unity in diversity', in order to emphasise two things. Firstly, experience of social solidarities (of being part of greater wholes) is an essential progenitor of a sense of personal ethics. It gives a grounding in everyday experience to the idea that human potentialities are to be used for the benefit of others as well as the self. Secondly, valuing both difference and commonness is not a contradictory stance, but requires a subtle moral sensitivity to what is of passing and what is of enduring value. On the one hand, cultural differences (such as gender, religious allegiance and nationality) are to be respected. Equally, they are not to be seen as the ultimate definers of personal identity and loyalty, legitimised by appeals to nature or divine command, and do not describe absolute boundaries of distinction. Hence, Fraser refers to 'an antiessentialist cultural politics of recognition' (1997: 187). On the other hand, there is something profound that connects human beings *qua* human beings, which is recognisable as deeply embedded in all and which calls forth an acknowledgement of fundamental equality. That is the contention of developmental democracy, and it is the very foundation of a democratic order.

According to the developmental model, democratic participation enhances the capacity to realise deeply embedded human potentialities. The tradition in which developmental democracy is founded encourages a particular stance towards modernity. It encourages a discourse which draws on particular concepts and ideas which include creativity, self-transcendence and reintegration of human capacities with the aim of challenging the dominance of instrumental rationality and the alienating character of the social order. Moreover, from a developmental perspective, people collectively – through state institutions and civil society – can, and are morally obliged to, create economic and social conditions which enable everyone to participate and work towards their human potential. People without sufficient food, employment, adequate housing, learning opportunities and

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educational stimulation are presented with greater obstacles to realising this potential. Developmental democracy, therefore, has a concern with social justice.

Leadership in the developmental model is concerned above all with aspiring to the common human good and working to create the conditions that give everyone a chance to fulfil their potential. Opportunities for leadership, in the sense of taking initiatives and seeking to influence others and the direction of society, its institutions and communities, are not the preserve of a small minority. They exist not only in the political domain but in a range of locations, such as local neighbourhoods, workplaces and voluntary associations, where developmental democracy sees that democratic involvement should be encouraged. In this regard, the model of developmental democracy overlaps with notions of deliberative and dialogic democracy (Giddens 1994).

This chapter has acknowledged the origins of modern democracy in the democratisation of access to religious knowledge and the idea that all people possess a creative capacity (even if it is confined and alienated in practice) to explore and work towards the good. However, many different conceptions of the form and scope that democracy might take have been put forward and debated over the centuries. Some of the key characteristics and principles of the main types of democratic theory have been synthesised and presented in this chapter in the form of four models of democracy, based on Stokes (2002), and their implications for leadership briefly outlined. In light of this discussion, it is suggested that the developmental model of democracy provides the most fertile and challenging theoretical framework for human and social development. The task now is to set out in greater detail, in the next chapter, a developmental conception of democratic practice in order to provide the necessary foundation to understanding democratic leadership.

Notes

- 1 Hill (1990: 207) is referring to D.P. Walker's book, *The Decline of Hell* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964).
- 2 Griffiths emphasises the importance of heeding 'little stories (modest narratives) and local theories' (2003: 53).
- 3 From *A Dictionary of Famous Quotations* (1983: 376), compiled by Robin Hyman. London: Pan Books.
- 4 See Olssen et al. (2004: 260–61) on cosmopolitanism and communitarianism.