Title

Wither democracy? The rise of epistocracy and monopoly in school governance

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Short bio

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Abstract

In this chapter I draw on Foucault's genealogical method to examine the professional turn in school governance through a study of recent and profound changes affecting the development of education policy in England since the introduction of the Academies Act 2010. The Academies Act 2010 was a watershed moment in education reform that facilitated widespread privatisation, depoliticisation and devolved management of the school system. The consequences of these reforms have produced mixed results and gains for different stakeholders and interest groups. Among the main beneficiaries are businesses set up as private limited companies who occupy the role of management groups and support services to an increasingly dense, specialised and juridified system of governance. Local communities and ordinary citizens, on the other hand, find themselves marginalised from the business of governance and its expert administration. No longer strictly participatory in design or practice, the role of school governance has shifted dramatically towards a rigid focus on 'risk-based regulation' to enhance upward accountability to the funders and regulators of education. This chapter examines two key features of these reforms, namely *epistocracy* and *monopoly*, and considers the challenges they pose to participatory democracy in schools.

Key words

Introduction

In this chapter I draw on Foucault's genealogical method to examine some of the fundamental changes to school governance in England effected by the introduction of the Academies Act 2010 and subsequent legislation and policy (DfE 2010, DfE 2012, DfE 2013a, DfE 2013b, DfE 2016, DfE 2017a, Education Act 2011, Education and Adoption Bill 2015, Ofsted 2011). Specifically, the chapter addresses the diminished role of participatory democracy in many schools given the narrow instrumental focus to 'modernise' or 'professionalise' governance through appointing only suitably qualified, skilled and experienced individuals to the governing body. This chapter documents the rise of *epistocracy* (rule by the most knowledgeable) and *monopoly* (rule by hierarchy) as endemic features of the turn to 'professional governance'.

Drawing attention to the role of democracy, the chapter also details the impact of professional governance on traditional forms of bureau-professionalism and stakeholding, including discretionary powers among civil servants and elected councillors and school governors to intervene in the running of schools. Here, the technocratic embedding of professionalism within school governance is closely linked to new managerialism and new public management (NPM) with its emphasis on 'output controls…private-sector styles of management practice [and] greater discipline and parsimony in resource use' (Hood 1991: 4-5). A consequence of these reforms, I argue, is the hiving of governance activities and spaces through 'enclosures' that limit participation to those who are bearers of relevant knowledge,

skills and expertise. These enclosures are typically structured through 'consensus' or 'oneness' driven by 'like-minded people' with sufficient skills and knowledge to discharge their responsibilities in holding others to account for the educational and financial performance of the school, notably the headteacher and members of the middle management team. Although these enclosures are representative to some degree – they include an elected parent governor in most cases – they are largely structured through an indifference to sectional interests and partisanship.

The high-stakes environment in which school governors now find themselves means that performance management and 'risk-based regulation' (Hutter 2005) underpinned by financial monitoring and strategic planning constitute a vital element of governance. Consequently, the scope for dissensus and value conflicts tend to be minimised in order to maintain the efficiency of such work. According to Kooiman and Jentoft (2009: 818),

> norms, principles and values…They underpin all decisions since they inspire those who govern how to think and make judgements about how the world works and how to act in particular situations…Implicitly or explicitly, governance means choosing between them.

In this chapter I challenge this somewhat idealised view of governance by drawing attention to the technocratic cultures of precision and bounded judgement through which norms and values of governance are encountered rather than genuinely deliberated. Instead, this chapter demonstrates the extent to which depoliticisation –

and therefore the evacuation of the political core constituting value conflicts – is considered to be vital to 'good governance' and its quality and effectiveness. Borrowing from Escobar and Elstub's (2017) work on 'mini-publics', the chapter concludes by thinking through some of the possibilities for greater democratic innovations and participatory governance in education.

A Foucauldian genealogical method

This chapter draws on Foucault's genealogical method to trace the ascendency and dominance of particular ideas that have shaped the development of school governance in England, namely 'the historical process of descent and emergence by which a given thought system or process comes into being and is subsequently transformed' (Olssen 2014: 29). In the spirit of Foucault's genealogical method, the chapter does not conceptualise governance in strict historical-linear or tautological terms as the gradual unfolding of a universal or rational project. Here, instead, governance is conceptualised as a hegemonic movement or 'complex alliance and power bloc' (Apple 2017: 2) made up of 'contingent ruptures and displacements that arise from struggles among agents' (Bevir 2010: 421).

A key strategy to employing Foucault's genealogical method in the context of this chapter is to open up that discursive space in which meanings and practices of governance are not treated as legitimate to the extent they are identical and indivisible to prevailing ideology. Typically, policy makers, education advisers, governance support services, and politicians reduce governance to something

programmatic and procedural, namely a set of techniques or strategies to ensure that schools are transparent and publicly accountable – properly audited and monitored, high achieving, financially sustainable, law compliant, non-discriminatory, and so on. At the same time, governance can be more creatively aligned with practices that work to strengthen direct relations of accountability between schools and the communities they serve through forms of public deliberation. Co-operative schools (or 'public service mutuals') enable pupils, teachers, parents, local people, employers, and other member groups (universities and schools) to join their board of trustees, for example (Davidge, Facer and Schostak 2015). Governance, therefore, is a 'field of contestation' (Wilkins and Olmedo 2018) in which competing, sometimes irreconcilable sets of interests and normative commitments emerge through the interaction between schools and their various stakeholders. Through its attention to 'nominalism, contingency and contestability' (Bevir 2010: 426), Foucault's genealogical method is useful here to preserving the notion of governance as a continually evolving, mutating project that is amenable to democratic means and ends.

The politics of governance

School governance has a long history in England which can be traced back over 600 years to the Winchester School in 1382 (Sallis 1988). Up until the late nineteenth century schools in England were funded and maintained by either religious organisations or town and city corporations who relied on school governors – or 'custodians', 'wardens' and 'stewards' as they were sometimes called – to oversee

the educational and financial performance of their schools. In response to concerns over poor governance, two major government enquiries were commissioned during the nineteenth century to investigate the financial and management activities of hundreds of grammar, private and proprietary schools. The Clarendon Commission in 1861 and the Taunton Commission in 1864 brought into sharp focus evidence of mismanagement and misuse of endowments by some school governors. These enquiries laid the foundation for the Public Schools Act 1868 which introduced guidelines and frameworks to help to specify the remit and influence of school governors.

Following the introduction of county and county borough councils in 1888, the 1902 Education Act introduced local education authorities (LEAs) who acquired powers to intervene in the running of both elementary non-denominational state schools introduced through the Education Act 1870 and some public elementary and voluntary schools. It was common, therefore, for LEA appointees to be present on the governing bodies of some grammar schools and church schools in receipt of public subsidy. Following the recommendations of the publication *A New Partnership for Our Schools* (Taylor 1977), the Education Act 1980 and Education Act 1986 introduced fundamental changes to school governance that included equal representation of the LEA, staff and parents on governing bodies as well as delegation of powers to school governors to shape decisions about admissions, finance and other strategic matters. As a result, the powers of LEAs to intervene in the running of the schools was significantly downsized to make way for greater stakeholder governance and devolved management. Up until this time LEAs were

'managing bodies' of most primary schools under guidelines laid out in the Education Act 1944 and Education (No 2) Act 1968.

Guided by public choice theory and neoclassical economics which strongly opposed state intervention in the economy and welfare as authoritarian, demoralising and inefficient (Gamble 1986; Niskanen 1973), these reforms ushered in a new era of school governance which opposed the bureau-professionalism (or bureaucratic centralism) and politicised decision making of LEAs and their discretionary powers to nominate members to governing bodies. Breaking with these trends in school governance, the Education Act 1980 and Education Act 1986 not only enabled schools to co-opt members to their governing body but confirmed the statutory right of parents to be elected as school governors.

The significance of public choice theory to this movement cannot be underestimated in terms of understanding the close relationship between the growth of marketisation in education and the development of various forms of de-collectivisation, depoliticisation and de-democratisation since the 1980s. Central to public choice theory is the view that collective decision making by political organisations, be it trade unions or local government, is not only untrustworthy – public servants are just as likely to be 'self-interested' as they are 'public spirited altruists' (Le Grand 1997: 149) – but inefficient and unresponsive since it works from position of epistemological arrogance or naïve presumption regarding the relevant facts about the complexity of human or social 'need'. Public choice theory, therefore, champions market concepts of competition and supply and demand as essential to 'allocative

efficiency' (Boyne 1996: 704) in terms of improving upon service provider responsiveness to user preference or choice.

Similar parallels can be drawn from the US where, as MacLean (2017) observes, public choice theory has been used effectively as a political instrument to undermine consolidation of bargaining power among certain organisations and collectives to influence education, health and other services. These organisations and the politics and bureaucracy underpinning them are typically characterised by public choice theorists and like-mind neoconservatives and libertarians as alienating and oppressive to the extent they undermine certain freedoms, namely the individual's freedom to pursue their own self-interest. Hence, public choice theory has been integral to the development of competition and choice as organising principles of public sector management, especially in England (Le Grand 1997). Similar to England, the development of public choice theory in the US has been instrumental to legitimating the market as the only viable programme for organising public and private institutional arrangements and transactions (MacLean 2017). Yet, in contradistinction to public choice theory and its staunch opposition to producer paternalism, the development of education in both the US and England has given rise to new forms of anti-competition arrangements and monopoly (Saltman 2014; Wilkins 2017a).

The direction of travel set in motion by the Conservative government in England in the 1980s was continued through the 1990s and 2000s with Tony Blair's Labour government (1997-2007) and Brown's Labour government (2007-2010). As Clarke

(2005: 449) observes, New Labour captured and translated the Conservative view of 'the people versus the state, with the people requiring rescue from an over-bearing, intrusive and dominating public power'. Building on the model of stakeholder governance envisioned by previous Conservative governments, the Labour government placed a strong emphasis on the role of proportional representation on governing bodies, namely 'representation of key stakeholders (parents, staff, community, LEA, foundation and sponsors)', to ensure schools are 'accountable to parents, pupils, staff and the local community' (DfES 2005a: 7). However, it was also during this time that the Labour government introduced the academies programme to enable sponsors (usually a charity, business, faith group, university, or philanthropic entrepreneur) to manage underperforming schools in urban areas. Designed to offer 'radical and innovative challenges to tackling educational disadvantage' (DfES 2005b: 29), the academies programme made it possible for private sponsors to enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State and run schools independent of LEAs.

Much like the City Technology Colleges (CTCs) introduced under the terms of the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Local Management of Schools (LMS), the academy model enabled maximum delegation of managerial and financial responsibility to a separate legal entity known as an academy trust (a company limited by guarantee). Directed by a board of trustees with legal powers to set the curriculum and admissions policy and employ the staff, the academy trust answers to central government by way of its funding agreement and therefore is not directly accountable to the LEA, other than on matters of special needs and exclusions as is required of all publicly-funded schools. Similar reforms, albeit reforms sensitive to

geo-political tensions and specific regulatory regimes and national strategic priorities, can be traced to Australia (Gobby 2016), South Africa (Karlsson 2002) and New Zealand (Jacobs 2000) where school leaders and school governors are granted conditional freedoms to determine budget spending and admissions policy beyond the control of any local government or municipal authority.

While reforms designed to 'liberate' schools from local government politics and bureaucracy in England can be traced back to the 1980 and 1986 Education Acts and the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) (DES 1998), the scale and pace of these reforms were advanced considerably under the Coalition government in 2010. The Labour government opened 203 academies between 1997 and 2010 and therefore continued the discursive and political work of disaggregating state power to complement new forms of self-organisation or 'heterarchy' (Grimaldi 2011: 120) characterised by devolved systems of education planning. In 2010, the election of the Coalition government (a cooperation between the Conservative and Liberal Democratic party) brought new impetus to these reforms with the introduction of the Academies Act 2010. The Academies Act 2010 made it possible for all 'good' and 'outstanding' schools (and, for the first time, primary schools) to apply to the Department of Education (DfE) to convert to academy status. Recent statistics released by the DfE (2017b) indicate there are 5,905 academies open representing 30% of the total number of primary, secondary, special, and alternative provision schools in England. Central to these reforms and others that preceded it (DfES 2001, DfES 2005a, 2005b) is the displacement of traditional structures of government, notably the discretionary powers of civil servants and elected councillors to intervene in the running of schools, and the articulation of a new

political settlement in which schools are managed by separate legal entities known as academy trusts.

These reforms can be described, on the one hand, as new modes of governing in which education planning is managed through the interaction, cooperation and co-influence of multiple stakeholders (Sørensen and Torfing 2007). On the other hand, these reforms have strengthened rather than weakened hierarchy as an organising principle of education planning. The shift away from LEAs as providers of education provision suggests the displacement of certain forms of monopoly, namely the management of education by civil servants and their own brand of bureau-professionalism. Yet the growth of academies, in particular academies run by multi-academy trusts (MATs), suggests new forms of monopoly are taking shape (Wilkins 2017a) albeit characterised by privatisation management of public sector organisation or 'exogenous privatisation' (Ball and Youdell 2007: 14).

Monopoly revisited

In some cases, schools in England considered to have 'serious weaknesses' or require 'special measures' under section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005 are brought under new management by a sponsor called a MAT who runs the school as an academy on behalf of the government and in line with the funding agreement entered into by the Secretary of the State and the CEO of the MAT. Set up as a private limited company, MATs are typically comprised of 2-3 academies collectively called collaboratives or soft federations (Salokangas and Chapman 2014).

Depending on the scheme of delegation, some schools within the MAT may have less autonomy to pursue their own forms of governance – and therefore retain their own separate governing body – compared to other schools. Typically, the MAT will be run by a board of directors or board of trustees made up of headteachers and middle management who make policy decisions for all schools within the cluster. In contrast to these small MATs, there exist large MATs called hard federations that tend to operate more prescriptive, command and control governance setups that compel schools to adhere to standard operational procedures in terms of teaching, learning and assessment (Stewart 2016). Moreover, the board of trustees retains legal powers to determine the composition of any governing bodies (NCTL 2014). A consequence of this rigid governance structure is that fewer schools (if any) within the cluster have their own governing body – and where schools do have a governing body (sometimes called a 'local governing body' or 'academy council') the members retain none of the statutory powers normally attributed to school governors.

By transferring liability of the school's assets to a MAT, the school is stripped of its governing body and any legal powers to employ staff, enter into contracts and plan budget spending. Instead, the school is run by the board of trustees of the MAT who employ their own cadre of professionals to monitor and improve the quality of provision. The largest of these MATs – Academies Enterprise Trust – runs 66 primary, special and secondary schools. The government argue that restricting management of large numbers of schools to a single board of trustees or a small number of 'professional' governing bodies is vital to enhancing accountability but also the 'quality of governance':

The growth of MATs will improve the quality of governance – meaning that the best governing boards will take responsibility for more schools. As fewer, more highly skilled boards take more strategic oversight of the trust's schools, MAT boards will increasingly use professionals to hold individual school-level heads to account for educational standards and the professional management of the school (DfE 2016: 50).

Here, the drive to 'improve quality of governance' is linked to 'fewer, more highly skilled boards', the idea being that school governance is best served by those who can effectively discharge their responsibilities as performance managers. Here, the drive to 'professionalise' or 'modernise' school governance can be understood as a strategy for 'coping with complexity' (Jessop 2003: 3). Complexity and variegation is endemic to the current system of education in England. The rapid pace of decentralisation and 'disintermediation' (Lubienski 2014: 424) since 2010 has resulted in large numbers of schools operating as academy trusts and management groups with liability of public assets and discretionary powers to source their own suppliers and professional advisers as well as determine their budget spending, curriculum design, admissions (subject to the admissions code), staff pay and conditions, and length of school day and term. Such complexity needs to be grasped at the level of 'representation' and 'meta-analyses' so that it is amenable to scrutiny from the regulators and funders of education. Hence, increased re-regulation (or 'repoliticisation') has followed the government's plans to accelerate

deregulation, with direct implications for the role and composition of governing bodies.

Academy trusts receive their funding directly from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA, a central government body responsible for funding and regulating academies) and therefore face increased regulation through tight, centralised accountability which aims to ensure that both government and non-government organisations can hold schools to account for specific purposes, agendas or priorities. The conversion from LEA-maintained school to academy, therefore, places huge demands on the board of trustees and their governing bodies to make themselves auditable and workable as 'high-reliability' organisations capable of supplanting the techno-bureaucratic role of the LEA. Academy trusts adopt responsibility for the kinds of financial and managerial overheads previously overseen by the LEA for example, namely premises management, succession planning, budget control, resource allocation, employment disputers, contractual issues, payroll and legal advice. This includes adopting liability for all kinds of risks and their attendant calculations and moral hazards. Increasingly, schools are harnessing the power of data and data technologies to meet these expectations, including the Department for Education's school comparison tool, RAISEonline, Fischer Family Trust (FFT) Governor Dashboard (developed in partnership with the National Governors' Association, NGA), skills audits, and bespoke self-evaluation tools.

This is not to say that the drive to modernise school governance and democratise school governing bodies are mutually exclusive options. Many governing bodies in England, particularly those working in primary schools, are guided by a duty to be representative of the communities they serve and appoint and elect school governors on this basis (Connolly, Farrell and James 2017). Increasingly, however, the meaning of 'diversity' underpinning the constitution of these governing bodies has given way to a far more corporate image, narrowly conceived in terms of skills, professional experience and specialist knowledge (Young 2016). The drive to modernise and professionalise governance means that participatory democracy is not only undesirable in some cases (especially where it is linked to particular interest groups or is disruptive to building 'consensus', see Wilkins 2016) but is only permissible where it contributes to the smooth functioning of the school as a business.

Crises in legitimacy

The standard rhetoric of policy makers and researchers against proportional representation on the governing body is that too many voices (or too many 'unskilled', 'unprofessional' voices) is potentially unwieldly and therefore counterproductive to achieving consensus. In terms of decision making, consensus is therefore paramount to governance in as much as it gives authority to school governors to ratify and pursue actions deemed to be in the interest of the school and its pupils. But such consensus is typically contrived. As Rancière (2010: 196)

argues, consensus 'defines a mode of symbolic structuration of the community that evacuates the political core constituting it, namely dissensus'.

In their public criticism of traditional, democratic models of school governance (Owen 2014), many education advisers and politicians have called for 'professional governance to move beyond the current 'amateurish' approach to overseeing schools' (Wilshaw quoted in Cross 2014) through narrowing governing body membership to 'business people' (Nash quoted in GOV.UK 2013) with the 'right skills' (Morgan quoted in GOV.UK 2015) who can achieve the 'best or right outcome' and open up the internal operation of schools to greater public scrutiny. As more schools in England acquire legal powers as management groups or academy trusts to operate outside their LEA as academies (sometimes called 'state-funded independent schools'), the government have called for greater epistocracy (rule by the most knowledgeable) and in some cases monopoly (rule by hierarchy) in the way that schools are governed.

These reforms include restricting governance to those with 'significantly better epistemic capabilities – relevant knowledge and skills – than others' (Holst and Molander 2014: 13). At the same time, it means limiting governance participation to the control of a single authority or body of professionals, usually realised through the involvement of new actors and organisations from business and philanthropy (Wilkins 2017a). The result is that ordinary citizens and local communities find themselves increasingly marginalised from the business of governance and its expert administration. Moreover, these reforms serve an important discursive-

political strategy, namely to polarise meanings and practices of governance and democracy as mutually incompatible. Speaking at a conference in 2014 organised by the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS) and the National Governors' Association (NGA), former Conservative chair of the education select committee, Graham Stuart, said he was 'less interested in democratic accountability than in quality' (Stuart 2014).

In this context, the function of governance is to improve the transparency and efficiency of the internal operation of schools for the purpose of making them publicly accountable and auditable or sustainable as businesses: 'Running a school is in many ways like running a business, so we need more business people coming forward to become governors' (Nash quoted in GOV.UK 2013). Consensus is therefore vital to governance in as much as it advances the smooth functioning of the school as a 'high-reliability' organisation (Reynolds 2010: 18). Consensus is conducive to the division and differentiation of work, the sequestering and delegation of roles and responsibilities, and the standardisation of judgements as auditable or 'actionable' within a framework of rational account giving (Wilkins 2016).

The strong demand for consensus on governing bodies increases participation inequality, however. It is far more likely, for example, that those who can contribute to the smooth functioning of the governing body ('people like us') will be favoured over people who do not share similar priorities, knowledge or preferences. One of the ways in which governing bodies aim to secure compliance in this regard is by disciplining school governors to divest themselves of any vested interests or

prejudices that detract from the purpose of governance. This explains why parent governors are sometimes singled out as 'problematic' or 'difficult' (Wilkins 2016).

Unlike other members of the governing body who are co-opted to their position by the chair and vice-chair, usually on the basis on an interview and skills audit or competency framework, parent governors are elected by the parent body of the school and therefore enter in to their position by virtue of the will of the local community. In most cases, parent governors are sufficiently 'enculturated' through orientations and repeated, compulsory training to ensure they understand the parameters of their role and responsibility. But since parents are elected rather than co-opted to the governing body, they represent a potentially subversive element that threatens to destabilise governance unless properly orientated and audited. As stated in the School Governance Regulations (DfE 2013a: 2), 'The governing body may only appoint as a parent governor [or partnership governor] a person who has, in the opinion of the governing body, the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school'.

Governance, on this account, is a heavily politicised, controlled environment. In 2016 the government issued plans to remove the requirement for governing bodies to retain democratically elected members, namely parent governors (DfE 2016). While the requirement was later scrapped, the proposal to alleviate representative democracy as a function of governance is indicative of a government that is anxious about the capacity of some governors to effectively monitor the financial and educational performance of multi-million pound organisations. Hence the

government emphasises the importance of risk-based regulation to governance and continuously intervenes by way of funding agreements, performance benchmarking and attrition through inspection and high-stakes testing to exercise greater control over the limits and possibilities of governance (Wilkins 2017b). Moreover, the government have expressed a strong preference for MATs who 'increasingly use professionals to hold individual school-level heads to account for educational standards and the professional management of the school' (DfE 2016: 50).

The government also appear to favour MATs to the extent they are depoliticised entities with largely techno-managerialist ambitions that include enhancing vertical accountability. In 2017, however, the House of Commons Education Committee (HCEC) report on MATs concluded that 'There is too much emphasis on 'upward' accountability and not enough on local engagement' (HCEC 2017). According to Glatter (2013), these trends are evidence of a 'crisis of legitimacy' in as much as governance legitimacy is not judged against evidence of civic participation and democratic control but rather depends on the extent to which schools are ancillaries to government rule and corporate and contract measures of accountability.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the growing influence of technocratic cultures on education structures and processes, and the diminishing role of participatory democracy in these contexts. Specifically, the chapter details the rise of epistocracy and monopoly and its implications for democratic governance in schools. Through

tracing the history of school governance and its development in relation to changes in education law and policy, especially the introduction of the Academies Act 2010, this chapter analyses the prevalence of a set of social arrangements, institutional orders and dominant discourses that appear to sustain as well as legitimate certain anti-democratic principles and practices. 'Governance failure' (Jessop 2000) is a recurring problem in education systems where significant instructional, financial and operational powers are devolved to schools and their communities, and this might partly explain why the government and many non-government organisations and actors, from governance consultants and support services to governors themselves, appear to favour elements of epistocracy and monopoly in the education system. Here, governance failure can be measured against the capacity of school governors to discharge their responsibilities as custodians of public interest.

Although not democratic in design or practice, epistocracy (rule by the most knowledgeable) and monopoly (rule by hierarchy) appears to mitigate some of the worst features of governance failure to the extent it insulates governance from aspects of inefficiency or ineffectiveness, be it 'unwieldly' discourse that favours dissensus over consensus or priorities and preferences that resist or evade capture from the 'lure of the explicit' (Green 2011: 49). Instead, the government are keen to limit governance participation and action to 1) Professional guidelines and judgements that are amenable to external scrutiny; 2) Consensus building that is apolitical and driven by knowledge specialists, experts and research people; 3) Dialogue that is 'actionable' according to the explicitness and transparency of economic indicators, compliance orders and accountability targets; and 4) Technocratic precision shaped by efficient instruments of problem solving,

performance evaluation and risk regulation. Not only is democracy trivialised in these contexts as beyond the remit of governance; it is typically regarded as dangerous or risky in as much as it threatens to undercut the smooth functioning of the above procedures and directives.

In their discussion of 'mini-publics', Escobar and Elstub (2017) outline a number of democratically innovative approaches to strengthening citizen participation in matters of public interest, from science and technology to health and education. These innovations in participatory governance include citizens' juries, consensus conferences and deliberative polls. The purpose of these experiments in participatory governance is to gain a better understanding of how the public might deal with matters of public interest if they had the time and resources to do so. Rather than aggregate citizen knowledge and opinion through a voting system, for example, participatory governance (or participatory democracy) is designed to empower citizens through learning, support and deliberation to engage in complex issues about making good collective decisions. In the case of school governance in England, there are strong elements of representative democracy that impact the composition and decision making of governing bodies, at least among those schools that still have a governing body. Parent governors are a staple among many governing bodies, for example. Yet deliberation on these governing bodies tend to be subject to specialised standards of technocratic evaluations and bounded judgements determined by external authorities rather than genuine citizen deliberation. The formation of mini-publics in schools are not only necessary to improve equality in governance participation and extend governance to genuine

public deliberation, but are vital to redressing the crisis of legitimacy within public

education and its democratic deficit.

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