

## Ethical Leadership

*(Carolyn Roberts, who had chaired the ASCL Ethical Leadership Commission, spoke on this topic at the NGA Conference in November)*

Carolyn began by quoting the first part of the title of her address – *What kind of people are we?* – and stating the NGA had been involved in the enterprise from the start, and thanking Emma Knight (NGA Chief Executive) for her contribution. ‘Governance had done us proud.’

Things this session were not about Leadership standards, Leadership styles, Accountability, Outcomes. It had at its back the seven Nolan Principles of Public Life. Carolyn asked what schools were for, and gave the answer: ‘Schools were where society chooses to look after its young during the prolonged childhood and adolescence of the human being’. The focus of this ‘care’ was education. However, the relationship between this education, the purpose of schooling and the economic needs of the nation remained uneasy. There had been a very fixed pattern of schools after the war, then prosperity brought some change with the arrival of comprehensive schools. Carolyn felt that the relationship between the child, society and the state had been underthought. Children should be valued because they were children, and the education system should serve them, and should model good citizenship. Schools were *in loco parentis*, and should be good parents. She quoted Kipling and reminded us that we were public servants and equally that we were constant role models to the young. She considered history. In order effectively to measure and evaluate public investment and protect economic competitiveness, simplified measures were developed to judge schools’ outputs. Then, in the later years of the 20<sup>th</sup>/early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century this combined with high-stakes inspection to offer perverse incentives whereby Head teachers could claim excellence by focusing entirely on examination results. This fuelled competitiveness between schools which then undermined some unspoken assumptions of common purpose. School leadership training was simultaneously developing in a context where bold attributes were highly prized at Secretary of State and Chief Inspector level. Finally, the pre-existing state framework was systematically dismantled and schooling left open to evolutionary, if not market, forces. It was little wonder therefore that some school leadership became compromised.

Carolyn turned to school leaders and asked ‘What were they for?’ They had complex professional duties, were significant decision-makers for society and individuals, worked with vulnerable people, held public assets and provided integrity in intellectual and pedagogic life. And from leaders the taxpayer required value for money, transparency, people who were independent but also interdependent, promoted lifelong learning and equality, kept children safe – but also kept the streets free from children. These tasks assumed motivation, so Carolyn asked the following questions: Why did we start? Why did we keep going? What had brought each of us to this point? How did we see ourselves in the world? The answers were, for most, giving back, personal development, satisfaction, a worthwhile role and learning a lot from the process.

The next question was: What kind of people were we? She gave a series of possibilities: child-centred blobby liberal, zero-tolerance super head, light television entertainer, entrepreneur, DCS *de nos jours*?

Carolyn quoted Danny Dorling, Halford Mackinder professor of geography, Oxford University (*The Guardian*, 20.03.18), which might give pause for thought:

*‘The cult of the macho “strong leader”, which dominates education, has been damaging in so many ways. I always seem to be reading fatuous accounts of the apparently super-human workloads of our academy trust principals and university presidents. They rise at 5am to lead their institutions forward with an hour of emails, followed by breakfast meetings, and fall late into bed having worked tirelessly all day for their underlings. It is narcissist guff and to most*

*of us is unimpressive, but given how much educational leaders pay themselves, it is perhaps not surprising that they try to justify their worth in this way.'*

And so we came to **Ethics** (and Ethical Leadership). There were four ways to look at Ethics – through Rights, Duties, Virtues and Cases.

Rights took us to *The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child 1959*, and *Articles 28* and *29*, which dealt specifically with education and schools as the rights of children.

Coming to Duties, she referred to Kant (Children do not choose to be born. Making children's lives bearable is a consequence of the adult act of procreation – *Metaphysics of Morals* ~28); and his development of the Golden Rule from Matthew 7,12, as his categorical Imperative (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 4:421); and John Rawls (1921-2002) – 'Equality is difficult to achieve' and 'The **veil of ignorance** should be used when we set up social arrangements'.

For Virtues, CR turned to Aristotle – **Courage** (managing fear and confidence), **Temperance** (dealing with bodily pleasure and pain), **Generosity** (giving and receiving money), **Magnificence** (giving and retaining money on a large scale), **Greatness of soul** (honour on a large scale), **Even temper** (managing anger), **Friendliness** (social relations), **Truthfulness** (honesty about oneself), **Wit** (conversational skill), **Justice** (distributing things fairly), **Friendship** (dealing with individuals).

Finally, Cases (English Case Law) meant looking at precedents. These were to be found in court, in Parliament (Select Committees), in national life (Inquiries, Royal Commissions) and in our daily jobs (investigations).

Carolyn then moved on to the Ethical Leadership Commission itself. There were many people involved and she listed 14, including Emma Knight, Dame Alison Peacock and Ofsted's HMCi Amanda Spielman. They had met nine times, and the result was the **Ethical Framework for Educational Leadership**, a proposal for **embedding the framework in professional development programmes** and a proposal for the establishment of a **committee for ethical educational leadership**. The Draft Framework was based on the Seven Principles of Public Life (see slide presentation for the details included under each of the seven). To these were added seven Virtues to which Leadership should exhibit: Trust, Wisdom, Kindness, Justice, Service, Courage and Optimism.

Exemplifying these:

**Trust:** off-rolling; home ed misuse

**Wisdom:** proper Schemes of work vs exam tricks; take time to think

**Kindness:** following procedures; Friday-Monday;

**Justice:** admissions; behaviour methods

**Service:** remuneration committees; GB size

**Courage:** curriculum for children, not school; gaming

**Optimism:** no functionalism; no 'fail'

Carolyn closed by asking what the audience thought: inviting comments or questions to be sent by email to [codeofethics@ascl.org.uk](mailto:codeofethics@ascl.org.uk); suggesting people asked someone from the Commission to speak at a local event; or joined the pilot. There was to be a free conference on 25<sup>th</sup> January to launch the Framework.