Thinking about the school most of the time: studio as generative metaphor for critical reflection

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Abstract

Busy leaders need time to reflect and renew. They need to consider the particularities of their school and the ways in which they can work with others in the school community to address pressing issues, as well as to make future plans. The metaphor of the studio offers some helpful avenues for thinking how this reflection might occur. Artists use their studios for respite, not knowing, generating new ideas, risk taking, integrating theory and practice, exercising criticality and developing socially just practices. Leaders might take a lead from artists; however, there are both space and time challenges to making the studio a practical possibility.

Keywords: studio, metaphor, leadership, reflective practice

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> After my first seven years I took a break to research at university, and now I am allowing myself membership of one or two professional and Government committees, even though during meetings I find I am thinking about the school most of the time. (Winkley, 2002, p. 233)

Sustaining leadership in the long-term requires reflection and renewal. And this requires conscious self, time and agenda management. David Winkley, writing a memoir about his twenty-three-year headship of a school in inner London, focuses on the need to balance a deep commitment to his school with personal self-care and renewal. Working out how to 'think about the school most of the time' and to make this thinking productive, and not obsessive and personally damaging, is a challenge, as Winkley acknowledges. This paper addresses this challenge. It is a 'think-piece' which brings together research on the work of school leaders, predominantly headteachers, with research on the work of artists. As artists, like headteacher Winkley, often think about their work most of the time (Lofaro, 2016), there are possible synergies and benefits from transposing ideas from the art world to educational leadership. Focused on the practice of thinking most of the time, I explore the metaphor of 'the studio'.

I begin by indicating my approach to metaphor, the need for leaders to develop a reflective practice, and then address the artist's studio and studio practice. I point to studio practice relevant to busy school leaders - not knowing, generating new ideas, risk taking, integrating theory and practice, criticality and socially just practices. I conclude with a discussion of time and space, recognising that the very idea of studio might be difficult for school leaders to establish and maintain.

Metaphors to think with

Metaphor is integral to everyday meaning-making (Ricoeur, 1975). As key metaphor researchers Lakoff and Johnson (1983) point out, metaphor - actually metaphorical concept - is not something confined to poets and orators, but is pervasive in human thinking and speech. Because metaphor is quotidian, it structures and frames how we understand the world, our experiences and relationships, and is integral to governing actions, including memories and plans for the future.

Metaphors have long been the subject of academic study. Analysis of metaphors is used to both deconstruct dominant discourses and sense-making practices, and to reconstruct them. Metaphors in literary texts are interrogated to illuminate interpretation (Lodge, 2015). Psychologists work with metaphors in order to understand and diagnose stresses and pathologies and to assist clients to re-narrate their lives (Klopp, 1995). Educational researchers too have been interested in metaphor; within the corpus of educational metaphor research, some work is focused on leadership. Lumby and English (2010), for instance, identified seven dominant metaphors in leadership discourse - leadership as machine, accounting, war, sport, theatre, religion and lunacy. Schecter and colleagues (Schechter, Shaked, Ganon-Shilon, & Goldratt, 2018) examined interviews with 59 Israeli principals about their experience of national reforms to show a range of agentic metaphors – juggling, conducting, being a magician, a shaper – including some that demonstrated constraints – marionette, in a tailspin, a catch-all.

However, Lumby and English (2010) note a current decline in positive metaphors about leadership: notions of stewardship and cultivation, for example, have fallen out of favour. But English (2008) offers a positive take on leadership metaphor, identifying leadership as both science and art. He suggests that work with metaphors might inform the teaching of, for and about, educational leadership (c.f. Bredeson, 1988; K. Singh, 2010). Leaders in contemporary standards and audit driven systems need, he suggests in concert with Lumby, to

> have a critical perspective on the wider context and forces at play that support or impede learning. … They will need to be sensitised to their own and other's use of language and its significance for learning. (Lumby and English, 2010, p. 127)

Thinking about metaphors can be an important aspect of a reflective leaders' practice.

This think-piece is directed to a similar end. I take up English's notion of leadership as art. I offer an elaboration of the studio as a way of thinking how to sustain leadership practice and to withstand the pressures of current policy agendas.

Sustaining leadership

There is little doubt that leading schools is a demanding job. Head teachers are expected to be knowledgeable about policy, pedagogy, organisational change, and relationship building and maintaining (Brighouse and Woods, 1999). They must ensure that they use 'evidence' in the form of data analysis, best practice and research to inform school improvement (Johnson, 2002). They must be symbolically adept, managing school cultures and narratives (Busher and Baker, 2003). They must be highly strategic and have expertise in legal and financial dealings and in working with expert partners and governors (Davies and Ellison, 2003). In order to meet these demands, leaders work long hours, often struggle to manage family commitments alongside those of the school, and many find it increasingly difficult to reconcile their educational philosophies with those of audit-driven, league-tabled school systems. They fret, they think all the time. Many heads find it hard to 'turn off' (Thomson, 2009).

At the same time, headship is often seen as a reflective practice (Sergiovanni, 1987). Reflective practice is a form of learning, a systematic and critical engagement with both theory and practice, directed towards achieving explicit pedagogical goals. For headteachers, reflective practice means, inter alia, interrogating organisational and their own everyday work, thinking about futures in the present, synthesising a large amount of information, and formulating possibilities. This is not fretting, but something much more generative and re-freshing. While ideas might be generated at any time and in any place – as Winkley notes, he thought about school most of the time - ideas are often explored, tested away from everyday pressures of school. Winkley asserted, reflecting on his own malaise after a period of time in the job, that time away was respite crucial for staying in the position.

> The seven-year decline is not inevitable. The head is only one member of the team, and if you are sufficiently aware of the dangers of the long haul, the possibility of over-control, cosiness, self-importance and the stresses that can lead to breakdown, then you can sustain a long-term professional life, constantly learning something new. (Winkley, 2002, p. 236)

Winkley's time-out was for reflection, something different from constantly thinking all the time.

Day (2000) identifies five types of reflection necessary for 'good' and 'effective' leadership:

> *the holistic*, where the emphasis is upon vision and culture building; *the pedagogical* (on and in action), in which they place emphasis upon staff acquiring, applying and monitoring teaching which achieves results allied to their vision (which includes but is greater than the demands made by policy implementation imperatives); *the interpersonal*, where the focus is upon knowing and nurturing staff, children, parents and governors; *the strategic*, where the focus is upon entrepreneurship, intelligence gathering and networking to secure some control of the future; *the intrapersonal*, where the focus is upon self-knowledge and self-development and fulfilment. (Day, 2000, p. 118)

Taking on these five types of reflection is 'slow' intellectual activity in contrast/conflict with the 'fast' barrage of leaders' daily encounters and demands. Such reflective practice might thus seem impossible to achieve. Rather than reflection, many heads, like Winkley, report fretting and worrying, thinking all the time. And it is unresolved fretting and worrying that often leads to ill-health, stress and burnout (Thomson, 2008). Reflective practice must ideally become a manageable form of life-long learning (Bradbury, Frost, Kilminster, & Zukas, 2010), not a guilt-inducing omission.

As a former headteacher I am familiar with the demands of the position and the challenges of sustaining both work and quality of life. But as I have researched with artists and on artistic practice I have come to wonder about whether, like teachers, heads might benefit from reflecting on their practice as artists do. I wonder whether heads who think too much might gain some impetus for a reflective practice and sustain headship if they were able to think about the work differently.

The studio

In each of the next sections I discuss the place where artists quintessentially work and reflect – the studio. I discuss four aspects of studio – the studio as a site for learning and knowing, as both theory and practice, as social and socially just, and as time and space – four interconnected aspects of reflective practice. In each section, I begin with a key theme in the literatures on leading, and indicate the possible affordances of the metaphor.

Learning and knowing

It is not uncommon to see and hear that leaders must be learners. School improvement scholars emphasise the importance of staff learning as a means of organisational capacity building (Ainscow and West, 2006; Lambert, 1998), and note the correlation between a learning-oriented principal and 'authentic' school change (Fullan, 2006; Hargreaves, 1996). In order for the school to become a 'learning community' teachers must become leaders and learners, and the one who leads the charge, must be 'lead learner' (e.g. Bennis and Nanus, 1985; McDowell, 2018; Senge et al., 2000).

However, not all leader learning is the same or is equally well regarded. While official departmental training programmes espouse learning, many use profiles, standards and standardised approaches (Eacott, 2011; English, 2000). Educational leadership researchers of various persuasions argue that generalised rubrics ignore specific school contexts and localised issues (Arlestig, Day, & Johansson, 2016; Brighouse and Woods, 1999; Macbeath and Mortimore, 2001). If leaders cannot rely on one-best universalised approaches then they must, critics of standards say, be able to 'read' the specific histories, strengths and weaknesses of their organisation, understand system demands and parent expectations and be aware of future trends and possibilities. Combining such understandings with ethical and democratically developed plans for the school requires deep and systematic leader earning, maintained over time. Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) argue that the 'most successful' school leaders, those able to do ongoing learning contextualised thinking, learning and

acting, are those who are “open-minded and ready to learn from others” and “flexible rather than dogmatic in their thinking within a system of core values” (p. 36).

Enter the studio metaphor. The origin of the word studio is from the Latin *studium*, which is translated as study or application. Etymologists suggest the studio family tree begins with the Latin verb *studere* – to be diligent - and note a thirteenth century meaning “to apply oneself to the acquisition of learning, pursue a formal course of study” and a fourteenth-century meaning of “reflect, muse, think, ponder” (1). These early meanings are highly germane to the studio practices of visual artists, musicians, writers, dancers, designers and architects and to the ways in which I will use studio as metaphor. The studio is now also synonymous with a workroom, perhaps seen most frequently in its association of media - radio, television and film-making. The studio metaphor thus offers a way of thinking about being a learner and a knower, the practices of sustained deep learning and knowing, and the materiality of space and its sociality.

Studio offers a particular approach to learning. Rather than begin with what is already known and problematising it, as reflection and action research theory posits, many artists begin with openness, adopting a position of *tabula rasa* – knowing nothing. Artists value not knowing, and practices which support unknowing – not simply abandoning or deconstructing what is known - but unknowing as a way of being (Fisher and Fortnum, 2014). Not knowing and unknowing are axiological and ontological, ways of being artist, ways of approaching and living in the world (Thomson, 2017b).

Not knowing and unknowing are akin to Ranciere’s (1991) ignorant schoolmaster who worked *as if* the classroom was equitable, *as if* all children were already equal in attainment and ability. Many artists working in schools use *as if* pedagogies; they approach children without any prior knowledge of them. They work *as if* they are all equally able to have insights, opinions, and good ideas which they can realise (Hall and Thomson, 2017; Hall, Thomson, & Russell, 2007). Perhaps school leaders can also work *as if*, and take up and take on the not-knowingness of artists. A school leader might work *as if* they knew nothing about school, their teachers, classrooms, curriculum, policy, tests and league tables in general and in particular. Assuming an as-if position towards the school as the basis for learning, and hence knowing more and differently, is to embrace the desire for a liminal state – to pause in the space between the I-who-was and the I-who-I-am-now, as Ellsworth (2005) puts it. At the same time, it is to step away from the performative imposts of everyday life in schools (Ball, 1998; P. Singh, Heimans, & Glasswell, 2014).

Not knowing is a rejection of highly modern leadership practice. Once, leaders simply had to manage a gruelling day of multiple human interactions and meetings (Wolcott, 1973), but quotidian contemporary leadership practice is strongly shaped by audit, actuarial and public relations requirements (Gunter, Grimaldi, Hall, & Serpieri, 2016). As Lyotard suggests, explaining the performativity of postmodernity,

> The idea that we could put up with not making progress (in a calculable and visible way), that we could put up with always doing no more than making a start—this is contrary to the general values of prospection, development, targeting, performance, speed, contracts, execution, fulfilment (Lyotard, 1993, p. 102)

It may be that the studio offers school leaders a welcome opportunity to step away from these performative aspects of their work. Studio, as the opportunity to be and think and learn *as-if-I-do-not-know,* supports a (perhaps temporary) rejection of the can do-must do subjectivities now most valued in school systems (Niesche, 2011). Studio un-knowing may provide not only opportunities for professional and personal learning, but also for professional and personal re-imagination. The studio

is perhaps a small counter-space (Fraser, 1993) where other ways of being and doing school leadership might be dwelt in and upon. A place to take a breath.

These *as if* and *what if* (Craft, Jeffrey, & Leibling, 2001), counter-thinking and being-doing aspects of reflection in the studio are now explored further in relation to sustained, contextualised leader learning.

Theory and practice

Among the research on artists are a few studies that focus on studios. *Studio Life* (Trigg, 2013) for instance draws on interviews and photographic records of over two hundred US artists to document the rituals and material objects – mascots, collections, tools, makeshift tools, residues - that constitute the studio as artist habitat. The hefty art book *Sanctuary* (Amisadeghi, 2012), a compendium of interviews and photographs about one hundred and twenty British artists, reports artist Ian Wallace saying that

> … during the Renaissance there was a shift in the space of production from the craft workshop to the more literary studium, a shift that was essential to the intellectual liberation of the artist and the eventual repositioning of the visual arts as a branch of the humanities. (p.23)

This thesis of a contemporary artist's studio brings thinking and making together, not in a hierarchy, but as integrated and co-dependent, habituated and ritualised, aspects of the one material practice. Once studios were largely for making. Now theory and practice are indivisible in studio work, although there might be times devoted more to one than the other.

The theory-practice divide is well-travelled educational territory. It has various manifestations, from the rhetorical and institutional separation of head and hands subjects (Rose, 2005) to the institutionalised hierarchies of knowledge production in teacher education in universities (theoretical) and schools (practical), and leadership training in universities (theoretical) and systems and professional associations (practical) (Thomson, 2017a). Rejecting this binary leads to various reconfigurations of theory/practice, including reflective practice (Brandenberg, Glasswell, Jones, & Ryan, 2017), action research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) and practitioner research (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009). All of these binary-breaking approaches begin from the position that practice always contains implicit theory and theory always implies practice; a mediating process of dialogue, inquiry or structured and systematic thinking brings the two together.

Studio too uses the familiar processes of critical reflection and dialogue to bring theory and practice together. But studio theory/practice reflection and dialogue can be directed to different ends. Because artists have relatively recently had to make explicit how theory and practice come together in the studio or practice doctorate (Nelson, 2013), they have had to engage in considerable debate. One of the key distinctions often made is between *practice-based* research, where a creative artefact is the contribution to knowledge, and *practice-led* research, where research leads to new understandings about practice - where practice is seen to not simply embody theory but is the basis for critical analytic and theoretical propositions (Throp, 2016). Such propositions then require exploration, not necessarily resolution. In educational terms, this is the difference between a reflective or research process leading to either 'what works' (practice-based) or enhanced and possibly transformed (practice-led) understandings.

Practice-led research in the arts is often very like action research, with the practice of testing and reflecting occurring in the studio. But the kind of intellectual-making practice-led research which

occurs in the studio is particular. It is as much about the contestation of prevailing orthodoxies as it is about self-expression. The practice-led studio is itself thought of metaphorically, as a laboratory for experimentation, as refuge, an activist cell, a gallery, a factory, a place where boredom rules, liminality seduces but where discipline ultimately prevails (Blazwick., 2012).

Bringing together theory and practice, the idea of practice-led research, and the necessity of some kind of risk-taking and experimentation signals the potential of studio as a metaphor for school leaders' reflective practice A studio becomes, for school leaders, a place where their own everyday practice is used to raise propositions that can be systematically investigated. Systematic studio practice-led reflection focused on raising propositions about the everyday might well engage in unknowing and may involve abandoning or reworking generally available school data (Earl and Katz, 2006), as well as making and using new investigative materials - journals, compendia of cases, school inventories and photographic records, analysis of conversations and questionnaires – and reading. A lot of reading. Locating and generating materials pertinent to the job and the local and vernacular allows the school leader to tinker with possibilities and consider alternatives. (This is not a new idea, see Barth, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1987) In a studio, leaders might safely reimagine their school's purpose and mission and the particular administrative, cultural, relational challenges they face. School leaders, understandably concerned about the ethics and consequences of live experimentation on teachers and students, may find some reassurance in the notion of studio as a site for *practice-led* reflection, theorising, experimenting and risk-taking that will inform *their* work.

And this process of practice-led reflection might become habituated, as it does for artists and for school students studying the arts. A study of 'studio thinking' in visual art classrooms (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007) located seven studio 'habits of mind': learning to engage and persist; learning to envision (planning beyond seeing); learning to express (finding personal visions); learning to observe (seeing beyond the ordinary); learning to reflect (thinking metacognitively; learning to stretch and explore (beyond the familiar); and learning to understand the artist's world (navigating domain and field). These studio habits of mind are equally pertinent to school leaders. A leadership studio might support habituated processes that situate the educational leader as a practice-led inquirer, open to possibility and willing to critically challenge themselves.

Social and socially just practice

A studio is not always solitary. People gather in mutual and shared activity in studio workrooms. Sometimes studios are pedagogical workspaces where apprentices learn from experts, or collectives of artists learn from and with each other. Studios thus might be places where leaders teach others about the job, or places where leaders gather together for mutual and reciprocal exchange.

The pedagogical studio has particular 'signatures' (Shulman, 2005). Studio-based learning (SBL) is an alternative to problem-based learning (PBL). SBL features design–teams engaged in 'real life' interprofessional problem-solving . Teams develop design briefs via data collection and 'charrette', then undertake analysis, prototyping, trialling and review. An important aspect of SBL is the use of 'the crit' a collective and critical discussion about work that has been produced; architecture, urban planning, visual art and performing arts also have strong traditions of 'the crit'. The crit is constructive. It allows artists to be explicit about the thinking behind their work. It encourages them to connect theory/practice and the work they have made (McPherson, 2018). The crit also offers new insights from other points of view. How does the person viewing this work understand it? is this what I intended? Is there something here in this new perspective that I want to explore further? The crit might be a social pedagogy for proposition building, practice-led leadership pedagogies. It might offer a somewhat different approach to leading school change.

However, studio practices are not benign. Studios are sites for producing, via studio pedagogies, the status quo as well as for challenging it. For example, while the crit is intended to be developmental and appreciative, it is not always experienced in this way (Lymer, 2010; Thornton, 2008). Studio pedagogies such as the crit can have potential unwanted consequences. The crit can arouse fear, and through affect, can serve as one way to put people off, and thus be a mechanism to sort and select students (Sara and Parnell, 2016). Of course, reproducing the status quo may be seen as desirable – some university studio-based courses for example now take pride in preparing students for contemporary hot-desked offices (Cai and Khan, 2010). But most artists are interested in change. Many modern visual artist studios are explicitly positioned as anti-studios or spaces for post-studio practices, that is, they set out to challenge the social and economic arrangements of the art world and its (re)production (Jones, 1996). Judy Chicago (2014) for example used the studio as a place to develop a feminist collective pedagogy which spoke back to the male-dominated art world, and to society more generally and her 'crits' were geared to that end.

These pedagogical examples are instructive; they show that the studio is not neutral. It might be a place sequestered from the everyday, but the everyday world permeates it. The studio is social, economic, cultural and political. There are thus choices to be made, when considering studio as a metaphor for school leaders, about which aspects of studio are simply reproductive and which might offer possibilities for equitable change.

Leaders committed to more socially just schooling may find socially engaged studio practices of particular interest. Socially engaged artists prioritise critical and political processes. They aim to work with marginalised groups, neighbourhoods and organisations to speak back to power. They seek, in Fricker's (2007) words, epistemic justice, to bring subjugated narratives, experiences, interpretations and knowledges into larger public arenas. They aim to enter, usually uninvited, the 'public sphere', calling for respect, recognition and redistribution (Fraser, 1997). In refusing to be silenced, socially engaged artists demand that wrongs be made right. Their studio practices are directed to the production of the agora, spaces for public debate and social action, working from and with an understanding of the agency and rights of others. The socially engaged studio is not a lone pursuit but collaborative, dialogic and reciprocal.

In socially engaged and participatory arts, the social and the artistic are not collapsed together but held in tension (Bishop, 2012), and mediated through events or spectacles. A spectacle is, as Ranciere (2011) suggests, a 'third thing'. The third thing is possible when the artist and the spectator come together to make something new. Ranciere rejected the idea of transmission from the artist to the spectator arguing instead for pedagogies and aesthetic practices that "reorganise common worlds and make visible the capacities and intelligences of all those who live in them"(Maggori, 2017). During the event, a singular artistic autonomy is transformed into a (temporary) heteronomy (Ranciere, 2002).

In studio practice then, the socially engaged artist first seeks to understand where they are working. They talk, read, walk, explore, research and reflect, with others, in order to come to a view of what might be possible. Then, in partnership, they develop 'events' which enact possibilities, speak out and speak back. Hopes and ideas for social justice may begin and be partially processed in the studio but are more widely shared through the time-space of staged events. All participants are transformed by this experience, and their work may become socially transformative.

The tension between ultimately being the one held responsible for the school and various forms of extending leadership and management (often called distributing leadership in the mainstream literatures) is fraught (Hatcher, 2005). How can a leader be both democratic and autocratic at the same time? Socially engaged artists' studio practices are instructive for leaders who delegate much

of the administration and management of the school to others on whom they rely to lead smaller groups of staff in tune with an overall school plan or 'vision'. They may also choose to engage parents, students and staff, as well as governors, in having ideas and developing plans, in creating events that are a 'third thing'.

Here then are studio propositions for leaders. *What if* democratising leadership practices can be held and sustained at the same time as they are relationally strained by hierarchically mandated requirements? *What if* school leaders can hold socially just goals, and avoid imposing them on staff and students undoing the goal even as it brought into being? These *what if* propositions go against the grain of mainstream leadership literatures which posit the school leader developing a singular vision which is then transmitted to other staff (Courtney and Gunter, 2015). How might leaders, following Ranciere and socially engaged arts practices, make hope practical and practice through the development of a school calendar which institutionalises and embeds the 'third thing'?

Socially engaged studio practices point to school leaders not solving this knotty problem on their own, but engaging others in considering these questions. They also point to the need to find the 'third thing', the mediating events and spectacles. Management now comes into play. Leaders interested in this aspect of studio might consider which school occasions have potential to become sites of mediation between the ideas developed in the studio by the leader and colleagues, and the ideas, experiences and desires of the wider school community. Meetings, conferences and assemblies and school rituals and regularly diarised occasions such as parent evenings, concerts, sports days, INSET days and work experience weeks (c.f. Spillane et al., 2002) perhaps offer Rancierian possibilities for third thing shared conversations and social action.

Space and time

But how is this un-knowing, practice-led third thing oriented leadership to be materialised?

James, Mann and Creasy (2007, p. 79) argue that safety is paramount for leaders' reflection. Safety might mean being able to 'not know' and think *as if* away from those staff, students and parents who may be extremely worried by the idea of a school leader who does not know, who admits they are learning, who wants to test out untried ideas, who critiques their own practice. There may also be safety in numbers, in shared proposition making. Perhaps heads need an actual studio.

Studio is strongly associated with the notion of withdrawal from other activities in order to focus on the thinking-making. The artist retreats to work in the studio. But where is the head to find their studio?

Studios are variously portrayed as large light-filled rooms with students standing at easels painting a life model, a home office with a solitary writer beavering away or, as in the well-heeled contemporary artist's studio, several rooms where employees work on aspects of large commissions. A studio might be fixed – as in a single room in which the artist sleeps, eats and possibly bathes, a la Van Gogh - or mobile – as in the digital musician able to turn almost anywhere into a project music studio. These varied images indicate that studios are not one thing. While the popular trope of the studio might be associated with a single and privatised lone – often male and middle class - cultural producer (Friedman, O'Brien, & Laurison, 2016; Ley, 2003), in reality studios take multiple forms. Studios are always a material space, but of various sizes, temporalities, mobilities, ownerships and occupancies. This will surely be the case for leaders' studios too.

Some school leaders will be able to find a space at home. Others may find it at school. The leader's office is a possibility, but the office is also used for regular meetings, sad and tricky staffing issues,

stern parent and student encounters, meetings with visitors, governors and inspectors, and an unending stream of administrative tasks (Bristow, Ireson, & Coleman, 2007; Southworth, 1995). The school leader's office may not always be the most conducive space for reflection. But finding a place at home might be equally difficult. Nippert-Eng (1996) shows how professionals, as opposed to blue collar workers, tend to let their work encroach into every aspect of their lives; their work is done in the kitchen and lounge room as much as a home office. And research with school leaders suggests that setting boundaries around work may be a problem for them too. School leaders work very long hours, and often find it very difficult to juggle their professional and family obligations. This is a key factor in the decision of many to leave the job (Whiteoak, 2014). Finding the space to reflect is clearly a challenge. Perhaps there is some mileage for leaders in thinking about writers who hire office space away from home, or artists who work in a garden shed.

However, not all artists have equal access to a physical space or have abundant time. Apart from young artists who cannot afford spaces to work, artists who have other full-time work or are carers find studio access hard to come by. Bain's (2004) study of ten Canadian women artists noted that possession of a studio, a 'room of one's own' (Woolf, 1929), was important for women working in a male-dominated profession. It signified independence, a professional commitment and membership of the artist community. However, family responsibilities often meant that this precious studio space had to be found in the home, and artistic work was frequently interrupted: art practice was confined to fragments of time. Nevertheless, the presence of the physical studio was key to women claiming and sustaining an artist identity (see also Perkins, 1998).

The question of space is not the only potential difficulty with studio as metaphor and reality. School leaders, like some artists, are time poor. Surveys regularly report that, like teachers, school leaders spend over sixty hours a week on work-related matters (2). Some, like Winkley, take time out from the position in order to recuperate, replenish, review and renew. Some break under the pressure (author 2008).The problem seems to be that the job cannot be compressed into the hours available.

Eacott (2018) argues that leaders might benefit from a different approach to temporality. Rather than thinking about the job, he suggests that leaders need to consider key elements of their practice in relation to the available time. Putting the job together with time, rather than seeing time as a container into which the required work won't fit, may produce a different set of leadership temporal practices. Perhaps this means leaders deciding a priority list of activities – including studio – and then blocking out time in their diaries for these particular activities. The time that is left is then all that is available for other tasks. And if these tasks can't all fit, then some tasks have to be handed over, or a new way found to get them done.

Many leaders of course do try to order their activities, but find themselves continually eating into their strategic reflection times in order to deal with what appear to be non-negotiable and pressing matters. They sabotage their own good intentions. Again, an artist's studio related practice might be instructive for leaders in this situation. While artists do think about their work all the time, they also have ways of keeping hold of those ideas until they have time to work on them in the studio. Sketchbooks and artists' books – books where notes, doodles, quotations, bits of data, journaling and so on – are as much a signature of artists' practice as 'the crit'. Sketchbooks and artists' books are a portable external archive; rather than relying on memory, or thinking about the same thing over and over, artists document, save and return later. These days, an artist's book might be digital or analog or both, as many artists still prefer the book for its sensual qualities and mark-making affordances. The book is a resource for reflection and for testing out.

Artists' book habits are part of studio pedagogies. Documenting is integral to teaching arts and design studio-based practice. Habituated use of reflective design journals has for example been

shown to improve architecture students' awareness of organisation, planning, monitoring and evaluation (Kurt and Sevinc, 2017). So *what if* the largely defunct and old-fashioned school journal could be reworked in a similar way? What might the school journal afford and enhance? (for an example see Johnston, 2018). How might a leader's book assist studio-style learning?

Collaborative sketchbooks have been used as a means of reconnecting art teachers with their artistic practices (Brass and Coles, 2014). *What if* there was a collective leadership journal focused on the kinds of topics that school leaders feel they rarely have time to discuss - curriculum, pedagogy, community development? *What if* experienced and newly appointed school leaders wrote a combined reflective journal between them? *What if* leaders' studio practices could use an archive of leader books to see what has been accomplished and learnt? But of course, documenting and prioritising are not easy solutions to the time-space dilemmas leaders face. These are structural systemic issues not easily resolved by individuals.

Concluding thoughts: what chance for studio in busy leaders' lives?

I have suggested that leader fretting and worrying does not constitute a systematic reflective practice. I have argued that the processes of reflection as they are normally considered – reviewing experience, taking up new information, formulating new ideas – might be complemented by reflective strategies used by artists in their studios – unknowing, *as if* thinking, integration of theory and practice through practice-led position forming and social practices such as 'the crit', the use of artists' books and collaborative sketchbooks, and creation of 'third thing' events. A studio – as metaphor and reality - might allow the school leader a site for replenishment, healing and reinvigoration and permit and/or legitimate a focus on the kinds of radical innovation necessary for schooling to be more beneficial to many more students and their teachers.

But for studio practice to have any chance of being maintained it has to have pulling power and obvious benefits. Studio has to be seductive, desirable, a place in which thinking and reflective are pleasurable. This may just be possible.

Like leaders, artists too are deeply affected by the politics of performativity and austerity and many do find that studio is a space where it is possible to detach, albeit temporarily, from everyday pressures. Studio can be a place for resistance (Fanthome, 2013) or as Cazeaux (2017) suggests, the attraction of studio lies in 'contextualised novelty', the generation of valuable ideas that are surprising and beneficial. Cazeaux enthuses about

> approaching art as an encounter that makes demands on my understanding, in which new forms that standout as concepts are applied, and there is the overall sense of experience that flexes concepts responsible for organising the world in a way that is rarely permitted in routine perception. (p 67)

Finding the frictions and smoothness between context and novelty, Cazeaux suggests, create divergent meanings and new articulations. Perhaps leaders too can find through and in a resistant studio practice a renewed sense of satisfaction, delight, joy and even exhilaration in novel thinking and learning. Such discovery might be not only highly rewarding but also a very enjoyable process, something worth finding time for.

Of course, whether the studio as metaphor has any traction, is able to be animated in and as reality, is dependent on whether this kind of intellectual activity is seen as worthwhile – not simply useful. I suspect that at least some leaders are likely to agree with Winkley who says

> Leadership is more like a kind of artistry where you are constantly aiming to raise the level of the game, the professionalism the quality of performance and the maturity of the players using imagination and empathy to travel into the unknown. (200, p. 236)

Winkley had to take a term off in order to do this kind of reflective learning. Perhaps the metaphor of studio might have allowed him to engage with the artistry of leadership more regularly. Perhaps there are some leaders and some aspiring leaders who think studio is a resistance metaphor worthy of testing out in practice. *What if*…

Endnotes

(1) Etymology online https://www.etymonline.com/word/study?ref=etymonline_crossreference

(2) See for example https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/13afb486-68b7-45f8-abf9b88840e396f2.pdf, https://www.tes.com/news/teachers-work-54-hour-week-dfe-survey-finds and http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-02-21/principals-overwhelmed-by-workplace-stress-acu-survey-finds/9468078.

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