

TEACHING AND MANAGING

Inseparable Activities in Schools

Cyril Wilkinson and Ernie Cave

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Teaching and Managing:

INSEPARABLE ACTIVITIES IN SCHOOLS

CYRIL WILKINSON AND ERNIE CAVE

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FOREWORD

The authors of this book are well known in Northern Ireland and beyond as teachers and lecturers in education management. Ulster Polytechnic, now merged into the University of Ulster, has a well deserved reputation for the quality of its first and higher degree work in education. Their BEd degree is built around an Action Research model and is firmly based on the direct experience of the serving teachers who enrol for it in considerable numbers each year.

This addition to the Croom Helm education management series is addressed to practising teachers in both primary and secondary schools who are in posts of responsibility or who aspire to them. It is a happy combination of scholarship and practical realism: well founded on a wide theoretical base, but always with the concerns of the teacher in the classroom and the school in the forefront. Each chapter has, therefore, a scenario of school events in a normal school day as the backcloth against which the reader may set the detailed study of the management theory or the practical issue.

This book is unusual in that it will serve both as textbook for education management students on full-time and part-time higher education courses, and as valuable reading for the teacher engaged in day to day tasks. Increasingly, with the new Grant Related In-service Training scheme in England and Wales, we are likely to see a move towards modular higher degrees, diplomas and certificates. The sections of this book lend themselves admirably to this new approach to in-service education.

Cyril Poster



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PREFACE

The stimulus for writing this book comes from our experience in planning, teaching and evaluating Education Management in the BEd and MSc programmes at the University of Ulster. Both courses are predicated on the proposition that improvement in the managerial activity of participants comes through critical analysis of practice and the context within which it takes place. This process of reflection on existing circumstances, on action taken for improvement, and on the consequences of that action, is aided by dialogue and analytical examination within the group. We believe that there is a substantive body of knowledge which should inform the participants' analyses and judgements. There is no shortage of literature which summarises and examines various theories and approaches to education management, but few which test the concepts and ideas presented against an analysis of a real school situation.

We accept that in an action approach to learning the task of testing existing theories against current practice is essentially an individual one. But it is not an easy task and our experience has been that participants welcome illustrations of how the literature might suggest insights which could illuminate school situations. This book draws heavily on experience of managing in schools including the variety and wealth of experience contributed by participants on management courses. The substance of the situations described as happening in a fictional school are based on real events. The situations presented are analysed to identify important issues involved which are then examined and developed.

The Introduction explains the stance taken in the book that teaching and managing are inseparable but not necessarily indistinguishable activities in schools. The first three chapters in Part One describe how developments in organisation theory have increased our understanding of the reality of schools and the nature of the management task. Chapter Four addresses more fully the question of how the practitioner generates operational frameworks [Operational Theory]

from analysis of his own practice [Grounded Formal Theory]. The four chapters in Part Two focus on inclusive pervasive processes in schools: devising, deciding, communicating and influencing.

In order to maintain the continuity and flow of argument copious reference to literature is avoided in the main body of text. Further reading is indicated in the text and provided at the end of the chapter. This directs attention to relevant literature which may be useful in developing and critically examining topics and themes presented. This in turn provides extensive bibliographies. Each section of the text is preceded by a brief statement of the main assertions of the passage which follows. These can be taken together to form a summary of the chapter.

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Interest in the managerial aspects of schools has grown in parallel with the increase in size and complexity of educational institutions. The question of the extent to which a formal study of management theory can lead to improved practice in schools has been a particular focus of attention. The early arguments tended to become polarised into a 'congruent' or 'dissimilar' debate.

The 'congruent' position presupposes that exclusively managerial activities can be isolated, and the label carries a suggestion that key functions of management are 'equal in all aspects' independent of the context in which they operate: a kind of 'management is management is management' argument. This allows an attractive viewpoint that managing and teaching are discrete activities: that schools pursue the purpose of pupil learning and that such learning, at face value, is the outcome of classroom teaching. Managing can then be regarded as a separate activity which creates the environment in which teaching takes place. A neat dichotomy emerges and suggests an inviting proposition: good teaching supported by sound management results in effective pupil learning. It has the appeal of identifying clear areas of action for improvement. In-service curriculum courses and staff development programmes improve teaching; management education courses improve managing. It can promote thinking which advocates programmes in curriculum and teaching skills for those lower down the ranks, and education management and training for those at the top. It encourages a belief that the way to improve management in schools is to identify clear management responsibilities and functions and to make senior and middle managers in schools better at performing the related tasks. This is often the implicit and unexamined rationale underlying short courses in education management.

The 'dissimilar' position argues that the peculiarity of education is such that management theory, and more particularly, management techniques, are irrelevant. The assertion is made from a strongly educationist standpoint that in the

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complex purposes, social structures and processes of educational institutions 'management' is an alien concept. Theoretical arguments centre around values and ideology, and are illustrated by reference to unique features of education: the uncertainty of educational goals and the difficulty of measuring outcomes; an unclear technology in that we are not sure how children learn, which leads to problems of monitoring and accountability; ambiguity in relation to areas of control within a loosely related system; variability in the external contexts of schools. These arguments are revealed at school level in practical issues. It is difficult to identify who are the designated managers of schools. The responsibilities of central and local authorities, of school governors, and of heads are couched in generalised statements, and specific powers are uncertain, but it is clear that teachers have not had the authority normally associated with management on many important issues: appointment of staff, especially ancillary staff; control of budgets; suspension of pupils. However, it is interesting that current moves by central government to weaken the influence of intermediate administrative levels like LEAs have devolved more responsibility on the managers of individual institutions in areas like control of budgets. Heads hesitate to accept a title of 'managers' preferring to see themselves as 'head teachers', and have justification for doing so. In industrial relations terms the principal is not represented on the management side and is likely to be a member of a union representing teachers, though the ambiguity of his position becomes evident at times of industrial action. The head teacher's qualifications and career advancement are likely to reinforce a professional orientation as a teacher rather than as a manager. The image of 'the scholarly head' lingers even in the harsher and more competitive world in which education now finds itself.

The opposing contentions that management theory can identify discrete, learnable managerial skills which apply to the running of schools, or, in contrast, that education is unique and management theory can provide no usable insights, have become less strongly argued in the last decade. The coming together of the 'managerist' and the 'educationist' viewpoints has resulted from better awareness arising from practical experience and from developments in theory. It has been found in practice that participants on management courses from various areas of the public sector such as police authority, local government, health, and education quickly discover that they share similar problems and concerns. Our own involvement in development programmes in the National Health Service has shown us that a concept of management as a rational separate activity is as dubious for the health service as for education. It faces similar problems relating to measurement of outcomes, conflicting expectations, the role of the professional and staff development. For the ward sister,

managing and caring are as inseparable as managing and teaching are in education.

From a theoretical point of view modern writers on management increasingly question many of the assumptions of rationality, certainty and predictability which underlay early approaches to the study of management and which were difficult for practitioners in schools to accept. (Further Reading: *Developments in Management Theory*.) The picture of organisational life given by new approaches in organisation theory accords much more closely to the reality of schools as perceived by teachers. Management theory now recognises the overriding importance of the unique situational variables, both internal and external, of an individual organisation and thus acknowledges the differences between organisations within sectors, as much as differences between sectors. Arising from better understanding of organisational life there is a recognition that the exclusively managerial contribution is hard to separate from the living whole of the institution's activity. Managing is no longer perceived as a sequential execution of separate activities, and in schools it is often difficult to isolate activities which are exclusively managerial and exclusively pedagogical.

Our stance is that teaching and managing are inseparable but not necessarily indistinguishable activities. We take the view that good schools are recognisable and marked by certain characteristics: teaching standards are good; teacher morale is high; there is a strong sense of purpose; pupils work hard and behave well; examination results are good; success in extra-curricular activities is evident; parental involvement is positive; the school's reputation in the community is favourable. We argue that these outcomes are the consequences of a combination of good teaching and good managing. This view is supported by DES publications *Ten Good Schools* (1976), *Better Schools* (1985). Although this book emphasises the managing activity and will be seen to add to the growing volume of texts concerned with organisation and management, we side with the long tradition in education that teaching quality is the key factor in determining the effectiveness of the school. Nevertheless, the kind of school described above would in everyday terms be seen to be 'well run'. There is clearly an activity in addition to the teaching activity which helps to make it a good school. Our concern is with those 'other than teaching' activities which help to determine the characteristics of the school. Throughout the book we stress that any activity is embedded in the total life of the school and a particular problem is that, in the holism of school action, managing and teaching processes are often inseparably linked.

Yet we argue that managerial aspects can be identified and examined within the total activity. The notion that activities can be inseparable yet identifiable is crucial and perhaps

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needs illustration. The activity of a central defender on the football pitch is inseparably linked with the activity of other players in terms of the team's outcomes but is clearly distinguishable: it can be analysed, assessed and perhaps improved. So the image which perhaps describes our approach to the examination of managing processes is that of the coach who freezes the action in order to allow examination of detail or sequence of the total performance. Modern coaching approaches recognise that the kinaesthetic feel of a movement is different when it is part of a sequence of action and reject the notion of training in isolated skills. Freezing the action allows the performer to check certain important elements: in cricket that bat and pad are close together; in golf that the head is still during the swing. Similarly, we believe that in attempting to analyse and reflect on the totality of the varied and simultaneous activities which constitute his practice, an identification and examination of key elements is useful. A parallel to the rejection in coaching of the notion of the 'the right way' is the rejection of the idea of 'the right way' to manage. The coach's role is to help the player to analyse his performance in the light of his own strengths and weaknesses. We believe we cannot present 'the right way to manage' but can perhaps assist in the learning process described in the Preface. In managing, as in sport, it is well to remember that the apparently unorthodox can be effective.

From our arbitrary definition of managing as that 'other than teaching' activity which is directed to create a favourable learning environment and to support the teaching process, it follows that our definition of 'the manager' is equally arbitrary. We recognise that there are possible ambiguities in the use of the term and that we set aside questions of accountability [Who is answerable for what goes on?] and of authority [Who is institutionally empowered to manage?]. Managerial roles are identifiable and throughout this book the term 'the manager' is used to refer to someone who is undertaking that role in a given situation.

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- DES (1976) Ten Good Schools: A Secondary School Enquiry. HMI Series: Matters for Discussion 1. HMSO, London.
DES (1985) Better Schools. Cmdn 9469. HMSO, London.

FURTHER READING

Developments in Management Theory

Early writers presented an image of management theory as a body of knowledge relating to a set of unproblematical functions, universally constituting the distinct and indispensable

tasks of managing. This view of management is now disputed: there is less emphasis on formal and structured managerial processes and more analysis of the informal, reactive and political activity which empirical studies have shown to be the reality of management activity.

See:

- Stewart R (1983) 'Managerial behaviour: how research has changed the traditional picture' in Earl M J Perspectives on Management. Oxford University Press, Oxford

Stewart claims that the evidence revealed from studies of how managers behave indicates that management in practice is less ordered, rational, proactive and planned than might be suggested by traditional theory. The manager's daily round is shown as 'a whirl of activity' characterised by brief, varied, fragmented, instinctive and reactive behaviours.

- Harries-Jenkins G (1984) 'State of the art review of the literature: education management: Part One'. School Organisation and the Management Abstracts, vol 3, no 4

Harries-Jenkins argues that 'traditionally those involved in the administration of education institutions have been trained as scholars and teachers and not as managers' but that solutions to 'major structural and operational problems' in education require 'professional management of the highest order'. He concludes, 'The future trend of research would appear to be the further development of an inter-disciplinary approach that will generate not only sophisticated conceptual theory but also a pragmatic appreciation of the problems which arise in the management of educational institutions.'



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PART I

THE CONTRIBUTION OF MANAGEMENT
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