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THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Problem statement. Educational management is a field of study and practice concerned with the operation of educational organizations. Tony Bush has argued consistently that educational management has to be centrally concerned with the purpose or aims of education. These purposes or goals provide the crucial sense of direction to underpin the management of educational institutions. Unless this link between purpose and management is clear and close, there is a danger of «managerialism … a stress on procedures at the expense of educational purpose and values» [1, p. 240].

«Management possesses no super ordinate goals or values of its own. The pursuit of efficiency may be the mission statement of management – but this is efficiency in the achievement of objectives which others define» [2, p. 29].

Problem relevance. The process of deciding on the aims of the organization is at the heart of educational management. In some settings, aims are decided by the principal, often working in association with senior colleagues and perhaps a small group of lay stakeholders. In many schools, however, goal setting is a corporate activity undertaken by formal bodies or informal groups.

School aims are strongly influenced by pressures from the external environment. Many countries have a national curriculum and these often leave little scope for schools to decide their own educational aims. Institutions may be left with the residual task of interpreting external imperatives rather than determining aims on the basis of their own assessment of student need. The key issue here is the extent to which school managers are able to modify government policy and develop alternative approaches based on school-level values and vision [3].

Latest research analysis. The concept of management overlaps with two similar terms, leadership and administration. «Management» is widely used in Britain, Europe, and Africa, for example, while «administration» is preferred in the United States, Canada, and Australia. «Leadership» is of great contemporary interest in most countries in the developed World. Dimmock differentiates these concepts whilst also acknowledging that there are competing definitions:

School leaders experience tensions between competing elements of leadership, management and administration. Irrespective of how these terms are defined, school leaders experience difficulty in deciding the balance between higher order tasks designed to improve staff, student and school performance (leadership), routine maintenance of present operations (management) and lower order duties (administration) [4, p. 442].

Administration is not associated with «lower order duties» in the U.S. but may be seen as the overarching term, which embraces both leadership and management. Cuban provides one of the clearest distinctions between leadership and management: «By leadership, I mean influencing others actions in achieving desirable ends. Managing is maintaining efficiently and effectively current organisational arrangements. I prize both managing and leading and attach no special value to either since different settings and times call for varied responses» [5].

Object of the article. Leadership and management need to be given equal prominence if schools are to operate effectively and achieve their objectives. «Leading and managing are distinct, but both are important. The challenge of modern organisations requires the objective perspective of the manager as well as the flashes of vision and commitment wise leadership provides» [6, p. 18].

The main part. Educational management as a field of study and practice was derived from management principles first applied to industry and commerce, mainly in the United States. Theory development largely involved the application of industrial models to educational settings. As the subject became established as an academic field in its own right, its theorists and practitioners began to develop alternative models based on their observation of, and experience in, schools and colleges. By the 21st century the main theories have either been developed in the educational context or have been adapted from industrial models to meet the specific requirements of schools and colleges. Educational management has progressed from being a new field dependent upon ideas developed in other settings to become an established field with its own theories and research.

Leadership and management are often regarded as essentially practical activities. Practitioners and policy-makers tend to be dismissive of theories and concepts for their alleged remoteness from the «real» school situation. Willower, for example, asserts that «the application of theories by practicing administrators is a difficult and problematic undertaking. Indeed, it is clear that theories are simply not used very much in the realm of practice» [7, p. 2].

This comment suggests that theory and practice are regarded as separate aspects of educational leadership and management. Academics develop and refine theory while managers engage in practice. In short, there is a theory-practice divide, or «gap» : The theory-practice gap stands as the Gordian Knot of educational administration. Rather than be cut, it has become a permanent fixture of the landscape because it is embedded in the way we construct theories for use. The theory-practice gap will be removed when we construct different and better theories that predict the effects of practice [8, p. 1-3].

If practitioners shun theory then they must rely on experience as a guide to action. In deciding on their response to a problem they draw on a range of options suggested by previous experience with that type of issue. However, «it is wishful thinking to assume that experience alone will teach leaders everything they need to know» [9, p. 75].

Teachers sometimes explain their decisions as just «common sense» However, such apparently pragmatic decisions are often based on implicit theories. When a teacher or a manager takes a decision it reflects in part that person's view of the organization. Such views or preconceptions are coloured by experience and by the attitudes engendered by that experience. These attitudes take on the character of frames of reference or theories, which inevitably influence the decision-making process.

Theory serves to provide a rationale for decision-making. Managerial activity is enhanced by an explicit awareness of the theoretical framework underpinning practice in educational institutions. There are three main arguments to support the view that managers have much to learn from an appreciation of theory, providing that it is grounded firmly in the realities of practice: [10].

1. Reliance on facts as the sole guide to action is unsatisfactory because all evidence requires interpretation. Theory provides «mental models» to help in understanding the nature and effects of practice [11, p. 75].

2. Dependence on personal experience in interpreting facts and making decisions is narrow because it discards the knowledge of others. Familiarity with the arguments and insights of theorists enables the practitioner to deploy a wide range of experience and understanding in resolving the problems of today. An understanding of theory also helps to reduce the likelihood of mistakes occurring while experience is being acquired.

3. Experience may be particularly unhelpful as the sole guide to action when the practitioner begins to operate in a different context. Organizational variables may mean that practice in one school or college has little relevance in the new environment. A broader awareness of theory and practice may be valuable as the manager attempts to interpret behaviour in the fresh situation.

Of course, theory is useful only so long as it has relevance to practice in education. Hoyle distinguishes between theory-for-understanding and theory-for-practice. While both are potentially valuable, the latter is more significant for managers in education. The relevance of theory should be judged by the extent to which it informs managerial action and contributes to the resolution of practical problems in schools and colleges [12].

There is no single all-embracing theory of educational management. In part this reflects the astonishing diversity of educational institutions, ranging from small rural elementary schools to very large universities and colleges. It relates also to the varied nature of the problems encountered in schools and colleges, which require different approaches and solutions. Above all, it reflects the multifaceted nature of theory in education and the social sciences: «Students of educational management who turn to organisational theory for guidance in their attempt to understand and manage educational institutions will not find a single, universally applicable theory but a multiplicity of theoretical approaches each jealously guarded by a particular epistemic community» [13, p. 223].

The existence of several different perspectives creates what Bolman and Deal describe as «conceptual pluralism: a jangling discord of multiple voices.» Each theory has something to offer in

explaining behaviour and events in educational institutions. The perspectives favoured by managers, explicitly or implicitly, inevitably influence or determine decision-making [6, p. 11].

Griffiths provides strong arguments to underpin his advocacy of «theoretical pluralism.» «The basic idea is that all problems cannot be studied fruitfully using a single theory. Some problems are large and complex and no single theory is capable of encompassing them, while others, although seemingly simple and straightforward, can be better understood through the use of multiple theories . . . particular theories are appropriate to certain problems, but not others» [14, p. 372].

Most theories of educational leadership and management possess three major characteristics:

1. Theories tend to be normative in that they reflect beliefs about the nature of educational institutions and the behaviour of individuals within them. Simkins stresses the importance of distinguishing between descriptive and normative uses of theory. «This is a distinction which is often not clearly made. The former are those which attempt to describe the nature of organisations and how they work and, sometimes, to explain why they are as they are. The latter, in contrast, attempt to prescribe how organisations should or might be managed to achieve particular outcomes more effectively» [15, p. 270].

2. Theories tend to be selective or partial in that they emphasize certain aspects of the institution at the expense of other elements. The espousal of one theoretical model leads to the neglect of other approaches. Schools and colleges are arguably too complex to be capable of analysis through a single dimension.

3. Theories of educational management are often based on, or supported by, observation of practice in educational institutions. English says that observation may be used in two ways. First, observation may be followed by the development of concepts, which then become theoretical frames. Such perspectives based on data from systematic observation are sometimes called «grounded theory» Because such approaches are derived from empirical inquiry in schools and colleges, they are more likely to be perceived as relevant by practitioners. Secondly, researchers may use a specific theoretical frame to select concepts to be tested through observation. The research is then used to «prove» or «verify» the efficacy of the theory [8].

Summary. The six models present different approaches to the management of education and the syntheses indicate a few of the possible relationships between them. However, the ultimate test of theory is whether it improves practice. There should be little doubt about the potential for theory to inform practice. School managers generally engage in a process of implicit theorising in deciding how to formulate policy or respond to events. Facts cannot be left to speak for themselves. They require the explanatory framework of theory in order to ascertain their real meaning.

The multiplicity of competing models means that no single theory is sufficient to guide practice. Rather, managers need to develop «conceptual pluralism» to be able to select the most appropriate approach to particular issues and avoid a unidimensional stance: «Managers in all organizations can increase their effectiveness and their freedom through the use of multiple vantage points. To be locked into a single path is likely to produce error and self-imprisonment» [6, p. 4].

Conceptual pluralism is similar to the notion of contingent leadership. Both recognize the diverse nature of educational contexts and the advantages of adapting leadership styles to the particular situation rather than adopting a «one size fits all» stance. Appreciation of the various models is the starting point for effective action. It provides a «conceptual tool-kit» for the manager to deploy as appropriate in addressing problems and developing strategy [1].

While it is widely recognized that appreciation of theory is likely to enhance practice, there remain relatively few published accounts of how the various models have been tested in school or college-based research. More empirical work is needed to enable judgements on the validity of the models to be made with confidence. The objectives of such a research programme would be to test the validity of the models presented in this volume and to develop an overarching conceptual framework. It is a tough task but if awareness of theory helps to improve practice, then more rigorous theory should produce more effective practitioners and better schools [3].

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У статті розглядається освітній менеджмент, як галузь науки, що пов'зана з вивченням управління діяльністю освітніх установ. Освітній менеджмент має бути пов'язаний із основними цілями освіти, реалізація яких лягає в основу управління освітніми закладами.

Ключові слова: освітній менеджмент, освітня установа, концепція менеджменту, теорії освітнього менеджменту.

В статье рассматривается образовательный менеджмент, как отрасль науки, что сопряжена с изучением управления деятельностью образовательных учреждений. Образовательный менеджмент должен быть связан с основными целями образования, реализация которых ложится в основу управленияобразовательными учреждениями.

Ключевые слова: образовательный менеджмент, образовательное учреждение, концепция менеджмента, теории образовательного менеджмента.

The article considers educational management as a field of study and practice concerned with the operation of educational organizations. Educational management has to be centrally concerned with the purpose or aims of education. These purposes or goals provide the crucial sense of direction to underpin the management of educational institutions.

Keywords: educational management, educational organization, concept of management, theories of educational management.