Lecture Title:Middle Leaders and Teamwork

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ACADEMY

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Middle Leaders and the Leadership of Educational Institutions

Leadership as team building

- "A group of people working together towards a *specific aim* to accomplish a result. It involves looking outwards to *develop knowledge of* and *alignment with other people* enhancing eventually a sense of unity and full coordination among the members to *think and act in synergic ways*" (Senge 1994)

- "A group of people who *need each other* to accomplish a result".

Learning Disabilities:

1. "I am my position" ...after a little while, people form an intense identification with their position – who they are is what they do.

2. "The enemy is out there"... When things don't go well we conclude that somebody out there "screwed up".

3. "Myth of proactiveness"... Most of the time it interchanges with reactiveness.

4. "Skilled incompetence" .. Where groups are highly skilled at protecting themselves from threat, and consequently keeping themselves from learning.

Team learning:

1. **Building shared vision**: ...it's **an ongoing process**, you never quite finish.

   Those leaders who understand the distinction between vision as a set of inert words and vision as a living force in the hearts and minds of people, know, that what matters is continually reflecting on what people really want to create.

- 2. **Personal mastery:** individuals must have their own vision before a shared vision can exist. If people have no real sense of what truly matters to them, the best they can ever do is follow someone else's vision …. *COMMITMENT* vs *COMPLIANCE*.

3. Individual learning is fundamentally irrelevant to organizations, because virtually all important decisions occur in groups. The learning unit of organizations are "teams", groups of people who need one another to act.

It no longer consists of individual thoughts, but a group "sharing in a pool of collective meaning". – *Dialogue* vs *Discussion*.

If I believe that my current state was created by somebody else, or by forces outside my control, why should I hold a vision? The central premise behind holding a vision is that somehow I can shape my future.

Alignment within teams

- Often within schools the capacity to work as a team rather than as a group is very much constrained especially within schools where the culture of individualism prevails.

- Therefore the need of alignment.

- Organisations need to be seen as the sum of their teams, just as teams are the sum of their members, but with the potential to be greater than the sum. Learning and growth and improvement within organisations can only be materialised if individuals are learning in aligned teams.

- "the fundamental characteristic of the relatively unaligned team is wasted energy. Individuals may work extraordinarily hard, but their efforts do not efficiently translate to team effort. By contrast when a team becomes more aligned, a commonalty of direction emerges and individuals' energies harmonise. There is less wasted energy" (Senge 1990)

- "the person who is truly effective has the humility and reverence to recognise his own limitations and to appreciate the rich resources available through interactions with the hearts and minds of other human beings. That person values the differences because those differences add to his knowledge, to his understanding of reality. When we're left to our own experiences we constantly suffer from shortage of data" (Convey 1989).

Tension between the autonomy of the classroom and the need to work in a team.

1. Poor 'teams' place great emphasis on the tasks of managing and little emphasis on the processes (network). Getting the job done is seen as more significant than how the job is done.

2. Weak teams in schools spend too much time debating issues and principles and too little time formulating solutions and developing a commitment to action vis-a-vis problem solving.

3. Poorly managed teams in schools are reactive – respond to events rather than anticipating them and often seeking solace in routine cores rather than driving the vision and becoming proactive.

4. Mediocre teams spend insufficient time recognising, reinforcing and celebrating each other. They lack time in planning and reviewing their work, nor will they seek to develop their skills as a team or the potential of individuals to become effective team members.

5. Teams offer the basis for enhancing the individual while allowing the school to function.

Characteristics of effective teams

- <u>Explicit and shared values;</u> no team can operate effectively unless it is working in a context where the values are clear and agreed and translated into a mission.

- Situational leadership; the willingness and ability of the designated leader to stand back and to allow other team members to assume control according to the needs of the situation.

- Pride in the team; team members believe in themselves, in each other and in the team as a whole and the need to be expressed both internally and externally.

- Clear task; teams that set intangible goals, unclear outcomes and lack information, resources and timescale are unlikely to be motivated. For a team to spring it requires:

  ➢ Specific outcomes
  ➢ Performance indicator
  ➢ Realistic targets
  ➢ Information and resources
  ➢ Nurture and reinforcement
  ➢ Timescale.

- Feedback and review; effective teams devote time to getting feedback from their clients and from each other. The review of task completion and team processes provides the basis for change through learning. Teams abandon tasks to explore what is happening in process teams, identify and reinforce success and tackle problems until they are solved.

- Openness; all issues are open to discussion, there are no 'hidden agendas' and every member of the team feels able to offer suggestions, ideas, comments, information, praise and criticism.

- Lateral communication; team members are able to communicate with each other without reference to the team leader or to other members of the team.

- Collaborative decision making; quality decisions emerge from the full utilisation of the knowledge and skills of the team members.

- Emphasis on action; teams make things happen – their decisions are expressed in terms of action. Effective teams do not write minutes of their meetings – they issue agreed actions.

Team building

Stages in team maturity (Tuckman 1965)		
Task	**Stage**	**Process**
Clarification of outcomes sought, roles uncertain	Forming	Anxiety, uncertainty, domination, ambiguity
Values and feasibility of task questioned, principles and methods debated	Storming	Conflict between group's resistance to leader, individual initiatives, opinions polarised
Planning starts, working standards laid down, roles clear	Norming	Working procedures established, communication of feelings, mutual support, sense of team identity
Solutions to problems emerge, more output in less time, quality of outcomes improves, decisions are translated into action	Performing	High levels of trust and interdependence, roles are flexible, individuals and team relaxed and confident.

- The central principle in team building is to minimise the time spent forming and storming, to make norming as powerful as possible and to devote the maximum amount of time to performing.

- It is not possible to short circuit the process i.e. avoid forming and storming, but with deliberate team management the negative aspects can be minimised.

How teams learn

Task

Individual review

Planning

Clarification

Shared analysis

- Having completed a task, individual members of the team review their own behaviour, that of their colleagues and of the team as a whole, in terms of both task achievement and team processes. These individual perceptions are then shared and a consensus view of the team's performance emerge: problems are identified, reasons for failure established and the factors involved in success celebrated and reinforced.

- This allows the team to clarify, to understand its behaviour and so to agree how to approach the next task, what behaviour to stress and what to minimise so as to improve its performance.

- Within teams every member counts and every single effort whatever its magnitude is expected to be celebrated. It is not the achievements that should be acknowledged though these are important in encouraging the group in pursuing its mission but all the effort and participation of every member within the team to accomplish its endeavour.

- Leadership has to become team based contending that leaders of the future need to be trained in the arts of forming teams, "to collaborate through teams rather than directing through edicts" (Bezzina 2000)

- Shared leadership moves away from the concept of a vertically downwards to a more horizontal type of leadership involving all the members to take an active role in the life of their institution.