8

Managing Yourself

THE MANAGER AS A RESOURCE

So far we have emphasized the fact that the manager is an organizer, a director, a controller of resources. Nevertheless, even in fulfilling these functions we are ourselves resources of the organization, and our managerial function extends to the control of our own time, skills and attitudes, to coping with stress, to the direction of our own efforts and to the development of our competence.

We have indicated already many of the ways in which we need to control our managerial behaviour in order to be effective in, for example, motivating others, taking decisions, participating in meetings and handling conflicts. This chapter is intended to focus on some key principles and to bring in some guidelines and techniques which have not been discussed elsewhere.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF TIME

It is very easy to be very busy doing the wrong thing. Those colleagues who are perpetually racing against time are seldom the most effective, and it should be recognized that just 'thinking' is one of the most positive uses of time. It is then that we are able to 'helicopter' above the hurly-burly of the school and do our managerial job of planning, organizing and controlling to make the best use of the resources available to us to achieve the desired result. Yet some teachers feel guilty if they are not seen to be bustling here and there, always doing something 'urgent'. Often the 'urgency' has arisen because they have failed to think ahead or act earlier, and they find themselves on the treadmill of crisis management. Managers will often find themselves doing things which they could – and should – have delegated if they had given the matter their attention earlier – but then they were too busy with the last crisis.

A great deal of effort can be expended to no avail. Geoffrey Morris was called in some years ago as a consultant to the head of a large comprehensive school, in which crisis management had developed to the point at which everyone was calling meetings at short notice, with the result that less than 50 per cent of the involved parties could attend because they were at other meetings. Further meetings, therefore, had to be called with many similar

results, and the amount of wasted time and energy was almost unbelievable. Frustration and stress were apparent at every level. In such a situation it is very hard to get off the crisis treadmill, because no one has time to think about solving the real problems.

In this situation, despite the 'urgency' of the crisis, we had to lay down a programme of discussion, training and eventually 'school review' (Exercise 7, p. 116) *well in advance* (a novelty in that school), and insist that it had absolute priority over commitments which might subsequently arise. Three months later the effect of the programme on the running and atmosphere of the school was dramatic. The time taken actually to sort things out was about 8 hours per departmental or pastoral manager, plus 12 hours each of the time of both the head and the deputy head, spread over six weeks.

Much of the success of the programme could be attributed to group work to establish new guidelines for managing the school. However, it was also essential that each manager should learn to manage his or her own time.

ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES

In determining how we use our time, we should be clear about our priorities and relate our activities to these. We should recognize that there are different kinds of priority, and the different categories have to be treated differently. The critical distinction is between what is urgent and what is important. It may well be that in time sequence we have to deal with the urgent before the important, but we must not be lured into the trap of being caught up in the urgent to the exclusion of the important. Are all the 'urgent' matters really so? Should I respond to every request to see me by allocating the next available slot of free time, or should I deliberately allocate a period of time to the important and keep that thinking, organizing or writing time as carefully as I would an appointment with Mr X? Do I myself have to deal with the things that are presented to me as urgent (or important for that matter) or can I delegate some of them, perhaps thereby motivating and developing one of my staff?

Within the 'important' category we need to think in terms of 'long term' and 'short term', with all the intermediate possibilities. If a priority is long term, we need to review the shorter-term implications and lay down the intermediate steps. These then need 'do-by' dates and allocation of time.

CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVENESS

A useful background to priorities is to ask yourself what your job is really about. In Chapter 6 we wrote of the importance of establishing with staff the criteria against which the performance of each one is judged. Even if there is no machinery for doing this with your own supervisor, the exercise is worth carrying out for your own guidance and it is well worth going beyond the level of the *actual* criteria by also asking what

(1) *ought* to be the criteria against which you are judged in the interests of the organization?
(2) personal criteria do you additionally apply in judging your performance? (For example, are you managing to achieve goals which may be related to your own interests, rather than to those of the organization?)

A format for carrying out such an analysis is in Exercise 8 at the end of this chapter.

TIME-MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

If we have used a process such as the above to establish our priorities or if we just know them instinctively, the critical factor in management success is, of course, to control our use of time in relation to our priorities. A number of well tried techniques are available to help us to do this. Two of these relate to an analysis of the recent past, namely

(1) use-of-time analysis (Exercise 9 at the end of this chapter), which offers a rough-and-ready way of analysing your impression of how your time is being spent; and
(2) time log (Exercise 10 at the end of this chapter), which enables a detailed analysis of the use of time over a relatively short period.

Both these documents are intended for occasional use and enable us to learn from what has happened and, repeated at a later date, to assess improvement. In each case the objective is, of course, to use 'gap' theory by comparing our actual use of time with the way in which we ought to use it, in line with our real priorities. Having learned from the past, the important thing is the continuous control of the present and future, and for this we need to build into our daily routine some basic administrative disciplines, i.e.

(1) an action diary;
(2) a daily action sheet; and
(3) project planning.

These disciplines are neither elaborate nor original, and most managers and headteachers come to use them sooner or later without any need for prompting from writers on management.

The action diary

This is a development of the appointments diary and the discipline consists simply in having the diary (preferably of the 'desk' variety) always in one's briefcase (possibly with a small emergency diary also in one's pocket or handbag) and writing down as they occur not only future appointments but also dates by which things have to be done. Periodically, at least weekly, the diary should be reviewed and slots of time allocated for items such as 'prepare

examination papers', 'plan overseas visit', 'practise with computer' or even 'administration and organization'.

The daily action sheet

This is an equally fundamental discipline. It can be a separate notebook or can be incorporated into a suitably large action diary. Here the discipline consists in starting each day by

(1) writing a list of all the things that should be done that day;
(2) reviewing the previous day's list and carrying forward anything not done;
(3) numbering the items in order of time priority (i.e. the order in which you hope to tackle them); and
(4) starring (or whatever other system you like to use) to indicate importance.

Project planning

This is the final basic discipline which consists in thinking through, for a project involving a series of action points or check points, what has to be done by when and

(1) recording the total project plan on a sheet of paper or in a file;
(2) publishing whatever parts of the plan others may need to know;
(3) recording 'do-by' dates in the action diary; and
(4) recording slots of time in the action diary for doing the actions.

MANAGING STRESS

Failure to manage our time will induce stress. As the educational environment has become more turbulent and where pupil misbehaviour has grown, so stress has become more widespread in the teaching profession. Not only does it impair the quality of life but it can also detract from performance; for both reasons, it needs managing.

There are three issues to examine: causes, symptoms and remedies. But first we need to understand that *some* stress is a valuable element in any job. It provides challenge and motivation, helps to raise performance and is an ingredient of job satisfaction. Lack of stimulation such as stress provides can lead to boredom, which paradoxically is itself stressful. Moreover, internal stress is a natural, animal response, connected with survival. In the face of external challenge, the body secretes adrenalin, which boosts the performance of the heart, muscles and brain and prepares the animal for 'fight or flight'. But if we do nothing physical after the adrenalin flows, we remain tensed up.

It is excessive, prolonged, unmanaged stress that causes problems, especially with 'Type A' personalities (pushy, active). Some problems can be

severe, such as ulcers, heart attacks, strokes, anxiety-depressive illnesses and even suicide. But these are largely preventable. Unfortunately our national culture is an obstacle to prevention: males particularly are conditioned not to expose their feelings or to display emotion, so stress tends to be a taboo subject for discussion. Admitting to it is felt to be tantamount to a confession of weakness or incompetence.

Causes

The causes of stress have a cumulative effect. Family crises such as divorce or bereavement pile on top of work pressures, of which the main factors in schools are

(1) pupil misbehaviour;
(2) educational changes;
(3) poor working conditions;
(4) time pressures;
(5) role conflict, confusion or overload; and
(6) a school ethos that denies information and support.

Our own attitudes can exacerbate stress: we may be perfectionists who set impossibly high standards; we may worry too much about what others think of us; we may bottle up emotion; we may not be assertive enough to say 'no' to unreasonable demands.

Symptoms

People react in different ways to excessive stress; symptoms can be behavioural, emotional, mental or physical. Surveys among teachers identify the main symptoms as feelings of exhaustion, reduction of contacts outside school, frustration at lack of achievement, apathy, irritability, displaced aggression and a wish to leave teaching. Others are listed in Figure 8.1. Each symptom may have other causes, but if you find you have several, they could be due to stress. Experience will tell you which you usually evince and help you recognize the onset of stress. Self-diagnosis is important, so that you know when to deal with the condition. Some of the symptoms are observable and may help you to discern when a colleague needs support.

Remedies

Organizations can help to deal with stress by adopting preventative measures. Generally, industry has the edge over schools in this respect. Large firms employ occupational health specialists. They have better selection processes, which help to ensure a better fit between person and job. They practise systematic appraisal, which helps to nip incipient work-related problems in the bud. They invest more money in training so as to develop confidence In the job. There is much more teamwork, which provides group support. Heads

can take similar measures in their schools. They can also find out how their own management style and the school's ethos lead to unnecessary stress among the staff, and modify them accordingly. They can review teachers' roles to minimize confusion, conflict and overload.

Behavioural	*Physical*
Overeating	Headaches
Drinking too much alcohol	Upset stomach
Compulsive smoking	Dizziness
Neglect of personal appearance	Sweaty and/or trembling hands
Insomnia	Blurred vision
Restlessness – fidgeting	Skin rashes
Lethargy	Palpitations
Change in sex drive	Dry mouth
Unusual clumsiness	High blood pressure
Accident proneness	Backache
Letting things slide	Neck pains
Less communicative	Nausea
Emotional	*Mental*
Depression	Loss of concentration
Tenseness	Increased forgetfulness
Irritability	Increased mistakes
Remorse	Increased day-dreaming
Thoughts of suicide	Poor judgement
Defensiveness	Less rational thinking
Crying	Indecisiveness
Aggressive behaviour	
Anxiety	

Figure 8.1 Some symptoms of stress

At the personal level those experiencing stress have several options open to them. Different people find help in different coping strategies, so you may have to experiment. Some things you can do by yourself are

(1) managing your time better (see above);
(2) identifying the people or tasks that steal your time and saying 'no' more often;
(3) 'brain-dumping' on to paper all the things that are worrying you, before you go to bed;
(4) deep breathing and other relaxation exercises (you can buy tapes for this purpose); and
(5) carving out time to pursue your favourite pastime or sport after work.

Try to view yourself objectively within your environment; reason with yourself

and realize that the seat of the problem may lie in the environment rather than in you, in which case self-reproach is misplaced.

Another approach is to share your concerns with a member of your family or trusted circle of friends. Let them listen and then help you to tease out the problem and come to terms with it. Agree with them the specific actions you will take, by when, to manage the stress, and arrange to meet again to review progress. Make sure that they understand the confidential nature of the discussion. The chances are that the person you choose to talk things over with will have experienced stress him or herself, so you can probably count on a sympathetic understanding. However, you may do even better to meet others in the same boat; sometimes you will find a stress workshop being run locally by a trained counsellor. Such support systems can be of real help in generating the will to take effective action, especially at a time when your decision-making capacity is impaired.

ASSERTIVENESS

We have already mentioned that one of the techniques for reducing stress is to learn to say 'no' to unreasonable demands. This is one of the principles of assertiveness training, which has primarily been introduced to help women to claim due recognition for their ideas and rights, but which can be of value generally in clarifying communication and preventing the build-up of commitments which cannot be met – hence stress on all parties.

'Assertiveness' in this particular sense can be summarized as 'openness, honesty and conciseness' and means

- letting people know how you feel;
- stating your viewpoint and, if necessary, restating it until you are sure that it has been listened to;
- not hesitating to tell people what you can and cannot achieve and what will be the consequence of their pushing a demand;
- clearly stating your requirements of others; and
- avoiding unnecessary padding which may soften or mask the impact of the message you wish to convey.

Being assertive must be distinguished from being aggressive. The latter usually involves some degree of emotion and a positive desire to impose one's will on the other party or to dominate. The 'assertive' person, on the other hand, should

- keep calm and keep the emotions under control;
- make factual, objective statements (this also applies to statements about one's feelings); and
- respect the interests and feelings of the other party and seek fair solutions in which neither party uses undue pressure to subjugate or dominate the other.

The simple techniques of 'assertiveness' are surprisingly powerful. The only danger is that those who practise them may overcompensate for their previous submissiveness and that, despite all warnings, the dominated may become dominators or even 'aggressors'.

DEVELOPING YOUR OWN COMPETENCE

Great strides have been made over the past 10–20 years in establishing systematic approaches to the assessment, enhancement and accreditation of competence. For heads, the lead agency was the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), with its three national training programmes, the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), to be mandatory by 2004, the Headteacher Induction Programme (HIP) and the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH), for aspiring, newly appointed and experienced heads respectively. Since 2002 the National College for School Leadership (www.ncsl.org.uk) has taken over responsibility. These programmes are based partly on those used to improve the output performance of senior managers in commerce, industry and the public services, modified to take account of research on fifty high-performing headteachers (Parsons, *et al.*, 2000).

Outside education, the lead agency in the UK was originally the Management Charter Initiative (MCI), but is now the Management Standards Centre (www.management-standards.org). These standards of competence form the basis of National Vocational Qualifications in Management (and from 2004, Leadership). They draw on best practice across the developed world. One of us (Everard) has been involved in the updating of these standards and recommends that education managers take note of them when they are launched in spring 2004. In draft, several units closely match aspects of the head's role. An inkling of the functions to be covered can be gained from Figure 1, (p. xii).

There are other sets of competence standards which have been used for headteachers. Jirasinghe and Lyons (1996) have reviewed and critiqued these; they have developed a new set using a psychometric test (OPQ) and based a self-evaluation and self-development questionnaire on them. They advocate the use of techniques widely adopted in non-educational employment sectors, based on job analysis. Their work is underpinned by an extensive research project and a theoretical framework.

It is government policy that standards (or benchmarks) of competence should exist for every occupation and a National Qualifications Framework is being developed to accredit all those who have attained the standards relevant to their job. Although such an approach has its critics, the grounds for criticism often stem from the inflexible way in which the model is implemented, rather than from the underlying concept of standard-setting itself.

We believe that standards are here to stay and not a passing fad. From time immemorial, sportsmen and women have used standards to improve their

performance, by competing with their previous best. Standards are equally useful to managers as benchmarks of their performance. It is worth encouraging managers and leaders in schools to use them as part of their professionalism, to take responsibility for systematic self-development. The steps in the development process are

(1) recognition of the various elements or units of competence;
(2) understanding their nature and how they relate to managerial and leadership effectiveness;
(3) self-assessment or other feedback (such as appraisal) on the level of competence;
(4) experimentation with reflectively applying the competence, or demonstrating it at a higher level of effectiveness, with systematic feedback;
(5) continuing conscious, reflective practice in using the competence; and
(6) applying it, along with other relevant competences, as an integral whole in a range of work situations.

While training courses are helpful in taking groups of individuals through steps 1–5, the process can also be followed on the job, especially if facilitated by a trusted colleague, adviser, coach, mentor or consultant.

Competence is a combination of knowledge and skill plus the ability and will to apply them to particular situations. It thus includes motives, traits, attitudes, values and aspects of self-image and role. Competence is related to performance in regard to both the functions and demands of the particular management job and the requirements and constraints of the organizational setting (e.g. LEA policy). In developing competence, therefore, there has to be some definition of what constitutes effective performance (effectiveness criteria – see above and Chapter 6).

The functions that managers are required to perform call for a variety of competences which are largely generic, in that they are needed in all kinds of settings. These have been classified in various ways; one of us (Everard, 1986) used Burgoyne's taxonomy (Burgoyne, 1976) to group the qualities that senior teachers associate with managerial competence.

However, it is insufficient to analyse competence, which is a holistic concept, into its elements; there is also a need for an overarching 'integrative competence', which enables a manager to assemble and orchestrate the necessary elements in dealing with particular situations.

Competences can be improved by systematic development and training; none is so innate that it cannot be influenced, although people's aptitudes for acquiring particular competences differ widely.

Boydell and Leary (1994) have categorized the development of competence under three types and seven modes of learning (italicized below), all of which relate to the characteristics of a 'learning organization', namely, that it does

(1) things well (implementation);
(2) things better (improvement); and
(3) better things (integration).

To 'do things well', managers must learn to *adhere* to rules, to *adapt* and modify rules to suit particular situations, and to *relate* these rules and procedures to some kind of rationale that gives them meaning. Learning to improve involves reflecting on one's *experience,* analysing it and *experimenting* systematically in order to 'do things better'. 'Doing better things' involves *connecting,* seeking patterns, empathizing with others, and this is followed by the seventh mode of learning – *dedicating* oneself to one's purpose in life, in the sense of doing something in and for the external world.

MANAGING YOUR LEARNING

Competence is developed by repeatedly going round an experiential learning cycle. The most effective learning occurs when all four stages of the cycle are fully used (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation). However, people have different preferences for the four stages; they are said to have different 'learning styles' (Kolb, 1984). Honey and Mumford (1989) call these styles Activist, Reflector, Theorist and Pragmatist, and have developed a useful questionnaire for determining one's learning style profile. They have kindly allowed us to reproduce the style descriptions (Figure 8.2), but if you want the best-selling questionnaire you must purchase at least ten copies or you can buy one inexpensively on-line (www.peterhoney.com). It helps you to interpret your scores, use your learning strengths and improve your learning style. Alternatively, write to Dr Peter Honey, 10 Linden Avenue, Maidenhead, SL6 6HB.

In interpreting your profile from the questionnaire, you need to compare your results with the norms for your occupational group. Kelly (1995) gives a set of norms for headteachers ($n = 149$), but is finding an upward trend in the activist score over time. Seymour and West-Burnham (1989/90) give a set for middle/senior education managers, predominantly deputy heads and heads of department, and Butcher (1995) has found a difference between primary and secondary heads, as follows:

	Activist	*Reflector*	*Theorist*	*Pragmatist*
Heads (Kelly)	9.0	12.6	10.5	11.5
Middle/senior (Seymour)	8.3	13.9	12.7	13.1
Secondary (Butcher)	8.9	13.9	12.9	12.8
Primary (Butcher)	10.6	9.0	10.0	10.6

Honey's manual contains norms for other occupations, including industrial and commercial managers.

Although your score can be used to select management training courses that suit your learning style, remember that practice in a less preferred mode