Models of educational leadership and management

The theory/practice divide

Leadership and management are often regarded as essentially practical activities. The determination of vision, the articulation of aims, the allocation of resources, and the evaluation of effectiveness, all involve action. Practitioners tend to be dismissive of theories and concepts for their alleged remoteness from the 'real' school situation. The implementation of the Education Reform Act (1988), and subsequent legislation in England and Wales, and in other countries, have led to an emphasis on the *practice* of educational leadership and management. Heads and principals have been inundated with prescriptions from politicians, officials, officers of quangos, academics and consultants, about how to lead and manage their schools and colleges. Many of these prescriptions are atheoretical in the sense that they are not underpinned by explicit values or concepts (Bush, 1999: 246). Hoyle and Wallace (2005: 9) say that 'policies embodied in the educational reform movement of the past two decades have brooked little compromise, relying on the excessive resort to leadership and management that we will term "managerialism" to ensure implementation'.

There is some evidence that the explicit and systematic use of theory as a guide to practice is unusual. Some commentators regard management as atheoretical. Holmes and Wynne, for example, are sceptical about the value of theory in informing practice:

> There can be little genuine theory in educational administration. It is an applied field ultimately dependent on human will acting within a social context ... So, it is unproductive to look for a set of theories ... by which educational administrators may guide administrative behaviour. (1989: 1–2)

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. (English, 2002: 1, 3)

Theory may be perceived as esoteric and remote from practice. Yet, in an applied discipline such as educational management, the acid test of theory is its relevance to practice. Theory is valuable and significant if it serves to explain practice and provide managers with a guide to action. The emphasis in this book is on the use of theory to inform practice and to guide managers:

> Theories are most useful for influencing practice when they suggest new ways in which events and situations can be perceived. Fresh insight may be provided by focusing attention on possible interrelationships that the practitioner has failed to notice, and which can be further explored and tested through empirical research. If the result is a better understanding of practice, the theory–practice gap is significantly reduced for those concerned. Theory cannot then be dismissed as irrelevant. (Hughes and Bush, 1991: 234)

Some writers argue that theories of educational leadership and management have failed to make adequate connections with practice. Fullan (1996), for example, says that more work needs to be done to develop a meaningful action-based theory of leadership. Harris (2003: 15) adds that 'the existing leadership literature is still dominated by theory that is premised upon a rational and technicist perspective'. These comments suggest that more work is required to provide meaningful explanations of practice that can build robust theories of educational leadership and management and help to guide school-level practice.

The relevance of theory to good practice

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' (Copland et al., 2002: 75).

Teachers sometimes explain their decisions as just 'common sense'. However, such apparently pragmatic decisions are often based on implicit theories: 'Common-sense knowledge ... inevitably carries with it unspoken assumptions and unrecognized limitations. Theorizing is taking place without it being acknowledged as such' (Hughes, 1985: 31). When a teacher or a leader 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.

Day (2003: 45) stresses the value of 'critical reflection' for practitioners facing complex circumstances: 'Headteachers' responses to the increasing complexity and intensity of their lives caused by imposed reform had been to use their capacity for reflection in a variety of real and imagined circumstances'. The use of the term 'theory' need not imply something remote from the day-to-day experience of the teacher. Rather, theories and concepts can provide a framework for managerial decisions:

> Because organizations are complex, surprising, deceptive, and ambiguous, they are formidably difficult to understand and manage. We have to rely on the tools at hand, including whatever ideas and theories we have about what organizations are and how they work. Our theories, or frames, determine what we see and what we do ... Managers need better theories, as well as the ability to implement those theories with skill and grace. (Bolman and Deal, 1997: 38)

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. Day (2003: 46) cautions that 'many principals (and teachers) mistakenly rely mainly upon experience and intuition – with all the limitations to change which these contain – to guide them through their careers'.

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 (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in the realities of practice:

1. Reliance on facts as the sole guide to action is unsatisfactory because all evidence requires *interpretation*. Life in schools and colleges is too complex to enable practitioners to make decisions simply on an event-by-event basis. Theory provides the framework for interpreting events. It provides 'mental models' (Leithwood et al., 1999: 75) to help in understanding the nature and effects of practice.
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. Grounded theory emerges by assessing a wide range of practice, and developing models which seem to help in explaining events and behaviour. An understanding of theory also helps by reducing 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. As Leithwood et al (1999: 4) stress, 'outstanding leadership is exquisitely sensitive to the context in which it is exercised'. The significance of the leadership context has been emphasized even more strongly in the twenty-first century as the inadequacies of 'one-size-fits-all' models have been exposed. Southworth (2004: 77), for example, suggests that 'one of the most robust findings is that where you are affects what you do as a leader'.

Of course, theory is useful only so long as it has relevance to practice in education. Hoyle (1986) distinguishes between theory-for-understanding and theory-for-practice. While both are potentially valuable, the latter is more significant for practising leaders and managers in education. The relevance of theory should be judged by the extent to which it informs leadership action and contributes to the resolution of practical problems in schools and colleges.

The nature of theory

There is no single all-embracing theory of educational management. In part this reflects the astonishing diversity of educational institutions, ranging from small rural primary schools to very large universities and

colleges. Given the centrality of context (see above), a universal theory to explain leadership behaviour in all types of school and college can be seen as too ambitious. This relates also to the varied nature of the problems encountered in schools and colleges, which require different approaches and solutions. Above all, this reflects the multifaceted nature of theory in education and the social sciences. 'The literature is full of competing theories and counter-claims that make any attempt at generating a single, over-arching theory impossible' (Harris, 2003: 15).

House (1981) argues that theories or 'perspectives' in education are not the same as scientific theories. The latter comprises a set of beliefs, values and techniques that are shared within a particular field of enquiry. The dominant theory eventually comes under challenge by the emergence of new facts which the theory cannot explain. Subsequently a new theory is postulated which does explain these new facts. However, the physical world itself remains constant.

Theories of education and the social sciences are very different from scientific theories. These perspectives relate to a changing situation and comprise different ways of seeing a problem rather than a scientific consensus as to what is true. House (1981) suggests that, in this sense, the perspective is a weaker claim to knowledge than a scientific theory. In education several perspectives may be valid simultaneously:

> Our understanding of knowledge utilization processes is conceived not so much as a set of facts, findings, or generalizations but rather as distinct perspectives which combine facts, values and presuppositions into a complex screen through which knowledge utilization is seen ... Through a particular screen one sees certain events, but one may see different scenes through a different screen. (Ibid.: 17)

The models discussed in this book should be regarded as alternative ways of portraying events, as House suggests. The existence of several different perspectives creates what Bolman and Deal (1997: 11) 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.

Griffiths (1997) 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. (Griffiths, 1997: 372)

Morgan (1997) also emphasizes the diversity of theories of management and organization. He uses 'metaphors' to explain the complex and paradoxical character of organizational life and describes theory in similar terms to House (1981):

> All theories of organization and management are based on implicit images or metaphors that lead us to see, understand and manage organizations in distinctive yet partial ways ... the use of metaphor implies a *way of thinking* and a *way of seeing* that pervades how we understand our world ... We have to accept that any theory or perspective that we bring to the study of organization and management, while capable of creating valuable insights, is also incomplete, biased and potentially misleading. (Morgan, 1997: 4–5)

One of the confusing aspects of theory in educational leadership and management is the use of different terms to explain similar phenomena. While House (1981) prefers 'perspective', Bolman and Deal (1997) choose 'frame' and Morgan (1997) opts for 'metaphor'. Boyd (1992: 506) adds to the confusion by referring to 'paradigms', a term he admits to using 'loosely': 'By paradigm is meant a model or theory; with models or theories often guiding, consciously or subconsciously, our thinking about such things as organizations, leadership and policy'. These terms are broadly similar and reflect the preferences of the authors rather than any significant differences in meaning. They will be used interchangeably in this book.

The various theories of educational leadership and management reflect very different ways of understanding and interpreting events and behaviour in schools and colleges. They also represent what are often ideologically based, and certainly divergent, views about how educational institutions ought to be managed. Waite (2002: 66) refers to 'paradigm wars' in describing disagreements between academics holding different positions on theory and research in educational administration.

Theories of educational leadership and management are endowed with different terminology but they all emanate from organization theory or management theory. The former tends to be theory for understanding while management theory has more direct relevance for practice. Hoyle (1986) distinguishes between these two broad approaches:

> Organization theory is theory-for-understanding. We can thus make a broad distinction between organization theory and management theory, which is practical theory and hence has a narrower focus. However, the distinction cannot be pressed too hard since management theory is grounded in, and the research which it generates contributes to, organization theory ...

> [The] case for organization theory is that it enhances our understanding of the management component and ... that it provides a loose organizing framework for a variety of studies of schools. (Ibid.: 1, 20)

The models discussed in this book are broad compilations of the main theories of educational leadership and management and are largely based on organization theory. However, by applying theory to practice throughout the text, leadership and management theories are developed and tested for their applicability to schools and colleges.

The characteristics of theory

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. Theorists tend to express views about how schools and colleges should be managed as well as, or instead of, simply describing aspects of management or explaining the organizational structure of the school or college. When, for example, practitioners or academics claim that decisions in schools are reached following a participative process they may be expressing normative judgements rather than analysing actual practice.

   Simkins (1999) 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 organizations and how they work and, sometimes, to explain why they are as they are. The latter, in contrast, attempt to prescribe how organizations should or might be managed to achieve particular outcomes more effectively. (Ibid.: 270)

   The remaining chapters of this book will distinguish between the normative and descriptive aspects of theory.

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. An explanation of educational institutions using a political perspective, for example, may focus on the formation of interest groups and on the bargain-

ing between groups and individuals. This approach offers valuable insights, as we shall see in Chapter 5, but this emphasis necessarily means that other valid theories of school and college management may be underestimated. In the 1980s, a few writers (Enderud, 1980; Davies and Morgan, 1983; Ellstrom, 1983) attempted syntheses of different approaches, but with only limited success.

3. Theories of educational management are often based on, or supported by, *observation* of practice in educational institutions. English (2002: 1) 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. As Glaser and Strauss (1967: 3) aptly claim, 'generating grounded theory is a way of arriving at theory suited to its supposed uses'.

   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 (English, 2002: 1).

   While many theories of educational management are based on observation, advocates of the subjective model are sceptical of this stance. As we shall see in Chapter 6, subjective theorists prefer to emphasize the perceptions and interpretations of individuals within organizations. In this view observation is suspect because it does not reveal the meanings placed on events by participants.

Theories of educational leadership and management thus tend to be normative and selective and may also be based on observation in educational settings. These qualities overlap, as Theodossin (1983: 89) demonstrates: 'Inevitably ... research involves selection; selection is determined by, and determines, perspective; perspective limits vision; vision generates questions; and questions in turn, help to shape and influence the answers'.

Diversity in educational leadership and management

Leadership in education in Western democracies has been dominated by what Lumby and Coleman (2007) describe as 'the white, male, middle class norm'. Women are greatly underrepresented in senior posts in education in the great majority of countries on every continent.

It has become part of our taken-for-granted understanding that men dominate numerically in senior positions in all phases of education with the exception of nursery and infant schools. Analysts of education management acknowledge the disparity between women's numbers in the teaching profession and their representation at senior levels. (Hall, 1999: 159)

The normative view that management is a male pursuit inevitably impacts on women who seek, and those who access, leadership positions. Lumby and Coleman (2007: 46) report that half the English women principals surveyed in 2004 'were aware of resentment and/or surprise from peers, colleagues and others in finding a woman in the position of head teacher'. The position may be worse in many other countries. Davies (1990: 62) notes that 'formal decision-making is in the hands of men ... Educational administration is still seen as a masculine occupation in many countries'. Research by Coleman, Qiang and Li (1998) shows that there were no women principals in any of the 89 secondary schools in three counties of the Shaanxi province of China. Moorosi (2007) reports that women leaders in South Africa encounter a 'traditional stereotype', that associates school principalship with masculinity. The republic of Seychelles provides one rare exception, in that 90 per cent of school heads, and most senior Ministry of Education staff, are women (Purvis, 2007).

Among the reasons advanced for the low proportion of women in senior posts is the alleged 'male' image of management which may be unappealing to women. This model includes 'aggressive competitive behaviours, an emphasis on control rather than negotiation and collaboration, and the pursuit of competition rather than shared problem-solving' (Al-Khalifa, 1992: 100). The male domination, or 'androcentricity', of educational management is evident in the United States where school administration evolved into a largely male profession disconnected from the mainly female occupation of teaching. Boyd (1992) implies that this led to discrimination in the allocation of administrative posts:

The abilities and values of women were passed over, as careers in school administration were more driven by male sponsorship than by merit and open competition ... school administration became far more concerned with hierarchy, control and efficiency than with issues of curriculum, pedagogy, and educational values. (Ibid.: 509)

Certain writers (e.g. Shakeshaft, 1987; Ozga, 1993) claim that theory has failed to acknowledge the different values of women and remains largely rooted in a male perspective. The difficulty is that there is little clarity about what constitutes a distinctive female theory of educational management. Hall (1993) concludes that:

> There is relatively little to date in research about women managers that can be used to challenge theories of educational management or lead to their reconceptualization to include both women and men ... Research is needed that challenges traditional stereotypes of what constitutes appropriate management behaviour and process. The association of management and masculinity has not been established as a fact yet it is treated as such, with negative consequences for women in education ... theory and prescriptions for action [would be] transformed by the inclusion of gender as a relevant concept for understanding educational management. (Ibid.: 43)

Wallace and Hall's (1994) research on senior management teams in secondary schools suggests that it is possible for management to incorporate both female and male styles:

> The decision to adopt a team approach seems to signify a shift in leadership style towards an 'androgynous' model which posits the possibility for leaders to exhibit the wide range of qualities which are present in both men and women. (Ibid.: 39)

Gray (1989) adopts a similar approach in distinguishing between 'feminine' and 'masculine' paradigms in school management. Feminine characteristics include 'caring', 'creative' and 'intuitive' dimensions, while the masculine paradigm features 'competitive', 'highly regulated' and 'disciplined' elements. Individual managers may possess qualities from both paradigms, regardless of their gender. This view is supported by the large-scale research on male and female secondary heads carried out by Coleman (2002). She shows that there is little difference in the ways that male and female heads respond to the Gray descriptors and concludes that 'the paradigms are not perceived as relevant in distinguishing women from men' (ibid.: 103).

A number of the six models presented in this book have been aligned with 'male' or 'female' qualities. The gender implications of the theories will be discussed at appropriate points in the text.

While there is now substantial research on gender aspects of leadership, in many countries, issues of race and ethnicity have been given much less attention. Lumby and Coleman (2007: 59) cite King's (2004: 73) notion of 'dysconscious racism' 'that tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges'. Bush and Moloi (2008) report that black and minority ethnic (BME) teachers are much less likely to be promoted to leadership positions than white teachers. Powney et al.'s (2003) research in England shows that 52 per cent of BME teachers remain in the classroom compared with 29 per cent of white women and 35 per cent of white men.

Several studies (e.g. Powney et al., 2003; Bush et al., 2006; 2007)

identify barriers to BME progression at every stage in England, including lack of encouragement to apply for headship training, through racist attitudes during training, to uncomfortable experiences during the selection process, and continuing difficulties after appointment. Similarly, Bush and Moloi (2007) report on the discomfort experienced by black leaders in South Africa working in previously white schools, where racist attitudes persist 13 years after the election of the first democratic government. Bush and Moloi (2008) conclude that BME leaders need confidence building and targeted preparation, along with modified recruitment and selection practices, if the school leadership profile is going to match the diversity of schools and communities.

Leadership and management theory has paid little attention to issues of diversity but the discussion in the remaining chapters will show how theories could, or should, be adapted to make them suitable for the increasing diversity of school contexts.

Models of educational management: an introduction

Many different theories of educational management have been presented by various writers. These perspectives overlap in several respects. A further complication is that similar models are given different names or, in certain cases, the same term is used to denote different approaches. A degree of integration of these theories is required so that they can be presented in a clear and discrete manner. Cuthbert (1984) explains why there is a lack of clarity:

> The study of management in education is an eclectic pursuit. Models have been borrowed from a wide range of disciplines, and in a few cases developed specifically to explain unique features of educational institutions. To comprehend the variety of models available we need some labels and categories that allow us to consider different ideas in a sensible order. (Ibid.: 39)

The approach to theory adopted in this book has certain similarities with Cuthbert's (1984) presentation of models in five distinct groups. Cuthbert's categories are analytic-rational, pragmatic-rational, political, models that stress ambiguity, and phenomenological and interactionist models. The latter three groups are the same as three of the models discussed in this text although I prefer the term subjective rather than phenomenological or interactionist. Cuthbert compares his models in the following terms:

> the level of agreement among people in the organization about the objectives of their joint efforts

different ideas about the way in which performance can and should be evaluated
different ideas about the concept and the meaning of organization structure.

Two of the criteria used by Cuthbert are similar to two of the four main elements used in this text to distinguish between the models.

Several writers have chosen to present theories in distinct groups or bundles but they differ in the models chosen, the emphasis given to particular approaches and the terminology used to describe them. Two of the best known are those by Bolman and Deal (1997) and Morgan (1997).

Bolman and Deal (1997); four 'perspectives or frames' – structural, human resource, political, symbolic.
Morgan (1997); eight images or metaphors of organizations – as machines, organisms, brains, cultures, political systems, psychic prisons, flux and transformation, instruments of domination.

In this book the main theories are classified into six major models of educational management. While this division differs somewhat from the categorization of other writers, these models are given significant attention in the literature of educational management and have been subject to a degree of empirical verification in British education. The six theories are illustrated extensively by examples of practice drawn from primary schools, secondary schools and colleges in England and Wales, and in many other countries.

The six models are:

formal
collegial
political
subjective
ambiguity
cultural.

In the first edition of this book only five models were identified. A chapter on the cultural model was added to the second edition because of the increasing significance of this approach in the literature and because some empirical work had been undertaken in British schools and elsewhere in the English-speaking world.

Analysing the models

The analysis of these six models includes consideration of four main elements which are valuable in distinguishing the theories. These criteria are as follows:

1. The level of agreement about the *goals* or objectives of the institution. Cheng (2002: 51) shows that goal orientation is one of only two common factors within the numerous definitions of leadership.

   The theories differ in that some emphasize organizational aims, while others focus on individual purposes. Certain models feature agreement about objectives but others stress conflict over aims or point to difficulties in defining purpose within educational organizations.
2. The meaning and validity of organizational *structures* within educational institutions. Hoyle (1986) refers to the twin dimensions of people and structure. An emphasis on structure leads to the notion of individuals being defined by their roles, while a focus on people leads to the predominance of personality in determining behaviour.

   According to some theorists, structure is an objective fact while others believe that it is the subjective creation of individuals within the institution. Another group argues that structure is a matter for negotiation or dispute while others claim that the structure is one of the many ambiguous features of schools and colleges.
3. The relationship between the institution and its external *environment*. The shift to self-managing schools and colleges, discussed in Chapter 1, increases the significance of the relationships that staff and governors must have with a wide range of external groups and individuals. The nature of these external relationships is a key element in the differences between models. Some writers regard the head or principal as the sole or major contact with the outside world, while others suggest a wider range of contacts. Links may be regarded as essentially co-operative in nature or they may be thought of as political, with conflict between the institution and external agencies. Other approaches emphasize the ambiguity of such relationships.
4. The most appropriate *leadership* strategies for educational institutions. Analysts have different views about the nature of educational leadership according to the theories they espouse. Some assume that heads take the lead in establishing objectives and in decision-making while others regard the head as one figure within a participative system. Certain approaches stress conflict inside institutions and emphasize the head's role as negotiator, while others point to the limitations of

an active leadership role within essentially ambiguous institutions.

Given the heightened interest in the concept of educational leadership since the second edition of this volume, this subject will be given extended treatment in this edition. The main theories of leadership are introduced below and will also be addressed alongside the six management models, to demonstrate the links between these twin concepts.

These four criteria serve to emphasize the great differences in approach between the various models and reinforce the view that theories are normative and selective. In subsequent chapters of this book we examine these different interpretations of the nature of leadership and management in schools and colleges.

Models of educational leadership: an introduction

As with educational management, the vast literature on leadership has generated a number of alternative, and competing, models. Some writers have sought to cluster these various conceptions into a number of broad themes or 'types'. The best known of these typologies is that by Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999), who identified six 'models' from their scrutiny of 121 articles in four international journals. Bush and Glover (2002) extended this typology to eight models. Table 2.1 elaborates these typologies to identify 10 leadership models and sets them against the six management models.

Table 2.1 Typology of management and leadership models

Management model	Leadership model
Formal	Managerial
Collegial	Participative
	Transformational
	Distributed
Political	Transactional
Subjective	Postmodern
	Emotional
Ambiguity	Contingency
Cultural	Moral
	Instructional

Source: adapted from Bush and Glover, 2002.

Instructional leadership, often described as learning-centred leadership, does not link to any of the management models because it focuses on the direction of influence, learning and teaching, rather than the nature of the influence process. This model was discussed in Chapter 1 while the other nine leadership models will be addressed alongside the appropriate management model in subsequent chapters of this book. The models in Table 2.1 are not exhaustive. In a single volume on leadership (Davies, 2004), seven other categories are identified:

Strategic leadership
Invitational leadership
Ethical leadership
Constructivist leadership
Poetical and political leadership
Entrepreneurial leadership
Sustainable leadership.

These models add to the complexity of leadership theory and demonstrate the contested nature of the terrain. These constructs will be referred to as appropriate in the following chapters but the structure of the book will be based around the models shown in Table 2.1.

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