

Managing managers' competence and developing leaders

(A CEL funded practitioner research project)

- Philip Barker

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The context

- Large general further education college
 - 1996-2002 merger of four local colleges
 - Successful Ofsted inspection, Beacon status, COVEs (x3)
 - Need to maintain quality and financial viability across the organisation
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Research questions:

- How can we support and improve the performance of managers in the college?
 - Can we ensure consistency?
 - Do standards improve performance?
 - What factors support the use of standards?
 - What are senior managers' needs when using standards?
 - Do standards affect managers' motivation for self development and improvement?
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Middle managers' recent experiences

- De-layering in 1990s
 - Fragile identities (Thomas & Linstead 2002)
 - Time-space surveillance (Collinson & Collinson 1997)
 - Tensions in role: go-between and liaser
 - Senior managers/own staff/external agents (Briggs 2005; Barker 2007)
 - Staff expectations: structure and teamwork; distance and proximity; external and internal communities (Collinson & Collinson 2005)
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Research methods:

- Web-based survey. 39/42 curriculum middle managers (cmm). 91% response rate
 - Interviews (1:1) with six cmm
 - Interviews with six managers of cmm
 - Postal and web-based college-wide staff survey
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Findings

- A consistent approach across the college?
 - Standardisation a challenge
 - Teaching – some reluctance to forego this
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Findings continued:

- Improved performance?
 - No clear evidence as yet, but
 - Cmms' focus on finding the evidence
 - Competence as minimum level of performance
 - Other factors affect performance (staff survey)
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Findings continued:

- What supports the use of standards? They need to:
 - Add to what staff already know
 - Refer to performance management (and teaching)
 - Refer more thoroughly to leadership?
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Findings continued:

- What are senior managers' needs?
 - Most were familiar with the ideas in principle
 - Wanted confidence that the process was managed effectively
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Findings continued:

- What is the impact on ccm motivation, self development and improvement?
 - Motivation increased by training, not standards
 - Some negative reactions and defensiveness
 - Demands on time to produce portfolio
 - Another means of surveillance
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Conclusions

- Need for clear procedures and structures for use of standards
 - Need for support for cmm in their role (e.g. networking, mentoring)
 - Develop Leadership amongst cmm
 - Introduction of a learning culture? (Senge 1990)
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Leadership

■ Transformational

■ Distributed

■ Emergent

■ Transactional

■ Prescribed

The impact of leadership

- Leadership and performance (Lumby)
 - Leadership and motivation (Martinez)
 - Context related
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The context.....

- Self regulation and quality assurance
 - Framework for Excellence
 - Performance targets
 - Financial viability and value for money
 - The new Department
 -and so on
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Middle managers

- What types of leaders?
 - What contexts?
 - What needs?
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