

There are two different types of literature about management, that written by management specialists and that written by industrial relations experts. This can create confusion for those in management positions.

I have often been confused by what the term "management" means but I'm particularly confused at the moment. In the past four years I'd begun to enjoy thinking of myself not only as an academic leader but also as an academic manager.

I have liked learning about styles and content of management through the various management sessions in training and consultancy that I had been fortunate enough to have the privilege of receiving or attending. In other words, I regard management, as distinct from administration or bureaucracy, as a "good thing", especially if it helps to promote both an efficient and effective organization and collegiality, harmony and co-operation along the way.

But the current National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education dispute, resulting in the examinations boycott and the reactions to it by polytechnic directors, have left me to ponder again what is meant by management. In this kind of industrial relations situation the term "management" used by any trade union becomes a "bad" rather than "good" thing.

And, of course, being an academic head of department I am readily included in the presumption of being on the side at least of the "bad" if not the full blown "enemy". And yet the union, in this case, as in many others, ostensibly at least represents senior as well as junior or rank and file academics. It certainly doesn't feel like that at the moment.

Like others in a similar position I presume, I feel like "piggy in the middle". That was certainly the impression that I also got from the meeting of sociology heads in advanced further education that I attended a couple of weeks ago. Despite our very varied situations and contexts, we shared our collective apprehensions about the roles we might be expected to play in the working out of this very sad dispute.

It does indeed threaten to destroy a lot of the co-operation and goodwill that has been built up over the years to sustain the expansion of edu-

# What women learn from man management

ational opportunities in the context of the chronic squeeze in resources that the public sector higher education has experienced in the same period of time.

And yet, given the yet more severe constraints on resources wrought through the Education Reform Act and the creation of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council in place of the National Advisory Body could we have expected an easier resolution to this fundamental question of how to value both the academics and the work that they do when there are not the traditional financial or monetary mechanisms available for this?

Appeals to people's goodwill and primary commitment not to hurt students are perfectly sensible strategies to use to try to resolve the situation but threats to "reduce pay by up to 20 per cent" are probably counterproductive at this stage. I would think that they are management forms that should be used only as a very last resort, when all other forms of negotiation are exhausted.

It is invariably extremely difficult to quantify the kinds of work that academics engage in be it teaching, examining, administration or research. And once quantified by units of time, nowadays the convention, are those units justifiably comparable? Can we reasonably argue that we, for example, spend 20 per cent of our time involved in examining and assessment? Is it really a day a week?

Another sad aspect of this whole dispute from my point of view is the fact that so many women have become imbroiled against rather than for each other? It comes at a time of expansion of opportunities for women both as students and as staff.

What a pity we have to start with us being pitted against each other in such an unfortunate way. It is also at a time when the prospects for working out a more "female" or "feminist" style of management in academic life were becoming greater.

A whole range of opportunities seemed to be opening up - hopefully they will all not be completely blighted. I have been to a number of seminars and training sessions especially for women managers over the past couple of years. I have also been involved in trying to build some supportive networks, for example for women heads of department in the social sciences, where we could begin to share and swap experiences of different types of management.

Those small beginnings have been built on excitingly by other groups of women. For instance, Sheffield City Polytechnic's Centre for Women's Studies now runs a range of courses for women managers which are superb. It also organizes a series of more informal gatherings, including female retreats. There is also now the distinct and exciting possibility that something more professionally managed will emerge for senior women in academic management. It would indeed be tragic if these efforts were vitiated.

A couple of summers ago, I also attended a summer college for senior executive women in which women from a variety of professional and business backgrounds began to learn from each other and our diverse work experiences of management. The women ranged in post from central to local government, to personnel management in business, to high office in a voluntary organization as well as academic life.



**MIRIAM  
DAVID**

The college was similarly run by women with a range of expertise from consultancy, to local government, to time management to voice and other presentational skills. We all found the core technique of action learning extremely useful and have continued to meet in a variety of ways since then to sustain this. But is it really necessary for women managers to meet together separately from men? Are the issues any different from the ones together with men?

One of the women at the summer college told me recently how important it had been for her to receive this kind of support - and how she had been able to draw on it in her work where she is the sole woman on a board of directors.

She had had to struggle extremely hard to be accepted on to the board as a woman. It was equally difficult to maintain that position on the board, presenting the "female side or arguments". With the benefit of hindsight she feels that the men on the board had grave difficulty in accepting her, or her arguments, because they simply did not have any appropriate role models.

Their (unconscious) models at least of women are likely to be their mothers, their wives or their daughters; all of whom are likely not to be in similar positions, but in supportive domestic roles.

This argument was amply confirmed for me a couple of days later

when I was engaged in a casual conversation with a senior female academic, who mentioned an episode that she had been involved in, working with senior management on a committee. She had raised some difficulties about organizing her time for the committee.

A male academic had sympathized with the difficulties, adding that "he understood" the problem because he had a wife and three daughters. Could the "possession" of a wife and family lead to anything more than sympathy - could it lead to empathy? This female academic, unlike the female director referred to above could have swapped anecdotes of sympathy about the difficulty of managing work and family. But is that really sufficient?

And is gender the crucial ingredient in these management dilemmas - or is it, instead, the possession or otherwise of a "wife" and family? Had the female director had a family would her arguments have been the same or found favour more or less quickly? Similarly would the female academic have elicited sympathy if she had not had a difficult "family" situation to deal with?

These are relatively imponderable questions about how best to learn and share management experiences and whether women working in similar contexts can build up a reserve of resources to share, like male managers appear to do. It does, however, seem important to draw on a range of resources to gather skills in management.

I have another situation which might on the surface of it appear to be the most difficult management - and yet in my limited managerial experience it is one of the least taxing and probably one of the most fun.

I have ultimate managerial responsibility for a large research programme into the epidemiology of Aids among gay men and conducted by gay men. I have on occasion to attend management meetings as a "manager" of this team. I believe we all find it intriguing because the conventional managerial roles of men and women in this context are so utterly confused.

What a pity they are not so mixed up in the Natfhe context so that one could not predict so easily the likely and predictably unfortunate outcome.