SECTION 5
TEAMS AND TEAM WORKING

Studying Section 5 should take you about 13 hours.

Section 5 addresses aspects of key question 2, by considering the role of teams in the effective management of educational organizations, and of key question 3, by presenting team work as a means whereby individuals and organizations improve their practice.

After studying this section you should:

- understand how the management and leadership of teams contributes to the effectiveness of educational organizations;
- have reflected on your own experience of working in teams;
- have begun to identify your own strengths and weaknesses as a member of a team with a view to improving your effectiveness in teams;
- have considered the extent to which teams can be effective in your own organization.

All the readings for this section are in Reader 2, Part 2.

5.1 WHAT ARE TEAMS AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

This section looks at the characteristics and the functions of a team, and what makes a team different from a group. It examines what makes for an effective team, including the management skills and behaviours needed to create, develop and maintain teams, and the skills of being a team member.

First, I will address the question: what are teams and what do they do? As you will have gathered from the course so far, leadership in education is no longer represented by an authoritarian figure working in isolation, taking sole responsibility for directing the achievement of an educational establishment. Instead, leadership is viewed as being intrinsically bound up with the management of organizational relationships and is judged effective according to how well the 'leader' relates to others, managing both their own behaviour and the behaviour of those they are working with. This is clearly demonstrated in the work of teams when the relationship between the leader and the led is at its most visible.

Team approaches are increasingly being used throughout all sectors of education. This mirrors the realization that individuals working in isolation in organizations are more likely to suffer stress, that change is more effectively managed in a collegial culture and that policy implementation is best achieved when groups of people work together to achieve consistency of practice. Research on organizational effectiveness and improvement indicates that it is beneficial to an educational establishment to develop teams that serve a variety of functions and purposes, both in the formal structure of the organization and in the more informal interpersonal networks. Much of the work in education now needs to be done by teams rather than by individuals working alone. In many respects this reflects the cultural change in the education sector internationally that has occurred with the development of self-managing schools. Individual schools empowered by legislation and released from the hierarchical structures of local government now seek to empower those within, giving staff more opportunities to participate in decision making, policy design and implementation, and strategic and action planning.
However, working in and with teams is not easy. Teams have their strengths: they develop collective responsibility, they enable individuals to gain an overview of a subject, they reduce isolation and parochialism within the organization. But they have their weaknesses too. They have to be properly managed or individual members will end up expending a lot of energy keeping activities going for little return. This affects morale. How often have you left a meeting thinking 'We never seem to get anywhere - we keep going round in circles'? This is because the majority of people are unskilled when it comes to handling co-operative relationships, so the pervasive habits shown when working with others are often competition, withdrawal, lack of trust, secretiveness, fighting for resources and power games.

In many instances a team is put together because something needs doing but little consideration is given to how the team should achieve its goal. This is an important point. Being given something to do is not enough to ensure that it gets done. A group of people coming together by virtue of having to carry out the same task is not enough to guarantee successful and effective team work or the achievement of the task. There is often an assumption that everyone knows what a team is and can work in one; in fact there is a growing need to understand the skills necessary to manage both teams and yourself within a team effectively.

It is important therefore to be clear about the difference between a group and a team. A group is a number of people who come together, and who have some characteristics that differentiate them from other groups, but who do not necessarily have a common definable feature. It may be that they have similar responsibilities, work in the same building, or teach the same age range; but it could equally be true that they are a group because they share the same interests or travel to work using the same means of transport. A group remains a gathering or collection of people until it undergoes some form of process to become a team. That is, until its members have a common purpose and join together to achieve it. The process of moving this group towards some commonality is defined as team work or team building and groups move along a continuum in this process, from being held loosely together to being a mature team. In this course I will use the term 'team' at all times, because in education groups of people rarely have cause to meet without a purpose, even if initially this is ill defined. I will use 'team' with reference to those still in the newly formed stages of coming together and to those who are in mature, well-established teams.

Teams in educational organizations are formed for a variety of reasons usually connected to the responsibilities that people have or the functions they fulfil:

- senior management teams - executive management;
- middle management teams - managers of the subject and/or pastoral curriculum;
- staff teams - within departments, phase groups, administrative units;
- interdisciplinary teams - permanent grouping with representatives from various departments/units, usually meeting to implement policy at operational level;
- project teams - established to achieve short-term goals.

(This latter type of team is considered by Young (Reader 4, Chapter 21) as a strategy for organizational improvement.)

Handy (1976) identifies the following organizational purposes for forming teams:

- for the distribution of work;
- for the management and control of work;
- for problem solving and decision making;
- for information processing;
- for information and idea collection;
- for testing and rectifying decisions;
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- for co-ordination and liaison;
- for increased commitment and involvement;
- for negotiation or conflict resolution;
- for inquest or inquiry into the past.

All these could be undertaken using bureaucratic structures but the degree of success would depend on the effectiveness of individuals as well as on the hierarchical structures linking them together. What is important to understand is that the team approach brings to organizational development a quality that is essential in the effective management of change. Combining the skills of individuals makes greater use of their individual personal skills and in doing so forms an entity that is capable of achieving far more than it would if individuals operated in isolation. Between them they create a synergy.

The team approach therefore has definite advantages:

- a greater variety of complex problems can be dealt with by the pooling of expertise;
- problems are exposed to a greater diversity of knowledge, skill and experience;
- individuals can derive more satisfaction from solving problems when they have participated in the decision making;
- problems that cross departmental or functional boundaries can be dealt with more easily and the potential for conflict is more readily identified;
- recommendations for action are more readily acted on when they come from a group rather than from an individual, as the quality of decision making in a team is normally high;
- teams are flexible and adaptive; they do not need to convene according to existing rules and structures but can invent their own.

I would like you to begin to think about your own experience of working in teams.

Activity 1

Think about the teams you have been a member of during the last few years or those you are currently a member of, either as a team leader or as a team member. List them and classify them, making notes on the purpose, task and function the team was/is fulfilling and the duration of the team.

Focus on two experiences that were/are very different: one that you would view as a positive experience, and one that you would consider as a negative experience.

Make notes using the following questions as headings:

- What did/does the team do - what were/are the actions taken to fulfil its task and function?
- What did/do you do - what actions did/do you take, how did/do you behave?
- What did/do you feel - what emotions did/do you experience?
- What did/do you learn from being a member of this team?
- What stands out in your memory about this team?

You will be returning to these notes in future activities, so please keep them to hand.

You may have discovered from this activity that each of the teams you have worked with or are currently a member of has developed a personality and culture of its own. Each team may have responded to different types and styles of leadership and each may have been motivated by different factors. They may each have achieved different levels of effectiveness.
While there is not space here to explore this in great detail it is worth remembering the three key theories of motivation that underpin much of the work in management and have informed the theories about teams. You will already be familiar with these from Section 4, but may wish to refresh your memory by rereading Chapter 6 by Riches in Reader 2 on motivation in education.

5.2 THE MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP OF TEAMS

Bear in mind the theories of motivation mentioned above as you read the following chapter. Is there a connection between what the author is outlining as good management practice in relation to teams and the individual motivators outlined by Maslow, McGregor and Herzberg?

Reading 1

First, please read Chapter 9 by Bell in Reader 2, which gives an excellent overview of the management of teams. Although written in the context of secondary schools it nevertheless makes some key general points that are relevant to all educational organizations. As you read, make notes on what Bell identifies as:

- the management strategies, practice and procedures of managing a team;
- the role and responsibilities of the team leader.

Now read Chapter 14 by Adair in Reader 2. Compare what Adair says with what is outlined in Bell. There is a similarity — both recognize that teams are always working at two levels: having to get on with the task set as well as working on those features that help the team develop — but Adair focuses more on team-building strategies than on management practices. As you read his article, identify what further implications this has for the role and responsibility of the team leader.

Activity 2

Look back at the notes you made in Activity 1 about your experience with teams and team work. In your experience how far was/is the success or failure of working with teams dependent on the presence or absence of the factors highlighted by Bell? How far have you answered the questions posed by Adair:

- Why am/was I in this team?
- Is/was it necessary to work in a team?
- Even if it is/was not necessary, does/did it benefit me?
- Am/was I collaborating or competing?
- Are/were my objectives realistic?
- How are/were decisions made?
- How is/was my performance appraised?
- How do/did I grow in effectiveness?

Bell provides a systematic approach to the management of teams that could be categorized under the following headings: aims and objectives, procedures, processes, relationships between team members, and the reviewing and monitoring of activity. He outlines the task skills and the process skills necessary to ensure members of the team can work together, the latter being for the most part the responsibility of the team leader. But Bell only touches briefly on the fact that an effective team leader will need to be able to recognize the psychological processes at work as the team develops and matures. These impact on the relationship with the leader and add a further dimension to what has to be managed.
Adair developed his ideas about teams and team building from his work with the army. He developed his 'action-centred leadership' model after working with cadet training units and observing those that were deemed the most successful. His model for team work and leadership is based on the belief that for any team to respond positively it needs a clearly defined task: that the response and the achievement of the task are interrelated with the needs of the team as a whole and as individuals. This creates an interdependent and multifunctional unit. The function of the leader is therefore to define and achieve the task, to build and co-ordinate the team and at the same time satisfy the individuals within the team. This goes some way in recognizing that there is a psychology to teams but does not give the complete picture. Whatever the task, the setting, the membership, teams will go through developmental phases.

Tuckman (1965) describes the five stages through which teams progress. In some instances the stages are sequential, but this is not always the case. Some teams do not pass through all five stages; some do not progress at all but jump backwards and forwards from one stage to another as individuals join and leave, affecting the team dynamic. Each stage has its own characteristics in relation to the behaviour of team members and the role demanded of the team leader. I outline below the five stages, with details of their characteristics, and with some indication as to the implication for those in a leadership position.

**Stage 1 Forming.** The team is characterized by anxiety, with dependence on the leader, who is looked to to set goals and define objectives. There will be attempts to discover a code of conduct, testing out what behaviour is acceptable and what norms will be established: the issue being of inclusion, who will be 'in' or 'out', who will set the tone, who will lead, who will follow. Feelings are not dealt with, listening skills are poor and there is a focus on establishing the bureaucracy of the team.

**Stage 2 Storming.** The characteristic of the group at this stage is counterdependence. It usually emerges three-fifths into the life of the team. There may be some experimentation but there is also conflict as members challenge the leadership, either overtly or covertly through sabotage. Opinions will be polarized and there will be emotional resistance to the task. Members will drag their feet, forget to perform tasks or form subgroups to talk about the leader behind his/her back.

**Stage 3 Norming.** At this stage there is some group forming: norms are established by which members can work together and independence is developing. Leadership begins to take a back seat. Members are used as resources for the task and begin to feel affection for each other and the work as former conflicts are patched up. The group will be capable of offering mutual support and there will be an increasing determination to achieve the task. There will be methodical working practices and agreed procedures based on established ground rules.

**Stage 4 Performing.** This is the phase of interdependence. The team is doing the task it was brought together to do. Roles within the group are functional and flexible. Members work as a unit and can focus on both task and people. Power and influence are distributed among those who have the specific expertise and the leader is a participative member. Differences of opinion can be expressed and compromises can be made. There is a lot of energy and therefore problems begin to be solved. Deviant members are dealt with by confrontation or exclusion. There is a feeling of intimacy with each other. The basic principles of the team are considered, agreed and reviewed.

**Stage 5 Ending ('Mourning').** Members leave the team and discussion focuses either on past shared experiences or on the ways in which the team can be held together. There is a reluctance to let the team finish for good.

It is evident from this that leadership in relation to teams and team work not only requires interpersonal skills of a high order, confidence, emotional maturity, stamina and a sense of humour, but also an appreciation of its situational nature.
Team leaders need strategic management skills as they must remain aware of the context within which the team is operating and how this may impact on the life of the team. At the same time they have to appreciate that as the team matures so must their leadership style move to accommodate the new-found confidence of other team members.

**Reading 2**

Please read Chapter 10 by Wallace and Hall in Reader 2. This reading presents case studies of six senior management teams (SMTs), each with a headteacher playing a key role in the creation and leadership of the team. From a practical management perspective it discusses decision making and considers some criteria for judging the effectiveness of teams. As you read, consider the relationship between the headteacher and the SMT.

- Is there any evidence of the phases of team development outlined earlier and, if so, is there a change in the headteachers’ leadership style as a result of the development of the team?
- How do the headteachers exercise power, influence or authority in relation to teams?

In considering this last point you should look back at your notes on Reading 2 of Section 3.

The teams in this reading fulfil a different function from those focused on by Bell in Reading 1. Here the SMTs meet primarily to fulfil their responsibilities as executive decision makers of the school and strategic planners, therefore the object of the meeting is invariably information gathering and decision making. Often those with senior management responsibility in an organization come together to report on the work being carried out by the teams they themselves lead as part of their work; a subtle difference in the leadership style of headteachers is needed in this context. They are team leaders of teams of team leaders! This raises the issue of team loyalties: to whom are SMT members loyal? To the headteacher or to the team they themselves lead? Bell states that conflict in teams often results from the breaking of behavioural norms about confidentiality. The situations outlined in these case studies could easily lead to such a conflict arising. A team leader needs to know how to manage the professional and personal boundaries so that conflict does not occur: to develop and maintain trust, constantly clarify values and goals so that they remain shared, agree procedures, establish common ground and keep communication as open as possible.

One of the interesting issues in this reading is the question of power. The relationships between the SMT and the headteachers illustrate clearly the interrelationship between power and influence and the complexity of the team dynamic that results from this. Some heads choose to take particular actions to maintain and keep visible their power, others work to ensure that no one member of the team can exert too great an influence over the others. In working with teams there is a need to develop an appreciation of power and how it is manifested in the team in question. This was further exemplified in Reading 5 by Grace in Section 4.

Wallace and Hall mention that one of the schools had selected team members according to their Belbin categorization. Meredith Belbin is a psychologist whose research into group behaviour has led him to conclude that individuals adopt a particular role when placed in a group situation. He derived nine categories of role in teams, whose characteristics he analysed. His research has shown that the interrelationship of these roles is a major determinant of a team's effectiveness. The roles are described in Table 2.
### Table 2: Belbin's team roles

<table>
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<th>Role</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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| Implementor| Stable, controlled practical organizer  
Turns ideas into manageable tasks  
Gets on with the job  
Sorts out what is feasible and actionable  
Strength of character and disciplined approach |
|             | Hard working, self-disciplined and loyal  
Needs stable structures and tries to create them  
Can be overcompetitive for status  
Can lack flexibility and adaptability  
Thrown by sudden change in plan |
| Co-ordinator| Stable, dominant extrovert  
Clarifies group's objectives and sets its agenda  
Presides over and co-ordinates  
Self-disciplined  
Dominant, but in a relaxed, non-aggressive way Recognizes where the strengths and weaknesses lie |
|             | Makes the best use of team resources  
Good communicator  
Sets criteria but does not domineer  
Social leader  
Not really creative or inspirational |
| Shaper      | Anxious, dominant extrovert  
Task leader  
Commands respect  
PUSHES to get the job done  
Full of nervous energy  
Quick to challenge and quick to respond to challenges |
|             | Gives shape to the application of the team's efforts  
Does not harbour grudges  
Impulsive, impatient, easily frustrated  
Prone to paranoia  
Exudes confidence which often belies self-doubts: his/her drive has a compulsive quality  
Needs to be in charge |
| Innovator   | Dominant, intelligent, creative introvert  
Uses intelligence to help ineffective teams  
Ideas person - radical and original thinking  
Searches for original approaches  
More concerned with fundamentals - large issues more than details |
|             | Trustful and uninhibited in a way that is uncharacteristic of an introvert  
May take criticism badly - can be prickly, can sulk and withdraw |
| Resource investigator | Stable, dominant extrovert  
Most immediately likeable, relaxed, sociable  
Identifies ideas and resources from outside team  
Questions and explores  
Many outside contacts - very good at networking  
Salesperson, diplomat, liaison officer |
|             | Positive and enthusiastic, but puts things down as quickly as picks them up - impulsive  
Does not cloud judgement - can be negative, sceptical and cynical  
Lacks warmth and imagination, but judgement rarely wrong  
Can lack self-discipline |
| Monitor evaluator | Intelligent, stable, introvert  
Serious, objective, critical thinker  
Analyses ideas - stops team from committing itself to misguided action  
Best skills - interpreting complex data |
|             | Least highly motivated member - ego involvement does not cloud judgement - can be negative, sceptical and cynical  
Lacks warmth and imagination, but judgement rarely wrong  |
| Team worker | Stable extrovert  
Socially orientated, loyal to the team  
Promotes harmony - dislikes conflict  
Perceptive, sensitive to individual needs and worries  
Good listener, communicates freely and encourages others |
|             | Counterbalances friction of shaper and innovator  
Can be indecisive and forget a task  
Missed if not present in a team - valuable when a team is in trouble |
| Completer finisher | Anxious introvert - worries about what might go wrong  
Only at ease when personally checked every detail  
Maintains permanent sense of urgency  
Self-control, impatient, intolerant of more casual members of the team - strong sense of purpose |
|             | Drives for task completion - on time and according to specification - driven by targets  
Compulsive about order |
| Specialist  | Has pre-existing specialist skills and knowledge  
Contributes specialist skills and expertise |
|             | May have narrow and specific vision |
Activity 3

Assessment instruments are used to identify team roles according to Belbin's classifications, and without these it is not possible for you precisely to identify your classification. However, you may like to look back on the notes that you have made on your experience with teams to see which team role you think fits you the best.

It is clear from Belbin's classifications that no one person has a monopoly on good characteristics: we all have personality traits that work for or against us. The key point is that while no individual can possess all these qualities, a team can. Each characteristic has advantages and disadvantages depending on the context and task of the team, although the predominance of a small number of these roles and the absence of others does affect the team's likelihood of success. This is because some roles are active - for example a shaper, who makes things happen, or an implementor, who can change plans into actions. Others are more passive, for example the team worker, who dislikes confrontations and works to keep the peace, and the innovator, who is an independent thinker. Some are more outward looking (the co-ordinator, the innovator, the resource investigator, the shaper) and some are more inward looking (the implementor, the monitor evaluator, the team worker, the completer finisher). Teams need active members to get things done but passive members to get them done in a particular way.

By analysing teams and their work it is possible to see how they can be improved. This is what one of the schools in Reading 2 did.

- An underachieving team needs a co-ordinator or completer finisher to ensure the task is completed.
- A team with conflict requires a team worker or strong co-ordinator to resolve the difficulties.
- A mediocre performance can be improved by a resource investigator or shaper bringing in new ideas or the means to get things done.
- To avoid making mistakes a team needs a clever monitor evaluator or an implementor to review its performance.

Each one of the Belbin roles can exert leadership, but the effectiveness of the team and the success of its achievement depends on how well the individual role players manage their own dominant characteristics. Leadership is not dependent on being the designated leader by virtue of status, resource power, expertise, knowledge or experience but on how personal and interpersonal skills are utilized.

Reading 3

Please read Chapter 11 by Johnston and Pickersgill in Reader 2. This article is a report of the Primary Guidelines Initiative in Northern Ireland, which aimed to encourage headteachers to engage their schools in a professional dialogue with staff and develop structures for collaborative processes. It is interesting in that the development of teams was seen as a strategy for developing collegiality (see Section 3 in this Study Guide). As you read, consider the following questions:

- What implications would developing this way of working have for those with responsibility for team leadership, and how far does it depend on the personalities of those involved?
- What implications for an educational organization as a whole would the development of collegiality have?
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The definition of collegiality will already be familiar to you from Section 3 of the Study Guide. You will be aware that as an organizational model it assumes that:

- there is authority of expertise;
- there is a common set of values;
- decisions are reached by consensus.

In some instances, rather than evolving naturally, collegiality may be contrived, in that structures are put in place to establish these factors. You should consider how far the headteachers in Reading 3 set up a contrived collegial culture rather than waiting for one to evolve naturally from the actions they were taking. Contrived collegiality:

- is supported by administrative systems rather than being a spontaneous quality;
- has a compulsory component rather than a discretionary one;
- is oriented towards implementation rather than concentrating on policy making - this is characterized by setting a fixed time and place for discussion rather than this being informal and opportunist;
- has predictable outcomes rather than open-ended ones.

Activity 4

Look back at the notes you made on Reading 3 by Meyerson and Martin in Section 3.

- How far do you feel that the initiatives outlined by Johnston and Pickersgill in Reading 3 can achieve a change in the culture of their establishments?
- Reflect on your own experience of team working. Have you worked in a team that developed a naturally collegial approach, or was some sort of contrived collegiality established? If your team developed a collegial approach, how far do you think this contributed to organizational effectiveness?

5.3 SKILLED BEHAVIOUR FOR TEAM WORKING

You will be considering the management of change in Section 7 of the Study Guide, but it is important to mention here some points about team leadership and the management of change to which you may wish to refer back later. The development of teams is considered an effective strategy for developing a collegial approach to the management of change. This requires both team leaders and team members to be committed to particular ways of working, to reject authoritarian unilateral behaviour for the use of skilled delegation, open communication and consultation. This is not easy, as some of the readings have highlighted. Throughout this section I have referred to the interpersonal skills needed by both team leaders and team members and now I consider one of these in more detail. I am going to focus on communication skills because, as identified by Bell in Reading 1, for teams to operate effectively both process and task skills must be in operation. Communication is a good illustration of this. It is a process operating within an organization but it is also a management skill displayed by individuals.

Reading 4

First, please read Chapter 13 by Riches in Reader 2, which provides an excellent overview of the theory and practice of communication in educational organizations. As you read, consider the management strategies, practices and procedures identified by Bell in Reading 1, and identify any additions you would make to these.
Now read Chapter 12 by Hargie et al in Reader 2. This reading is useful because it specifies the situations in which communication difficulties are likely to arise and the range of people with whom those with managerial responsibility have most difficulty in communicating. It begins to define the competences of an effective communicator and ends by outlining the implications for professional development.

**Activity 5**

Look through the notes you have made on your experience of teams and identify what you consider to be the skills, qualities and knowledge necessary to be an effective team member or team leader.

- What do you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses in being a member of a team?
- What do you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses in being a team leader?
- In what ways could you improve your skills as (a) a team member, and (b) a team leader?
- How could your organization make more effective use of teams?

5.4 **CONCLUSION**

Effective management of change is enhanced by the ability of a team leader to maintain the stability of the team experience within a changing organizational context. Team members have to be prepared to compromise their individuality in favour of corporate responsibility and success. An effective leader will recognize how far each individual member of the team can do this and accommodate them within the team as a whole, thus achieving a balance between the intended outcome, maintaining the team dynamic and making each individual feel valued for their own contribution. This is not an easy task, but one that marks the shift from management to leadership.