



## Transforming the wheel: from teaching skills to management skills

Liz Clarkson (left) and Pat Lodge explore the transfer of skills from teaching to managing.

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### Where ideas and involving practice come from

We have collected ideas from close colleagues and conference participants through discussion and more formalised working sessions. This is an attempt to initiate and maintain a dialogue which will form part of an ongoing process which can be used to influence teacher/management development.

### Where ELT managers come from

There are many managers in ELT institutions world-wide who have their working roots in teaching. Some, in the face of all odds, take pride (and sometimes refuge) in teaching one class a week. Others relinquish the classroom altogether - frequently with lingering regret. Managers without these classroom roots and connections often find they need to understand what at times can be an almost alien culture in which their ELT colleagues operate, and which is the source of their ideas and attitudes to management issues. The reverse is equally true - teachers find it difficult to see the relevance of areas which may preoccupy managers. The situation can be even more complex as both types of managers, those from a non-ELT background and those who have come to management

from teaching, may not have any formal training in management. Teachers in quality institutions, however, usually possess an impressive battery of ELT certificates and diplomas to which their skills can be clearly related. When we contemplate the skills required by managers, we are aware of the awe-inspiring array that has arisen from experience and instinct and sometimes, from training.

### Which skills and what for?

Paradoxically, the move from teaching to management has usually been made without any formal training (although this is changing rapidly) and often because teachers are good at the job they were doing, that is, teaching. The first steps into management often lead into taking on recognisably academic areas of responsibility such as placement testing, examination co-ordination, resources management, and so on. People who are willing to take on these extra tasks tend to be key figures among staff, who may also be involved in giving conference presentations, in-service training sessions and classroom observation. There may be growing awareness of such management issues as policy making, initiating change, overall quality assurance, recruitment and

staff training. The issues with obvious academic sources are more immediately identifiable and include keeping records for different purposes or linking resources to the curriculum and to the promises made in promotional material. There is also a gradually increasing realisation of the kinds of costs involved and their relative scale in the scheme of things. The part played by marketing and the importance of student feedback in shaping future course programmes becomes more apparent. A greater understanding develops of the effort necessary to convert an enquiry into an enrolment, and a potential client to a student sitting in the classroom. This is a far cry from the idea that those entering management from teaching may have of ELT management as academic management. The range of skills required for general management can seem a daunting array.

### Transforming by formalising

The gradual movement into management is a result of increased readiness and willingness to recognise and accept the consequences of responsibility. This acceptance entails developing a greater awareness of systems and how to manage them, and with a little courage, adapt them and even create new ones. The ability to exploit systems is a reflection of the

# teaching skills to management skills

facility to analyse the skills required to fulfil the type of responsibility taken on. The typically strong interpersonal skills brought from the classroom in many cases need to be complemented by more analytical skills. Those entering management from teaching may also need time to assimilate and become aware of the underlying structure, roles and functions that support the classroom activity in an institution. It can come as a surprise that the majority of concerns and links necessary in management are external, and that teachers and students are part of a greater picture. Below is one representation of the kinds of different areas pulling or weighing in a general manager. If one of the components is given too little or too much attention, the wheel is unbalanced. If the skills and knowledge necessary for one area are non-existent or undeveloped, the wheel is unbalanced. This is not to say that general managers need to be an accountant or a marketing expert, but that they need to know the relevance of the areas and be able to address them with the experts they employ to deal with them.

## Awareness raising

We suggest that it is worth looking at the basic management issues outlined in the wheel above whether as a new manager fresh from teaching, an experienced owner/manager or a seasoned manager whose job it is to identify and encourage potential managers and develop existing managers, and in doing so develop themselves. Responding to what one of our colleagues new to management described as "being ambushed when you venture from your office" by any of these issues is an aspect of daily life familiar to managers of all types and levels. In responding as best as we can, we develop our skills a little more every time we are ambushed. It appears that not only can we transfer skills from teaching to management, but we can transform and develop them, and with that, transform our image of ourselves and our function within our working context. No re-inventing is needed - just an initial image of our own wheel of concerns and skills and a view of its potential for transformation. How do we do this?

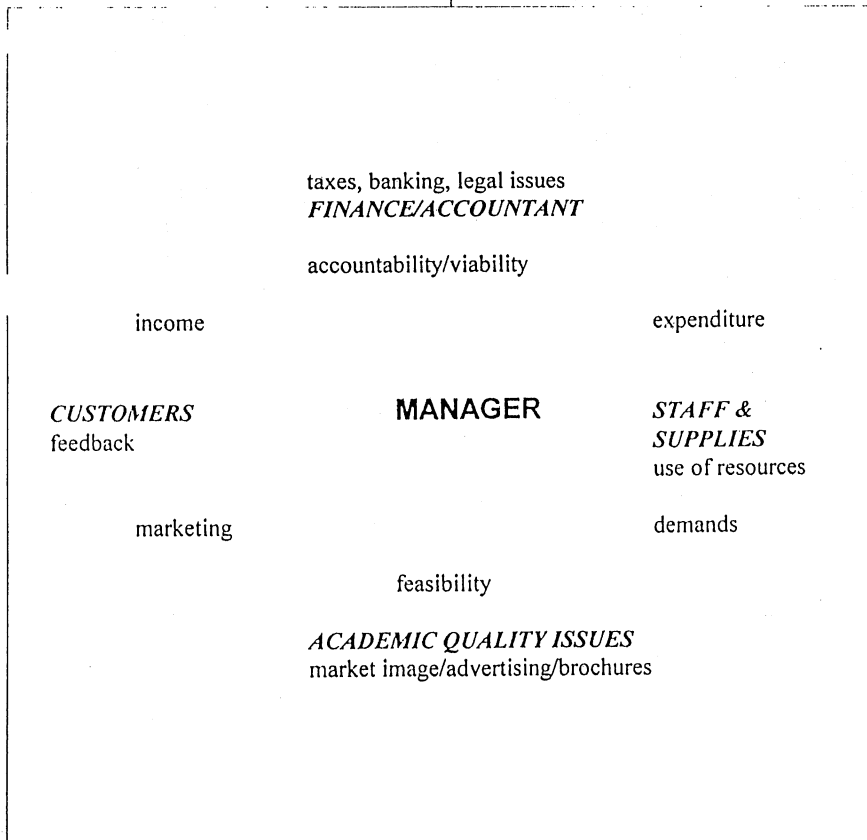
## A worthwhile session: realisation and beyond

For the sessions we undertook with both close colleagues and conference participants, it was useful to brainstorm a (non-exhaustive) list of skills typically associated with teaching:

- listening effectively
- persuading
- consulting
- giving encouragement, helping students to feel valued
- establishing rapport, dealing with emotions
- long and short term lesson and course planning
- offering a varied programme
- being able to make your aims clear
- keeping records and systems
- using appropriate styles
- assessing performance, monitoring
- giving negative feedback, correcting
- training and research (of the language)
- keeping records
- developing students
- working with others (e.g. teachers)

Session participants were then asked to compare this list with a similar list which identifies skills typically associated with management. We've found that this task serves to release reassurances, confidences and fears by recognising how similar the skills are. It remains only to explore which teaching skills have characteristics that lend them to adaptation. Clearly all have the potential for transformation into the management skills listed below:

- setting clear aims and objectives
- translating these into plans of action
- adapting to and initiating change
- assessing effectiveness
- offering objective advice
- delegating
- budgeting
- dealing with stress
- giving feedback regularly
- encouraging and developing others
- demonstrating knowledge of ELT
- keeping up-to-date



# teaching skills to management skills

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- speaking and writing clearly
- listening to others
- building networks
- accepting responsibility
- knowing own strengths and weaknesses
- having the vision and direction to make them clear

## The next step in transformation

The key step is identifying the vectors which actually effect the transformation of what are in many cases identical types of knowledge and skill. Discussion groups revealed the type of changes necessary in moving from teaching to management as confidence, attitude and training. We have grouped these as below:

## Changes needing increase in confidence

- recognising the need for, and asking for support
- increase in self esteem

## Changes needed in attitude and confidence

- realising that actions and decisions are more far-reaching and have more impact
- become perceived as "harder"
- realising that obtaining feedback on own performance is more difficult
- delegating over a wider area
- awareness of the importance of money and making staff aware of financial issues

## Changes needed in attitude

- gaining a bigger picture - a wider view of the organisation
- becoming more "mature" and sensitive to others
- being aware of the transition from

teacher to manager and the balance needed

- gaining more awareness of what management entails and includes
- dealing with the potential of a higher and more varied stress load
- networking and managing relations with administrative staff, and in larger organisations, with other departments
- recognising the need to be actively involved in team building and being part of a team
- identifying areas of management skills to develop

## Changes effected by formal training

- establishing credibility
- acquiring more formal skills through coaching / on-the-job training
- gaining more knowledge of the conventions of financial management such as costs, budgets, margins
- handling different ways of communicating and assessing their impact
- recognising and acting on the relative urgency/importance of messages
- preparation for dealing with more formal HR issues - appraisals, disciplinary issues, basic legal issues

## Summary

The skills that experienced teachers possess are valuable for management and are readily transformed by those who are willing to make changes in confidence and attitude. Supported by an experienced manager and some training, the changes lead to a continuing professional development with an effective blend of expertise. This process enables experienced managers to see more clearly both the

skills and concerns that new teacher/managers may have. The changes best brought about by training would seem to be those necessary to address areas which are largely unfamiliar to those coming from a teaching background.

We would like to thank:

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- the non ELT managers who have shown themselves willing to explore the background to the skills their staff use and to value the aspects they bring to management
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This article is based on a workshop session at IATEFL 1999 and a training seminar at the annual Bell Managers' Conference 1998.

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