LMS: the managerial climate and its effects on the interpersonal climate of the school

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Introduction

The concept of local management of schools (LMS) was a critical part of the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988. Together with the National Curriculum and open enrolment it has altered the very power structure of the education system. Unlike the 1944 Education Act, it has not been the result of a lengthy, thorough and sensitive series of consultations. The ERA was essentially imposed on the education system by central government, with only lip-service given to negotiations with interested parties.

The ERA was in essence a political package which opened up the boundaries of schooling and brought external influences into the workings of school management, shifting the balance of power away from education professionals. The aims of this article will be to examine how the introduction of LMS has influenced relations between staff, discover the impact of LMS on school structure and assess the success of LMS as an agent of change.

The ERA continued the trend in 1980s education policy of giving more power to parents and governors. This stemmed from the government’s view that the education establishment (the professionals who worked in higher education and schools, and administrators in local authorities), had become a self-serving group which was more concerned with its own interests and power at the expense of those who used the service.

The government felt especially that schools, with a guaranteed source of financial support and clientele, were no longer motivated to put the interests of pupils and parents first. Hence the introduction, via the ERA and LMS, of market forces and business methods to increase competition and accountability in order to raise standards.

The introduction of ERA and, in particular, LMS was essentially to undermine the power of local education authorities (LEAs) with a view to their eventual demise; and to reduce the power of teachers by making them a group more accountable to parents. Clearly if the LEAs held reduced powers, then some mechanism would be required to ensure schools were implementing government policy. This difficulty was solved by giving governors the power and responsibility to ensure that policies such as the National Curriculum are implemented and adhered to.

This shift in local power from LEAs to parents and governors was also combined with a somewhat contradictory concentration of power within central government. Policy formation has clearly been placed within the remit of the Secretary of State for Education; producing a two-tier system, with some monitoring powers at the local level in the hands of parents and total power over all aspects of education centralized in Whitehall.

The nature of these changes went beyond financial matters and called for new approaches to school management as a whole. Therefore, to study the effects of LMS on the school one needs to view the school as an organization. Little attention has been given to the primary school as an organization.

What constitutes an organization cannot be defined simply since there are a variety of organizational types and a number of metaphors used to describe them[1]. An organization has been seen as a machine which focuses on aspects of bureaucracy and hierarchy[2], or a political system which emphasizes the use of power and allocation of resources[3]. LMS involved shifts in power and responsibility which, in turn, affected the management of human and material resources. Therefore, when considering schools, it is reasonable to adopt the definition of an organization as a political system.

The subjects of this article are primary schools which, because of the 1988 ERA, have experienced a great deal of change. The politics of change invariably brings to the surface underlying conflicts and differences within the interpersonal climate of an organization. Therefore the changes resulting from the introduction of LMS, in particular the redefinition of teachers into management and non-management groups, may result in changes to the interpersonal climate of the school in terms of staff relations and possible new forms of conflict.

The study examined how the introduction of LMS has already brought to the surface the micropolitics (unofficial agendas of individuals) of the primary school. In particular its impact on teacher/teacher and headteacher/teacher relationships. The organizational structure of schools is a deliberate patterning of interpersonal relations among
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organizational members. Micro-politics is an aspect of organizational activity which represents a fairly recent development in the study of organizations, with an attempt by theorists to increase understanding of the reality of organizational life. This is far from Weber’s for formalistic hierarchical bureaucracies, since micro-politics implies there is conflict within organizations. It is concerned with the means by which individuals and groups in organizations seek to use power to further their interests. Hence, despite all parties in an organization having a common goal (such as successfully educating children), individuals and groups may subscribe to other goals - for example, personal concerns for autonomy, status, power and influence in decision-making and professional interests related to the curriculum and pedagogy.

It can be argued that every decision taken in a school is a political act, because it involves the exercise of influence and authority and the distribution of resources. Through an examination of the micropolitcs of the primary school these changes in the political process and subsequent interpersonal climate can be analysed in order to see whether any significant changes have really taken place, such as the emergence of the use of business methods in schools, or if in fact LMS is having a quite different impact on the primary school.

A key concern of this article is to examine the degree to which the enterprise culture has been established in schools. This culture refers to a formal, hierarchical structured workforce in which there is a clearly defined management group, responsible for setting organizational goals and taking decisions. Those who are not part of this group have their work tasks clearly defined and monitored.

It was clearly an intended aim of the government that such a culture should be established, in order to raise standards through increased efficiency and reduce the power of teachers and LEA administrators as professional groups, thus replacing the collegiate culture common in education with a model that has its origins in industry and commerce. Hence it is important to establish whether the intended culture and consequences have been achieved and, if so, whether and for whom these consequences have been positive.

Financial delegation at first sight represents one of the most practical and least contentious parts of the Act in terms of placing more decisions at school level. A closer examination reveals a framework of more radical changes - inevitably it will result in teachers developing attitudes previously associated with an industrial workforce, because the effects of time management and assessment of their performance as workers will undermine their professional ethos.

This is because financial delegation has altered the balance of power within the education system as whole but, more pertinently, because it has altered the balance of power (and thus relationships) within the school. Clearly this raises a number of questions and issues about the nature of a school’s organizational structure, for example the role of headteachers as managers, and what type of culture should be established in schools.

Not all those working in education have welcomed the government’s attempt to alter the culture of schools, and there are powerful forces which are supportive of the old culture; the government is attempting to replace this old culture stemmed from the fact that the vast majority of teachers in the present workforce were trained in the Colleges of Education. These establishments (many of which were religious foundations), were typified by the fact that they emphasized an individualistic approach to teaching. Teachers were not trained to see themselves as part of a team, or as administrators and managers, but as teachers in charge of pupils.

It is an important question to consider how successful the government has been in altering this culture, based on a view of teachers as independent professionals and replacing it with an enterprise culture. The radical restructuring of the processes by which teachers are produced, (placing more of their training within the context of schools, and distance learning); can be seen as a further attempt to eradicate the old culture governed by the educational establishment.

An important consideration is whether the enterprise culture is having the effects that the government had intended. There is a danger of alienating teachers within this new culture. Particularly with the introduction of a “management” group, it is possible that these changing roles have huge implications for the professional status of teachers.

The idea of an enterprise culture within education providing choice is an illusion. Popular schools will choose their pupils, not vice-versa, and many parents will have a restricted choice, particularly those in inner cities or those who have children with special needs. Clearly the new management culture must be concerned with the running of the school; the government assumption that, in a market economy, business enterprise is in the service of the consumer is mistaken. In fact, the consumer is very substantially in the service of the business firm; consumer wants are shaped to the purposes and notably the financial interests of the firm.

This “new managerialism”, the government argues, is resulting in the more efficient running of schools through the introduction
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One has also to be aware of the nature of the statements on which respondents have to agree or disagree. For example, it may be easier to answer "strongly disagree" to a strongly negative statement than to answer "strongly agree". Thus the degree of differentiation at one end of an attitude continuum may be very different from that at the other end. It would be imposing one's own value judgements on to the questionnaire if one sought to change the weighting:

- strongly agree;
- agree;
- disagree;
- strongly disagree;

which is evenly distributed to:

- strongly agree;
- agree;
- disagree;
- strongly disagree.

which acknowledges that views could be measured as further apart for particular statements.

The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of LMS on the school structure, to assess its effects on the interpersonal climate of the school and to examine LMS as an agent of market principles. However, the findings of our research indicate that it is resulting in conflict between managers and the managed: the implementation of ERA and LMS are creating tensions in a workforce essentially trained to view the education system as a collective good.

The teachers in the study reacted unfavourably to market principles, which emphasize individual rather than collective benefits, and defined their role as that of a worker, as opposed to that of a professional.

One issue that emerges from this is the question of headship style, and the level of consultation there should be with staff. These questions have become particularly topical with the advent of LMS, and recent concerns over balancing school budgets through the mechanism of teacher redundancies.

When members of staff are denied influence and responsibility their professional status and growth will be adversely affected. If some members of a school staff are not included in this process, it will deny access to the very people who are in a strong position to respond and implement change effectively. For LMS to be successful, a movement towards a more collaborative approach to decision making is required.

It is important to note that, while new approaches to management are seen as a necessary effect of delegated budgets, this new culture may well have resulted in unforeseen consequences. By creating managers, inevitably also create workers rather than co-professionals. This has many implications, not least for the professionalism of teachers. Despite talk of delegation and new management styles, it is possible that the enterprise culture exists only for the management group involved in such matters as balancing budgets and decision making within the school.

In order to examine the effect LMS is having on the interpersonal climate of the schools chosen, there were several factors to be considered. These include teachers' and headteachers' perceptions of the interpersonal climate of their school and how they think LMS has affected it. Connected closely with this is the head's leadership style and teachers' attitudes about their role and professional status within the school.

Four schools were examined: two in the inner London Borough of Newham, and two in Chingford, part of the outer London Borough of Waltham Forest. These different socio-economic areas were selected for comparative reasons. These different socio-economic areas were selected for comparative reasons to assess the impact of LMS in socially diverse areas. The research is designed to measure headteachers' and teachers' attitudes, opinions and perceptions of their present situation in schools, and their understanding of how LMS has affected their situation.

In order to measure these attitudes, closed questionnaires were used. The area of school micropolitics is a sensitive and controversial one, and questions concerning attitudes and opinions are likely to touch on sensitive and deeply held views. However, it is important to note that one can never be sure that responses are true indications of a person's feelings and attitudes.

The questionnaire consisted of 50 closed questions. Closed questions were used as they have the advantage of being easier to process, as well as being less time-consuming for the respondent to complete. As attitudes and opinions are held at varying degrees, the summated ratings method was used to measure the attitudes of teachers. The summated system used was Likert scaling (developed by Rensis Likert, 1932). This system is in essence monotonic (or order-maintaining) so that the probability of accepting a Likert item starts at 0 and rises up the attitude continuum to 1.

However, the middle, neutral option was omitted, resulting in a four-point scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. This was done because a central position suggests a position of indifference, and very few people are genuinely indifferent; the more categories there are, the more marginal answers there are, and the more likely people are to take a less extreme option. Although accepting that this loses certain subtleties of opinion, it serves to produce stronger differences for comparison, as well as simplifying data processing.

One has also to be aware of the nature of the statements on which respondents have to agree or disagree. For example, it may be easier to answer "strongly disagree" to a strongly negative statement than to answer "strongly agree". Thus the degree of differentiation at one end of an attitude continuum may be very different from that at the other end. It would be imposing one's own value judgements on to the questionnaire if one sought to change the weighting:

- strongly agree;
- agree;
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which acknowledges that views could be measured as further apart for particular statements.

The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of LMS on the school structure, to assess its effects on the interpersonal climate of the school and to examine LMS as an agent...
of change. The assessment of these global aims was undertaken through the examination of five variables:

1. The headteacher's leadership style;
2. The level of participation in decision making;
3. Job satisfaction;
4. The interpersonal climate of the school;
5. Perceptions of LMS.

These variables are interrelated, and the relationships between them are examined in relation to the respondents from each of the four schools. Particular areas examined in this research include: the effects of LMS on relationships between staff, teacher attitudes concerning their role and status, and attitudes towards LMS.

### Description of the schools

School A is a fairly large junior school with about 250 children on role. It is located in a residential area (mainly owner occupied) in an east London, predominantly working-class, Labour controlled borough (Newham). The school has a large proportion of ethnic minority children; for about 75 per cent English is not the first language.

School B is also situated in Newham. The school is a large primary school catering for around 330 children. Its catchment area comprises a large council estate, as well as privately owned houses. The children come from a wide variety of racial and cultural backgrounds. The school is popular with parents and, as numbers are increasing, the school has been forced to add another class to accommodate pupils.

School C is situated in Chingford, in the outer London borough of Waltham Forest. It accommodates children between the ages of five and 11, and the number on role is approximately 200. The school could be described as an "all white" school, with the children mainly coming from middle-class, professional families, and parental involvement in all school activities is high.

School D is also situated in Chingford. It is a first school catering for about 250 children aged between five and nine. The school is situated in a residential area made up mostly of privately owned houses, although there are some council houses. The children come from a mixture of middle-class and working-class families.

### Response rates

The response rates for each school (see Table I) varied from 40 to 64 per cent, producing a good response rate of 53 per cent; better than the usual 30-40 per cent for questionnaires.

Responses were received from headteachers from all schools except School A. These are indicated by an * in the data.

### Headteacher's leadership style

The first variable to be considered is the headteacher's leadership style. This is a particularly important variable to examine initially, as it is an indicator of the culture of the school. It is possible to identify two main leadership styles present in a variety of models[3]: interpersonal and authoritarian, and these may be related to the cultural nature of the school in the following way.

The interpersonal style emphasizes the need for the head to be friendly and approachable to all staff, and thus relationships are informal. Decision making is decentralized and there is a preference for individual negotiations and one-to-one consultations in order to gather opinions or sound out ideas. Communication is therefore primarily through informal channels. This style is therefore more indicative of a collegiate culture where all teachers are viewed as colleagues, and as such have a valued view on all aspects of the school and a role (although not necessarily an equal one) in decision making.

Headteachers with an authoritarian leadership style adopt a more formal, bureaucratic view of organizations. Only people at a certain level of the hierarchy of the school are involved in the decision-making process, with the decisions of this group being disseminated to others through meetings or memos. There is rigid adherence to the formal rules of the school, with the responsibilities of teachers clearly defined by regulations.

Although it could be argued that there have always been authoritarian headteachers, this leadership style is nonetheless indicative of a changed culture within schools. Previously, headteachers may have been authoritarian, but their staff would still have had some involvement in most aspects of the school. LMS requires more authoritarian leadership because it gives the headteacher exclusive...
roles (such as managing budgets) which do not require collaboration with all staff. Clearly then, this style of leadership is more indicative of a managerialist culture within the school; as required by LMS. The term managerialist culture is used here as a modification of the term enterprise culture. The enterprise culture refers to the organizational style which is present in business and commerce; one of competition. Managerialist culture refers to specific aspects of the enterprise culture, such as the establishment of distinct management groups, goal setting and performance monitoring.

When examining Table II, it is apparent that staff in schools A and B (the inner London schools) tended to view their headteacher as having an interpersonal or informal style of leadership, whereas those in the Chingford schools (C and D) viewed their headteacher’s style as authoritarian. It is interesting to note that where a headteacher’s perception of their leadership style is available, two of them shared the view that they had an authoritarian approach (heads C & D).

However, the headteacher of School B differed in his response from his staff, indicating an authoritarian style rather than interpersonal. It is noted that this difference may be of significance, and it will be discussed further in the “analysis”; the leadership style of the headteacher of School B will, then, be taken as interpersonal as reflected by the score (Table II).

The results therefore indicate that the two inner London schools appear to have a more collegiate (old) culture, while the two Chingford schools appear to have more formal, managerialist cultures (a view supported by the heads).

### Table II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>350</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low possible score (A)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual score</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>1261</td>
<td>A 88</td>
<td>A 102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

- Highest possible score per respondent 50 = interpersonal/informal
- Lowest possible score per respondent 15 = authoritarian
- I = Interpersonal/informal
- A = Authoritarian
- a = Headteacher’s score

### Participation in decision making

The headteacher’s leadership style clearly has implications for the level of participation in decision making by staff. One would expect to find that in schools where the headteacher’s leadership style was authoritarian, staff participation in decision making would be relatively limited.

As Table III indicates, this link was confirmed, with respondents in Schools C and D claiming considerably low levels of participation. However, it is also worth noting that no respondents claimed to have high levels of participation in this area; with respondents in schools A and B having only slightly higher levels than respondents in schools C and D, at moderate levels.

### Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a particularly significant indicator of staff perceptions of their role and status. This can be seen especially when levels of job satisfaction are examined in relation to other variables.

As Table IV indicates, levels of job satisfaction did cover a spread of attitudes, although there was a definite leaning towards low job satisfaction. School B had the highest overall levels of job satisfaction, followed by school A with a moderate score, and schools C and D which both had very low levels of job satisfaction. Interestingly, headteachers’ scores indicated that they had among the highest levels of job satisfaction in the sample.

### Table III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>A</th>
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<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High possible score (L)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low possible score (H)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual score</td>
<td>M 121</td>
<td>M 196</td>
<td>L 132</td>
<td>L 174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

- Highest possible score per respondent 50 = low participation in decision making
- Lowest possible score per respondent 15 = high participation in decision making
- H = High level of participation
- M = Moderate level of participation
- L = Low level of participation
- Headteacher’s response excluded
However, the most interesting findings become apparent when examining low levels of job satisfaction with other variables. When comparing levels of participation in decision making (Table III) and job satisfaction (Table IV) a relationship between these two variables becomes apparent.

In schools where there is a low level of involvement in decision making (schools C and D) there is an equally low level of job satisfaction. This relationship is also reflected to a degree in schools A and B, where moderate levels of involvement in decision making are equal to moderate to high levels of job satisfaction.

It is therefore possible to identify a link between the culture of each school and the level of job satisfaction of its teaching staff. Where a managerialist culture is prominent, indicated by the headteacher’s leadership style (Table II), as in schools C and D, job satisfaction among staff is very low. This is in contrast to the collegiate schools (A and B), which have comparatively higher levels of job satisfaction.

Although the sample in this study is not sufficiently large to assert a direct causal relationship here, it does nonetheless indicate that where a managerialist culture exists, teacher attitudes are significantly more negative. Clearly, a managerialist culture and low participation in decision making have implications for teachers’ roles and status; as well as their effectiveness as teachers, since low morale is unlikely to lead to improved performance. It may well be these threats to professionalism which are resulting in a low level of job satisfaction for teachers.

It may be argued here that a link between decreased levels of participation in decision making and threatened professionalism does not stand, as teachers do not need formal control within the school to maintain their state of professionalism. As autonomous educated professionals, it could be argued that their views are valued and thus consulted in a less formal way. This argument does not hold for two reasons.

First teachers’ control over all aspects of the school and their autonomy within the school are becoming increasingly limited with the advent of such policies as the National Curriculum and teacher appraisal. Therefore their influence over a number of areas has already been decreased by legislation. Second, a management culture is less likely to allow for informal consultations or influence, with the process of decision making occurring in a much more formal way.

Therefore, in this context it is clear that being in control of many aspects of school life and having an informal bearing on decision making is not likely to be a reality for many teachers. Any residual influence cannot be equated with meaningful participation and a reasonable level of autonomy and control; surely the defining aspects of a professional. The link between low job satisfaction and low participation in decision making, and the implications for teachers’ status and professionalism identified in these findings is therefore a significant one.

Indeed, the general high level of negativity of teachers’ attitudes does not bode well for the interpersonal climate of the school or for the effect of LMS as a positive agent of change.

### The interpersonal climate of the school

The interpersonal climate of the school is affected by all the other variables identified, since they all have a bearing on the nature of the relationships between teachers. Given that levels of job satisfaction are low (as illustrated by Table IV) one would expect that perceptions of the interpersonal climate would follow this.

Table V confirms this, although it is not as negative as may have been expected. Again, teachers in school D had a negative perception of the interpersonal climate, which reflected the low level of job satisfaction within the school and the negative effects of a managerialist culture. However, this link is not firmly supported by the results from the other schools. Respondents in school C (which also has a managerialist climate) have

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table IV</th>
<th>Level of job satisfaction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>School A</td>
</tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High possible score (L)</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low possible score (H)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual score</td>
<td>M 76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- Highest possible score per respondent 36 = low level of job satisfaction
- Lowest possible score per respondent 9 = high level of job satisfaction
- H = High
- M = Moderate
- L = Low
- a Headteacher’s score
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a moderate view of the interpersonal climate of the school despite low levels of job satisfaction.

Perceptions of LMS

It was important to examine teacher attitudes concerning LMS in order to assess the effects of LMS on the interpersonal climate of the school, and as an agent of change. Given the negativity found in teacher attitudes within the sample, it would also be pertinent to examine them in terms of more particular aims issues such as the effects of LMS on teacher attitudes concerning their role and status. As Table VI indicates, teachers’ perceptions concerning LMS are very clear. The overall view of LMS is a negative one, with teachers in schools B, C and D all indicating this with negative high scores.

It is also apparent that few respondents viewed LMS in a positive way, except notably the headteachers, who had very much more positive views of LMS as well as in terms of their job satisfaction (particularly in schools C and D).

However, because attitudes are moderate to negative across the four schools, further analysis is required to ascertain whether these negative attitudes are a result of particular aspects of a managerialist culture (more akin to LMS), such as authoritarian management and centralized decision making; or more general conditions which are not inherent aspects of the new managerialist culture.

Therefore, in order to establish the specific causes of this negative perception of LMS, respondents were asked to underline specific statements concerning aspects of LMS which were either positive or negative.

From examining Table VII it is apparent there are a number of negative statements which received a high response, and some positive statements which received little or no attention. This indicates a high degree of concern with those aspects of LMS related to styles of management which reflect a managerialist culture.

The statement “staff collaboration”, for instance, was chosen by only two respondents from school A, which, as already stated, has a culture closer to a collegiate model. This result also reflects the low level of participation in decision making within the schools, which is more likely to be the case where there is an authoritarian headteacher and thus a culture closer to a managerialist ethos.

Closely related to this issue is the statement “empowerment of teachers”. This positive statement was not chosen by any of the respondents. This clearly indicates that they do not see LMS, or the manner in which it has been implemented, as empowering teachers as a professional group.

Although negative perceptions of LMS do cover some general concerns, such as funding, it is thus apparent from analysing Table VII that the most extreme responses (or non-responses) are concerned with aspects of LMS directly related to changes in school culture and the role and status of teachers.
This is again evident when regarding the statement “imposed changes to working conditions”, which received one of the highest responses of the entire list.

From examining the findings overall, it is apparent there are some very significant trends throughout the sample. It appears that where a managerialist culture is present, attitudes among staff are generally more negative. There does appear to be a relationship between low participation in decision making (a product of a managerial ethos within the school) and low job satisfaction, with some implications for the interpersonal climate of the school.

There certainly appears to be a link between LMS and teacher attitudes towards status and professionalism, as indicated by the nature of the statements chosen in Table VII. It is important to note that one must be cautious about asserting a direct causal relationship between a managerialist culture and these issues given the scale of the study.

### Analysis

The questionnaire had a good response rate of 53 per cent and therefore produced a wealth of data. It is possible to identify distinct patterns within these data which can be discussed in relation to the four schools, and in the wider context of the contributions made in this area by various commentators.

The main findings of the study were as follows: a very significant difference existed between the attitudes of head teachers and those of the teaching staff in general. Also that a relationship existed between the level of participation in decision making expressed by teachers, and their levels of job satisfaction. It was also found that, where a managerialist culture existed within a school, teacher attitudes were more negative. There were some indications that negative attitudes towards LMS related to issues concerning teachers’ roles and status.

The research found that teacher attitudes generally tended towards negativity. This was particularly true in relation to levels of job satisfaction and perceptions of LMS.

However, in contrast to this were the attitudes of headteachers, who exhibited significantly more positive attitudes than those of their staff.

All headteachers claimed comparatively high levels of job satisfaction, even in schools in which job satisfaction was low (schools C and D). Perceptions of LMS were also negative among teachers in general, but again headteachers expressed very positive attitudes with some of the highest scores of the sample.

However, the attitudes expressed by teachers in this study suggest that even seven years after the introduction of LMS, the majority of teachers have not reached a stage at which they positively accepted LMS. This is indicated not only in the negative levels of opinion expressed towards LMS in general, but also in the high level of response to negative statements in Table VII. These include “added pressures”, “imposed changes in working conditions” and “changes without additional resources”.

Although the findings of this study indicate that teachers are still at the early stages in terms of their reactions to change, this does not appear to be the case for headteachers. While there was data only available for three headteachers, it was still possible to identify a distinction between their views and those of their staff.

Job satisfaction levels for headteachers were among the highest in the study, as were their perceptions of LMS. Headteachers’ scores were considerably more positive towards LMS, with the headteachers of schools C and D achieving scores of 22 and 26 respectively; the most positive score possible being 21.

These positive views were also reflected in statements chosen in Table VII, with the headteachers of schools C and D being the only respondents to express enthusiasm towards LMS. Headteachers were also the only respondents to choose the positive statement “school autonomy”, and also chose the statement “increased community links”.

From examining these views it would therefore be likely that the headteachers in the sample (and certainly those from schools C and D), have reached the stage of “constructive adaptation”: actively engaged in the reality of LMS, planning for the changes it incurs and feeling quite secure within this change.
The fact that this distinction of views between headteachers and staff exists, highlights possible reasons for negative attitudes among teachers. These include changed roles within the school (i.e., less participation in the decision-making process and its implications for teacher professionalism).

The implications for teachers fully accepting LMS as an agent of change are negative ones. A belief in LMS is also a belief in a transition from a professional, autonomous group, to a managed workforce with little influence or involvement in important issues with the school. For headteachers these issues are less likely to be felt, with the transition from professional to manager, and its implications of increased school autonomy and management responsibility, not seen as a threat to their personal or professional status.

Another finding of the research was a significant relationship between low levels of job satisfaction and very low levels of participation in decision making; this was illustrated particularly in schools C and D. This bent towards low job satisfaction reflected the fact that no respondents claimed to have a high level of participation in the decision-making process.

Therefore it appears that low levels of job satisfaction come not so much from an increase in menial tasks, but from being excluded from the decision-making process, and the subsequent feeling of powerlessness. Such feelings of powerlessness, and negative attitudes towards their work, clearly have many implications for teachers’ roles and status. The professionalism of teachers is clearly an issue that would be affected by a decreased role in certain aspects of school life.

These issues of professionalism also relate to another significant link found in the study: that between the presence of a manageralist or enterprise culture and teacher attitudes. As mentioned in the introduction, LMS was introduced by the government in order to increase efficiency in schools by bringing “market principles” into the education system; including the business methods (such as time management) which accompany this.

This new culture differs from the old collegiate culture in schools, which viewed all teachers as professionals, and the school as an organization in which teachers are responsible for managing themselves and their classrooms guided by the headteacher. The introduction of LMS has inevitably changed this culture, creating management and non-management groups within the school.

In the schools where a management culture was indicated (via the headteacher’s leadership style) job satisfaction was much lower than in schools which appeared to retain a more collegiate ethos. It was also found that negative attitudes could be seen as relating to aspects of LMS associated with this management ethos; with teachers reacting negatively to statements such as “staff collaboration” and “empowerment of teachers”. However, as discussed earlier, this was not the case for headteachers.

As mentioned, the headteacher’s leadership style (Table II) was taken as an indicator of the culture of the school. The headteachers’ own perceptions of their leadership style was only available for those of schools B, C and D. The respondents of schools C and D agreed with their headteacher that their leadership style was authoritarian. However, the headteacher of school B saw himself as having an authoritarian leadership style, while his staff claimed that it was interpersonal.

This difference in the perception of the headteacher’s leadership style draws attention to some very pertinent issues. It may be that the terms “authoritarian” and “interpersonal” were interpreted differently by the headteacher and his staff. For the headteacher, the term authoritarian may have denoted decisiveness and strong leadership, evoking positive connotations. In contrast, staff interpretations of “authoritarian” may have included dictatorial images of leadership and unapproachability. The headteacher of school B may therefore have been perceived as having an interpersonal leadership style because he did not exhibit the negative connotations interpreted as “authoritarian”, and was viewed as having an “interpersonal” style because of the staff interpretation of this term also (i.e., approachable, reasonably friendly, etc.).

It may be possible that the headteacher of school B did have an authoritarian style of leadership, but was also approachable to his staff, giving them the impression of informality and interpersonal leadership, (the mark of a good manager perhaps). Unfortunately, the questionnaire design did not allow for clarification of this issue and so one can only speculate about reasons for this difference.

Another dimension of the findings were the differences in teacher attitudes not only between the four schools, but also in different socio-economic areas. One might have expected, given that job satisfaction tended to be low and that perceptions of LMS were generally negative, that the most extreme negative attitudes among teachers would be concentrated in the two inner city schools (schools A and B).

Schools in inner city areas tend to be presented (in the media and elsewhere) as having many more problems than schools in other areas. Issues such as poverty, problems of poor housing and a large number of children whose first language is not English, are just some of the difficulties that these schools additionally face. However, our research
found that negative attitudes were more likely to be held by teachers in the schools in Chingford.

It is possible that certain external factors which relate to the findings of this study can explain this difference. As stated, where a management culture was indicated to be present in a school, attitudes were generally more negative; schools C and D illustrate this. Schools C and D are situated in the outer London Borough of Waltham Forest. Waltham Forest in general, and Chingford in particular, are areas which are traditional Conservative territory. It would be probable, then, that an area such as this would embrace LMS in its entirety, and therefore the impact of the legislation would be fully felt.

Conversely, the London Borough of Newham has a history of strong Labour support. It is also likely that teachers who choose to teach in such an area are aware of this link with left-wing political views and may share them. Therefore strong support systems may exist, such as certain types of political activity and strong union links. Hence the impact of LMS may not be so harshly felt. The wider political context of the local community may have a bearing on an individual’s attitudes, as well as the micro-political context of the school.

The question which this research raises is: what are the implications of negative attitudes for the success of LMS as an agent of change? It could be argued that LMS will inevitably be dysfunctional. Although LMS is enforced by legislation, it is not possible to legislate against the negative attitudes (which this study indicates) and possible subversion which may result. If LMS is to be successful (i.e. achieving its stated aim of increasing efficiency and the quality of education in the state sector) then surely teachers have to be reasonably happy and motivated because they are at the forefront of the education system.

However, it could be argued that LMS is in no way dysfunctional, as its main function is to improve standards and efficiency. Reading standards and examination results have continued to improve in the last few years. It may be further argued that dissatisfaction is not a threat to efficiency but, on the contrary, a reaction to it by the educational establishment which has for so long enjoyed a self-interested monopoly on education. Thus the placing of power in the hands of consumers is bound to be uncomfortable at first, but the increased standards resulting from LMS will vindicate this action.

The findings of the research, while not indicating that LMS is dysfunctional, do raise some concerns about the degree of its success. The level of negative attitudes which were found among teachers seven years on from the implementation of LMS suggest a state of long-term discontent with the policy, rather than initial negative reactions to change.

Clearly, this level of discontent cannot aid efficiency in an organization, and will have tangible negative effects. Indeed it is possible these are already evident. There are concerns expressed about the number of teachers leaving the profession, and subsequent shortages of teachers in specialist areas such as science and technology.

The research identified a number of relationships concerning LMS and its effect on the interpersonal climate of the school. It was found that although negative attitudes were to be found towards LMS among teachers in general, headteachers, in comparison, held very positive views. It was also found that a link existed between levels of participation in decision making and negative attitudes among teachers towards job satisfaction.

Where a managerialist culture existed, teacher attitudes were on the whole more negative than in schools with a more informal collegiate culture. Although not conclusive, there was some indication that negative views of LMS were related to specific aspects of the managerialist culture. The indications from this study are that the separation of teachers into management and teachers has not served schools or the relationships between teachers well.

References

Further reading