Absorbing LMS: The Coping Mechanism of a Small Group

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While the original proposals for Local Management of Schools (LMS) had a wide-ranging agenda for change, the actual outworking has tended to be more aligned to the management of devolved financial resources rather than the management of the total education process (cf. Wallace, 1992). This article, following this emphasis, looks at the way these new financial responsibilities are managed in a number of different schools.

The financial interpretation of LMS, and the overarching thinking behind this managerialist development, is not unique to the UK public sector. Neither is it a phenomenon which has not been noted by other writers. Meyer (1986) provided a more general discussion of the increasing rationalization within society and the "spread of countings and accountings" (p. 347). Our discussion is more limited, relating to the processes which have been underway in the UK public sector. Even so, the specific changes introduced by LMS are part of a much wider agenda which is traceable to what is broadly described as the "financial management initiative" (FMI) (cf. Jackson, 1988; Laughlin, 1992; Richards, 1987) albeit dressed of late in different titles (e.g. "next steps", the "new public management" (Hood, 1991). In the context of the public sector, FMI tends to develop a new structural framework in the organization in question, to allow devolution of financial responsibility to service units. This financial devolution is tacitly to allow these units freedom to decide on the best use of the finances made available to them, while at the same time developing constraints (invariably measurable output expectations aligned to input resource usage) around this apparent freedom.

LMS, coming as it does from FMI roots, expresses these twin concerns (of devolved financial freedom yet constraint of actions through definable expectations) even though the latter definition of outputs and its linkage to input resources remains undeveloped. The enactment of LMS through the Education Reform Act 1988 (ERA) requires all secondary schools and all other schools of 200 or more pupils to have devolved responsibilities for their finances allocated on the basis of a formula. ERA also required that all schools should teach a new national curriculum. Yet the linkage between the allocation of resources and its possible usage (e.g. the "successful" teaching of the national

curriculum?) remains unclear. The funding formula for schools is primarily linked to a simple amount per pupil. It does not make specifications as to what is expected in the way of educational outcomes for these pupils, even though the drive, following FMI logic, is to strengthen the relationship between funds received and outputs achieved and thus allow some clear judgement on the schools effectiveness and efficiency to ensue. At the present time, such coupling is still weak and thus LMS is an incomplete rendition of the full FMI model.

The empirical insights we offer suggest that the overwhelming approach for managing the devolved financial responsibility of LMS is through the creation of a small group of existing staff, and, on rare occasions, governors, to absorb the management tasks involved. The role of the small group in absorbing the workload and strains and stresses of LMS was highlighted as the predominant coping mechanism in the initial insights from previous research (see Broadbent *et al.*, 1992, 1993a). This article both builds on these insights and expands the understanding of this management process from a theoretical and empirical perspective.

The concept of "absorption" has a connotation of being something which needs to be "soaked up" rather than being seen as an enabling force. This is intentional and is used deliberately since it fairly reflects current attitudes towards the nature of the work created by LMS by many of those involved in it. For some, however, the concept of LMS has been seen as enabling, it creates the possibility of their detachment from the educational milieu; these teachers are a minority and recognize their different outlook. Despite the general antipathy to the work created by LMS, few, if any, headteachers would want to return to the days when Local Education Authorities had control over school budgets. It is recognized that there can be some benefit in having control over resources as a means to drive educational priorities. This does not mean that the tasks involved and the implicit economic thinking are readily accepted within schools. By default, and also by design in certain circumstances, a small group emerges, which, in effect, "does LMS" to allow the "real work" of the school to go on unhindered.

The design of the article explores, in depth, the nature and diversity of this small absorbing group, from both a theoretical and empirical viewpoint, as well as raising a critical agenda concerning this handling process. There are three major sections. The first section posits a theoretical rationale for the design of and necessity for a small absorbing group based on some models of organizational change and coping mechanisms for environmental disturbances. The second looks at the different design of the absorbing group in 24 different schools. This section highlights how these actors see "doing LMS". It also uncovers the commonality yet diversity in the design of these groups and draws out some of the strengths, weaknesses and dangers in the different designs, both internally within the groups themselves and from the perspective of the other participants in the schools. The final substantive section looks critically at this handling process, raising a number of important issues which point towards an evaluation both of the way these reforms are being handled and of the value of LMS more generally.

The Role of the Small Group: A Theoretical Argument
The role of the small group in absorbing LMS can best be appreciated as a particular organizational change mechanism, for coping with an environmental disturbance which needs to be handled in such a way as to minimize its intrusive power. This section develops this argument through two interconnected themes. The first attempts to summarize, from a theoretical perspective, the organizational processes involved in coping with environmental disturbances. The second, building on these theoretical models, introduces a number of other theoretical perspectives which explore the role of the small group as an absorbing force to prevent a perceived "alienation" of, or to manage latent anxieties about, the education process in schools.

Organizational Change Processes
LMS is seeking to engender change in schools. A framework within which to reflect on the process of change taking place can be argued to be valuable in reaching understandings. Understanding the processual dynamics within organizations engendered by environmental disturbances is at the centre of recent theoretical conceptualizations in the organization change literature (cf. Goodman *et al.*, 1986; Hinings and Greenwood, 1988; Laughlin, 1991a; Pettigrew, 1985, 1987). This literature looks at the processual dynamics of the way an "environmental impetus" (Bartunek, 1984), "kick" (Morgan, 1986), "noise" (Smith, 1982) or "disturbance" (Laughlin, 1991a), "tracks" (Hinings and Greenwood, 1988) its way along particular "pathways" (Laughlin, 1991a) in any organization leading to changing organizational arrangements (including changing managerial designs).

The conclusion from this literature is that it is possible to conceptualize a number of possible pathways which any disturbance can take but the exact nature of these, and which one is followed in specific cases, is dependent on empirical investigation. The conceptual models, therefore, are always "skeletal" or more formally "middle range" (Broadbent *et al.* 1993a; Laughlin, 1991b) requiring empirical "fleshing out". These empirical insights are not some peripheral test of theory but rather constitute an important amplification and refinement of its very nature. Thus, with current levels of understanding, it is impossible to use the models either to predict exactly how the organizational arrangements will look in specific instances or which pathway will be followed from any actual disturbance. While the theories may well advance with greater empirical exposure it is unlikely they will ever be anything other than "middle range", always requiring amplification and refinement through empirical examples.

What is clear from this processual literature is that change pathways can be of two major types. These are given various labels in the literature but perhaps the most common is "first and second order" change (Laughlin, 1991a; Levy, 1986). Second-order change involves major shifts in the organizational value systems, at the "core" of organizations (Levy, 1986) often known as the "interpretive schemes" (cf. Broadbent, 1992a; Giddens, 1979; Hinings and

Greenwood, 1988; Laughlin, 1991a; Ranson *et al.*, 1980; Shutz, 1967) which will have lasting effects on the whole nature and future of the organization. First-order change involves shifts in the managerial arrangements in the organization but in such a way that the interpretative schemes remain undisturbed.

Laughlin (1991a), building on this key distinction, highlights four alternative pathways: two first-order and two second-order. The two first-order changes he calls "rebuttal" and "reorientation". Rebuttal involves a repulsion of the disturbance such that, while the eviction may involve some change in the organizational arrangements, these are very temporary. Reorientation, on the other hand, involves having to internalize the disturbance, through often permanent organizational changes, but in such a way that the interpretive schemes remain untouched and undisturbed by the alteration. Building on Hinings and Greenwood's (1988) model of a "design archetype", Laughlin (1991a) suggests that "reorientation" involves movements in the "archetypes" but in such a way as to avoid changes in the interpretative schemes. The assumption behind this is that a number of alternative design archetypes can live under any interpretive schema. The two second-order changes Laughlin (1991a) calls "colonization" and "evolution". The former involves major change in the interpretive schemes, led by a number of organizational participants initially engendered through changes in the design archetype. "Evolution", on the other hand, involves deliberately chosen change in the interpretive schemes, with subsequent shifts in the design archetype. It should be re-emphasized that these four possibilities are simply heuristic devices to provide a framework of possibilities. Actual pathways of change may move dynamically and will not necessarily follow a linear, one-directional course. There may be oscillations on a pathway, or different sections of an organization may progress at different paces, on different pathways, or in contradictory ways (Broadbent, 1992a).

The models of change are important as they alert us to possible points of interest. Apart from the evolution pathway all other alternatives initially involve movements in the design archetype. What happens in the design archetype, therefore, is of central importance to the organizational change process. The concept of the design archetype comes directly from Hinings and Greenwood (1988) and Greenwood and Hinings (1988), who, in turn, build their insights from Miller and Friesen (1984). In these works the exact nature of the design archtype is deemed to come only through empirical investigation. Their tentative definition is: "...compositions of structures and (management) systems given coherence and orientation by an underlying set of values and beliefs" (Hinings and Greenwood, 1988, p. 4). Thus it is to do with structures and management systems whose design is given coherence through an underlying set of values and beliefs. Laughlin (1991a), in his summary of this work, suggests it includes the design and functioning of the organization structure, decision processes and communication systems of any organization. It is the important intervening managerial "steering medium" (cf. Broadbent *et al.*, 1991; Habermas, 1984, 1987), there to allow the tangible subsystems of any

organization to reflect adequately the underlying (intangible) interpretive schemes.

While the guidelines as to the nature of the design archetype come from the interpretive schemes it always has the potential to overstep this "structural coupling" (Laughlin and Broadbent, 1991, forthcoming; Teubner, 1987) resulting in second-order colonization change (Broadbent *et al.*, 1991). It is difficult, if not impossible, with current theoretical insights, to postulate in the abstract the reasons for and dynamics of the nature of a shift in the design archetype which can engender second-order change. It remains the case that the theory is both embryonic and incomplete, requiring, as with all "middle range" theory, empirical detail to explicate the dynamics involved. Thus the empirical data gathered in our study of the implementation of LMS is used to develop the theoretical insights.

The Design and Nature of Absorbing Groups to Avoid Organizational Alienation and Anxiety

A central consideration here is the nature of the design archetype, a key element of which is related to organizational, structural arrangements which specify the functional role of specialist groups in organizations. A reasonable thesis is that the first action any organization will take to manage anticipated or unanticipated environmental disturbances is to look to its organizational arrangements and, if necessary, assign or employ a subgroup of its participants to "handle" the "opportunity" or "problem".

The organization's perception of the opportunity or problem arising from the environmental disturbance has a distinct effect on the perceived functional role and design of any newly created organizational group and hence on the resulting changing nature of the design archetype. Where an opportunity is perceived, the resulting group will be closely aligned to other functionally specialist groups. Where the environmental disturbances are perceived to be a problem, then the group will inevitably be somewhat functionally distinct from other groups being set up primarily to protect the workings of these latter groups. Theoretically, these protective groupings can be understood as "basic assumption groups" or "specialized work groups" using terms from psychoanalytic models of organizational life (cf. Bion, 1968; De Board, 1978; Kets de Vries and Miller, 1984).

Before exploring these theoretical frameworks in relation to small groups it is important to point out that, to schools, LMS is more of a problem than an opportunity (Broadbent, 1992b; Broadbent *et al.*, 1993a). As one head put the matter succinctly: "LMS is a brilliant idea but it should be adequately resourced" or, as another suggested, "LMS provides us with the flexibility to move things around but you can only bring change in minimal amounts". More dramatically another headteacher suggested, "LMS makes us a lot poorer – we can now choose what not to spend our money on". Put simply, the opportunistic elements of LMS in the way of freedoms to spend are not only tempered; they

are overrun with the constraints of inadequate and year-on-year reductions in resourcing, making the whole thing distinctly problematic.

However, LMS is more than just an unwelcome problem; it is something which is perceived to have the potential to undermine the very basis of the education process. The theoretical conflictual value and possible "secularization process" of the economic and accounting logic of LMS and FMI more generally in the education process has already been highlighted by Laughlin (1992) and Laughlin and Broadbent (1991, forthcoming). Using a rather different frame of reference a similar picture is portrayed using the Hegelian/Marxian concept of "alienation". This change in language and literature, although not a change in conceptual meaning, also allows an introduction of Marx's theoretical propositions concerning the potential alienating power of money. Baxter (1982), in his comprehensive analysis of alienation, builds his understanding around the role of definable "authentic work" which should not be "surrendered" (alienated) to some alternative alien force which he calls the "other". The other to Marx is, of course, the capitalist class who have the economic power to buy "work" from the labouring masses. Marx's argument is that it is because the capitalist is using money to purchase labour that the dangers of "commodification" of work become acute. With commodification comes the potential abuse of authentic work and the seemingly inevitable surrender or alienation of the labouring masses to "low trust" (Fox, 1974), definable and measurable forms of activities. While Marx's analysis clearly has all sorts of simplifying and questionable elements, the latent fear of the power of money to undermine and redefine authentic work is very real indeed in the caring professions (as Gorz, 1989, refers to professions devoted to teaching, medical and social work) but also arguably in other more main-stream manufacturing work, as the labour process literature so clearly demonstrates. The latent fear of alienation and secularization of authentic work, and the power of money to achieve this, is very real indeed. That this is not just a theoretical argument, nor one which is tied specifically to nineteenth century British life (from which Marx draws his insights and inspiration), is illustrated by our study of LMS. Thus, for instance, a not untypical remark by a teacher, made to the researchers, is: "…my fear is that the purse is overriding the educational, that we have to look to the purse to provide a standard of teaching". Likewise, another headteacher, expressing similar anxieties, this time providing a possible way to harness the financial problem, stated: "…my worry is that with finance you become blinkered, see everything from a financial perspective, forgetting about the relevance for the kids and seeing pound notes instead. The budget has to be firmly placed in an educational context. It would be dangerous to have a bursary model". What is clear from these two quotes is that finance is anxiety-inducing. It is seen as a potential force for undermining what is deemed to be authentic work, yet, as the latter quote suggests, it also has the potential to be managed to enable this work to proceed. However, even here, the important point is that it needs to be managed or it could overwhelm. This indeed is a latent anxiety which requires managing.

Central to Bion's (1968) model of group and organizational behaviour is the existence of latent anxieties which can come to the surface and affect the real work of the organization unless kept at bay. Bion called these anxieties "basic assumptions" (being assumed by all) of which he isolated three as central: the need to be protected from unwanted intrusions (a "fight/flight" assumption); the need for leadership (a "dependency" assumption) and a need for continuity through ensuring "reproduction" of central values and concerns (a "pairing" assumption). Bion's model suggests that these anxieties need to be "managed" in such a way that they do not impinge on the "real work", either by dominating the agenda of concerns or being allowed to become *the* agenda of the organization or group.

Bion suggested that the way to keep these anxieties at bay is through the creation of "specialized work groups" to handle the anxieties on behalf of the whole group. De Board (1978) summarizes the role of the specialized work group along with providing some interesting societal examples:

> In effect, these are sub-groups, "budded off" from the main group, whose main task is to deal with the basic assumptions on behalf of the main group, thereby allowing the work group function of the main group to proceed effectively. If society at large is taken as the main group, then various parts of it can be seen to be operating as specialized work groups. The Army can be seen as a specialized work group concerned with fight/flight. The Church is primarily concerned with dependency, and the aristocracy with pairing, that is, hoping for the birth of a genetically pure leader, presumably the monarchy (De Board, 1978, p. 43).

The difficulty with creating these functional groupings to Bion, is that they can end up thinking that they are not just coping with anxieties but actually doing work which is arguably more important than the "real (authentic) work" of the main group! De Board (1978) makes this plain in a continuation of the above quote in the following way:

> However, they are continually in danger of actually doing something, working as a work group rather than a basic assumption group. To avoid this they must translate action into basic assumption mentality. Thus the Church will say, *Non Nobis, Domine* (not unto us, O Lord, but unto thee be the glory) after a successful piece of work; the Army will encourage the belief that anything can be done by force, providing it is never used; and the aristocracy will insist that they (and the monarchy) are essentially democratic! (p. 43).

The danger remains, however, that such modesty will not remain and the basic assumption group could over-run and redefine the real work of the main group.

This psychoanalytic model provides a powerful complement to the organizational change model interpreted in the context of schools. The emergence of the small group in schools can be deemed to be a specialized work group set up within the design archetype to handle the fight/flight anxieties engendered through LMS. This is in marked contrast with other specializations within schools who have been set up to allow the *real* (authentic) education work to be undertaken[1]. LMS is something which is seen as an intrusion from which the real education process needs to be protected. Handling the fight/flight anxiety is the function of this group. The emergence of this group involves movements and changes to one of the important organization's structural

elements in the design archetype of any school which is central to the organizational change process. The real question remains as to whether the LMS group, as a specialized work group, is engendering change of a "reorientation" or "colonization" nature. If it fulfils its "anxiety-reducing" role, then first-order reorientation change is the outcome. However, if it starts to define the real work agenda of the school, it is likely to be on a pathway which has distinct colonizing potential.

This conceptualization provides a way of looking at the empirics which follow. It also provides the basis for a critique of what is happening. This latter concern will be explored further in the final section of the article. However, perhaps at this stage we could flag a few points which the modelling highlights. First, this conceptualization caricatures LMS as a potential problem and a threat which needs to be fought against, or from which flight is necessary. Second, the models posit a heavy resistance to change and a certain regressive nature in schools, as well as other organizations. Third, it suggests that it may well be important to study ways of providing the means of buffering environmental, regulatory disturbances. Finally, it seems to highlight the perceived value accorded to the status quo and the encouragement of resistance. All these are important challenges and questions to the models. Even though these issues could be debated in the abstract, a more meaningful analysis can be produced when the empirical detail surrounding this absorption process is appreciated. For this reason these questions will be left until the final section, after considering the empirically diverse nature of the absorbing group and its position in the schools. It is to these empirical insights that we now turn.

The Absorbing Group: Nature, Diversity and Organizational Dynamics

This section is concerned with looking specifically at the different groups in schools who are, in effect, "doing LMS". The insights for this are drawn from interviews with headteachers, classroom teachers and chairs of governors of 24 schools[2], conducted during the first 10 months of 1991. These schools range in pupil numbers from 180 to 1,500 as summarized in Table I. Of these, ten are nursery first, primary or middle schools (marked as P1 to P10 in Table I, listed in order of number of pupils). The remaining 14 schools are all secondary (marked as S11 to S24 in Table I, again numerically sorted into increasing number of pupils). The 24 schools are in a range of socioeconomic locations and drawn from three different local authorities. While there are major differences between these local authorities, their funding formulas and the schools' interactions with these authorities, we have come to the conclusion that none of this variety was directly of significance in understanding the workings of the small group. This is not meant to belittle these differences, just to say they are not significant in the context of doing LMS. Size and the primary/secondary split, however, was of importance along with, as we shall see below, the role and nature of the headteacher. Concentration on these differences, therefore, will dominate the discussions below. None of the 24 schools had more than two full

School	Number of pupils
P1	180
P2	190
P3	250
P4	289
P5	310
P6	340
P7	390
P8	455
P9	480
P10	490
S11	300
S12	480
S13	500
S14	700
S15	700
S16	900
S17	900
S18	1,000
S19	1,100
S20	1,100
S21	1,399
S22	1,400
S23	1,400
S24	1,500

Table I.
Schools in the Sample

years' experience of handling LMS. In the following, each of the 24 schools will be referred to in terms of the character label P1, S11, etc.

What "doing LMS" meant to the majority of schools was basically trying to "manage the budget" in what could be described as a housekeeping approach to the issue. LMS, to all interviewees, equalled budget management, yet it was the commonality of approach dominated by a concern for preserving the *status quo* which was particularly interesting. The description "housekeeping" is intended to reflect this careful preservation of established forms of behaviour (for more information on this interpretation of budgeting in these schools see Broadbent *et al.*, 1993b). Thus, to those interviewed, the freedoms to have responsibility for deciding on budget allocation became nothing more than a difficult juggling act on how to spread inadequate resources across unsatisfiable historically determined demands. As one head put the matter succinctly it is: "…silly talking about freedom to shift funds – there isn't enough in the blasted budget to manage, it's so tightly budgeted you can't move anything" (P6). Or as the

head of S22 put the same view: "LMS makes us a lot poorer – we can now choose what not to spend our money on". Even those more favorable to LMS could not see any real opportunity for movement in the budget allocation process: "LMS provides us with the flexibility to move things around but you can only bring change in minimal amounts" (Head of S21); "LMS is a brilliant ideal but it should be adequately resourced" (Head of P9). Managing a perceived highly restrictive budget and its transference to school level means that "doing LMS" involves a complex, time-consuming paper-chasing, housekeeping exercise with distinct anxiety-generating aspects. With new responsibilities for managing staff salaries, contracts for services, etc., with inadequate resources, the emphasis shifts from seeming "freedoms" to a considerable and overwhelming workload. For as one head put the issue: "LMS costs schools a lot of money in terms of cost of office staff and administration, not to mention extra time. If we were to cost the time it would be astronomical" (S22). This was echoed on many occasions by all headteachers who probably would share the disillusionment of the head from S16 when he said: "When LMS came on the horizon they though of it as a new power base, but that has died down – I think they quickly realized the work involved". Put simply, LMS, to most, involves "more evening meetings…more work" (Head of P9). Its anxiety-generating qualities are nicely summarized by the chair of governors in S18 who talked of the "sleepless nights deciding who won't get enough". In only one case was there a mention of an alternative approach to budgeting (which attempted a zero-based approach, where every expenditure is deemed negotiable) but this soon ran into problems of application. In the majority of cases, expenditure was perceived to be "fixed" and the income inadequate to cover such demands despite the best efforts of some headteachers to expand the income available. In sum, doing LMS equalled budget management and was seen as a complex balancing act which, coupled with the inevitable inexperience of handling these new responsibilities, resulted in a difficult, potentially anxiety-inducing administrative burden to the small group set aside to manage these tasks.

If we turn now to the specific nature and design of the small group taking responsibility for doing LMS, the key place to begin is with understanding the nature of the headteacher. Contrary to the expectations (anticipated in the framing of the initiative) that governors would be centrally involved with LMS, none were active in doing LMS (see Shearn *et al.,* 1993), for more details on the role of governors and their relationship to headteachers). A typical view was expressed by the chair of governors in S17 when he pointed out: "It is the head who runs the school. He has a difficult role to maintain – I see my role to support him". A rather more dramatic picture was portrayed by the chair of S15 when he described the headteacher as: "…the custodian of the system. His job is chief executive of S15 plc". In many cases governors were seen as "rubber stampers" of budgets, sometimes called together to ratify the head's need to "move some money about" (Chair of Governors of P4). Even for the one school from the sample where the governors were exercising their legitimate rights to be involved in deciding staff appointments, and generating some tension in the

process for both staff and the head, the chair of governors was at pains to point out that: "...we need to be cautious not to interfere in the running of the school...the head is the executive. He does the day-to-day running like a director". Our thesis is, therefore, that to understand the nature and design of the absorbing small group it is first necessary to appreciate the type of headteacher involved. This focus emerged from the empirical work with which the team were engaged, but is also echoed in the work of others researching LMS (Burgess *et al.*, 1992) and in more general management issues in schools (Torrington and Weightman, 1989). The importance of the headteacher in all aspects of school life and thus, not surprisingly, in managing a major disturbance of the magnitude of LMS, is immense.

Table II and Figure 1 summarize the different types of headteachers which became apparent in the 24 schools. These categories are not definitive but emerge from the particular methodological approach adopted. The approach is discourse-based and uses the insights gathered in interviews as a basis for critical discussions between the researchers[3]. It became possible, in these discussions, to classify all 24 heads into three broad bands with a number of subdivisions, making a total of eight classifiable types (for more information on issues concerning distinctions based on gender see Broadbent, 1992b). Table II highlights the eight categories of headteacher which emerged during discussions and the schools under each. Figure 1, on the other hand, provides a brief diagramatic description of the nature of the eight types. In this figure the various categories can be related to two continua which appeared to be particularly important in relation to the head's attitude to her/his role. The first of these is the level of the head's involvement with LMS ranging from "distant" to "full" and the second is the general orientation of the head ranging from "people-oriented" to "task-oriented". The positioning on the axes is relative and

Type of head	Schools				
Absorbers					
Soaker sinker	P1	P5	P6		
Informer-involver	P8	P9	P10	S22	
Autocrat	P2	S18			
Wheeler-dealer	P3	P4	P7		
Managerial					
Entrepreneurial	S11				
Educational	S14	S19	S23		
Pastoral	S12	S13	S20		
Informer-involver	S15	S16	S17	S21	S24

Table II.
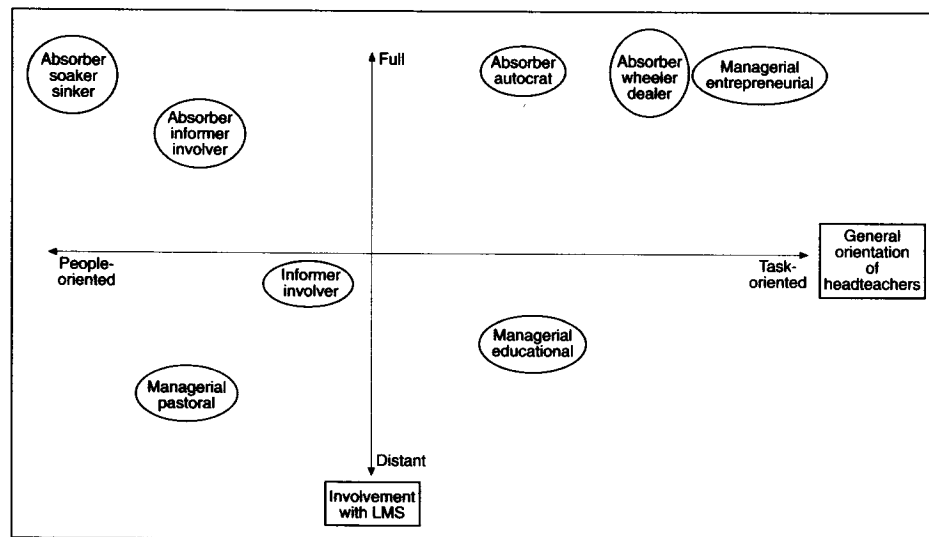Types of Headteacher
in Relation to LMS

Figure 1.
Characteristics of
Types of Headteachers
in Relation to LMS

the matrix is meant as a heuristic device to enable comparisons of the groupings rather than absolute descriptions.

The headteachers, then, are always key members of the small group handling LMS (albeit their level of involvement and dominance varies) but they are never the only members. Apart from the headteachers, a number of other key individuals make up the absorbing group who are doing LMS. Table III summarizes the key members who appeared from the interviews to constitute the "core" of the LMS group. The idea of core members is to register the important point that "doing LMS" is often complex, involving others on occasions (most notably the senior management team and the governors – particularly the chairs) but these additional members are only ever brought in on occasions. Chairs of governors, and the governors more generally, are clearly very involved in agreeing the overall budget yet they are rarely, if ever, part of the day-to-day management team doing LMS. The core members *in all circumstances* are those depicted in Table III.

Two points need to be made concerning the patterns in core membership of the small groups depicted in Table III. First, that the absorbing group for all primary schools is dominated by the headteacher, assisted by secretaries (many of whom were appointed soon after LMS was implemented). A typical comment on the changing role of secretarial assistance is encapsulated in the comment made by the head of P1 who made it plain that: "my old secretary was frightened by the enormity of the task, so she left. Our new one has commercial experience...she is almost overqualified. We're very lucky to have her. We're also totally dependent on her". Despite this assistance, and its undoubted importance, it is still the headteacher who has had to carry the burden in primary schools. Second, in the majority of the secondary schools, deputy

	Type of head	Heads involvement (F) full (S) sharing (A) advisory	Other staff involvement (D) deputy (O) other	Administration staff involvement (B) bursar (R) registrar (O) office manager	Secretarial staff involvement (S) Secretary
P1	Abs.S.S.	F*			S
P2	Abs.Auto	F*			S
P3	Abs.W.D.	F*			S
P4	Abs.W.D.	F*			S
P5	Abs.S.S.	F*			S
P6	Abs.S.S.	F*			S
P7	Abs.S.S	F*			S
P8	Abs.I.I.	F*			S
P9	Abs.I.I.	F*			S
P10	Abs.1.1	F*			S
S11	Man.Ent.	F*	D		S
S12	Man.Past	A	D*	O	
S13	Man.Past	A	D*	B	S
S14	Man.Ed.	S*	D*		S
S15	I.I.	F*	D	R	
S16	I.I.	F*		B	
S17	I.I.	F*	D	R	
S18	Abs.Auto	F*	D		S
S19	Man.Ed.	S*	D*	B	
S20	Man.Past.	A	O*		2S
S21	I.I.	F*		R	
S22	Abs.I.I.	F*	R		
S23	Man.Ed	S*	D*	R	
S24	I.I.	F*	D	R	

Note: * Signifies key individual in the small group.

Table III.
Members of Small
Absorbing Grups
"Doing LMS"

headteachers are necessarily drawn into the group, albeit with different levels of involvement, with a greater preponderance of bursars, registrars or office managers, as distinct from secretaries, playing a major role.

While Table III provides an overview of the core membership of the small group doing LMS, and Table II and Figure 1 provide some insight into the underlying orientation of the headteachers, there is still a need to delve deeper into both the workings and thinking of the small groups and some of the contextual dynamics, strains and stresses which the adopted management process engenders. In the following analysis, for ease of explanation and because of the centrality of the headteacher in the design of all small groups, we

will explore these dynamics through the eight typifications of headteachers encapsulated above.

The Absorber-Soaker-Sinker
The "absorbers" group has a dominant involvement with LMS, but one which varies with different orientations to people or tasks. The "absorber-soaker-sinker" type of headteacher who is also, in effect, the small absorbing group, is under considerable personal pressure, as well as the unintended cause of institutional difficulties. This group are fully involved with LMS and are oriented to people rather than tasks. LMS is seen as another task. The overall role of the "soaker-sinker" is nicely encapsulated in the comments of the head of P1 when he said: "I've tried to insulate my staff and children from any harm resulting from LMS". However, the cost of this on the individual heads is extreme, despite the assistance of capable secretaries, some of whom are equally under pressure ("It's even getting to her now…it's much more than she envisaged" (teacher of P4 describing the new "experienced" secretary)). As the head of P1 indicated: "I get more panic attacks with LMS about – now I wake up early – get physical symptoms". The head of P5 was rather more direct: "LMS is too much for me". To her there was a constant "fear that auditors will come and find out you've done it wrong and you'll be rushed to jail". The pressure was such that she had decided to retire early: "but if it wasn't for LMS I would not go". The costs of doing LMS through an absorbing head were not just personal but also had institutional ramifications. As a teacher in P1 indicated: "The head is not available as he used to be…we now hardly see him…he used to have his door open; now its shut…he's really bogged down with it." He went on, though, to suggest that "it doesn't create tensions because we're an understanding staff and he's open…he'd prefer more teaching, we know that". The teachers in P5 and P6, while making similar points, also showed some of the further ramifications of the heads' involvement in mopping up LMS: "We felt she was bogged down…had now only limited contact with children which put a lot of pressure on us…we couldn't send kids to the head…we lost our figurehead" (P5); "She had a really good relationship with us but is losing track of us now…LMS has taken the headteacher away…all feel that the general togetherness is being spoilt…she can't be around as much" (P6). The lack of availability was also not unconnected with, although not completely determining of, the growing fear and anxiety of the teacher in P6 where she said: "…in our school there is a trembling fear of who will be axed…never had this in a school before. I feel unhappy and frightened". In sum the "absorber-soaker-sinker" headteacher, and consequent small group, is a disturbing management-handling process both for the individuals as well as, by default, the ongoing working relationships with other staff. Despite the people-oriented concern of these heads (e.g. "I'm a 100 per cent relationship man" – head of P1) the handling of LMS through this very personal form of absorption has

considerable costs on the important educational concerns, intended to be protected.

Absorbing
LMS

73

The Absorber-Informer-Involver
Closely related to this soaker-sinker group are the "absorber-informer-involvers". The "absorber-informer-involver" type of headteacher is one who is desperate to share the LMS workload but finds the desire and the actuality difficult to reconcile, bringing its own tensions and problems, both personally and institutionally. They are fully involved with LMS, are people-oriented, and wish to shield their staff from the "intrusion" of LMS, yet realize they need to have help. The cry of these headteachers is nicely summarized by the heads of P9 and P10 when they point out that the "head can't do it all" (P9): "I didn't want to be the only one who knew. I feel it has got to be shared" (P10). Yet some of the underlying anxieties in fulfiling this need and the dangers of failing were clearly portrayed by the headteachers in P8 and S22: "My nightmare is that I'll become more and more isolated" (S8); "We are setting up systems but fear keeling over. We can't maintain this pace much longer – there's a finite limit, we either drop dead or we give up" (S22). Clearly the move into delegated responsibility is very time-consuming and costly, yet all claimed to be learning fast how to involve others. But this involvement was not without its problems. There was clearly a problem in the primary sector as to who could be involved, e.g. "She hasn't anybody to offload LMS to" (teacher at P8). For those struggling to find others to involve in the task the inevitable cry of non-availability of the head was clearly heard. Thus, the teacher in P8 made plain: "The head is caring, tries to shield us but keep us informed…but we don't see as much of her because her time is taken up with financial management". Attempts by other heads to try to involve colleagues in management tasks creates tensions in certain quarters as to expectations. Thus, the teacher in P9, dragged into a training session on LMS, went along with the view that: "We thought we might have to do an accountant's job". Thus, the "absorber-informer-involver" is trying to involve others in the tasks of "doing LMS", yet the desperation to delegate bring its own set of tensions and problems both to the heads and the schools involved, which are maybe particularly acute in primary schools due to the lack of personnel available to share the load.

These first two groups of headteachers are under differing levels of pressure, and the strategies they adopt are potentially dangerous for themselves and the morale of the school as well. The loss of leadership in the "soaker-sinker" schools, resulting from the overload of the headteacher, is a particular matter of concern. Equally, the desperation to pass on tasks in schools with "informer-involvers" could simply mean that the role conflict is passed to more members of staff, resulting in a growing level of resentment. In many small schools there is no possibility of finding colleagues with the spare capacity to assist and thus the overload on the head can be as intolerable as that in the "soaker-sinker" schools.

The Absorber-Autocrat

The next group of absorbers are headteachers who are fully involved with LMS, but who are moving towards a task-orientation in their working. The "absorber-autocrat" headteacher, and consequent small group, on the other hand, has not changed with LMS – this new development is just another area over which his or her dominance is exercised. It follows that these heads have an orientation towards tasks and are fully involved with LMS. Thus the female head of P2 could unashamedly say:"I do the whole budgeting. I prefer it that way. I look at every meticulous detail…know exactly what is going on". Similar views were expressed by the head of S18 when he said: "I'm an old-fashioned head. My job is internal organization. In the end I take responsibility for the decision. It's my job". On budgeting he was unabashed in his ability to "get into the mainframe and manipulate the budget", again, because he was in charge and it was his responsibility to manage budgets, as with everything else in the school. The teachers in the schools seemed to be used to this autocratic rule and despite seeing a continuing "gulf between the head/SMT and the teaching staff" (teacher in S18) saw little problem in this. Arguably this is because such a benign Victorian parental figure can possibly provide a conducive and supportive working atmosphere. Equally, the autocratic heads were not seemingly under pressure. The addition of LMS to the workload of their autocratic rule was accepted and managed very largely because, as the head of P2 suggested, "I'm very organized". Where tensions were apparent was in relation to the governors in S18 trying to exercise their legitimate rights to be involved in making appointments. As the head of S18 indignantly pointed out: "The Chair of Governors does not believe that the head has power to appoint…I feel quite bitter about that". A persistent Chair of Governors, who had appealed to County Hall about the Head's behaviour, reiterated his view that it is "the governors who have the power of selection. It's their responsibility. We will appoint, he (the head) can recommend only". Yet in the same breath he made plain that "we need to be cautious not to interfere in the running of the school…the head is the executive".

The Absorber-Wheeler-Dealer

The "absorber-wheeler-dealer" type head (and again, because of the head's dominance, the small group managing LMS) is equally confident about handling LMS but uses this involvement to exercise a latent marketing spirit which is potentially disturbing for teaching staff. As such they can be seen to have similar orientations to the absorber-autocrats, but are more task-oriented. Many of these heads opted to become an early pilot school for LMS because they "have no problems with the concept" (head of P7). They see their job as, in the main, getting the "best of the money that is about" (head of P3). Rather more dramatically, the head of P7 could proudly say in his constant comments to his staff: "My job is to fiddle it for you". LMS is not a worry to these headteachers, since as the head of P3 pointed out: "I never worry about money because we can always generate it. I've always been in the business of buying and selling

things. It runs in the family. I'm in the business of selling education but I market in a sensitive manner". Such wheeling and dealing is either accepted by staff or a cause of confusion, even fear. Thus the teacher in P3, having described the head as "a free spirit – a wheeler-dealer", was very supportive of him as being "one of the best heads to work for. He always works for the kids", yet added this cautionary note to say the "staff don't always support him". Equally, the Chair of Governors in P4 ruefully reflected on the unconventional manner of the head's behaviour when he reflected on the way the governors were called in to meet only when the "head wanted to move some money about". The head of P7 was also aware that his wheeling and dealing ways were seen as "…very strange" to his staff since "it was not part of their thinking". The Chair of Governors in P7 was also aware of some of these generated tensions both from his perspective ("Communications with the head are not as good as they used to be. The old head was constantly in touch") and from the viewpoint of staff ("Only one will speak up for the staff, the rest are frightened of him"). Thus the "wheeler-dealer type" has little problem with managing the workload of LMS yet has the potential to cause tensions and problems with both staff and governors. It depends on the extremes of his (and it usually does seem to be male!) wheeling and dealing as to the degree of potential disruption that is possible.

The Managerial Entrepreneur
Even more task-oriented is the "managerial entrepreneurial" type who is clearly invariably sharing responsibility with others to manage LMS but is also engaged in other entrepreneurial financial activities which generate a range of difficulties, in which LMS is implicated, from the perspective of the school. The headteacher of S11 was clear in his view of his role: "My aim is to make money; I am not a headteacher. I spend insufficient time around the school. I don't know in depth what is going on". This was reinforced by the teacher interviewed in S11 when he said that the "head doesn't teach at all. He doesn't know the children. Staff feel the financial side takes higher priority than the needs of the pupils". The head's primary concern is with getting the school into the public eye and obtaining finance through this PR exercise. To do this he devotes a great deal of his energy to managing an extracurricular study centre. The logic for this endeavour and some of the tensions for staff are nicely encapsulated in the supportive comments by the Chair of Governors when he said, "The unit is great – I'd hate to see it go. However, the staff would like to see the unit close down…it takes money away from the school. But advertising the school in this way will bring in more children." With regard to LMS a female deputy "does all the donkey work" (head of S11) but the head is key in the overall decision making and control. According to the teacher interviewed, "Staff have a lot of confidence in her…she has a lot of support". Yet they are also aware of her limited powers. This dominance of the head in budget control, his commitment to the study centre, and his staff's lack of trust in him, all roll together in the minds of the latter to create antagonism around the function and control of the

budget. As a teacher indicated: "There is no display of the budget, we're kept in the dark. There's quite a lot of controversy and ill feeling...people are not aware of the amount of money coming in...people want to know where the money goes. They are concerned that it is not going where it ought to go, i.e. it might be going to the study centre instead of special needs". In sum, this is potentially a very explosive school.

Unlike any of the other schools in the sample, the "managerial entrepreneurial" head is clearly an outlier. Despite this, there are similarities between the wheeler-dealers and the entrepreneurs. Devolved financial responsibility to such schools, and the handling process of the small absorbing group, looks potentially dangerous for all concerned. These headteachers have a very different perspective on life, promoting suspicion among other staff. The possibility of a colonization of the values of the school, promoting second-order change is greater in these schools than any other. LMS has not directly created any of these headteachers, but has allowed them to flourish. The fact that these headteachers are in control of the budget suggests they have the resource base to generate changes in the schools which could be quite dramatic. To date, the perceived maverick behaviour of these headteachers is tolerated by their colleagues as it is marginalized from the remainder of school life. Whether this tension can be maintained without the headteachers wanting the schools, as a totality, to reflect their rediscovered values remains to be seen.

The Managerial Education Headteacher
Retaining the task-orientation of the last three groups, but having a more distant relationship with LMS are the "managerial educational" heads. The "managerial educational" headteacher involves others (primarily deputies) in sharing the overall responsibility for "doing LMS", while at the same time developing a range of educationally led management structures only very partially related to LMS. A typical view of the heads in this group was expressed by the headteacher in S14 when she indicated, "I am fortunate that the Deputy takes the sweat and worry of LMS off me. I can now manage more effectively." She continued, "We are managers with education in our soul." Such managerial endeavours are distinct from doing LMS and distinct from being in the classroom. In fact the head of S14 was "happier being outside the classroom". Reflecting on the management arrangements, the teacher in S14 summarized the situation as follows: "We are structured. We know where we are going. Head is very professional...organized. If people see management produce the goods they'll respond. Head sees the strength of the school in the senior heads of department. They see themselves as managers and administrators". This management arrangement is largely seen as distinct from LMS which is managed by the deputy: "He sorts it all...he has to...(jokingly)...he's the best paid bursar in England...but I don't see him as an accountant type. We don't appreciate all the ramifications of his job...we know he puts a hell of a lot of work in" (teacher in S14). While in this school the division between LMS and the managerial strategies of the head is clear, in

another, where there are genuine uncertainties as to the merit of such structural changes, LMS is caught in the crossfire of concern. As one of the teachers in S23 indicated, "The faculty structure is supposed to be in place but there is antipathy from staff. It is perceived as careerism. It splits staff. They doubt colleagues' motives. It is wrong to set up a system that rewards those who administer more than teachers. Part of the problem is the career structure – have to give up teaching in order to administer". Rolling LMS into the discussion this staff member made plain his concern about the "potential division between classroom teachers and management staff". Thus the management of LMS in these schools is duly shared between the head and (usually) deputy and, in effect, separated off from other managerial changes instituted by the headteacher. Yet because these additional changes are "managerial" rather than pastoral or curriculum-led there is a tendency on the part of staff to see these as either some extension of LMS or closely linked to LMS.

The managerial emphasis of these headteachers moves educational activity towards a task-orientation, and this may be resented by members of the school who seek to retain an orientation towards people and relationships (see Broadbent, 1992b, for a discussion of these issues). These headteachers were moving along this pathway before LMS and the extent to which LMS has enabled or impinged on the process is not great. However, budget devolution has the potential to provide financial impetus for the developments, which may well have the possibility to produce change of a second order.

The Managerial Pastoral Headteacher
The "managerial pastoral" headteacher, on the other hand, has a tendency to be as distant as possible from LMS concerns – delegating as much as possible to other staff members – so as to keep him or her self free to fulfil the perceived original role of headteacher as "pastoral", involved in the care of staff and children. They are, therefore, closely aligned to the people-orientation. Thus a typical view of these heads was: "I thought of doing the budget myself but not for long. It would take me away from virtually all other responsibilities" (head of S20). In this same school a senior teacher, renamed "systems manager", became the key individual in the small group "doing LMS". As the head of S20 indicated: "He said he'd do it provided he could get on with it and not have any interference". This systems manager seemed to have many of the same anxieties as other headteachers playing a major role in LMS. As he pointed out, "It could suck me into being a financial administrator", yet he was also aware of its potential for educational purposes but became frustrated that other senior staff "did not want to know about money". Presumably driven by this frustration, but also wanting to exercise greater control, this systems manager was about to leave to become a headteacher in a neighbouring school. On asking about his replacement, and questioning the role of the head, the researchers were told by the bursar, amid some mirth, that the head "is not as much involved as he would like to be with LMS...which creates a big dilemma

with the deputy moving". Undoubtedly, "dumping" "doing LMS" on to another staff member, allowing the head to be somewhat distant from the issues, is an interesting possible handling process. Whether this is tenable as a long-term handling strategy either for the individual taking on the loading or for the school is clearly debatable.

This strategy is one which places LMS on the periphery of activities. It may be admirable on one level, as it leaves a head free to fulfil the role they perceive is appropriate. However, if LMS is here to stay, it is potentially undermining the position of the head who may be expected by others to have some control over the resources of the school. It also means that there is a possibility that resources are decoupled from the educational agenda and cannot be used to further it.

The Informer-Involver
The "informer-involver" type heads are described by a position rather nearer to the centre of the two continua than any of the other groups, although they are inclined to an orientation to people and a rather more distant involvement with LMS. The "informer-involver" type heads are dominant in the small group yet, as distinct from the *"absorber*-informer-involver" types, have managed to involve others in the management tasks to a degree acceptable to them. This puts less pressure on them individually and results in less tension from an institutional viewpoint. The overarching impression of this group of heads is that they are balanced in their involvement with the LMS workload: fully involved yet involving others. Thus the head of S15, reflecting on his own role, suggested it involved "some delegation but with a task of oversight and the need to have fingers in all pies". Or as the head of S24 suggested: "I can delegate the running of LMS but not the managing – LMS gives the head infinitely more responsibility". The carefully managed absorbing strategy and success of this group of heads is nicely summarized in the comments of the headteacher of S21 when he pointed out: "Morale in this school is high – it's a key job for me to protect my colleagues. There is no point in passing on a lot of aggravation and anxieties. It sounds patronizing but I don't mean that. My job is to identify and choose structures to cope with that". Yet it would be wrong to say that this group of heads are tension-free. As the head of S21 put his concerns: "I didn't come into teaching to do accounting. I work an incredible number of hours. My amount of teaching has decreased. I also spend less time on curriculum matters. But the paperwork is tremendous. I need a strike a balance between remaining a sane rational human being and becoming a machine". Or as the head of S17, having reflected that: "LMS didn't cause me more stress, only more work, especially paperwork", wistfully pointed out: "There are times when I would like to stand back and think about education". Equally, despite the best intentions of all these heads not to change the relationship with staff, subtle shifts can be noted. Thus, as the teacher in S15 pointed out: "I'm sad that this increased pressure doesn't give him (the head) the opportunity to use his skills – his qualities are interpersonal, communicating. He's too office-bound, looks

too much at figures. Staff notice he talks cost more". In sum, the "informer-involver" type of head, who dominates the small group doing LMS, seems to be a reasonably content absorber, involving others where appropriate and only causing some strain both individually and institutionally.

Of all the strategies this one seems to be the near optimal one. "Doing LMS" is not perceived as a great opportunity but as a rather delicate balancing act with a lot of bureaucracy and housekeeping involved. The concern seems to be for some sort of sharing of this task, alongside attempts to keep everyone informed of the resourcing issues. This tactic seems to be the least anxiety-inducing alternative and one which is accepted by the teaching staff in schools.

This completes our survey of the different types of small groups set aside to "do LMS". The way LMS is currently being handled in schools, using the theoretical lens described in the first section, is engendering change of a first-order variety. As predicted at the outset of this article, in none of the 24 schools was there a fundamental change in the interpretive schemes. In all cases a small group has emerged to manage LMS on behalf of the school to allow the "real (authentic) work" to go on unhindered. What is apparent, however, is the wide variety in the nature and design of these small groups, despite their common concern to protect staff from involving themselves in the financial burdens of LMS. These different designs and their functioning raise a range of potential and actual problems for both the individuals and schools, only some of which are apparent at the moment. Some of these designs, as has been demonstrated above, may have a colonizing potential and, thus, have the possibility of engendering second-order change. In the next section we explore this and allied issues further, using these insights to commence the process of trying to evaluate the merit and worth of the handling process as well as LMS and similar FMI-type initiatives.

Concluding Thoughts and Pointers to an Evaluation

The observations in the previous section are arguably important in their own right. Yet the ongoing research of the authors is not purely descriptive. It is also intended to use these observations in an evaluation, not only of LMS, but also of other FMI-type changes which the UK Government has been implementing ever since they came to office in 1979. It is towards this evaluation that the following is addressed.

At the outset it is important to make plain that we take a discursive "naturalistic" approach to any evaluation process. Our approach is a mixture of some of the structural elements in the "naturalistic evaluation" literature (cf. Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln and Guba, 1990) enriched through Habermasian discourse analysis (cf. Habermas, 1984, 1987; Laughlin, 1987). The authors have yet to clarify the specific details of an evaluatory framework which combines these different streams of thought. This will be the focus of a further article in the foreseeable future. There are, however, two points which are clear at present. First, that the value or otherwise of LMS can only be approached through open discourse, marshalling whatever evidence is

required, and will always be partisan to a degree. In good Habermasian tradition, it is the "force of the better argument" that should determine value. This cannot be prejudged distinct from entering into the discourse and by those involved in the discussion. Second, since evaluation should lead to action, the way to focus the debate is through concentrating on alternative strategies for the future.

As a start to this debate, consideration can be given to three key alternative strategies for LMS (with all having implicit ramifications for the other FMI changes in the public sector): namely, should LMS be:

(1) abandoned;

(2) retained as presently constituted;

(3) more closely defined in terms of output expectations?

Questions (1) and (2) are closely aligned and can be linked directly with the observations described in this article. Question (3) is more aligned to the discussions in the first section and brings into play a more speculative discussion as to who defines "real (authentic) work".

With regard to the first two questions, there are a number of points coming from the observations on managing LMS to suggest that there is a growing case for wondering whether LMS should be abandoned as currently constituted. Closely allied to this is the further question as to whether LMS could ever be enabling.

Despite its seeming promise, LMS is not proving to be a great liberating force. Its lack of resourcing makes it a time-consuming tricky balancing act between claims that cannot be satisfied. This finding is not one which surfaces only in the work of the present authors, it is witnessed in that of others who have studied LMS (Burgess *et al.*, 1992; Murphy, 1992). An argument could, of course, be made that the schools are misinterpreting the potential although it is difficult to see this being an acceptable argument to the schools. Despite the view that many headteachers would not want to give back their devolved powers (see Broadbent *et al.*, 1993a, for more details on this attitude) there clearly are very serious questions to ask about whether LMS is worthwhile. This assumes, of course, that the way it is currently being handled is the only meaningful way to manage the tasks involved from the perspective of the schools. But, as pointed out above, it is difficult to argue otherwise.

Three arguments can be advanced for raising serious questions concerning the value of continuing with the LMS experiment. First, LMS seems to have a minimal effect on improving the education of children. In all of the interviews the workload was constantly discussed but the value of this for the educational process was never mentioned. The negative value of this in terms of locking up key individuals and thus taking them away from their teaching duties was, however, a regular point of discussion. To many, LMS reduces the quality of education because of the inevitable reduction in the teaching complement of many schools. This links with the second argument which is that LMS, in the

vast majority of cases, takes key senior teaching staff away from teaching into administrative activities. In the majority of cases this is the headteacher, in other cases it is the deputy headteacher and sometimes both. The locking up of these experienced teachers in rather mundane administrative activities has very real costs both on these individuals as well as the rest of the school and the education offered. In larger schools, headteachers have always been taken away from education duties to administrate the group of professionals who make up the teaching staff. For heads in smaller schools, particularly primaries, the changes are providing a wholly managerial role for the first time. The credibility of headteachers as managers seems to be linked to their teaching background (Bush, 1986) and the evidence of this study (and that of others (Hughes, 1984)) is that the headteachers see themselves as teachers first and managers second. The enlarged workload means that more teachers are being sucked into this management role and indeed the headteacher is pushed further from education as the administrative hierarchy grows. This distance could provide problems for the legitimacy of the head's role in the longer term.

It is valuable at this point to compare LMS changes with those in the health sector. See Laughlin and Broadbent (1991, forthcoming) and Laughlin (1992) for more details on these interconnections. The health sector reforms were accompanied by a new managerial strata of employees who were basically implanted into the National Health Service to make sure the reforms were adequately managed (Broadbent *et al*, 1991). No such resourcing has happened with the education reforms. LMS has to be managed by the personnel currently in place or through using precious resources to buy in administrative support. There still seems to be no move to consider providing additional resourcing of extra administrative support for the education reforms. Thus this second argument still stands – senior staff are being taken away from educational concerns into administrative tasks of little educational value. The question of whether LMS would be enabling if resourcing were provided for administrative support remains open. It hinges on the extent to which the educational benefits of making decisions at school level (which the headteachers value) can be outweighed by the costs of extra administration. While the latter can be costed the former cannot. However, if the LMS initiative is to endure, then a strong argument could be made that the administrative function should be resourced, to ensure that experienced educators are not lost to administration.

A third argument is that the continuing presence of LMS and the present handling processes allow mavericks such as the "wheeler-dealer" and "entrepreneurial" heads to emerge. This may, of course, be seen as a valuable spin-off benefit. It may even be the desired outcome from introducing LMS. Being "entrepreneurial" is argued to be part of the ethos of LMS (Bowe and Ball, 1992); it does, however, take time. Thus, Bowe and Ball also note the pressure this puts on senior staff who try to hold this new role alongside educational issues which "won't go away". The other element of entrepreneurship is risk, and the extent to which risks should be taken with the educational resources is another debatable point. More importantly, the time-span of the effect of poor

decisions on individual pupils can be a lifetime. A child's education, once disrupted, cannot be easily retrieved (or replaced like a faulty electrical appliance) and risks in educational provision can, therefore, have profound effects on individuals. Added to this has to be the very real concern of the teachers in the schools where these characters have emerge of late. If "wheeler-dealers" or "entrepreneurial" heads are the desired outcome of LMS, then important questions remain to be answered about the way in which failures might be handled and how other staff may be reassured about the *modus operandi*.

Turning to the third of the questions raised above, we can now consider whether LMS needs redefinition. A key aspect that is missing from the full implementation of FMI logic is the linkage between the money received and the measurable outputs expected from the school. This inevitable "commodification" of the education process has been avoided to date although, with the Parents' Charter enacted in the School Act 1992, the links are starting to be made. The introduction of the "commodification" process would clearly put added burdens on the schools, and particularly the headteachers, who would then be obliged to ensure that the defined measurable outputs are achieved by teachers so as to ensure a continuing flow of income. If this should occur, no longer could the small group be involved only as an absorbing force, they might well be forced into becoming a management unit which has to guide the behaviour of teachers into areas which will assure the achievement of the measurable outputs required for the receipt of the devolved finance. Authentic work would then be defined according to the measurable outputs and the argument of Marx concerning the surrendering (alienating) of professional activity would appear as a legitimate concern. This scenario, in which there is an impingement on the organization which is "absorbed" by a special group, is potentially threatening. The possibility always exists that there will be a colonization (Broadbent *et al.*, 1991) of the group leading to a second order change. This may lead to a fragmentation of the organization (Broadbent, 1992a) which clearly has the potential to change the education process out of all recognition.

To date this is not happening, even though there are moves in this direction. Before moving further on these developments a lot of questions should be asked about the wisdom of this tight coupling between money and outputs. The argument of Marx, of Gorz, and of many others, is that this commodification of all activities is not only inappropriate, it is a dangerous reduction of value and autonomy; the purchase of education is not the same as the purchase of toothpaste. The output of the latter is clear and unambiguous, while that of the former is very unclear and extremely ambiguous. To try to commodify it into measurable outputs, no matter how sophisticated the measurement system, is bound to reduce its complexity and richness. There are, however, two other points which need to be made. First, that, as Gorz (1989) suggested, measuring outputs may in certain circumstances be dangerous. The publication of league tables of examination results has provided the first indication that education is

being defined in terms of measurable outputs. Input resourcing is not being linked to these results directly, but the importance of results tables for providing an account of the school which may well attract pupils and therefore funding is now apparent. Hence, the reported outputs may begin to define the content of education, prior to any meaningful debate on the form and value of educational processes. Gorz suggests "it is possible for the efficiency of carers to be inverse proportion to their visible quantifiable output" (Gorz, 1989, p. 143). If this is the case then there is cause for concern for the future of our educational system.

Second, and related to the first issue, is the question as to who should determine legitimate "authentic work". To Marx it was clear it was the worker him or herself who should not be forced to surrender (alienate) this autonomy to the "other" (capitalist) in exchange for money. Such a distinct categorization clearly has problems but it does raise some serious questions about professional autonomy. If the educational process is commodified in the way described above then this assumes that the professionals' concern that their activities cannot be neatly summarized into measurable outputs is basically wrong. Such a move would be a fundamental challenge to professional autonomy and professional responsibility, which clearly needs to be debated before being implemented. In addition to the need for a debate as to the objectives of our educational system mentioned in the previous paragraph, there remains a need to clarify the nature of the role of the educational professional in the process.

The above comments are offered as starting points for a necessary debate on LMS. The first two questions are intended to raise issues about the worth of LMS, as presently constituted, while the third raises doubts about any further commodifying development of LMS *per se*. Like all debates it does require counter points and people willing to enter into discussion about these important issues. It hardly needs to be said, after 14 years of the current UK Government, that this is not just an educational debate but also a political one. The record to date suggests that, while the educationists are happy to discuss the issues, the politicians are happier implementing reforms whose value remains unproved. Hopefully, the above evidence on current handling processes will encourage the politicians to stop, think and discuss before moving into greater areas of the unknown.

Notes

1. Underlying this article is an assertion that LMS is seen as in opposition to other "real" concerns within schools. Some evidence for this assertion is given here although space precludes the expansion of the discussion. More evidence is presented in Broadbent (1992b) which is centrally concerned with the development of this argument.

2. The research, sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council, was to look at 25 different schools. Interviews with the 25th school started with a discussion with the female headteacher. A policy decision that we should not bother this school any further was taken by the researchers after it became clear how stressed the headteacher was, not just with LMS, but a range of other concerns. The one interview with the headteacher did not provide sufficient information for inclusion. However, it has been included in the paper by Broadbent (1992b) on gender issues related to LMS and headteachers.

3. This process of developing critical theorems about what is happening represents the first stage of a discourse-based approach adapted from the work of Jurgen Habermas (Laughlin, 1987).

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2

Corporate Accountability and Rorty's Utopian Liberalism

Tom Mouck

Accounting, Intelligence, Philosophy

Addresses the lack of any coherent intellectual perspective for establishing a theory of corporate accountability that is neither extreme right-wing nor anti-liberal. Insights derived from Rorty's *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* are employed to develop a new perspective on the relationship between corporate activities and the public interest. This perspective is then joined with Dewey's view of social intelligence and Barber's notion of *Strong Democracy* to argue for an expansion of corporate social accountability.

Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, and Turnover Intentions of United States Accountants: The Impact of Locus of Control and Gender

Sarah A. Reed, Stanley H. Kratchman and Robert H. Strawser

Accountancy Profession, Gender, USA, Women

Investigates the impact of locus of control and gender on the experiences and practices of accounting professionals. Also considers the impact of role overload, inter-role conflict, and coping behaviour on these attitudes. Suggests that a complex set of forces creates differences in the extent to which an individual encounters, and is successfully able to contend with, both role overload and inter-role conflict. Gender differences were observed in the accountants' expressions of housekeeper role overload, volunteer role overload, and inter-role conflict between work and spouse. Locus of control differences were present in the perceived conflict between work and self. Locus of control and gender interacted to produce differences in accountants' expressions of overload and leisurite role overloadexpressed less satisfaction with their current positions and greater intentions to search for alternative opportunities. Suggests that the accounting environment may still be inhospitable for certain women attempting to realize multiple work and family obligations.

Absorbing LMS: The Coping Mechanism of a Small Group

Richard Laughlin, Jane Broadbent, David Shearn and Heidrun Willig-Atherton

Financial Management, Local Management of Schools, Schools

While the original proposals of Local Management of Schools (LMS) had a wide-ranging agenda for management change, the actual outworking has tended to emphasize the management of devolved financial resources. Looks at the way these new financial responsibilities are handled. Empirical insights suggest that the dominant approach is through a small group of staff, invariably dominated by the headteacher, to absorb the management tasks involved. Draws from a wide range of theoretical literature to highlight the nature and function of the small absorbing group. Uses these theoretical insights to inform the empirical analysis which explores the nature and diversity of the small group "doing LMS" in 24 different schools from three local education authorities. Highlights the importance of the headteacher both in the functioning of this small group as well as providing pointers to its underlying character and nature. Presents a range of critical comments about the strengths, weaknesses and dangers of this handling process as well as providing some wider evaluatory points concerning the value of LMS more generally for the education service.

Better Informed Judgements: Resource Management in the NHS

David M. Rea

Healthcare, National Health Service, Resource Management

The Resouce Management Initiative (RMI) is a central ingredient in plans to instil market-based relationships in health care and medicine. However, these plans have not benefited from any adequate assessment of "resource management". Demonstrates how earlier experience with resource management provides little guidance as to how it might be made to work. While resource management implies that measures of cost and activity were to be related to each other, its purposes are confused and confusing. While seemingly offering a variety of advantages, resource management is characterized by struggles and negotiations over its operational substance. Moreover, the initiative failed to resolve crucial issues over how to account for activities. Experience of tackling these issues as market-based relationships came into effect during 1992-3 demonstrates that resource management provides limited assistance to managers of the service.