

Classic Dilemmas in Middle Management

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Middle Management Muddles

1. Implementation gap: opportunity vs. demand, criticism, and over-promising
 - a. We know more about change, but our targets are vastly more ambitious—and contradictory
 - rising expectations, overloaded improvement agendas (“change” means “addition,” not “replacement”)
 - more challenging “customers”: entitled, anxious, consumer students—and parents
 - b. Resources—human and fiscal—under more pressure
 - near-nuns and -monks, closet omnipotence, and the scarlet G
 - the implicit contract—sacrifice for autonomy—under pressure
2. Chronic tensions of leadership are exacerbated
 - a. Managing vs. leading
 - b. Resources vs. demands
 - c. The paradox of power: the dependent leader
 - d. The parental transference object
3. Structure: three key dilemmas
 - a. One of us—or one of *them*?
 - b. More responsibility than authority
 - c. Managing down—and managing *up*

Dr. E’s Leadership Laxative: Misconceptions To Purge

1. Myers-Briggs Myth (cult of flexibility)
 - a. Makes leadership harder
 - b. Inconsistency saps credibility, complicates followership
 - c. Plus, no one can pull it off, adopt styles seamlessly
2. Top-down vs. bottom-up is a false dichotomy
 - a. Goal: participation without paralysis
 - b. Ideas should flow both up and down
 - c. Clarity, not parity, is key (whose decision is this?)

Dr. E's Leadership Elixir

1. Charisma isn't crucial
 - a. It can be very helpful, but you can't learn it, and panache is no panacea
 - b. The key is the *meanings* you communicate
2. Leaders who are followed are authentic
 - a. Fundamental consistency of beliefs, goals, and actions
 - b. People know what matters most to him/her
3. Find your niche: the right fit is essential
 - a. Am I the right person for this job, now? Not, Can I become that person?
 - b. Build on strengths. Learn from mistakes and weaknesses; don't dwell on them

Further reading:

Seven Secrets of The Savvy School Leader; The Human Side of School Change. Both published by Jossey-Bass.

Other articles and resources: www.robevans.org