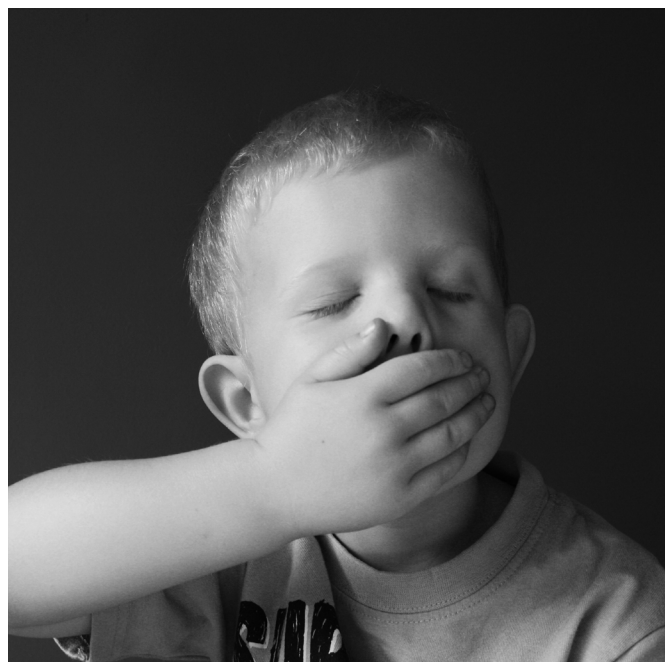


There is a
looming crisis in
the teaching
profession

Management is not a dirty word

Who hasn't needed the strongest negotiation skills when encouraging the best out of their students; or diplomatic skills dealing with concerns from parents; or carefully attuned conflict management skills when sorting out differing staff perspectives? These skills, often associated with the most consummate businessperson, are also necessary skills to be highly effective teachers and leaders. Yet, sometimes there exists a sense that teachers and leaders acquire the necessary high impact proficiencies at the expense of the more operational aspects of leadership known as 'management'. Whilst all excellent managers may not necessarily become great leaders (since leadership focuses on vision and a well-developed sense of the strategic rather than operational elements of the organisation), the reverse is not an easily accepted 'truism'. This article asserts that high impact teachers and leaders require highly effective management skills as much as any other attribute to enable them to achieve their career aspirations and professional goals.

There is a looming crisis in the teaching profession. Globally, Japan faces a shortage of 700,000 pre-school teachers; 50% of the 3.5 million teachers in the United States are now eligible for retirement; 40% of education majors in the United States will not work in the field of education whilst there are currently 63,000 new teachers in the US to fill 260,000 vacancies (Arnup, 2016; Gordon, 2016; Ingersoll, 2012; Riggs, 2013). In the United States, Sutchter, *et al.*'s (2016) report confirms that unless major changes in teacher supply or a reduction in demand for additional teachers occur over the coming years, annual teacher shortages could increase to as much as 112,000 teachers by 2018, and remain close to that level thereafter. A recent Queensland College of Teachers' (2016) study showed that approximately one third of currently registered



teachers are not working in long-term positions in Queensland schools. In Australia, much has been said about the high attrition rates of graduate teachers with 30–50% leaving the profession in the first five years (ACER report cited in Earp, 2016). As well, increasing student numbers in Australia, 26% higher by 2022, adds further pressure on the education system to provide high quality resources and high quality teachers (ACER report cited in Henebery, 2016).

From a teaching perspective, there are many reasons for these quite alarming statistics – competing, higher paid professions attracting graduates; growing pressures related to the profession; a limited career path to retain teachers in the profession for the long term; and what appears to be constant and growing criticism of the profession resulting in

Table 1

Reasons for graduate teachers leaving the profession	Reasons assistant heads and school deputies aren't stepping up to headships
Buchanan, J. (2013). Teacher Retention & Attrition: Views of Early Career Teachers. Australian Journal of Education	Riley, P. (2015). Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey. ACU.
• Lack of collegiality • Issues with behaviour management • Poor working conditions/lack of resources • Lack of professional learning opportunities • Heavy workloads • Isolation	• Lack of understanding as to what the role involves • 70% of respondents experience some kind of bullying & violent threats • Principals experience higher levels of stress & burnout than in the general population • Long hours – 50, 60, 70+ hours per week • Principals report feelings of lack of support from education authorities

Table 2

Self	Others	Teams
• Time and self management • Establishing goals	• Understanding & working with diverse others • Persuading individuals & groups • Effective communication	• Negotiation skills • Building teams • Managing conflict • Facilitating success • Decision making & problem solving

(from De Janasz, S.C, Crossman, J., Campbell, J. & Power, M. (2014). Interpersonal Skills in Organisations. McGraw-Hill. Australia.)

teachers' poor professional self esteem, to name just a few. Two recent studies identifying the professional concerns of graduates (Buchanan, 2013) and deputy heads/assistant principals (Riley, 2015) give some insights into why they either leave the profession (graduates) or resist the opportunity of headship (for deputies). Table 1 summarises the major reasons identified in each study for high levels of attrition for graduates and the lack of 'stepping up' in the category of school leadership. Compare the two columns – what do you see?

Surprisingly, (or maybe not), concerns of both groups are remarkably similar. Initially it's interesting to see which concerns are not identified by each group. Neither group identifies issues about their personal attributes to undertake their respective roles as of significant concern, nor the extent of their professional knowledge.

What is shared by both groups is an absence of strong management skills which jeopardises their sense of professional capacity to undertake these new roles. It's not too difficult to identify the kinds of managerial skills that would be of most benefit. De Janasz (*et al.*, 2014) separates management skills into three categories – those that relate to management of self, others and of teams. Using this categorisation, it is easy to see that the skills required by graduate teachers and more experienced teachers that will assist them to be effective teachers and leaders are in Table 2. Of most value to teachers are those associated with personal goal setting, dealing with diversity and conflict, time management, negotiation and persuasion, decision making and problem solving, and, communication skills to support graduates and more experienced teachers to take the next step on their professional ladder.

The relevance in this thinking is that the skills

identified have real resonance for dealing with the issues raised by the respondents in the two studies. For instance, understanding how to construct and structure teams for effective practice can very easily deal with feelings of isolation and lack of collegiality. Table 3 extrapolates these ideas further.

Effective management skills begin with an investigation of self, critical in the teaching profession. It helps us to understand others better as well as understanding ourselves. Self aware leaders are able to reduce conflict in their environments since they listen more carefully to feedback and modify their own behaviour to create a more trusting and productive working environment (Sosik, 2001). Self-awareness begins with knowing our motivations, preferences and personality, enabling us to develop more positive relationships with others, set appropriate life and career goals and understand how our behaviours impact on others. Increasing our self-awareness also enables us to set more realistic and effective goals. Whilst adopting a goal-setting framework such as SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound) is a positive activity to undertake, developing a strategy for achieving our goals is just as important. Practices we could use might include: visualising the outcome; limiting the number of goals to focus on; developing a support network; building in the possibilities of failure; reflecting and modifying goals as our journey proceeds; rewarding ourselves along the way; being honest with ourselves and keeping the end in sight.

Goals become even more achievable when other skills are utilised such as effective time management, which is closely related to effective stress management. Once able to identify our stressors and stress levels, the next step is putting in place practices that turn our energy into productive outcomes through

Table 3

Concerns	Skills
Feelings of isolation & lack of collegiality	Building teams Effective communication Persuading individuals & groups
Poor working conditions	Establishing goals Building teams Facilitating success
Heavy workloads	Time and self management Decision making & problem solving
Dealing with diversity and conflict	Understanding & working with diverse others Managing conflict Negotiation skills Persuading individuals & groups
Lack of relevant professional learning	Establishing goals Negotiation skills Effective communication

Managing
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journalling, talking it out, visualisation and relaxation. Overlaying a time frame that suits our workplace, that is site specific, realistic and achievable then becomes possible. Whilst it's important to persist with these approaches, changes in behaviour are not sudden events; it is also important to be flexible in adapting our practices in response to changed circumstances.

Establishing or working in high performance teams goes quite a long way in dealing with feelings of isolation, de-professionalisation, lack of agency, and managing conflict since effective teams require effective communication by their members. To work well, teams require a clearly defined mission and purpose, identify measurable and observable accountability outcomes, provide clarity around the roles of its members and work in developing professional trust. The very act of being a member of a team addresses many of the concerns raised in the earlier lists since a team approach builds the communication skills of participants; distributes the workload of leaders; empowers participants through high levels of engagement and commitment; supports the development of professional relationships and gives participants a strong sense of agency which is professionally satisfying and encourages them to persevere and be more resilient when times get tough.

Effective management of conflict in organisations is another skill useful for teachers who are usually quite adroit in managing conflict when it comes to their students but not so confident when it relates to their peers. Conflict occurs for a range of reasons – when resources are limited; goals and objectives are unclear, unattainable or disputed; miscommunication; differences in the way of doing things; and, differences in attitudes, values and perceptions. The older methods of managing conflict – avoiding, accommodating (smoothing), compromising and competing (forcing) – have been replaced by the more successful approach of collaborating, where those involved work towards an agreed upon and acceptable outcome. The

advantages of such a process are that it maintains relationships, develops new understandings of situations, improves morale and professional relationships and creatively problem solves to bring about innovation in organisations.

Whilst differences of opinion are quite usual in large organisations, unresolved conflict in organisations, significantly further along the scale of negativity, only delivers an unwelcomed toxicity to professional environments. Good communication skills and knowledge of self and others can ameliorate tense situations but in times of deep and unresolved conflict, more sophisticated skill sets are required. One important skill in this context is learning to be an active listener. Become a practiced active listener by ensuring in conversations that concerns are identified clearly and are constantly reflected upon; separate the person from the problem to control the emotional level of the conversation; pay attention to the non-verbals being communicated as well as the words; withhold judgement and ensure, through carefully checking, that all participants have a clear picture of what the concerns are and how they will be addressed.

Managing conflict often entails enacting the art of negotiation. Sound negotiation skills enable us to maintain better self control, reach a solution in the simplest means possible, generate an agreement that is mutually beneficial and work to improve professional relationships and professional achievements (Williams, 2000). Good negotiation skills involve careful planning and preparation; defining the ground rules; clarifying and justifying the desired outcome; constructively problem solving and implementing what has been agreed upon including carefully establishing a shared meaning to any key points which might be easily misunderstood (Lewicki, 1981).

Negotiations often require the skill of per-

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suasion, a skill we are all familiar with since we are bombarded by its methods in advertising on a daily basis. For persuasion to work in organisations, Reardon's (1991) ACE theory is an easy model to use. She suggests that to persuade someone to undertake a course of action, the presentation or argument must first of all appear to be appropriate, the right thing to do; secondly, it needs to be consistent either with what is happening elsewhere or has a historical context so that the ideas sit comfortably within current beliefs or behaviours; and finally, the presentation is assessed on its effectiveness or the extent to which the argument presents a desirable state or outcome.

Without going into further detail, it is apparent from this brief discussion that there are a range of management skills teachers need to possess that are necessary for their effective professional practice. The links are obvious. For so long it was not usual for education to think 'business' but this is now part and parcel of its daily work. So too, it feels necessary for those who work in these increasingly complex environments to develop a wider skill set that may have not been traditionally part of their field of knowledge. Given the concerns raised by both new teachers and those more experienced, combined with the looming problems facing the profession in the near future, we are compelled to explore a variety of ways of increasing job satisfaction, risk taking and retention. Focusing on equipping teachers with the necessary management skills to support the complex roles they are required to undertake seems to be an obvious starting point.

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Good management is the art of making problems so interesting and their solutions so constructive that everyone wants to get to work and deal with them.

Paul Hawken

Time management is an oxymoron. Time is beyond our control, and the clock keeps ticking regardless of how we lead our lives. Priority management is the answer to maximizing the time we have.

John C. Maxwell

Leadership is working with goals and vision; management is working with objectives.

Russel Honore

Effective leadership is putting first things first. Effective management is discipline, carrying it out.

Stephen Covey

Corporate culture matters. How management chooses to treat its people impacts everything – for better or for worse.

Simon Sinek