

Management Teams

– Realising the Potential from Ireland to Pakistan...

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Between June and the end of August I was lucky enough to work for an extended time with five different school management teams – one of these on site in Pakistan...more of which below...!

What Teams Want...

What do these management teams want with me? It has been my experience that most of the teams want a combination of contributions among them:

Check us out: How are we doing?

Facilitate us: We have some major challenges – work through them with us...

Negotiate: We need to work through our concerns – navigate it with us..

Mediate: We have a conflict we are prepared to try to sort out constructively...

Consult: This is where we are at – what can we do with our reality and aspirations?

Strategise: What are our options – how can we plan for practical implementation?

Advise: We need guidance on particular issues – what's possible and practical?

Learning from Management...

What I admire about, and learn from, these teams is that they are willing and able to name and address their issues. They have taken the step to invite in another to offer a different way to explore what the team are more than familiar with ... to offer a new perspective, to allow the team to converse with each other in a 'new' way... to have a quality of presence that explores, examines and ventures new possibilities...an approach that calls forth generosity and trust even when the issues are tough...

Supervision...

I get the same experience through 'supervision' – a concept that more and more of us are drawn to in order that we can reflect on the experience of our professional reality. Supervision has long been my 'critical friend' – constantly seeking to have the professional 'someone somewhere' that can and does ask me

the hard question and stay with me as I navigate the learning, the challenge to push myself professionally.

'Who do you find hard to like on your team...?' When I asked my supervisor why she asked me this – she said: *'That's the person you will learn most from in your leadership role'*. I didn't like her question nor her answer to my follow up – and of course she was right – even more annoying!!!

Questions...

Questions – well placed, asked from the right motivation – they are powerful tools. In my work with management teams they are my tool of choice. My job is to ask, ask, ask...to unearth the question that opens up, uncovers, enlightens and challenges constructively...I love working with people who want to explore in such a way...where there is no fear to 'go there' as the role of leadership is to lead and if we have not 'gone there' ourselves how can we expect others to travel that journey...I outlined some of these questions in my article in the last edition of Leader – what I termed Cliff Edge Questions – visit them again and put them to each other as the management team.

What I learned in Islamabad

I crossed the road in downtown Rawalpindi to enter the Presentation Sisters school of over 1200 students. Armed security checked me in ... the threat to education, especially that provided for girls, is palpable here. We only have to listen to the powerful voice of 16 year old Malala Yousatzai to realise the challenge that the Presentation Sisters and other groups providing education in Pakistan face. I was so very moved that these school leaders where not so much concerned with their safety ...rather...they asked, how can we get better training to our teachers, what more can we do to make access to education more possible for more young people even in the most dangerous parts of the country. The sisters have schools in the Swat Valley, the same area where Malala was shot on the way to school for advocating her right to education.

These leaders have such a strong and compelling vision of what they want for their students...they are fixed always on this vision and what practical steps each day they need to take. Their focus and commitment is inspiring. It was a privilege to work among them however briefly.

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