INTRODUCTION

In Singapore many of the issues of the worldwide quest for Total Quality Management (TQM) have been addressed with specific reference to schools. The responsibility for thorough implementation of TQM in schools rests with middle management which in schools is represented by the Heads of Department. It is clear that the emphasis formerly given to pattern maintenance or maintenance of the status quo within departments has necessitated a shift to a greater emphasis on continuous improvement and quality assurance. Thus the role of a head of department has become one of being rather more proactive than reactive if curriculum quality is to be assured. Such shifts of emphases necessarily require for Heads of Department to have a greater range of skills and abilities if these requirements are to be adequately met. Within this context the roles of heads of departments were investigated in a series of studies with a view to providing some guidelines to further support them and thus promote quality assurance in schools.

We first provide some background to the Head of Department role in Singapore schools and then report on the series of studies. Study 1 was an investigation of the Heads' perceptions of their roles and their own teaching abilities. Study 2 is a report of how they prioritise the roles. Study 3 reports on an investigation of HODs' roles in terms of their perceptions and feelings on three dimensions of their roles: role making/role taking, role centering/role entering, role linking and role shrinking. Study 4 is a report of the leadership styles of Head of Department and Study 5 reports on the 'good' and 'bad' thing Heads of Department do.
THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT ROLE

In Singapore Heads of Department were first introduced into both primary and secondary schools in the early eighties. In the Principal's Handbook (1993) the roles and responsibilities of Heads of Department are outlined. They include duties and responsibilities as the following:

To set the direction for the subject (s) under his charge as chairman of the subject/ECA/media committees comprising relevant teachers;

To plan and implement, monitor and evaluate a comprehensive programme of instruction in the subject (s) including remedial and enrichment programmes;

To develop teachers in his subject areas through classroom observations, induction and new relief teachers, conferencing and workshops; and

To select, prepare and organise teaching-learning resources, e.g. textbooks, supplementary and media materials and to encourage their effective use in the classroom.

In the Principal's Handbook (1993) the roles and responsibilities of Heads of Department are described but they are not told how to undertake these roles and responsibilities. A one-year full-time course, the further Diploma in Education was first offered by the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University (formerly the Institute of Education) in 1984 to develop the new Heads of Department. The course was developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. It comprises modules on Managerial Skills, Personnel Management, Instructional Headship and Effective Departmental Management, Staff Development and Appraisal, Classroom-based Assessment and Evaluation, Coordinating Curriculum Implementation in the Department, Trends and Issues of Schooling, Developing Programmes for Pupils with Special Needs along with a six-week school attachment where participants undertake a series of role-related tasks.

One would expect some differences in the way that the roles are perceived would depend on individual differences as well some differences in the system. Recent changes in Singapore have included the addition of six autonomous schools in 1994 and to add to the existing independent schools. More schools will become autonomous in 1995. This devolution of power will provide opportunities for Heads of Departments and their teachers to have a greater role in decision-making about the curriculum.
Some schools inevitably provide some additional pressure on the Head because of differences in practices. Schools in Singapore have been acknowledged to be dominated by the public examination system in both the primary and the secondary schools. There is a national curriculum in place. These factors have sometimes erroneously been perceived by teachers as being unnecessarily restrictive on how they perform their roles. Thus each grade level may be treated in some cases as just a rehearsal for the public examinations at the expense of arousing curiosity in learning. At worst Heads might just maintain the status quo and only undertake the mechanics of the job to maintain perceived traditions and order. On the other hand, Heads may work proactively within the given parameters of the curriculum and encourage innovative teaching and assessment practices.

Yipp (1993) has alerted us to the important economic challenges in Singapore. He has stressed the importance of developing such qualities and abilities as independent thought and action, initiative, creativity, spirit of enterprise, problem-solving, decision-making and autonomous learning. Yip suggests that there will be some important consequences for schools in terms of the curriculum since it will be essential to develop these skills while not compromising standards in the curriculum. The change in emphasis in the teaching-learning and assessment practices embodies an emphasis on deep learning or learning for meaning (Ramsden, 1992). These changes will necessarily have further impact on what Heads do in schools. As Gopinathan, Sharpe and Kings (1994) state:

To support the implementation of a greater range of teaching-learning, and assessment strategies, Principals and Heads of Department would have to develop a more collaborative and supportive climate in which teachers would not lose face, in which they could take calculated risks and in which they could feel supported. In such a climate the resources of teachers would be marshalled, the self-esteem of teachers would be enhanced as they would feel a sense of ownership of the curriculum. Teachers would learn from each other in their collaborative endeavours and be more sensitised to the needs of students.

Pareek (1988) defines a role as a pattern of behaviour that characterizes and is expected of a person who occupies a certain position in a group or an organization. The performance of a person depends on his or her effectiveness as a person, his or her technical competence, his or her managerial experiences, as well as the way the role which he or she carries out in the organization is designed. Some important dimensions contributing the effectiveness are discussed below.

One dimension is called 'role making' contrasted with 'role
taking first is an active attitude i.e. to define and make the role as one likes whereas latter is a passive attitude i.e., mainly responding to others' expectations. Second dimension 'role centering' i.e., increasing the power of role can be contrasted with 'role entering' i.e., accepting the role as given and reconciling oneself. The third dimension is called 'role linking' i.e., extending the relationship of the role with other roles and groups contrasted with 'role shrinking' i.e., making the role narrow, confined only to work-related expectations.

Heads have a very important role to play in managing the department and in developing curriculum. Whether they see their role as proactive and contributing to the improvement in these functions would have effect on their effectiveness as the Head. It was therefore important in these studies to explore the roles that Heads perform and the way in which they carry out those roles.

STUDY 1

HEADS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLES AND TEACHING ABILITIES

Approach

A study was undertaken to explore the perceptions heads of department had of their own specific roles and also of their abilities as teachers. The sample of 125 was drawn from the 1993-94 cohort of Further Professional Diploma in Education (FPDE) participants at the National Institute of Education. A questionnaire was designed and administered in the first few days of their course to probe the perceptions of heads of departments of the importance (1=low to 5=high) they accorded certain roles and the perceptions they had of their own teaching abilities.

Results

The average experience in teaching of heads was 17.0 years (SD 8.6) and their average experience in their current roles was 2.5 years (SD 1.5).

The results revealed that heads of department perceived their own abilities as teachers as fairly high, with some abilities being perceived as higher than others. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.1
In Teacher's Role (n=125)
Roles Mean SD
Course Preparation 4.090.90
Facilitating Classroom Learning 4.290.68
Assessing Performance of Students 4.100.74
Programme Evaluation 3.630.85
Maintaining order and Organisation in the Class 4.590.60
Student Welfare 3.80 0.77
Committee Work 3.630.95
Keeping Records of Students Academic Performance 4.110.92

Table 1 shows that teachers perceived themselves to be reasonably confident about their abilities in course preparation, facilitating classroom learning, assessing performance of students, maintaining order and organisation in the class, and maintaining records of student performance. On the other hand, heads perceived themselves as less confident about their abilities in the areas of programme evaluation, student welfare and committee work.

Heads perceived all their roles as being important. However, some roles were perceived as slightly more important than others. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 1.2
Head of Department Roles
Roles Mean SD
Planning of a Comprehensive Teaching Programme 4.560.78
Implementing the Teaching Programme 4.400.87
Monitoring the Teaching Programme 4.410.75
Evaluating the Teaching Programme 4.400.86
Developing and Adapting Effective Teaching Strategies 4.270.90
Professional Development of Teachers 4.130.83
Co-ordination of Resources 4.030.93

Table 2 shows that heads perceived the roles of planning a comprehensive teaching programme, implementing the teaching programme, monitoring the teaching program, evaluating the teaching programme, developing and adapting effective teaching strategies, professional development of teachers and the coordination of resources as all being important.

STUDY 2
ROLES - RANK ORDER OF PRIORITIES

Approach

In one sample of eighty participants the head of department roles were ranked in order of the attention paid to these roles.
Results

The results indicated the rank order shown in Table 2.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Rank Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning a comprehensive teaching programme</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring the teaching programme</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing the teaching programme</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating the teaching programme</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and adapting effective teaching strategies</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination of resources</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development of teachers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that the first four tasks are mechanical in nature and can be done using manual guidelines are also seen as more important. The last three tasks require additional effort and some discretion and are not seen as important.

STUDY 3
ACTORS OR PAWNS: HOW HOD'S PERCEIVE THEIR ROLES

Approach

The performance of a person working in an organization depends on such factors as his or her effectiveness as a person, his or her technical competence and managerial experience, as well as the way the role which he or she performs in the organization is designed. Thirty-nine Heads of Department were asked to write an essay on 'My Role', on the very first day at the beginning of the FADE course in July 1993 at the National Institute of Education. These essays were subsequently content analysed to find out perceptions and feelings about their roles. The essays were scored on the following dimensions:

One dimension is called 'Role Making' contrasted with 'Role Taking', first is an active attitude i.e. to define and make the role as one likes whereas latter is a passive attitude i.e., mainly responding to others' expectations. Second dimension 'Role Centering' i.e.,
increasing the power of role can be contrasted with 'Role Entering' i.e., accepting the role as given and reconciling oneself. The third dimension is called 'Role Linking' i.e., extending the relationship of the role with other roles and groups contrasted with 'Role Shrinking' i.e., making the role narrow, confined only to work-related expectations.

Results

Table 3 shows that about 2 in every 3 HoDs perceive their roles as mainly responding to others' expectations. Some mentioned that they would not like to be HoDs. Almost all those who were scored as 'role-taking' stated that they did their jobs as prescribed by the Ministry or told by the principal. Another interesting finding was that none of them saw their role as important and only five of them mentioned that they had some opportunity to influence teachers. Most complained that they had no power or authority in this role. Only 3 Hod saw their role as part of a larger role set. About one-third of HoDs mentioned that the help was available from the principal and others when they needed it to carryout their roles, whereas some mentioned about the non-cooperation of teachers and colleagues. Another interesting finding was that only very few saw their roles as benefiting the students and most saw it as helping the school.

Table 3
n=39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Making</th>
<th>14 (35.9%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role Taking</td>
<td>25 (64.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Role Integration</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactivity</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity/Discretion</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Role Distance</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reactivity(20)
Routine/Prescribed Jobs(25)

Role Centering
5 (12.8%)

Role Entering
34 (87.2%)

Centrality(0)
Influence/Impact(5)
Personal Growth(0)
Peripherality(0)
Powerlessness(34)
Stagnant/No Growth/No Learning(20)

Role Linking
15 (38.5%)

Role Shrinking
24 (61.5%)

Inter-Rol_Linkages(3)
Helping Relationships(12)
Superordinate Goals(6)
Role Isolation(5)
Hostile Relationships(15)
Narrow Goals(22)
STUDY 4
LEADERSHIP STYLES

Approach

A study was undertaken on the first day of the July Semester this year to explore the head of department leadership styles. A questionnaire was administered to 122 of the 1994-5 cohort of Further Professional Diploma in Education participants at the National Institute of Education. The questionnaire looked (1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree) into the following dimensions of leadership style:

- authoritarian / democratic
- structured / unstructured
- task oriented / employee centered
- emphasis on quality improvement / emphasis on maintaining the status quo.

Results

The responses for the four dimensions of leadership style are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Authoritarian / democratic
n=122MeanSD
[A]Order the books that I think are important for the library.4.500.60
[A]Write up appraisals without any input from the staff.1.410.59
[A]Make all the decisions for the department.2.410.85
[A]Tell staff what to do.3.270.70
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TOTAL 2.900.69

[D]Promote staff collaboration.4.140.71
[D]Talk with staff before implementing important changes.4.270.88

[D]Involve staff in early discussions of any programme.4.230.53
[D]Seek staff views and suggestions when planning curriculum.4.040.64
t=14.37(p<.001, df=121)----------------------
TOTAL4.190.70
Structured / unstructured

[S] Set clear tasks for teachers.4.310.57
[S] Monitor all programmes regularly.4.300.65
[S] Expect the staff to strictly follow the MoE Guidelines.3.590.91
[S] Set a clear agenda before departmental meetings.4.590.50

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TOTAL4.200.67

[U] Let teachers work in their own way.3.230.92
[U] Let teachers decide objectives at every point.2.630.73
[U] Encourage teachers to be creative.4.270.55
[U] Meet teachers only when necessary.3.091.02

\[t=9.38(p<.001, df=121)\]

TOTAL3.300.82

Task oriented / Employee centered

MeanSD

[T] Expect teachers to get the marks in at the stipulated time.4.000.61
[T] Get through the syllabus to give time for revision.3.631.00
[T] Closely monitor job progress.3.820.79
[T] Want everyone to do their job.4.680.58

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TOTAL4.030.76

[E] Respond to the views of staff.4.270.63
[E] Encourage open communication among the staff.4.410.73
[E] Express concern about people's feelings.4.270.46
[E] Express appreciation to staff for doing their jobs.4.450.91

\[t=3.40(p<.01, df=121)\]

TOTAL4.350.70

Emphasis on quality improvement / maintaining the status quo

[Q] Promote the sharing of good ideas and practices among teachers.4.450.80
[Q] Get staff involved with reviewing and improving procedures.4.090.87
[Q] Utilise staff resources in the development of examination papers.3.950.79
[Q] Use feedback from teachers to improve the curriculum 4.500.51

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TOTAL4.250.75

[M] Expect teachers to do what the Ministry asks of them.3.600.80
[M] Ensure that all the required things are done.4.180.50
[M] Ensure that teachers do the things the same good old way.2.230.92
[M] Encourage teachers to use well-tried teaching methods.3.180.91

\[t=9.66(p<.001, df=121)\]

TOTAL3.290.80
The results in Table 4 show that there were significant differences in the self-perceptions on the four dimensions of leadership styles. Heads perceived themselves to be:

more democratic (mean 4.19, SD 0.7) than authoritarian (mean 2.9, SD 0.69);

more structured (mean 4.20, SD 0.70) than unstructured (mean 3.30, SD 0.82);

more employee centered (mean 4.35, SD 0.70) than task oriented (mean 4.03, SD 0.76); and

emphasising quality improvement (mean 4.25, SD .75) rather than maintaining the status quo (mean 3.29, SD 0.80).

These findings indicate that younger managers in Singapore are more theory Y, democratic and employee-centred. Being more structured, however, in their approach, their emphasis is not on the status quo but they want to use this approach to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

STUDY 5
‘GOOD’ AND ‘BAD’ HoDs: WHAT THEY DO AND WHAT THEY ARE

Approach
Fifty-four participants (primary school HoDs) from 1994-95 FPDE cohort were asked to think of a 'good' or 'bad' HoD they knew best and write down a description of what he or she did on the job in the school. Their description were then content analysed to identify the recurring themes in them.

Results
The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Observed Behaviours/Qualities of 'Good' HoDs (n=29)
**Accepts others view points/receptive to ideas/open-minded**  
**Approachable/sincere/warm/friendly/encouraging/not stingy with praise/considerate**  
**Assertive**  
**Committed/dedicated to the job**  
**Communicates well**  
**Delegates appropriately to the right persons/distributes work fairly**  
**Has knowledge and interest in her subject matter**  
**Is a good teacher therefore a good role model**  
**Is sincere in what she says/no duplicity**  
**Manages time/resources well/keeps every thing up-to-date**  
**Relates well with principal/vice-principal/other HoDs/teachers**  
**Takes responsibility rather than blaming others when things go wrong**  
**Very methodical/organises very well/always to the point**  
**reported by more than 50% respondents**

Observed Behaviours/Qualities of 'Bad' HoDs (n=25)

**'Delegates' work**  
**A task master-too authoritarian and demanding**  
**Aggressive**  
**Always blaming others when something does not turn out right**  
**Condescending**  
**Delegates work in a biased manner**  
**Does not know but pretends to know**  
**Gives order all the times/never explains**  
**Makes comparisons**  
**Monopolises meetings/ late for them/runs meeting very poorly**  
**No courteous/encouraging words**  
**Poor listener/only hears**  
**Reports on teachers/criticises others in front of principal**  
**Scheming, calculative, manipulating**  
**Shows favouritism**  
**Unable to give clear, concise, comprehensible instructions**  
**reported by more than 50% respondents**

It seems that most important dimension which differentiates a 'good' HoD from a 'Bad' Hod is 'Assertiveness' and 'Aggressiveness'. Other important dimension is 'delegation'. If it is seen to be done properly it is seen in a positive light and if it is seen as 'passing on the burden' to sub-ordinates, it is not seen such a good thing. Affirmation of what people are doing seems to be contributing to the image of 'good' Hods. Communication skills are also mentioned as contributing to their perception of being 'good' or 'bad' Hods.
DISCUSSION

Professional development was perceived as one of the lesser roles of a Head of Department. However, the authors would argue that if real changes are to be effected in schools it will be more necessary for professional development to be perceived and realised as more central to the Head of Department role, and this would be particularly with respect to on-the-job development. This would be consistent with the findings of Kings and Ming (1994) who studied the roles of tertiary Heads in Singapore. The authors feel that this more pivotal role for professional development will provide the basis of continuous improvement in all other activities that Heads of Department will undertake. Important things for Heads to do are:

- Encouraging dissemination of information.
- Encouraging a high level of communication.
- Sponsoring the development of teaching and assessment planning groups.
- Delegating responsibilities and roles.
- Modelling good practice.
- Encouraging reflective practice.
- Providing a supportive and positive climate.

It was clear that some Heads perceived themselves as more reactive than proactive. This is seen by the authors as the most critical issue to be addressed. It would seem important that Heads should empower themselves to carry out their roles. In recognising that they cannot change their teachers, nor their principals and at the same time, if they assume that they cannot change their situation, they will need to address what they can change in themselves. This would seem to be an essential component of any course for Heads if they are to maintain esteem and to be effective in carrying out their roles.
REFERENCES


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