

Strategies for managing change and the use of paraprofessionals; a comparative study for the benefit of post-LETR providers of legal services

Catherine Shephard





Introduction

Catherine Shephard | Senior Lecturer | Law
MA (Cantab.), BA Law (Cantab.), PGDip. Legal Practice,
PGCE (HE), Solicitor (non-practising)

c.shephard@mmu.ac.uk

@missshephard

- Programme Director, Postgraduate Certificate in Legal Practice Management
- Law Society's Management Course Stage 1





Motivation

Current debate on management in the legal services sector

- LETR – framework to support provision in time of unprecedented change
- SRA Competence Statement
- CILEx inquiry into meaning of paraprofessional

Research question

- Can experience of change management in the public sector inform this debate?





Literature review

- FE
 - Policing
 - Healthcare
 - [Accountancy]
-
- Academic research in this area?





Methodology

- Conceptual paper, ideas piece
- Theoretical analysis, at macro level
- Intellectual exercise to reveal and articulate a shared management agenda across public and private sectors
- Seeks to produce framework for management of rapid structural change in legal services sector which will have impact and inform the current debate



Discussion

- Analyses recent strategies employed in public sector to manage and implement change
- Extrapolates the strategies into 3 generic categories:

Provide the service as before and meet every imperative for efficiency by requiring highly qualified staff to work harder (***Strategy One***).

Substitute paraprofessionals for professionals (***Strategy Two***).

Substitute capital for labour (***Strategy Three***).

- Refracts current changes in LS sector through this lens
- Seeks to identify a cross sector shared management agenda



Provide the service as before and meet every imperative for efficiency by requiring highly qualified staff to work harder (*'Strategy One'*).

- Professionals should be allowed to deal with high-order, 'A' team, challenging work
- Default strategy
- Unfeasible, primarily due to cost



Substitute paraprofessionals for professionals (*'Strategy Two'*).

- Proven solution
- Professionals resist idea
- Better service delivery?
- Need to be able to define paraprofessional and how differs from professional
 - SRA/ CILEx
 - Acceptance of risk?
 - Hierarchy
- Customer does not mind how service 'badged' provided is good
- How to credit paraprofessional experience
- Career structure



Substitute capital for labour (*'Strategy Three'*).

- Proven solution, provided proper implementation
- Efficiencies in moving back office function to cheaper location



Conclusion

There is a cross sector shared management agenda:

1. Allow for system improvement

- Appropriate supervision, flexibility of approach & allocation of responsibility

2. Actively manage paraprofessionals

- Risk, accountability, reward, support

3. Identify how best to use professionals

- Prepare, resource, identify 'A team' work

4. Allow professionals to 'own' IT systems

- Delivery, evaluation, refinement

5. Support staff through profound change

- Opportunities, threats, career progression



Limitations

- Lack of body of academic research and debate
- Conceptual piece:
 - Legal academics – open to theoretical, idea pieces – but this about ‘practice’ not ‘law’
 - Management academics – social science basis – like data
- Written for practitioners
 - Law firm culture: not traditionally open to ‘management’ education or academic research
- **Where is home?**





Further research

- Empirical support for the argument
- Scope for further analysis of areas which resonate most with managers in legal services sector





Questions?

- Distinction between professionals and paraprofessionals
- Home for the paper

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