

# Management in Education

## New section: Middle leaders – practitioners' reflections

### Guidelines

#### Introduction

This new section of the journal provides a platform for a key group in *MiE's* readership - middle leaders in education – to foreground your concerns and share perspectives on the current challenges you face and how you are tackling them.. The middle leaders' section provides a sharp practical lens on the middle leader's day-to-day realities, and a means of exchanging ideas on negotiating these effectively whilst sharing professional practical knowledge.

#### What is a middle leader?

We welcome contributions from middle leaders in all sectors of education internationally who occupy a range of roles below senior leadership. These might include heads of department or faculty in schools, colleges or universities, heads of year, subject leaders, coordinators for special needs, assessment, or CPD. However, we recognise that 'middle leader' is sometimes a contested term, with blurred boundaries. Rather than providing a restrictive definition, we invite contributions from those who *position themselves* as middle leaders, occupying roles between more senior and classroom-based levels of decision-making.

#### Possible topic areas?

Good middle leaders papers will explore current issues and dilemmas that are of relevance to other practitioners in similar positions, as well as a wider readership. These papers are likely to focus on some of the challenges and tensions inherent in the middle leader's role, such as

- negotiating the sometimes competing expectations and demands of senior staff and classroom teachers
- juggling between a strategic overview and day-to-day management concerns
- managing and implementing externally initiated changes in policy and practice
- fostering 'bottom up' change and improvements
- motivating and empowering staff
- negotiating the nature of their leadership role, the extent to which leadership is distributed or delegated, and the implications for their own practice
- ethical challenges and concerns arising from competing priorities and interests
- gatekeeper role issues in protecting staff in their areas from external pressures and demands.

Your paper should focus on your own experience and practice as a middle leader, examining the issues you face and how you are addressing them. Papers should be analytical not merely descriptive, drawing on evidence and examples to support the discussion. It would also be good to draw on relevant literature to structure and inform the analysis of your thinking and practice. As well as exploring issues and

problems, papers should also look to actual and possible solutions and ways forward in tackling these issues.

You may also want to compare middle leaders' experiences between different organisations or sub-units, such as departments or faculties, and submissions from pairs or groups of middle-leader contributors would be welcomed.

Care should be taken to anonymise organisations, sub-units and individuals so that they cannot be recognised.

### **How does a middle leader paper differ from an opinion or reflective piece?**

The key characteristics of a middle leader section paper are that:

- it is written by a middle leader (or a pair or group of MLs)
- it is practice-focused
- it explores current issues faced by the ML and how they are being tackled.

The intention is to share and develop thinking and practice among middle leaders, a key group in our readership.

On the other hand, an opinion piece is designed to provoke a reaction in the reader and to stir them to action. It may often be provocative and take a contrary or new stance with regard to an important and current issue within the discipline, field of enquiry or profession. A reflective piece may also do some or all of these things, but it serves a different purpose. It is more personal and less objective (while still being informed by theory/research).

### **Reaction it should provoke in the reader**

A good middle leader piece should encourage the reader to reflect on her/his own thinking and practice in the light of the ideas put forward, to compare her/his context and experiences with those of the writer, and foster a wish to read more on the topic and explore alternative forms of practice.

### **Word count**

1500 words – excluding references

### **Writing style**

Papers should be written in a style which is both accessible and engaging to the reader. Paragraphs should be self-contained and not overly long. If using data, please be mindful to weave this data into the narrative and avoid losing the reader through use of scientific jargon or convoluted language. The piece should have a natural flow. The discussion should build logically and coherently, and arguments should be supported by evidence drawn from experience and the literature. Readers will be able to recognise how the discussion relates directly to their own professional thinking and practice.

All submissions should be uploaded via the journal's submission site - <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/mie>