Tailpiece

Essentially this book offers two things. First, it offers an analytical method which can be used to study the constituent parts of any model. Secondly, using this method, it provides analytical descriptions of a range of different consultancy modes and models. However, the book is neither an overview of the field nor a taxonomy of consultancy. It is a selection of models intended to give a representative cross section of the field. Models are presented in sufficient detail and in the same format to facilitate several things: the study of each mode and model through the descriptions of them and through the references to the primary sources about them; the comparative analysis of the similarities and differences between the models; the identification of critical issues for further attention, discussion, study and research; the further development of the classification of the consultancy field.

Consultancy Modes and Models is a working document offered with its imperfections and limitations as a contribution to the development of the theory and practice of consultancy. It brings together in one book what would otherwise be available only in a considerable number of books, theses and many articles. Much as such a picture would be useful, most students and practitioners would simply not be able for to find the energy and time to produce one for themselves – the effort required has proved to be much more than I had anticipated.

A particular issue emerged as I wrote with which I found myself engaging. It seems right to note it here even though I cannot pursue it to a conclusion. Basically it revolves around two interrelated elements of models: one is what I referred to as the application of a model and the other the understanding required by consultants of the consultor's work. Whereas various understandings of organizations, systems, human interaction at work are seen to be necessary, knowledge of the nature and the forms of the consultor's work is not generally seen to be a significant aspect of consultancy praxis, apart, that is, from the Management Consultancy Model in Chapter Five and the Church Work Models in Chapter Six. Generally speaking, emphasis appears to be placed upon consultant's knowing their own consultancy praxis and having the ability to practice it in relation to the consultor's work and praxis. And, amongst other things, that involves consultants being able to access and formulate what they need to know about consultors and their work in order to be effective. How this is done varies from model to model although there are some commonly used methods such as listening, observing and questioning. Alongside all this there appears to be an unstated working assumption that consultors will be more effective practitioners if they make essential elements of the consultant's praxis their own: that is, if they supplement or replace their own way of doing and going about things with those of the consultant's; or if they adapt or embrace the consultant's approach or aspects of it as integral parts of their own. This may be a distortion of the reality, possibly due in part to the attention to praxis in the source material. However this might be, those models in this book which emphasize the importance of consultants being informed about and experienced in the kind of work in which consultors are engaged contrast with those models in which it is not a stated part of their design. For instance, they use their understanding of the *nature* of the consultor's work to help them to examine the particular *form* of that work in which the consultor is engaged.

An important point emerges from this: those models in which it is not seen to be necessary to know about the nature of the consultor's work and the attributes to carry it out are more open to proffering consultancy services to a wider constituency than those where the consultants are required to have knowledge of the consultor's work.

Notwithstanding, there is evidence that using a given approach in different work domains is not seen by some to be as straightforward and automatic as all this might indicate. Checkland and Scholes found the application of SSM to the NHS, for instance, required more sophisticated attention than was usually the case in industry because of the complexity of problem situations. Consultants were seriously divided about what is involved in the transfer of a family system's model to an organizational development model. On the other hand Nevis found counselling skills were transferable to human problems in an organizational setting. Lyman C Wynne and his colleagues were adamant that "consultation is not a panacea".

Despite all this, and my conviction that an essential in consulting to churches is an understanding of the nature of the work in which they are engaged, I found that as I wrote the "application" sections there was a strong propensity to universalise the applicability of most of the models. I found myself noting the areas in which the model had been applied and then adding ones in which I considered that it could be applied. A colleague's comment about this brought me up with a start. To the front of my mind came the issues raised above which had been rumbling around for some time. I removed all references to areas of work in which I thought a particular model could or might be applied!

Applying consultancy models designed to operate in one human organizational system to that of another is not simple. Not only must they be practical and effective but they must be compatible with the host's spiritual, philosophical and theological systems and their work culture. Consequently, extending the use of the methods beyond their original domains, unavoidably involves examining their theoretical and theological as well as their practical fit and thinking out the theory and theology of their extended use. Some work on this has been done. Stephen Pattison, for instance, in *The Faith of Managers: When Management Becomes Religion*, [1] shows just how important it is to do this in relation to management praxis. MODEM (Managerial and Organizational Disciplines for Enhancement of Ministry), founded in 1993 is another example. It is an association committed "to serve both the Church and business communities at large by promoting dialogue and sharing insights on best practice" as a way of promoting two-way exchanges. It has produced three books exploring the application of management praxis to the work of ministers and churches and vice versa.[2]

What has become clearer from the work involved in making these representations of models is that further study and research into the transferability of models from one work domain to another is needed with especial reference to the understanding required of consultants of the consultor's work. Hopefully this would identify the nature of the mobility of consultancy praxis. But I am sure that this is only one of the issues to be explored and researched and I hope that this book will help practitioners to do just that.

References and Notes

1. This book was published by Cassell in 1997

2. The MODEM handbooks are: Nelson, John (ed) *Management and Ministry- appreciating contemporary issues,* (1996); *Leading, Managing and Ministering: challenging question for Church and Society* (1999) with a foreword by Sir John Harvey-Jones; *Creative Church Leadership* (2004). They are all edited by John Nelson and published by the Canterbury Press.