



Citation for published version:

Bunnell, T, Fertig, M & James, C 2017, 'The problematic nature of schools as institutions and the implications for school head teachers and principals', Paper presented at Annual Conference of the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS Annual Conference 2017), 30/06/17.

Publication date:
2017

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

University of Bath

Alternative formats

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact:
openaccess@bath.ac.uk

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

**The problematic nature of schools as institutions
and the implications for school head teachers and principals**

Tristan Bunnell (University of Bath)

Michael Fertig (University of Bath)

Chris James (University of Bath)

Roundtable Session at the Annual Conference
of the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society
July 2016

Address for correspondence:

Professor Chris James
Department of Education
University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath, UK
BA2 7AY

Phone +44(0)1225 383280
Fax +44(0)1225 386113
E-mail C.James@bath.ac.uk

The problematic nature of schools as institutions and the implications for school head teachers and principals

Tristan Bunnell (University of Bath)

Michael Fertig (University of Bath)

Chris James (University of Bath)

Arguably, given the significance of what they do, all schools need to be secure as institutions in every aspect of their work. However, what constitutes an institution and the activities that make it legitimate as such are problematic. Those responsible for the daily conduct of a school and making sure a school is a legitimate institution therefore face considerable challenges. This roundtable will focus on those very issues: The problematic nature of schools as institutions, and the implications for school head teachers and principals.

Roundtable participants will have the opportunity to discuss the issues in a structured way. At the start of the roundtable, the central underpinning ideas will be reviewed and discussed. These are: the pillars of institutionalisation – the legal-regulative pillar, the normative pillar and the cultural cognitive pillar (Scott, 2014; Bunnell, Fertig and James, 2016a), the institutional primary task (Bunnell, Fertig and James, 2016b) and institutional legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). After that initial discussion, the following issues will be discussed in turn.

- The varied nature of the complex, evolving, loosely linking systems (CELLS) that comprise the whole-school and the implications for institutionalisation and institutional legitimacy.
- The nature of institutional primary task and the way it can be defined, the varied conceptualisations of the primary task in school settings, and the challenges the notion of the primary task presents for school leaders.
- The nature of institutional work (Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca, 2006).
- The centrality of affect in schools as institutions (James, 2010) and the notions institutional emotional work and institutional emotional labour.
- The various challenges school leaders face in ensuring compliance with the different pillars of institutionalisation in order to ensure institutional legitimacy.

The roundtable will be an opportunity for participants to consider school leadership from a different perspective and to explore new and emerging ideas. As such, it will be a highly relevant session for BELMAS members and conference delegates. New concepts, such as the CELLS perspective and institutional emotional work and institutional emotional labour will be discussed and developed. Those facilitating the roundtable will ensure there are ample opportunities for discussion and interaction among the participants and will prepare an account of the session after the event for the conference archive.

(363 words)