

The working order of the day and contingencies

Supervision that starts from the real circumstances of work is likely to be appropriate to the education and development of practitioners in the workplace. A close 'street-level' focus is required.

In most jobs you will hear stories of 'busyness', competing demands and unexpected occurrences. The multilayered management of competing agendas, and the unexpected events and interruptions to plans and routines, are soon revealed. The accounts typically divide between **what is supposed to happen** and **what actually happens**. Any simple notion of time following a single straight line soon evaporates.

Management has its time track. Resources also have their effect on the construction of time. If resources are inadequate, then the ideal unfolding of events is only ever a benchmark against which to measure what actually happens in real time. Personal time and time for education, teaching and reflection are too often the sacrificial victims.

The agenda for a working day and the 'running order' of that day are constructed anew each day, depending on the circumstances of that day. For many staff the day begins with a listing of who is available to deal with particular work, and what problems there are. This phase is an analysis of circumstances. The next phase is to construct a strategy for allocating people to work. The experienced professional may see these two phases as a single act: what needs to be done in order to cope.

Analytically, however, it is useful to separate the two phases because practical reasoning and judgement can be identified and used as a basis for curriculum building and assessment purposes. What people do in real practice circumstances are resources to be built on to help plan and develop assessment.

Generally speaking, **the order of the day is composed in relation to the ideal or normal running order.** At the same time, contingencies are always occurring. Bad weather, orders not having been delivered, postal strikes, lead to unanticipated demands on people. The process can be continued. Other organisations may have problems, which in turn lead to problems in your organisation. Each problem leads to reprioritisations, which finally construct the actual running order of the day.