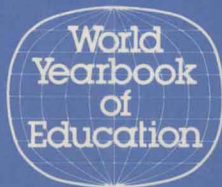


World Yearbook
of Education 1986

**THE
MANAGEMENT
OF SCHOOLS**

*Edited by Eric Hoyle (Guest Editor)
and Agnes McMahon (Assistant Editor)*



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Kogan Page, London/Nichols Publishing
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First published in Great Britain in 1986 by Kogan Page Limited
120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

World yearbook of education — 1986

1. Education — Periodicals

370'.5 L16

ISSN 0084-2508

ISBN 1-85091-064-2

First published in the USA 1986
by Nichols Publishing Company
PO Box 96, New York, NY 10024

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

World Yearbook of Education; 1986

1. Education — Periodicals

ISBN 0-89397-234-7

LC Catalog No. 32-18413

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Anchor Brendon Ltd, Tiptree, Essex

Contents

<i>List of Contributors</i>	7
Part 1: Overview	
1. The management of schools: theory and practice <i>Eric Hoyle</i>	11
Part 2: Theoretical Perspectives	
2. Organization theory and the management of schools <i>Donald J Willower</i>	29
3. Politics, power and the management of schools <i>Peter Gronn</i>	45
Part 3: Managerial Tasks in Schools	
4. Achieving effective schools <i>Terry A Astuto and David L Clark</i>	57
5. The management of change <i>Michael G Fullan</i>	73
6. The management of school improvement <i>Ron Glatter</i>	87
7. School self review <i>Agnes McMahon</i>	100
8. Instructional management <i>Steven T Bossert</i>	112
9. Staff appraisal <i>Glenn Turner, Desmond Nuttall and Philip Clift</i>	125
Part 4: Selected Management	
10. Coping with unionized staff in the comprehensive school: a framework for analysis <i>Geoffrey Lyons</i>	139
11. The selection and appointment of heads <i>Colin Morgan</i>	152
12. Linking school and community: some management issues <i>John Rennie</i>	164

13. School management and administration: an analysis by gender <i>Patricia A Schmuck</i>	173
14. The school and occupational stress <i>A Ross Thomas</i>	184
15. School management and nation building in a newly independent state <i>O E Maravanyika</i>	199

Part 5: Management Training

16. Recent trends in management training for head teachers: a European perspective <i>Tony Bailey</i>	213
17. Can educational management learn from industry? <i>Elisabeth Al-Khalifa</i>	226
18. Training for school management in the Third World: patterns and problems of provision <i>Paul Hurst and Susie Rodwell</i>	239
19. The National Development Centre for School Management Training <i>Ray Bolam</i>	252
20. Interstudie SO: school management development in the Netherlands <i>Kees J M Gielen</i>	272
21. The National Institute of Educational Management, Malaysia <i>Chew Tow Yow</i>	283

Part 6: Reflections

22. From leadership training to educational development: IMTEC as an international experience <i>Per Dalin</i>	297
23. IIP 66: source of an operating manual for educational administration on spaceship earth? <i>William G Walker</i>	310

Part 7: Bibliography and Biographical Notes

Bibliography <i>Biddy Niblett and Mike Wallace</i>	321
Biographical notes on editors and contributors	349
<i>Author index</i>	355
<i>Subject index</i>	360

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Part 1: Overview

1. The management of schools: theory and practice

Eric Hoyle

Summary: Practitioners in school management have potential access to theories of education, educational policy, curriculum, innovation, management and organization. The chapter is concerned with the last three of these areas. Although organization theory and management theory have different intellectual origins and different orientations – the former essentially concerned with understanding, the latter with guiding practice – there has been much common ground. However, recent trends in organization theory have enhanced our understanding of schools as organizations but have diverged considerably from management practice. The relationship between the two remains strongest with the link between the concept of organizations as loosely coupled systems and contingency theories of management. This nexus has important implications for practice but the impact of theory on practice remains relatively weak because we have not yet explored fully the ways in which knowledge is generated, negotiated and utilized in professional practice and in professional training. The most promising approach in recent years has come specifically through approaches to the management of change which have created contexts in which head teachers and principals have engaged with substantive problems in collaboration with colleagues and professional peers, backed by various forms of professional support. Chapters in the *World Yearbook of Education 1986* describe some of the most promising developments in this area.

Introduction

The growing preoccupation in many societies with the problems entailed in the management of schools can be largely attributed to the increasingly turbulent environment in which schools function. In North America there has been a longstanding concern with theory, research and training in the field of school management but in Britain and Europe, and in those Third World countries to which colonial systems of education have been exported, there has been much less interest in this domain largely due to cultural differences in attitude towards management in general and to the styles of leadership appropriate to schools in particular. Head teachers in these systems have not been expected to have had any training in management; experience as a teacher plus certain personal qualities, diffuse and undefined, have been regarded as sufficient for the successful head. However, there has been a steady growth of concern with management

in Britain, Europe, Australia and the Third World over the past 20 years. The British Educational Management and Administration Society and the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration have both fostered interest and activity in their respective constituencies. And such agencies as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Movement for the Training for Educational Change (IMTEC) have sponsored research and development in Europe and the Third World on the management of school change. These trends have now accelerated and in many countries school management training has become a major element in governmental attempts to improve the quality of schooling (see Bailey, Chapter 16).

The increasing importance which is being attached to the training of head teachers has been stimulated in large part by the perceived need to equip them to cope with substantive problems with which schools have to cope. These problems differ from society to society, and are sometimes the exact reverse in some societies than others. Thus, while schools in many Western societies are having to cope with the problems of falling enrolments, schools in many developing societies are having to cope with rapid acceleration in enrolments. Some of the other problems which schools are facing include those social developments which are affecting the behaviour of young people (for example, substance abuse), the constant need for curriculum change (forced by high unemployment in many industrialized societies), the requirement that schools should seek to equalize opportunities for ethnic minorities and girls and, in newly independent societies, the problem of balancing a curriculum for nation building with the more universal needs of pupils (see Maravanyika, Chapter 15). Schools are generally experiencing much more direct political intervention than in the past, and the shrill demand for accountability is to some extent matched by the growing militancy of teachers at school level (see Lyons, Chapter 10).

It is assumed that training better enables the head teacher to make a professional response to these substantive problems and, if it is accepted, despite the doubts of some students of the professions that such a response involves recourse to a body of theoretical knowledge, one must ask what bodies of theory are available to the head and how these inform, or might inform, practice. The fact is that there are diverse theories available, including curriculum theory, organization theory, management theory, theory of innovation, etc, which are developed to varying degrees and related to each other somewhat loosely. We can explore further this range of available theory.

The theoretical basis of school management

Figure 1 (see p 00) shows some of the areas of relevant theory. It must be immediately stated that this diagram is simplistic and used here only for heuristic purposes. *Theory of education* represents the most philosophical

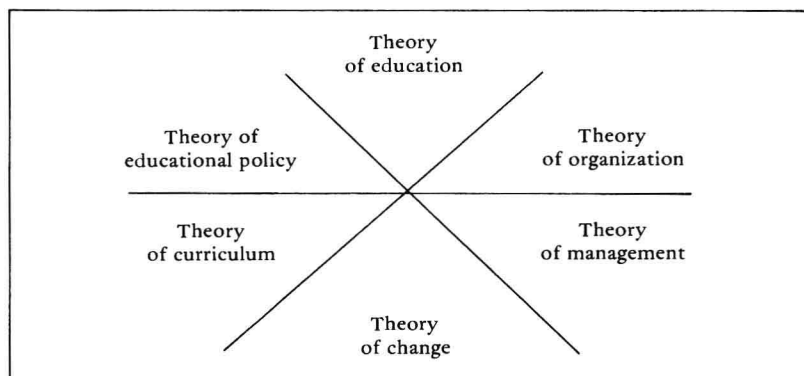


Figure 1 *Relevant theories*

level. It includes theories about the ultimate purposes of education and is thus an enormous field. *Theory of educational policy* is concerned with what the general arrangements should be for achieving educational aims in a particular society at a particular time. It would include theories about, for example, states of transfer, the role of examinations, the schooling of minorities and the relationship between education and industry. *Theory of curriculum* includes all areas related to content and transmission. It could be further subdivided in many ways to include, eg, theories of learning and theories of pedagogy. The distinction made between *theory of organization* and *theory of management* may not be immediately obvious. However, as the distinction is discussed in some detail below, suffice it to say here that *theories of organization* are seen as being concerned with all the components of an organization (eg a school) while *theories of management* are concerned largely with one domain of organization centring on authority, decision making, etc. Similarly, one might quibble that the remaining vector, the *theory of change*, is really a subsection of management theory, and this is a perfectly reasonable point. However, an admittedly crude distinction can be made, not least because international initiatives in this area have ensured its more rapid development in many societies than broader aspects of management theory. Its affinity has often been more with theories of curriculum and their renewal than with management theory.

Insofar as practitioners draw upon theory, one may imagine that there will be variations in the degree to which individual heads will draw upon the different bodies. One can perhaps produce the sections on the above diagram as a sort of pie-chart with 'slices' of varying size, or of vectors covering different proportions of the equal divisions. For example, one head may give priority to educational theory, a vision of what education can accomplish, and be little concerned with, say, theories of management, while another may have a good organizer as a self-image and thus be concerned with management theory. In any case, the mix of theoretical

concerns will, insofar as this influences practice, generate different styles. Hodgkinson (1983) in *The Philosophy of Leadership* has developed a model of leadership concerns of a much more sophisticated kind than the above and discusses various archetypes, eg *the poet* or *the technician*, which represent different priorities. However, these are heuristic categories, different in nature and intent from the research-based models of educational leadership of, say, Leithwood *et al* (1984) or Hall *et al* (1984).

Many of the substantive problems of head teachers, referred to earlier, would obviously involve recourse to the three distinctively 'educational' vectors, ie theories of education, educational policy and curriculum. It might well be that the training of heads should focus on these areas on the assumption that if the head can handle these issues the more 'managerial' tasks are of less importance and can be relegated to a minor concern. However, this chapter is concerned with the other three areas presented in Figure 1 and we can now turn to consider their nature.

Theories of organization, management and change

Organization theory and management theory have different intellectual origins. Organization theory is essentially a sociological tradition, with Max Weber as one of the founding fathers. Management theory stemmed from the writings of practitioners. However, the distinction is a crude one and over time there has been considerable intertwining between the two strands of organization and management theories with a degree of overlap at a notional 'centre' from which the two traditions diverge. They differ basically in terms of range and function.

Organization theory is a broader type of theory. Organizational structure and management process are central components of an organization but still only two of a set of components. Organization theory is also concerned with cultural aspects of organization: symbols, language, the ways in which participants define their situation, etc, together with the micro-politics of organizations: the strategies which participants use in pursuit of their interests, and with the informal dimension of the organization; peer groups and their values, etc. Management theory is, on the whole, limited to a concern with organizational structure and the management process. However, there has long been a concern with organizational climates and, increasingly, an interest in culture and micro-politics is developing. Thus, there is a degree of overlap in the concerns of the two bodies of theory.

The different functions of the two types of theory can be indicated, in an admittedly over-simplified way, by conceiving organization theory as *theory-for-understanding* and management theory as *theory-for-practice*. Organization theory consists of a number of different perspectives by which we might better understand the nature of organization as social units and the reality of life in organizations. Organizations are objects of inquiry, and the organization theorist an interested but neutral party.

Management theory, as a practical theory, is concerned with enabling the practitioner to improve the effectiveness of organizations and, simultaneously, the work satisfaction of members. Thus its focus is on organizational design, leadership, decision-making processes, communication, etc.

Of course, this distinction in terms of function is over-simplified. Organization theories are rarely value free. Organizational theorists naturally hope that their work will lead to improvement in effectiveness and satisfaction. However, within the category of organizational theory there is a great variation. Some theories are virtually indistinguishable from management theory, while at the other end of the continuum are those which are grounded on Marxism, critical theory or social phenomenology which are critical of the most fundamental characteristics of organizations. It is a moot point whether these should be termed 'organization theories' at all, though they are certainly social theories about organizations (see Burrell and Morgan, 1979, for an excellent discussion of the full range of organization theories, and Willower, 1980, as well as Chapter 2 of this book, for a discussion of their place in the educational domain).

In dubbing organization theory *theory-for-understanding* one is not, of course, implying that management theory is not concerned with understanding. It would be foolish to seek to improve organizations without such understanding. However, whereas some management theories seek to embrace all organizational components, most are limited and, at the end of a continuum which stretches from the middle ground occupied by both organization and management theory, there are those theories which are highly mechanistic and uninformed by 'engineering' models of organization.

The dangers of each type of theory for the practitioner are clear. Management theories can be so mechanistic as to be almost wholly detached from the realities of organizational life. One still encounters management theories which are splendidly rational blueprints for an unreal world. On the other hand, the understandings yielded by organization theory could easily bemuse and confuse the practitioner who tries to struggle with philosophical disputes within fields marked by an arcane scholasticism. One of the paradoxes of organization theory at the present time is that, as it enhances our understanding, it is thereby undermining some of the rationalistic assumptions which underpin much management theory and guide most practitioners. Three such developments can be discussed.

Social phenomenology, a perspective which has been much debated in the literature on education organizations for over ten years (eg Greenfield, 1975; 1980; Gronn, 1983; Willower, 1982), is less an organization *theory* than a *perspective* on organizations which questions some of the basic tenets of mainstream organization theory (see Burrell and Morgan, 1979, for a 'placing' of phenomenology). Whereas organization theory is predicated on the assumption that organizations are entities about which generalizations can be made, and have internal structures which are independent of those who people a given organization at a particular point

in time, social phenomenology deplores this misplaced concreteness and holds that an organization, though it has a location and a membership, is essentially a social construct with different sets of members construing the same 'organization' differently. Thus for the phenomenologist the appropriate focus is not the properties of organizations but the varying definitions of members, say the head teacher and a group of low-achieving pupils. Although one cannot at this point debate in detail the relative merits of the 'phenomenological' and 'systems' approaches one can suggest that the former, in challenging the prevailing systems perspective, has enhanced our understanding of organizations.

The second development can be called, albeit with some hyperbole, the 'arationalist' approach. Elsewhere the present writer (Hoyle, 1986, forthcoming) has described 'organizational pathos' as the inevitable gap between the rationalistic perspective of those who design and manage organizations and the reality of organizational life which, from their perspective, is 'irrational'. In fact the 'irrational' behaviour of organizational members is usually 'rational' according to other criteria. That there are cognitive and logical limits to rationality in organizations has long been recognized (eg March and Simon, 1958; Lindblom, 1959). These limits have been much discussed in the literature on social policy (eg Allison, 1971; Olson, 1965; Hirschman, 1981). The philosophical aspects of this have been discussed in a fascinating and scholarly manner by Elster (1978; 1979). Perhaps the best-known exploration in the field of organizations, particularly educational organizations, occurs in March and Olsen (1976) whose striking metaphors of 'garbage can' modes of decision making, 'organized anarchies' and 'backward-running' organizations have caught the imagination. Again, there is no opportunity here to discuss the degree to which organizations are rational systems, but one can simply note again the point that, although it may enhance understanding, it is not obviously helpful to practitioners who have to cope with the daily running of a school.

The same problems are generated by the third development, the micro-politics of organizations (see Gronn, Chapter 3 of this book, and the contributions to the *British Journal of Educational Management and Administration* 10:2, 1982). In the latter volume the present writer (Hoyle, 1982) seeks to explore the symbolic nature of management and micro-politics in organizations. The existence of micro-politics in all organizations is widely recognized in talk of 'hidden agendas', 'rigging meetings', 'massaging the minutes', 'making offers which cannot be refused', etc, but the study of these phenomena, not least because it is difficult and sensitive, has remained recessive to the more dominant organizational theory.

Each of the above developments in the field of organization theory clearly diverges from management theory. The implications of these trends away from the more practical theories of management will be discussed below.

One further theme which can be raised in this section can perhaps be