



EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

FIFTH EDITION

E. MARK HANSON

Educational Administration and Organizational Behavior

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E. Mark Hanson

University of California, Riverside



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Preface

Anyone reading about American public education in the daily press might assume that in recent years our schools have become wholly owned subsidiaries of the Barnum and Bailey Circus. This is partly because more than at any other time in our nation's history, schools have become pawns in a battle to redefine the course of America. Schools are constantly being subjected to analyses from the ideological left and right, the ill-informed, and more than a few weirdos. The intent is usually to draw others to a singular cause based on a particular point of view. A case in point was the presidential campaign of 2000, when candidate George Bush repeatedly charged that America was in the midst of an education recession. The then secretary of education, Richard Riley, countered by stating that dramatic improvements in education had come during the Clinton administration and that candidate Bush's problem was that he had trouble reading—and so went the intellectual discourse on American education. This rush-to-judgment approach to analysis does little to provide intellectually honest solutions to the complex problems that have an impact on the quality of education of our nation's youth.

The eminent scholar James G. March once wrote that “to describe American public school administration quickly is to describe it badly.” The challenge of this new century is to make sure American education is better than ever before, leaving little room for the anesthesia of ignorance born of “quick and dirty” analysis. Anyone who reads this book will agree, I hope, that these sins were not committed here.

In all five editions of this book, a special attempt has been made to establish a meaningful link between the “ivory tower” and the “firing line.” A firing line without an ivory tower is a system that simply reproduces itself and all its problems without a sense of where it is now and the possible paths before it. An ivory tower without a firing line is little more than an exercise in spinning wheels. We tend to forget that virtually everything we do is related to some cause and effect relationship squirreled away in the back of our minds, whether it be the way we brush our teeth or the way we hire personnel. Without linking practice to some theoretical framework, we become random in our behavior, which leads us nowhere fast.

Consequently, for those who argue that they only want so-called practical knowledge about running an educational system, my response is that there is nothing more practical than understanding how an educational organization works within the context of theory and practice. Only then can something be done to

make it work better. When my “give-me-the-nuts-and-bolts” students complain about theory, I often ask them a simple question—would they prefer their life’s work to be that of a mechanic fixing cars or that of an architectural engineer designing the next generation of cars? Perspective frequently makes a difference in thinking.

Plan for the Text

Specifically, this book has five basic objectives. First, it describes and critiques concepts, analytical tools, case material, and organizational theory and behavior from the public and business administration sectors and the educational administration sector. Although the educational system is unique among organizations, I believe materials found in other management sectors are at times more advanced and can provide a wealth of insight into many issues in the educational administration field.

Second, this book is written within the framework of the social and behavioral sciences. It is not prescriptive and does not stress “cookbook” responses to complex issues. Rather, analytical thinking is the requirement of the day.

Third, it presents the notion that the field of educational administration tends to be configured around three holistic conceptual frameworks. These three models—the classical hierarchical model, the social system model, and the open system model—say a great deal about how organizations function. Because the basic assumptions about management behavior underlying each of these three models are quite distinct, different people operating with different conceptual frameworks perceive and attack different problems by different means. This book intends to provide a comprehensive grounding in all three conceptual frameworks, permitting a more expansive analysis of educational possibilities and problems and thus promoting positive educational development.

Fourth, the key processes of communication, leadership, motivation, conflict, and organizational change are analyzed in terms of how they influence educational systems. The book also addresses a question highlighted recently by management scientists: Is it possible for some organizations (banks, schools, department stores) to be smarter than other similar organizations? Taking into account new advances in thinking about organizational memory and organizational learning, the answer appears to be “yes.”

Finally, I wanted to write a book that wouldn’t be a crashing bore to read or filled with bureaucratic babble or academic gibberish. Colleagues and students who have read the material tell me that for the most part I have succeeded.

An ancient saying reminds us, “When you drink the water, remember who dug the well.” Many generations of academicians and practitioners provided the scholarship that gave intellectual life to this text. To them I owe my greatest debt. I also would like to thank the reviewers who assisted in shaping this current edition: Judith Adkison, University of North Texas; Carrie Y. Ausbrooks, University of North Texas; Roy R. Nasstrom, Winona State University; and Russ Marion, Clemson University.

About the Author

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Prior to his current position, he held faculty appointments with the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the School of Education at the University of Antioquia in Medellín, Colombia. He took his B.S. and M.Ed. degrees at the University of Illinois and his Ph.D. at the University of New Mexico.

The author was socialized into the complex world of educational management by his father, Dr. Ernest M. Hanson, who was a career school administrator. Ernest Hanson served as superintendent of schools in New Ulm, Minnesota; Pueblo, Colorado; and Harvey, Illinois; and he was Assistant Superintendent of Schools for many years in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Professor Hanson has recently published a novel entitled, *Chief Executive Officer* (<http://www.home.pe.net/~ceo2>). He now lives in Riverside, California, with his wife, Amparo, and daughters Kathleen, Cristina, Lisa, and Andrea.

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Organizational Behavior in Schools

An Overview

Schools are perhaps the most complex of all our social inventions. Like other formal organizations, the school must deal with the tasks of structuring, managing, and giving direction to a complex mix of human and material resources. Unlike most other formal organizations, the school has a human product that gives rise to unique problems of organization and management. Because virtually everyone—parents, taxpayers, legislators, teachers—is considered a stakeholder in the school, the processes of school governance are exceedingly complex.

Thomas Sergiovanni writes that because the field of educational administration has adopted so many of its ideas and so much conceptual knowledge from other disciplines, it has become essentially characterless “with no identity of its own, with little or no sense of what it is, what it means, where it is going, or even why it exists.”¹ However, borrowing theory from other fields is not necessarily bad; the problems arise when borrowed material is not closely woven into the practice of educational administration. In recent years some of our most significant contributions to the field of management have come from engineering, political science, and biology.

Considerable dialogue about the link between theory and practice has always surrounded the field of educational administration. Some argue that theory is when you know something but it doesn’t work, and practice is when something works but you don’t know why. When we combine theory with practice, nothing works and we don’t know why. Most academics and serious practitioners do not share this view, however. Rather, they believe theory and practice go together inseparably, like hand in glove. Don Willower writes that “to separate science from school life is a serious error because the subject matter of social science used reflectively by a savvy administrator can drive school improvement and

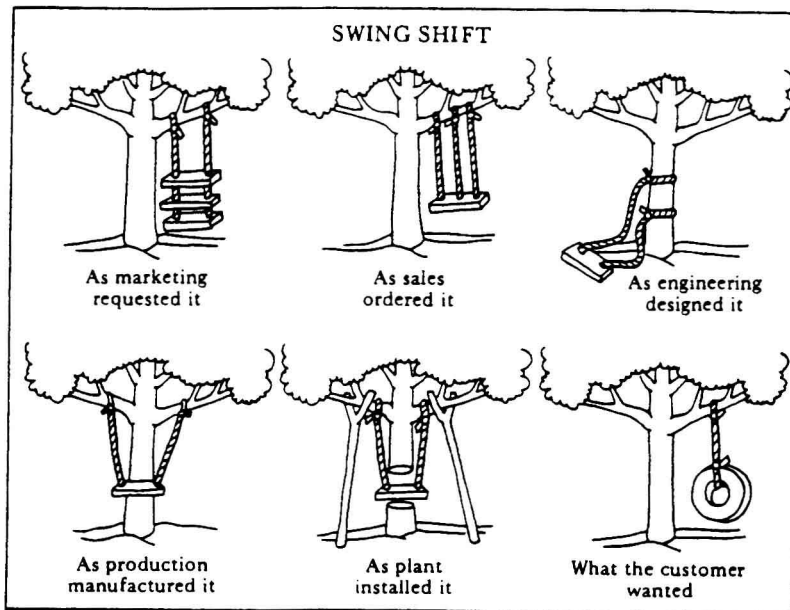
enhance student learning.”² In a related context, Lee Iacocca, former president of Chrysler Corporation, reflects in his biography on the nuts and bolts of his own academic training.

In addition to all the engineering and business courses, I also studied four years of psychology and abnormal psychology at Lehigh. I’m not being facetious when I say that these were probably the most valuable courses of my college career. It makes for a bad pun, but it’s true: I’ve applied more of those courses in dealing with the nuts I’ve met in the corporate world than all the engineering courses in dealing with the nuts (and bolts) of automobiles.³

The theory this book presents is linked directly to searching for a better understanding of how educational systems work and how to make those systems more effective instruments for carrying out their missions in society. What could be more practical than that?

Purpose and Organization of This Book

This book will examine and analyze specific management processes central to directing educational organizations: leadership, motivation, communication, conflict management, change, and situational (contingency) techniques. In addition,



certain unifying perspectives will be examined (sometimes called conceptual frameworks, models, lenses, or optics) that tend to capture and focus our thinking, as a magnifying glass can capture and focus light. Our reactions to situations in organizations are determined largely by these varying perspectives—not necessarily by objective reality. The conceptual perspective we carry around in our heads can lead to a situation Weick refers to as “believing is seeing.”⁴ That is, we see what we tend to believe already exists and we screen out the rest.⁵ Behavior, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.

Four major conceptual frameworks (perspectives) that have important implications for schools are developed here. These frameworks depict educational organizations as bureaucracies, sociopolitical systems, open systems, and institutions. The management processes of each will be analyzed in terms of how administrators who hold differing perspectives on the functions of educational organizations typically attend to them.

The primary objective of this book is to enhance insight into human behavior within organizations in order to promote greater skill in governing schools. *Governance* is defined here as control over decision-making processes. In recent years, the study of decision making has become central to the thinking of educational administrators because “all other functions of administration can best be interpreted in terms of the decision-making process.”⁶ The concept of *decision* is defined as “all judgments that affect a course of action. The concept of *decision-making process* is therefore construed to mean not only the decision but also the acts necessary to put the decision into operation and so actually affect the course of action of an enterprise.”⁷

There is much empirical research and scholarly writing on decision making.⁸ Most of the writings, as they reflect on organizations, find their conceptual roots in one of four basic bodies of theory that offer explanations about how organizations should or do work. These theories are identified in the management literature as *classical organization theory*, *social system theory* (sometimes called sociopolitical group theory), *open system theory*, and *institution theory*. These conceptual models (sometimes depicted as schools of thought or traditions) are often referred to as holistic because they explain a wide range of phenomena and possess a visible unity and inherent logic on the ordering of organizational events. The models have contradictory basic assumptions about what draws and holds people together and how people work collaboratively to achieve a set of goals.

Case studies of governance and decision making, which draw close relationships between empirical data and the bodies of theory under discussion, will be discussed. In addition, several brief teaching cases and discussion questions will be presented for student analysis.

Conceptual Frameworks and School Organization

The behavior of educational officials differs according to which pair of conceptual eyeglasses they put on. Unfortunately, most educators have been taught to believe

that only one model can apply to the schools—a model derived from classical organization theory.

Classical Organization Theory

As Figure 1.1 illustrates, all four bodies of theory are represented in contemporary management thinking, although they entered the mainstream of thought at different historical periods. The pioneer writers obviously did not invent the phenomena they wrote about. When Max Weber (1864–1920) began writing at the turn of the century about what he termed *bureaucracy*, elements of that bureaucracy had been present in descriptions of organized life dating back to ancient Rome and China.

Most classical thinkers, such as Max Weber (a German sociologist), Henri Fayol (a French industrialist), and Frederick Taylor (an American industrial engineer), lived through the industrial revolution as it went through its most fervent stages around the turn of the twentieth century. As they watched the rapidly growing technology of mass production collide with the traditional patterns of management (which were designed for simpler societies), they clearly saw the resulting wasteful and appalling inefficiency.

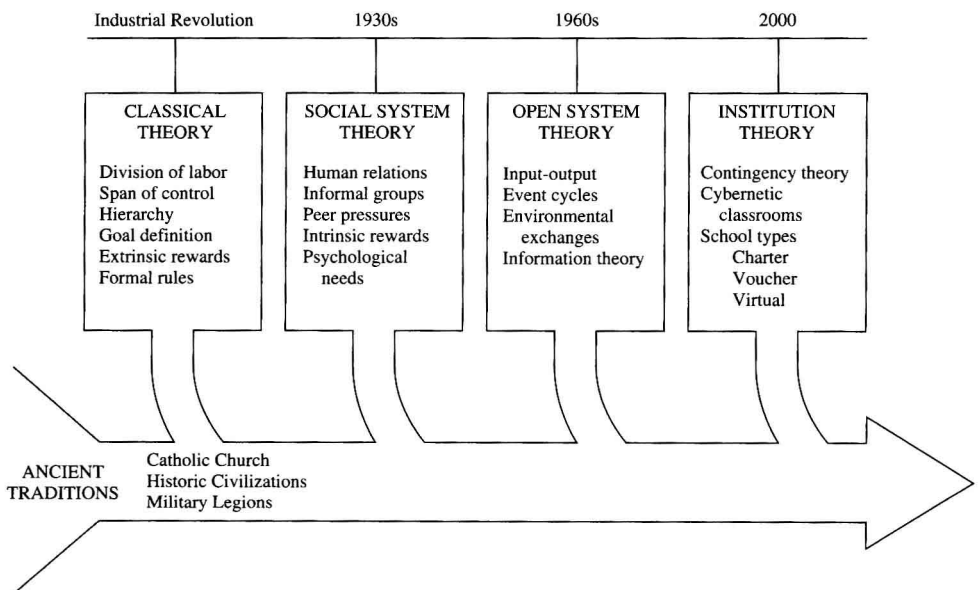


FIGURE 1.1 *The Evolution of Organization Theory*

Source: Adapted from Billy Hodge and Herbert Johnson, *Management and Organizational Behavior: A Multidimensional Approach* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1970), p. 19.