Educational Administration: The Roles of Leadership and Management

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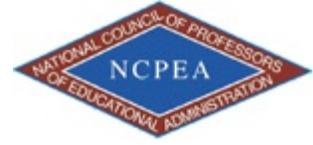
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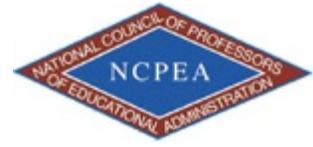
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How the pendulum swings! The purpose of this introductory chapter is to discuss the dynamic roles of leadership, management, and administration as they relate to educational organizations. There has been much debate on this topic, particularly regarding the roles of leadership and management, and usually management comes out the worse for it. Typically, when education field practitioners or professors are asked about leadership and management, leadership will be thought of in a positive sense and management will likely be viewed negatively. It seems that no educational administrator wants to be seen as being a manager. Educational administration preparation programs are now usually housed in departments of educational leadership. When seeking a new principal or superintendent, the position description will very likely seek "a strong leader with vision." Historically, in the early phases of this dialogue, the focus was on administration (see Wilson [1887] who noted that the study of administration was being added to the curriculum of universities). Then the focus was on management in school administration, as noted in Callahan's work (Cult of Efficiency). Next, and continuing until the present, the focus was on leadership. Many volumes have been written on these topics. Currently, a number of scholars and field practitioners have again been talking about the importance of management and the need for balance between leadership and management. There are a number of reasons for these "paradigm shifts" as will be discussed in later sections.

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Chapter 3. Theories of Educational Management

The process of deciding on the aims of the organization is at the heart of educational management. In some settings, aims are decided by the principal, often working in association with senior colleagues and perhaps a small group of lay stakeholders. In many schools, however, goal setting is a corporate activity undertaken by formal bodies or informal groups.

School aims are strongly influenced by pressures from the external environment. Many countries have a national curriculum and these often leave little scope for schools to decide their own educational aims. Institutions may be left with the residual task of interpreting external imperatives rather than determining aims on the basis of their own assessment of student need. The key issue here is the extent to which school managers are able to modify government policy and develop alternative approaches based on school-level values and vision. Do they have to follow the script, or can they ad lib?

Distinguishing Educational Leadership and Management

The concept of management overlaps with two similar terms, leadership and administration. "Management" is widely used in Britain, Europe, and Africa, for example, while "administration" is preferred in the United States, Canada, and Australia. "Leadership" is of great contemporary interest in most countries in the developed World. Dimmock (1999) differentiates these concepts whilst also acknowledging that there are competing definitions:

School leaders [experience] tensions between competing elements of leadership, management and administration. Irrespective of how these terms are defined, school leaders experience difficulty in deciding the balance between higher order tasks designed to improve staff, student and school performance (leadership), routine maintenance of present operations (management) and lower order duties (administration). (p. 442)

Administration is not associated with "lower order duties" in the U.S. but may be seen as the

overarching term, which embraces both leadership and management. Cuban (1988) provides one of the clearest distinctions between leadership and management.

By leadership, I mean influencing others actions in achieving desirable ends . . . . Managing is maintaining efficiently and effectively current organisational arrangements . . . . I prize both managing and leading and attach no special value to either since different settings and times call for varied responses. (p. xx)

Leadership and management need to be given equal prominence if schools are to operate effectively and achieve their objectives. "Leading and managing are distinct, but both are important . . . . The challenge of modern organisations requires the objective perspective of the manager as well as the flashes of vision and commitment wise leadership provides" (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. xiii-xiv).

The English National College for School Leadership.

The contemporary emphasis on leadership rather than management is illustrated starkly by the opening of the English National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in November 2000. NCSL"s stress on leadership has led to a neglect of management. Visionary and inspirational leadership are advocated but much less attention is given to the structures and processes required to implement these ideas successfully. A fuller discussion of the NCSL may be found in Bush (2006).

The Significance of the Educational Context

Educational management as a field of study and practice was derived from management principles first applied to industry and commerce, mainly in the United States. Theory development largely involved the application of industrial models to educational settings. As the subject became established as an academic field in its own right, its theorists and practitioners began to develop alternative models based on their observation of, and experience in, schools and colleges. By the 21st century the main theories, featured in this chapter, have either been developed in the educational context or have been adapted from industrial models to meet the specific requirements of schools and colleges. Educational management has progressed from being a new field dependent upon ideas developed in other settings to become an established field with its own theories and research.

Conceptualising Educational Management

Leadership and management are often regarded as essentially practical activities. Practitioners and policy-makers tend to be dismissive of theories and concepts for their alleged remoteness from the "real" school situation. Willower (1980, p. 2), for example, asserts that "the application of theories by practicing administrators [is] a difficult and problematic undertaking. Indeed, it is clear that theories are simply not used very much in the realm of practice." This comment

suggests that theory and practice are regarded as separate aspects of educational leadership and management. Academics develop and refine theory while managers engage in practice. In short, there is a theory/ practice divide, or "gap" (English, 2002):

The theory-practice gap stands as the Gordian Knot of educational administration. Rather than be cut, it has become a permanent fixture of the landscape because it is embedded in the way we construct theories for use . . . The theory-practice gap will be removed when we construct different and better theories that predict the effects of practice. (p. 1, 3)

The Relevance of Theory to Good Practice

If practitioners shun theory then they must rely on experience as a guide to action. In deciding on their response to a problem they draw on a range of options suggested by previous experience with that type of issue. However, "it is wishful thinking to assume that experience alone will teach leaders everything they need to know" (Copland et al, 2002, p. 75).

Teachers sometimes explain their decisions as just "common sense." However, such apparently pragmatic decisions are often based on implicit theories. When a teacher or a manager takes a decision it reflects in part that person's view of the organization. Such views or preconceptions are coloured by experience and by the attitudes engendered by that experience. These attitudes take on the character of frames of reference or theories, which inevitably influence the decision-making process.

Theory serves to provide a rationale for decision-making. Managerial activity is enhanced by an explicit awareness of the theoretical framework underpinning practice in educational institutions. There are three main arguments to support the view that managers have much to learn from an appreciation of theory, providing that it is grounded firmly (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in the realities of practice:

1.Reliance on facts as the sole guide to action is unsatisfactory because all evidence requires interpretation. Theory provides "mental models" (Leithwood et al, 1999, p. 75) to help in understanding the nature and effects of practice.

2.Dependence on personal experience in interpreting facts and making decisions is narrow because it discards the knowledge of others. Familiarity with the arguments and insights of theorists enables the practitioner to deploy a wide range of experience and understanding in resolving the problems of today. An understanding of theory also helps reduces the likelihood of mistakes occurring while experience is being acquired.

3.Experience may be particularly unhelpful as the sole guide to action when the practitioner begins to operate in a different context. Organizational variables may mean that practice in one school or college has little relevance in the new environment. A broader awareness of theory and practice may be valuable as the manager attempts to interpret behaviour in the fresh situation.

Of course, theory is useful only so long as it has relevance to practice in education. Hoyle (1986) distinguishes between theory-for-understanding and theory-for-practice. While both are potentially valuable, the latter is more significant for managers in education. The relevance of theory should be judged by the extent to which it informs managerial action and contributes to the resolution of practical problems in schools and colleges.

The Nature of Theory

There is no single all-embracing theory of educational management. In part this reflects the astonishing diversity of educational institutions, ranging from small rural elementary schools to very large universities and colleges. It relates also to the varied nature of the problems encountered in schools and colleges, which require different approaches and solutions. Above all, it reflects the multifaceted nature of theory in education and the social sciences: "Students of educational management who turn to organisational theory for guidance in their attempt to understand and manage educational institutions will not find a single, universally applicable theory but a multiplicity of theoretical approaches each jealously guarded by a particular epistemic community" (Ribbins, 1985, p. 223).

The existence of several different perspectives creates what Bolman and Deal (1997, p. 11) describe as "conceptual pluralism: a jangling discord of multiple voices." Each theory has something to offer in explaining behaviour and events in educational institutions. The perspectives favoured by managers, explicitly or implicitly, inevitably influence or determine decision-making.

Griffiths (1997) provides strong arguments to underpin his advocacy of "theoretical pluralism." "The basic idea is that all problems cannot be studied fruitfully using a single theory. Some problems are large and complex and no single theory is capable of encompassing them, while others, although seemingly simple and straightforward, can be better understood through the use of multiple theories . . . particular theories are appropriate to certain problems, but not others" (Griffiths, 1997, p. 372).

The Characteristics of Theory

Most theories of educational leadership and management possess three major characteristics:

1. Theories tend to be normative in that they reflect beliefs about the nature of educational institutions and the behaviour of individuals within them. Simkins (1999) stresses the importance of distinguishing between descriptive and normative uses of theory. "This is a distinction which is often not clearly made. The former are those which attempt to describe the nature of organisations and how they work and, sometimes, to explain why they are as they are. The latter, in contrast, attempt to prescribe how organisations should or might be managed to achieve particular outcomes more effectively" (p. 270).

2.Theories tend to be selective or partial in that they emphasize certain aspects of the institution at the expense of other elements. The espousal of one theoretical model leads to the neglect of other approaches. Schools and colleges are arguably too complex to be capable of analysis through a single dimension.

3.Theories of educational management are often based on, or supported by, observation of practice in educational institutions. English (2002, p. 1) says that observation may be used in two ways. First, observation may be followed by the development of concepts, which then become theoretical frames. Such perspectives based on data from systematic observation are sometimes called "grounded theory." Because such approaches are derived from empirical inquiry in schools and colleges, they are more likely to be perceived as relevant by practitioners. Secondly, researchers may use a specific theoretical frame to select concepts to be tested through observation. The research is then used to "prove" or "verify" the efficacy of the theory (English, 2002, p. 1).

Models of Educational Management: An Introduction

Several writers have chosen to present theories in distinct groups or bundles but they differ in the models chosen, the emphasis given to particular approaches and the terminology used to describe them. Two of the best known frameworks are those by Bolman and Deal (1997) and Morgan (1997).

In this chapter, the main theories are classified into six major models of educational management (Bush, 2003). All these models are given significant attention in the literature of educational management and have been subject to a degree of empirical verification. Table 1 shows the six models and links them to parallel leadership models. The links between management and leadership models are given extended treatment in Bush (2003).

Management model	Leadership model
Formal	Managerial
Collegial	Participative
Political	Transactional
Subjective	Post-modern
Ambiguity	Contingency
Cultural	Moral

Figure 1: Typology of management and leadership models (adapted from Bush and Glover 2002)

Formal Models

Formal model is an umbrella term used to embrace a number of similar but not identical approaches. The title "formal" is used because these theories emphasize the official and structural elements of organizations:

Formal models assume that organisations are hierarchical systems in which managers use rational means to pursue agreed goals. Heads possess authority legitimised by their formal positions within the organisation and are accountable to sponsoring bodies for the activities of their organisation (Bush, 2003, p. 37).

This model has seven major features:

1.They tend to treat organizations as systems. A system comprises elements that have clear organisational links with each other. Within schools, for example, departments and other sub-units are systemically related to each other and to the institution itself.

2.Formal models give prominence to the official structure of the organization. Formal structures are often represented by organization charts, which show the authorized pattern of relationships between members of the institution.

3.In formal models the official structures of the organization tend to be hierarchical. Teachers are

responsible to department chairs who, in turn, are answerable to principals for the activities of their departments. The hierarchy thus represents a means of control for leaders over their staff.

4.All formal approaches typify schools as goal-seeking organizations. The institution is thought to have official purposes, which are accepted and pursued by members of the organization. Increasingly, goals are set within a broader vision of a preferred future for the school (Beare, Caldwell, & Millikan, 1989).

5.Formal models assume that managerial decisions are made through a rational process. Typically, all the options are considered and evaluated in terms of the goals of the organization. The most suitable alternative is then selected to enable those objectives to be pursued.

6.Formal approaches present the authority of leaders as a product of their official positions within the organization. Principals" power is positional and is sustained only while they continue to hold their posts.

1. In formal models there is an emphasis on the accountability of the organization to its sponsoring body. Most schools remain responsible to the school district. In many centralised systems, school principals are accountable to national or state governments. In decentralised systems, principals are answerable to their governing boards.

(Adapted from Bush, 2003, p. 37-38).

These seven basic features are present to a greater or lesser degree in each of the individual theories, which together comprise the formal models. These are:

* structural models;

* systems models;

* bureaucratic models;

* rational models;

* hierarchical models.

A full discussion of each of these sub-models appears in Bush (2003).

Managerial Leadership

The type of leadership most closely associated with formal models is "managerial."

Managerial leadership assumes that the focus of leaders ought to be on functions, tasks and behaviours and that if these functions are carried out competently the work of others in the

organisation will be facilitated. Most approaches to managerial leadership also assume that the behaviour of organisational members is largely rational. Authority and influence are allocated to formal positions in proportion to the status of those positions in the organisational hierarchy. (Leithwood et al, 1999, p. 14)

Dressler's (2001) review of leadership in Charter schools in the United States shows the significance of managerial leadership: "Traditionally, the principal"'s role has been clearly focused on management responsibilities" (p. 175). Managerial leadership is focused on managing existing activities successfully rather than visioning a better future for the school.

The Limitations of Formal Models

The various formal models pervade much of the literature on educational management.

They are normative approaches in that they present ideas about how people in organizations ought to behave. Levacic et al (1999) argue that these assumptions underpin the educational reforms of the 1990s, notably in England:

A major development in educational management in the last decade has been much greater emphasis on defining effective leadership by individuals in management posts in terms of the effectiveness of their organisation, which is increasingly judged in relation to measurable outcomes for students . . . This is argued to require a rational-technicist approach to the structuring of decision-making. (p. 15)

There are five specific weaknesses associated with formal models:

1.It may be unrealistic to characterize schools and colleges as goal-oriented organizations. It is often difficult to ascertain the goals of educational institutions. Formal objectives may have little operational relevance because they are often vague and general, because there may be many different goals competing for resources, and because goals may emanate from individuals and groups as well as from the leaders of the organisation.

Even where the purposes of schools and colleges have been clarified, there are further problems in judging whether objectives have been achieved. Policy-makers and practitioners often rely on examination performance to assess schools but this is only one dimension of the educational process.

2.The portrayal of decision-making as a rational process is fraught with difficulties. The belief that managerial action is preceded by a process of evaluation of alternatives and a considered choice of the most appropriate option is rarely substantiated. Much human behaviour is irrational and this inevitably influences the nature of decision-making in education. Weick (1976, p. 1), for example,asserts that rational practice is the exception rather than the norm.

3.Formal models focus on the organization as an entity and ignore or underestimate the

contribution of individuals. They assume that people occupy preordained positions in the structure and that their behaviour reflects their organizational positions rather than their individual qualities and experience. Greenfield (1973)has been particularly critical of this view (see the discussion of subjective models, below). Samier (2002, p. 40) adopts a similar approach, expressing concern "about the role technical rationality plays in crippling the personality of the bureaucrat, reducing him [sic] to a cog in a machine."

4.A central assumption of formal models is that power resides at the apex of the pyramid. Principals possess authority by virtue of their positions as the appointed leaders of their institutions. This focus on official authority leads to a view of institutional management which is essentially top down. Policy is laid down by senior managers and implemented by staff lower down the hierarchy. Their acceptance of managerial decisions is regarded as unproblematic.

Organizations with large numbers of professional staff tend to exhibit signs of tension between the conflicting demands of professionalism and the hierarchy. Formal models assume that leaders, because they are appointed on merit, have the competence to issue appropriate instructions to subordinates. Professional organizations have a different ethos with expertise distributed widely within the institution. This may come into conflict with professional authority.

5.Formal approaches are based on the implicit assumption that organizations are relatively stable. Individuals may come and go but they slot into predetermined positions in a static structure. "Organisations operating in simpler and more stable environments are likely to employ less complex and more centralised structures, with authority, rules and policies as the primary vehicles for co-ordinating the work" (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 77).

Assumptions of stability are unrealistic in contemporary schools. March and Olsen (1976, p.21) are right to claim that "Individuals find themselves in a more complex, less stable and less understood world than that described by standard theories of organisational choice."

Are Formal Models Still Valid?

These criticisms of formal models suggest that they have serious limitations. The dominance of the hierarchy is compromised by the expertise possessed by professional staff. The supposed rationality of the decision-making process requires modification to allow for the pace and complexity of change. The concept of organizational goals is challenged by those who point to the existence of multiple objectives in education and the possible conflict between goals held at individual, departmental and institutional levels. "Rationalistic-bureaucratic notions . . . have largely proven to be sterile and to have little application to administrative practice in the "real world" (Owens & Shakeshaft, 1992, p. 4)

Despite these limitations, it would be inappropriate to dismiss formal approaches as irrelevant to schools and colleges. The other models discussed in this chapter were all developed as a reaction to the perceived weaknesses of formal theories. However, these alternative perspectives have not

succeeded in dislodging the formal models, which remain valid as partial descriptions of organization and management in education. Owens and Shakeshaft (1992)refer to a reduction of confidence in bureaucratic models, and a "paradigm shift" to a more sophisticated analysis, but formal models still have much to contribute to our understanding of schools as organisations.

Collegial Models

Central Features of Collegial Models

Collegial models include all those theories that emphasize that power and decision-making should be shared among some or all members of the organization (Bush, 2003):

Collegial models assume that organizations determine policy and make decisions through a process of discussion leading to consensus. Power is shared among some or all members of the organization who are thought to have a shared understanding about the aims of the institution. (p. 64)

Brundrett (1998) says that "collegiality can broadly be defined as teachers conferring and collaborating with other teachers" (p. 305). Little (1990) explains that "the reason to pursue the study and practice of collegiality is that, presumably, something is gained when teachers work together and something is lost when they do not" (p. 166).

Collegial models have the following major features:

1.Theyare strongly normative in orientation. "The advocacy of collegiality is made more on the basis of prescription than on research-based studies of school practice" (Webb & Vulliamy, 1996, p. 443).

2.Collegial models seem to be particularly appropriate for organizations such as schools and colleges that have significant numbers of professional staff. Teachers have an authority of expertise that contrasts with the positional authority associated with formal models. Teachers require a measure of autonomy in the classroom but also need to collaborate to ensure a coherent approach to teaching and learning (Brundrett, 1998, p. 307). Collegial models assume that professionals also have a right to share in the wider decision-making process. Shared decisions are likely to be better informed and are also much more likely to be implemented effectively.

3.Collegial models assume a common set of values held by members of the organization. These common values guide the managerial activities of the organization and are thought to lead to shared educational objectives. The common values of professionals form part of the justification for the optimistic assumption that it is always possible to reach agreement about goals and policies. Brundrett (1998, p. 308) goes further in referring to the importance of "shared vision" as a basis for collegial decision-making.

4.The size of decision-making groups is an important element in collegial management. They

have to be sufficiently small to enable everyone to be heard. This may mean that collegiality works better in elementary schools, or in sub-units, than at the institutional level in secondary schools. Meetings of the whole staff may operate collegially in small schools but may be suitable only for information exchange in larger institutions.

The collegial model deals with this problem of scale by building-in the assumption that teachers have formal representation within the various decision-making bodies. The democratic element of formal representation rests on the allegiance owed by participants to their constituencies (Bush, 2003, p. 67).

5.Collegial models assume that decisions are reached by consensus. The belief that there are common values and shared objectives leads to the view that it is both desirable and possible to resolve problems by agreement. The decision-making process may be elongated by the search for compromise but this is regarded as an acceptable price to pay to maintain the aura of shared values and beliefs. The case for consensual decision-making rests in part on the ethical dimension of collegiality. Imposing decisions on staff is considered morally repugnant, and inconsistent with the notion of consent.

(Bush, 2003, p. 65-67).

Participative Leadership

Because policy is determined within a participative framework, the principal is expected to adopt participative leadership strategies. Heroic models of leadership are inappropriate when influence and power are widely distributed within the institution. "The collegial leader is at most a "first among equals" in an academic organisation supposedly run by professional experts . . . the collegial leader is not so much a star standing alone as the developer of consensus among the professionals who must share the burden of the decision." (Baldridge et al, 1978, p. 45)

While transformational leadership is consistent with the collegial model, in that it assumes that leaders and staff have shared values and common interests (Bush, 2003, p. 76), the leadership model most relevant to collegiality is "participative leadership," which "assumes that the decision-making processes of the group ought to be the central focus of the group" (Leithwood et al, 1999, p. 12). This is a normative model, underpinned by three criteria (Leithwood et al, 1999):

- Participation will increase school effectiveness.

- Participation is justified by democratic principles.

- Leadership is potentially available to any legitimate stakeholder. (p. 12)

Sergiovanni (1984) claims that a participative approach succeeds in "bonding" staff together and in easing the pressures on school principals. "The burdens of leadership will be less if leadership functions and roles are shared and if the concept of leadership density were to emerge as a viable

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