Chapter 5
The Human Dimension of Organization

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The Human Dimension of Organization

☐ This chapter emphasizes the shift from a traditional structural approach to an emphasis on improving the organization from the bottom up.

☐ By building human capital, the organization becomes more effective as individuals and groups increase their capabilities.
Reconceptualizing the Nature of Organizations

- Donald Schön uses the metaphor of a swamp for dealing with problems in organizations.
  - “In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution.”
- Around 1975, organizational thought moved from logical-positivist assumptions about schools.
- The focus on new qualitative research methods helped reconceptualize organizational theory.
A New Paradigm of Organizational Theory

- As T. Barr Greenfield indicated:
  - Organizations are not real, they are invented social realities.
  - Organizations don’t do things to people or *behave* in certain ways (called anthropomorphizing).
  - “The essence of organization is human beings who populate the organization.”
Rise of Qualitative Research Methods

- James Bryant Conant, who studied educational organizations, wrote *Two Modes of Thought: My Encounters with Science and Education*.

- In the study of education, one moves from hypothetico-deductive reasoning to inductive methods.

- Social sciences are practical arts.
Carl Rogers, founder of the humanist approach to psychology (along with Abraham Maslow), discussed three ways of knowing about human behavior:

- Subjective knowing, which “is fundamental to everyday living.”
- Objective knowing, which Rogers thought was not really objective but actually more of a consensus between and among trusted colleagues who were thought to be qualified to make judgments about the “truth” of observed events.
- Interpersonal, or phenomenological, knowing about the frame of mind of the individual. The best way to find out is by simply asking the person in an empathetic way.

Rogers believed that in a mature behavioral science all three ways of knowing would be acknowledged and used in combination, rather than using one way and ignoring the others.
Rise of Qualitative Research Methods (continued)

- Arthur Blumberg enriched this line of thinking by adding the idea of school administration as a craft, rather than as a science.
- These ideas gave rise to qualitative research methods in the 1980s.
- What follows are ideas that emerged as traditional organizational theory collapsed.
Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems

- Karl Weick and James G. March indicated that educational organizations were not composed of hierarchical units as in a true bureaucracies, but are loosely coupled systems.

- Loosely coupled systems—subsystems in the organization are related to one another, but maintain their own identity and autonomy (e.g., the guidance office).
Educational Organizations as Dual Systems

☐ John Meyer and Brian Rowan’s important study early 1980s confirmed the concept of loose coupling.

☐ Dual systems include:

- Loosely coupled system over instruction.
- Tightly coupled system over noninstruction (transportation, pay etc).
Educational Organizations as Dual Systems (continued)

- Administrators have control over instruction via bureaucratic means:
  - The control of time, e.g., scheduling of teachers and students.
  - The assignment of students to classes.
  - Grouping.
  - Control of resources.

- In recent years, since NCLB, studies show that schools are exerting considerable control over instruction.
Building Human Capital

- Human Capital: the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and social skills of employees.
- Example: the Marshall Plan to rebuild Western Europe after WWII.
- Education is an investment in human capital.
Many organizational problems stem from a negative climate, such as low moral or inadequate effort.

Human resources accounting attempts to quantify human attitudes, motivation, and work behavior.

It is commonplace to assume that human resources decline in value over time, e.g., teacher burnout.

Researchers have shown that by facilitating personal and professional growth, human resources improve over time.
Organizational Culture as a Bearer of Authority

- Organizational culture: the norms, values, and beliefs that guide an organization.
- Certain organizational cultures promote greater effectiveness.
- Key authors: Terrence E. Deal, Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Edgar Schein.
Five Basic Assumptions of Effective Schools

☐ Whatever else a school can and should do, its central purpose is to teach: success is measured by students’ progress in knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

☐ The school is responsible for providing the overall environment in which teaching and learning occur.

☐ Schools must be treated holistically: partial efforts to make improvements that deal with the needs of only some of the students and break up the unity of the instructional program are likely to fail.

☐ The most crucial characteristics of a school are the attitudes and behaviors of the teachers and other staff, not material things such as the size of its library or the age of the physical plant.

☐ Perhaps most important, the school accepts responsibility for the success or failure of the academic performance of the students.
Effective Schools Research: 13 Characteristics

The first group contains nine characteristics that can be implemented quickly at minimal cost by administrative action:

- School-site management and democratic decision making, in which individual schools are encouraged to take greater responsibility for, and are given greater latitude in, educational problem solving.
- Support from the district for increasing the capacity of schools to identify and solve significant educational problems; this includes reducing the inspection and management roles of central office people while increasing support and encouragement of school-level leadership and collaborative problem solving.
- Strong leadership, which may be provided by administrators but also may be provided by integrated teams of administrators, teachers, and perhaps others.
- Staff stability to facilitate the development of a strong cohesive school culture.
Effective Schools Research: 13 Characteristics (continued)

- A planned, coordinated curriculum that treats the students’ educational needs holistically and increases time spent on academic learning.
- Schoolwide staff development that links the school’s organizational and instructional needs with the needs that teachers themselves perceive should be addressed.
- Parental involvement particularly in support of homework, attendance, and discipline.
- Schoolwide recognition of academic success, both in terms of improving academic performance and achieving standards of excellence.
- An emphasis on the time required for teaching and learning; for example, reducing interruptions and disruptions, stressing the primacy of focused efforts to learn, and restructuring teaching activities.
The second group of four characteristics have great power to renew and increase the school’s capacity to continue to solve problems and increase effectiveness over time:

- Collaborative planning and collegial relationships that promote feelings of unity, encourage sharing of knowledge and ideas, and foster consensus among those in the school.
- Sense of community, in which alienation—of both teachers and students—is reduced and a sense of mutual sharing is strengthened.
- Shared clear goals and high achievable expectations, which arise from collaboration, collegiality, and a sense of community and which serve to unify those in the organization through their common purposes.
- Order and discipline that bespeak the seriousness and purposefulness of the school as a community of people—students, teachers and staff, and other adults—that is focused by mutual agreement on shared goals, collaboration, and consensus.
Turmoil in School Reform

- NCLB has created the current turmoil in school reform.

- Three Approaches to School Reform
  - Market competition.
  - Testing.
  - Reform from within.