

# Chapter 5

# The Human Dimension of Organization

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# The Human Dimension of Organization

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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.

# Rise of Qualitative Research Methods

## (continued)

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- 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)

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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)

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- 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

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- ❑ 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.

# Human Resources as Assets

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- ❑ 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

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- ❑ 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

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- ❑ 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

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- 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)

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- 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.

# Effective Schools Research: 13

## Characteristics (continued)

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- 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

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- NCLB has created the current turmoil in school reform.
- Three Approaches to School Reform
  - Market competition.
  - Testing.
  - Reform from within.