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AUTHOR Hanson, E. Mark  
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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine the interaction between professional and bureaucratic decisional environments in schools and discover the impact of this interaction on the processes of educational governance. A case study methodology was used to gather data; the analysis was conducted within a conceptual framework of organization theory. The study challenges several traditional assumptions about how schools are governed. For example, schools maintain interacting spheres of influence with a range of decisions outside the control of administrators. In fact, teachers often use administrators as pawns, controlling events from their own positions in the hierarchy. (Author)

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ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS:  
A CASE STUDY OF GOVERNANCE IN SCHOOLS

by

E. Mark Hanson,

Associate Professor  
of Education and Administration

University of California, Riverside

Riverside, California

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## ABSTRACT

### ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS;

#### A CASE STUDY OF GOVERNANCE IN SCHOOLS

This study suggests that the conceptual models we have devised to describe, analyze, and predict behavior and events in educational organizations are of low grade quality and not extremely useful in helping us solve, or even cope with successfully, the many complex problems that confront our public schools.

In response to part of this problem, a basic goal of this research is to develop a conceptual model of school governance and decision-making that highlights the semi-professional/bureaucratic interplay. An ethnographic research methodology is used to study and diagnose the decision-making process of selected schools.

The data of the study suggest that a school is composed of multiple spheres of influence each maintaining differing degrees of decisional autonomy, a semi-professional/bureaucratic interaction, formal and informal power bases, coalitions that form and break apart under shifting environmental conditions (e.g., placid to turbulent), a "contested zone," and a relatively informal "negotiated order," which serves, among other things, to link the various spheres of influence into a "loosely coupled system."

The proposed study is significant because it (1) challenges much of the conventional wisdom surrounding how our educational organizations function, and (2) draws into the field of education many useful concepts now found mostly in literature of management sectors outside of education.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS;

### A CASE STUDY OF GOVERNANCE IN SCHOOLS

Management scientists do not have the luxury of treating theory like Cinderella's slipper, unique to a single organization; nor like The Old Woman's Shoe, encompassing every member of the family of organizations. In establishing a useful relationship between theory and practice, management scientists must develop reasoned "images of reality" that explain and predict behavior and events. These images of reality, usually called models or conceptual frameworks, should be sensitive to the unique features of a unique organizational-type (such as schools) that distinguish it from other organizational-types. Accordingly, the objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To diagnose the process of school governance and decision-making in selected schools. Based on this diagnosis,
2. to develop a conceptual framework which depicts how the processes of governance and decision-making function in schools. Specifically,
3. to develop a conceptual framework which gives special treatment to a relatively unique feature found in educational organizations, the professional-bureaucratic interaction of teachers and administrators.

Decision-making is defined here as the process of making choices in organizations (Simon, 1957:4). Governance is defined as control over the decision-making process.

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The professional-bureaucratic interaction is important to issues of governance and decision-making because the teachers as professionals, or semi-professionals if you will (Lortie, 1969), sense a legitimacy in claims of first allegiance to the norms of the profession and to their colleague group. In contrast, the administrators as officers of the bureaucracy, bureaucrats in Weber's (1947) use of the term, must be loyal to the organization that employs them (Corwin, 1974a:247). "In this instance," Lortie (1969:1) writes, "the several strands of hierarchical control, collegial control, and autonomy become tangled and complex." Helping to unravel these tangles is an important aspect of this research.

It is important to note that the term "bureaucrat" is used here in its original Weberian context associated with rationality and efficiency as opposed to the popular pejorative connotation of rigidity and inefficiency. Working in a similar research vein, Wolcott (1977:118-20) narrows the focus a bit and speaks of school administrators as technocrats as opposed to bureaucrats.

Conceptual "Images of Reality"

Since the study of organization and administration moved from an art to a science early this century, three proposed models (sometimes called traditions or schools of thought) have dominated the field of management: (1) the classical hierarchical model, which tends to be a mix of bureaucratic theory (Weber, 1947) and scientific management (Taylor, 1923); (2) the social system model, a derivative of the Hawthorne Studies (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939); and (3) the open system model (Katz & Kahn, 1966). It is important to note that these models tend to serve both as guidelines for practitioners as they attempt to make organizations function effectively



and efficiently, and as conceptual frameworks or "lenses" used by researchers as they attempt to diagnose the complex socio-technical relationships found in organizations.

The classical hierarchical model has probably been the dominant organizational framework used in trying to operate as well as analyze educational systems (Callahan, 1962; Griffiths et al., 1962; Anderson, 1968; Abbott, 1969). Clearly a school system has numerous characteristics which suggest it has roots in classical organization theory, such as: a well defined hierarchy of authority (board of education to superintendent, to principals to teachers), a division of labor (teachers, aides, counselors), a prescribed ordering of events (third to fourth to fifth grade), a body of rules and policies stipulating expected and prohibited behavior, an emphasis on disciplined compliance, and so on.

The second conceptual lens frequently used to understand issues of governance and decision-making is the social system model which emphasizes the make up and operation of formal and informal groups that operate in a semi-autonomous fashion in the internal environment of an organization. Issues of decision-making are complicated by the fact that the informal social systems have their own sets of norms, expectations, objectives, and sources of power (Becker, 1961; Goslin, 1965; Getzels et al., 1968; Bates & Harvey, 1975).

The third conceptual lens has us trying to understand the operations of schools through the perspective of contingency theory (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967, 1969; Darr & Gabarro, 1972; Tyler, 1973; Hanson & Brown, 1977), which is a derivative of open system theory (Herriott & Hodgkins, 1973; Bredo & Bredo, 1975). A distinctive feature of open system theory is the focus on the dependency relationships and exchanges between the organi-



zation and its external environment. Schools are supported by and in turn must support the social, political, and cultural demands of the community. As an open system, the school is seen as linking processes of (1) input (e.g., human, material, constraints, expectations), (2) through put (e.g., teaching-learning, reward systems, socialization), (3) output (e.g., graduates, custodial control, behavioral changes, romantic attachments), and (4) feedback and renewal process (e.g., information guiding decision-making, financial support to renew the cycle).

Contingency theory, on the other hand, concentrates its analytical focus on the adjustments internal to the organization (e.g., differentiation and integration) as it seeks to modify procedures to meet the changing demands of the environment of the open system. Thus, the contingency perspective stresses that the school requires variability in organizational response capabilities to cope with changing environmental needs and demands.

The brief sketch of these three often used "images of reality" highlights the fact that they are rooted in differing assumptions about such critical issues as, for example, rationality and limits to rationality, authority and power, organizational control, incentives, and the like. Graham Allison (1969:690) helps give focus to the problem when he writes that "Conceptual models both fix the mesh of the nets that the analyst drags through the material in order to explain a particular action or decision and direct him to cast his net in selected ponds, at certain depths, in order to catch the fish he is after." Hence, if educators use the wrong conceptual lens in description, analysis and prediction or use a "flawed" lens, they find themselves throwing the wrong net into the wrong pond at the wrong depth and catching fish they are not after (unanticipated consequences). Unfortunately, we often see these unanticipated



consequences emerge as, for example, innovations that fail, tension and conflict between teachers and administrators, directives that are ignored, and the like.

The Problem

In response to ballooning concerns about our most used "images of reality," various organization theorists have spoken out for the need to rethink how our educational organizations work in the real world. Dan Griffiths (1977:4) speaks for many of us when he writes:

Clearly, the way in which people view themselves and their relations to others in organizations has changed to the point that the theories of administrative and organizational behavior we have been using are no longer applicable. They do not describe organizational behavior, nor do they predict such behavior. They ignore the basic change in authority relationships that has been underway since World War II and that accelerated in the early 1960s.

At what might be called the macro level, then, Griffiths sets the stage for the general organizational problem which will give direction to the development of this research. The general problem statement comes in two parts: (1) public schools as organizations of our own creation are not particularly sensitive to the special needs and problems of clients (students, parents, community) or responsive to the expectations of school officials (teachers, administrators); (2) the conceptual models we have devised to describe, analyze, and predict behavior and events are of a low grade quality and not extremely useful in helping us solve, or even cope with successfully, the many complex problems that confront our schools.

Research Design

The data of the research were drawn from studies of two elementary schools, one middle school, and two high schools found in what will be



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called the Sherwood School District which is located in a large western city. The data were gathered using an ethnographic "observer-as participant" methodology (Lutz & Iannaccone, 1969:108) in which the researchers could view natural situations in the schools after establishing bonds of confidence with the educators (Scott, 1965). The three researchers involved were viewed, in a large extent, as impartial onlookers and questioners who could ask questions regarding matters not usually discussed among colleagues or authority figures. In this context, the researchers spent approximately six months gathering data at each of the three levels of schooling covering a total time period of approximately two years.

The data gathering process included intensive interviews (30 to 60 minutes each), direct observation (faculty cafeteria, classrooms, school meetings, etc.), and document analysis (minutes of meetings, correspondence, policy handbooks, etc.). With descriptive data available, the key to analysis was the emergence and identification of behavioral patterns in those data.

This paper represents a synthesis of the "component part" studies reported elsewhere (Hanson, 1976; Hanson & Brown, 1977; Brown, 1976; McKenzie, 1977). Because of space limitations, the "raw data" are not reported here but are available in the original works. Other limitations exist. The teacher-administrator interaction was of primary importance; therefore, the roles of the central office officials, students, and noncertificated personnel were recognized but given limited attention. Also, detailed attention will not be given here to discussing differences between elementary or secondary levels; only processes common to educational organizations will be treated. All issues influencing school governance cannot, of course, be treated. Those issues central to the bureaucratic-professional interaction will be highlighted.

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The issue of generalization is important to any research. The argument made here is that the processes of decision-making but not the content of decision-making can be generalized to other educational settings. In other words, the way decisions are made has generalization value and not what decisions are made. In a field study such as this, the vehicle of generalization is the conceptual model which emerges from the research. The model is then presented to the research community for testing using other methodologies (e.g., experimental) in other school-community settings.

### An Overview of the Interacting Spheres Model

The key organizational characteristics of the model, referred to as the Interacting Spheres Model (ISM), that emerged from the data are illustrated in Figure 1.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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The key components of the model are as follows:

1. Problems emerge and decisions must follow as the organizational environment shifts from a placid to turbulent condition.
2. Problems must be resolved in a milieu of multiple interacting spheres of influence.
3. Each sphere of influence is shaped by the needs of a specific decision-making environment.
4. The dominant spheres of influence are those that surround the task needs of the semi-professionals (teachers) and the bureaucrats (administrators), although the non-certificated personnel, parent groups, etc. also have their own spheres of influence.
5. Specific decisions are formally or informally zoned to different spheres of influence.
6. Each sphere of influence has a measure of decision-making autonomy (discretion) as well as identifiable constraints on that autonomy.

7. Formal and informal subcoalitions form and break apart within and between spheres depending on the character of the particular emergent decision to be made.
8. The formal and informal subcoalitions develop differing degrees of differentiation and integration depending on the issue at hand.
9. Each sphere has a source of power enabling it to take action.
10. Specific decisions that fall within more than one sphere of influence are in a contested zone.
11. Decisions made regarding problems within a contested zone are the product of informal or formal negotiation, and a negotiated order emerges.
12. The multiple spheres of influence that are linked together by the negotiated order form the basis of a loosely coupled system.
13. Administrators have developed tactics to attempt informal interventions into the teachers' sphere of influence, and the teachers have developed defensive strategies to defend their sphere against such outside interventions.
14. Teachers have developed tactics to attempt informal interventions into the administrators' sphere of influence, and the administrators have developed defensive strategies to defend their sphere against such outside interventions.

The researchers found that a key to understanding the processes of making decisions that give direction to schools was an understanding of the spheres of influence.

#### Spheres of Influence

The first few weeks of observation in each school would typically unfold as a confusing buzz of events, like static on a wireless. At any given moment in a high school, for example, we could find one administrator reviewing personnel files in the quiet of his office, a second being verbally abused by an angry parent, and a third chairing a crisis meeting of department heads exhorting them to get out of the behavioral objectives because an accreditation visit is coming up shortly.

Some of the teachers would be found lecturing to their students in highly

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structured settings, while others could be found sitting under trees discussing the subject of the day. Students could be found, for example, studying in the library, smoking clandestinely behind the cars in the parking lot, listening attentively in the classroom, or just standing around looking bored.

Some very specific organizational patterns were immediately visible, such as buses coming and going, bells ringing on the hour, football players turning out for practice, lunches being served, meetings being called, roles being taken, and examinations being given. Other patterns took weeks to sort out, such as the struggle by teachers to gain extensive participation in the selection of new administrators, the drive to improve the testing program, or the struggle to obtain greater support and resources for specific academic programs.

We often saw teachers and administrators working together in a more or less collaborative fashion toward a more or less defined goal. However, we also saw these same groups at times taking their own leads and working in opposition to one another and often in defiance of established school policy and rules (e.g., the rejection of team teaching through thinly disguised noncompliance).

In short, rather than finding a rationally planned and logically executed process of organization and administration controlled from the top of the hierarchy, we found a mixed bag of structured and unstructured activity, formal and informal procedures, and controlled and autonomous behavior. One of the first major research questions we had to treat was, "How is it possible that a school can function with such a set of seemingly coordinated as well as random activities and behaviors going on all at once?" Or, as one teacher so poignantly phrased the issue, "Is there really a method

behind all this madness?"

Our data suggest that there is a "method," and on reflection it appears quite reasonable and understandable. In all of the schools studied we discovered the existence of spheres of influence, or what might be called domains or decisional zones. Although among the many schools we studied the spheres differed in kind and content, they did exist. Visible spheres of influence were maintained at least by the noncertified personnel (e.g., secretaries, janitors, cooks), the school administrators, guidance personnel, teachers, students, parent groups, and central office officials. Each sphere maintained relative degrees of power, autonomy, decision-making discretion, legitimacy, and their own ill-defined tasks and objectives. The two dominant spheres of influence were maintained by the local school administrators and teachers and these two will become the central focus of this paper.

The two dominant spheres of influence seem to be an organizational response to a fundamental decision-making problem found in schools. Cast in the form of a question, "How does the school simultaneously provide for at least two very necessary and distinct decisional environments, one of which supports a rational, programmed and consistent environment while the other a personalistic, unencumbered and flexible environment?" On the face of it, we might think that two such unlikely decision-making environments, one responsive to bureaucratic needs and the other to professional needs, could not live together under one roof without continuously creating insurmountable problems for ~~one~~ another.

In response to the question, our data fell into a pattern which supports a process identified by Dan Lortie (1969:35-36) as decisional "zoning." Roughly speaking, each sphere of influence is built around and rooted in a decisional zone where either by formal delegation, informal assumption, or

traditional dominion a specific group tends to control the choices which take place in that zone. Decisional zoning establishes conditions which influence the processes of governance and decision-making in schools. Numerous researchers (cf. Lortie, 1975; Pellegrin, 1975) have observed that the primary activities and responsibilities of administrators and teachers serve as the basis of zoning. The administrator's primary concerns revolve around school-wide issues while the teachers tend to devote their energies to the classroom. Charles Bidwell (1965:976-977) writes that "the looseness of system structures and the nature of the teaching task seem to press for a professional mode of school system organization, while demands for uniformity of product and the long time span over which cohorts of students are trained press for rationalization of activities and thus for a bureaucratic base of organization."

A professional mode of organization which impacts on the governance process has some unique features which set it apart from a bureaucratic type: Professionals, for example, (a) have authority limited to their narrow area of expertise, (b) have autonomy over their own decisions, (c) have higher loyalties to the values and expectations of their profession than to those espoused by the organization that employs them, (d) control the admission, sanction, and evaluation of those who aspire to or are within the profession, and (e) have stress placed on goal achievement, client orientation, and the uniqueness of the clients' problems rather than on technical efficiency, task orientation, and the uniformity of clients' problems (Blau & Scott, 1962; Corwin, 1965).

At this point the researchers felt that the hospital model of decision-making might provide an acceptable substitute to the classical hierarchical model so often used to characterize schools. As Hall (1954:459) observes,

the hospital supports two authority structures; on the administrative side it extends from the superintendent down through various sections such as nurse supervisors, the kitchen, the housekeeping staff, the accountants, and ". . . provides a system of orders, and of accountability from the top to the bottom of the organization. On the other hand, the hierarchy of the doctors stands completely outside this structure. The doctors have their own hierarchy. . . No person in the administrative hierarchy gives commands to medical staff members."

After examining our data we concluded that while the dual structures model is attractive because of its ability to accommodate the diverse requirements of professionalism simultaneously with those of bureaucratic management, it is weak for our purposes because the tasks of administering a hospital are different at key points from those of administering schools. The basis of authority for hospital administrators does not cut across the professional norms and responsibilities of medical experts. However, school administrators are evaluators of teacher behavior and thus are required to intrude into professionally guarded areas of teacher expertise. Also, the degree of professional status and expertise for teachers is not taken for granted by administrators as it is for doctors in hospitals. Consequently, the clear-cut dual supervisory structure and degree of specialization found in hospitals are not replicated in the school setting. We found ourselves agreeing with Lortie (1969) when he characterized teachers as semi-professionals rather than professionals. Hence, our research problem took on the dimensions of building a semi-professional decision-making model for schools which fell somewhere between the classical hierarchical model and the hospital model.

It is important to note that the zoning process laid the basis of pre-



dictability between the teachers and the administrators. Although in each school the inclusive character of the zones differed to some extent, general understandings existed on the part of all parties (teachers, administrators, students, janitors, etc.) with regard to "the way we do things around here." New arrivals to any one school were quickly socialized through such means as faculty meetings, teacher handbooks, conversations with "old hands," and the like. Most of the school personnel admitted to the researchers that "after a few weeks around here, there are few surprises." Hence, the existence of spheres of influence forms the basis of predictability between teachers and administrators and thus functions as a conflict reduction mechanism that permits the tasks of schooling to be carried out more smoothly.

The existence of spheres of influence suggests the presence of decisional discretion or autonomy. The next research question becomes: "In the Sherwood Schools, what are the organizational characteristics which contribute to the presence of autonomy within a given sphere of influence?"

#### Autonomy Within Spheres

According to Katz (1968:18), autonomy "refers to the independence of subunits of an organization from control by other parts of the organization or even by the whole organization." Autonomy, however, does not mean license. In the Sherwood Schools, the teachers and administrators were quite clear and articulate about those decisions upon which they felt they could act independently and those where they felt they needed to consult on or share the act of choice. Rather than "blanket and uniform autonomy" within the separate domains of teachers and administrators, it is more appropriate to speak of "pockets of autonomy," each differing in membership (e.g., history teachers, football coaches), freedom from outside intervention, and levels and

limits of discretion (e.g., coaches have more discretion on the football field than history teachers in the classroom),

The degrees of autonomy within each sphere of influence in general, and within each pocket of autonomy specifically, were constrained by limits imposed, for example, by the state legislature (e.g., books must be selected from an approved list), the court system (e.g., no prayer in the classroom), the school board (e.g., individualized instruction is the only acceptable teaching mode), and the principal (e.g., "All teachers must be in the classroom by 8 a.m."). In some instances the limits to autonomy were fixed and inflexible, such as the requirement for teachers to take roll in each class, and at other times flexible and subject to interpretation, such as the degree to which behavioral objectives were actually used to guide classroom instruction.

Once all the formal constraints to autonomy were treated, the teachers still did not feel they had complete freedom to act in an unrestrained fashion. Their sense of the norms of the profession seemed to establish limits to acceptable behavior, in varying degrees of course, with teachers. Also, in the Sherwood Schools we found the principals to be significant forces in determining the scope of the teachers' autonomy. The principal is the one who usually interprets the directives and constraints coming down from the central office, the state legislature, and community, etc.

School administrators also reported on a network of constraints which limited their own domains. These constraints ranged from the legal to the psychological variety. They spoke of limits placed by state laws, accreditation teams, budgets, district policy, community expectations, teacher needs, federal grant requirements, health and safety codes, court decisions, and the like.

### Applications of Power

Power is the ability of one unit to influence or impose its will upon another unit (Kaplan, 1964:13-14). Because a specific group has autonomy over a specific set of decisions does not necessarily mean that the source of that autonomy is some sort of power (Corwin, 1974b:257). The autonomy can be rooted in, for example, the isolation of the classroom or delegation from the principal. The school administrators were often seen actively protecting and nurturing the autonomy of teachers because the administrators seemed to be aware that through this autonomy the mission of the school was being carried out--"teaching kids."

However, the application of power also contributes at times to the source of teacher autonomy. French and Raven (1959) identify five bases of power, all of which were found operating in the hands of teachers and administrators in the Sherwood Schools. Illustrations of teacher power sources are as follows: (1) legitimate power (sometimes called authority), derived from the hierarchy and directed mostly at students ("we will have a test on Friday"); (2) coercive power, threats to go directly to the board of education or the newspapers with a complaint, (3) expert power, specialized academic knowledge, (4) reward power, expressions of praise or appreciation, (5) referent power, charismatic or friendship behavior with which others can identify.

In short, the researchers found that teachers and administrators tend to make decisions within what might be described as "protected pockets of autonomy." These pockets are incorporated in decision-making spheres of influence. The spheres and pockets of autonomy have limits placed upon them by a network of constraints. The sources of autonomy can be rooted in either the formal hierarchical structure, work space isolation, or the

informal application of power.

Given the existence of spheres of influence, the next research question becomes: "What are the types of decisions that are made by the bureaucrats and the semi-professionals in their own domains?"

### Decision-Making Categories

The researchers identified five categories of decisions being made in the Sherwood Schools.

1. Allocation Decisions: the distribution of human and material resources in the school.
2. Security Decisions: the preservation of physical and psychological safety of faculty and students.
3. Boundary Decisions: the determination of who controls the passage of materials, information, and people from one domain to another, within the school or between the school and the community.
4. Evaluation Decisions: the passing of judgment on the quality of performance (teacher or student).
5. Instructional Decisions: The determination of classroom teaching-learning processes and content.

A close inspection of each category in the Sherwood Schools revealed that some decisions within a given category fell basically within the administrators' sphere of influence, others fell within the teachers' sphere and others fell within the overlap area we called the "contested zone" (as illustrated in Figure 1). The material dealing with decisional categories reported in this section of the paper was drawn principally from the high schools, although the same categories were also found in the lower grades. Examples of the five categories, some of which had subcategories, are presented in Figure 2. No attempt is made in this paper to identify all the decisions found in each sphere, only a single example is presented as an illustration. (For a complete presentation of decisions in all categories

see Brown, 1976:Ch. 4).

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Insert Figure 2 about here

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Having examined categories of decisions, the research questions becomes: "Do the teachers or administrators act in concert on decisions falling within their own sphere of influence?"

#### Subcoalitions Within Spheres of Influence

As depicted thus far, a school is made up of differing decisional environments that form the bases of spheres of influence. However, even within their own domains, the teachers or administrators in the Sherwood Schools typically were not observed as acting in concert. Instead, they could be seen acting in small groups (sometimes merging into larger groups) which would struggle to achieve some objective (e.g., "We must improve our relations with parents," or "We need more bilingual teachers").

Providing insight into this perspective, Cyert and March (1963:27) write, "Let us view the organization as a coalition. It is a coalition of individuals, some of them organized into subcoalitions." The subcoalition members can usually be identified over a specified, relatively brief, period of time or for a particular decision. Over a more extended period of time, Cyert and March argue, we can usually identify certain classes of decisions that are treated by ongoing subcoalitions.

These subcoalitions seem to share with one another only those ambiguous goals which act as public flags with great symbolic value. Goals such as "to develop an awareness of the values inherent in our democratic society and loyalty to its underlying principles" serve as symbolic cement which

holds the organization together. In an informal sense, however, the researchers observed the subcoalition members establishing their own priorities based on their own interpretation of dominant needs (e.g., client, community, teacher, school, etc.). In any given school the researchers might observe, for example, one group of teachers trying to change the reading program, a second concerned with improving working conditions, and a third trying to block changes in the testing program. The impact on school policy and procedures by the different subcoalitions differed due to a number of variables, such as the alliances any given subcoalition could form, the extent of outside pressure existing in support or opposition to the goal of the subcoalition, the visibility of the issue, and the relative power of the subcoalition.

After identifying the presence of various subcoalitions in the Sherwood Schools, the researchers set out to understand the nature of their organization and the role they play in the decision-making process. Information concerning these issues are reported in the next section and will be drawn principally from the elementary school level.

#### Formally Organized Subcoalitions

At the elementary and secondary school levels, the researchers found formal and informal subcoalitions which were organized around long standing "durable interests" ("We are always looking for ways to build strong community relations") or episodic "troublesome issues" ("It hit the fan last week regarding a reading assignment"). We found the subcoalitions generally had focus, task direction, an identifiable membership (although some members were rather fluid in participation), a rough but generally understood set of norms and expectations, a sense of legitimacy, sources of power, and a set

of constraints limiting the arena of action.

At the elementary level, for example, we typically found three types of formally organized subcoalitions: the lower grade teachers, who were concerned primarily with the formation of student-role norms and social values; the upper grade teachers, who were primarily concerned with the formation of basic skills; and the standing committees, such as the guidance committee and the student activities committee. At the elementary level there usually weren't enough administrators to form formally organized subcoalitions, but such groups could be found at the high school level. These formally organized subcoalitions played active roles in the life of their schools, meeting more or less on a regular basis and making choices on issues that involved their specified decision-making domains.

#### Informally Organized Subcoalitions

Gross and Trask (1960:173-74) have pointed out that:

. . . important value issues arise over such questions as the respective responsibilities of the home and the school, the definition of a "good education," the teaching of moral values, the school's obligations to typical and atypical children, and the questioning of the status quo. On each of these and other value questions, there may be contradictory points of view among school personnel and between school personnel and the community.

In the Sherwood Schools, informal subcoalitions could be seen forming around these "contradictory points of view." Unlike the formal subcoalitions, the informal systems had an ebb and flow quality about them. For a time an informal subcoalition would be highly visible, influential, and active; and then drop from sight only to return again at a later date. Informal subcoalitions seemed to emerge where formal subcoalitions were unwilling, unprepared, unstructured, or unauthorized to serve as the advocate or problem solving vehicle for a troublesome issue..

The researchers often observed teachers banding together in a small alliance to fight for or against such things as the implementation of a central office mandated instructional program, or an attempt by an outsider teacher association to influence decision-making at the school sites. At times subcoalitions would form and clash with one another on opposite sides of an issue. (For a more detailed analysis of formally and informally organized subcoalitions see McKenzie, 1977: Ch. 4.)

The types of informally organized subcoalitions which played an active part in shaping processes of school governance and decision-making are as follows.

Mini-Teams. These teams, usually composed of an informal alliance of two or three teachers, typically formed to treat a specific emergent problem or task and dissolved when it had been resolved or the participants tired of the effort. Mini-teams were often observed doing things as developing new curricular units, writing behavioral objectives, or pressuring the principal for more resources.

Administrative-Oriented Alliances. Frequently issues would surface which placed in direct confrontation in a position held by the majority of teachers and the position held by administrators, such as a problem dealing with the appropriate use of teacher planning time, the unionization of teachers, or the need for increased articulation between academic programs. On those issues where administrators were taking a strong position, an alliance of administrators and those teachers who had aspirations of becoming administrators would often form as a temporary subcoalition.

Equal Education Opportunity Subcoalitions. Each school had an informal subcoalition organized around an identification with special concerns about the ethnic minority communities. The subcoalitions became active when such issues arose as the need for subject materials treating Black or



Chicano history, the consequences of student tracking, or the importance of hiring more minority teachers.

Outer-Directed Teacher Subcoalitions. A subcoalition of teachers would often emerge and become active when "outside" (e.g., central office, district-wide, teachers' union) issues would emerge, such as salaries and benefits, teacher selection, teacher evaluation, or additional time demands on after school activities.

Teacher-Pedagogical Alliances. Most schools had informal teacher alliances based on shared beliefs about teaching. These subcoalitions were organized around a philosophical-pedagogical orientation regarding what should be taught in schools and how it should be taught. In specific, the researchers frequently encountered conservative-essentialist teachers banding together and arguing about such things as declining academic standards, the need for more basic education, and a stricter approach to student discipline. The liberal-progressive teacher subcoalition, on the other hand, pressed concerns pertaining to such things as the negative effects of "classifying" students through test scores, the need for "relevant and meaningful" educational experiences, and the importance of building a sense of self-discipline within the students (as opposed to externally enforced discipline).

Administrator-Specialist-Teacher Alliances. Temporary alliances of specific teachers, administrators, and specialists would sometimes emerge. These alliances were typically formed as a base from which to influence the central office regarding problems which affected the whole school, such as a pending program funding cut, or the need to obtain additional specialized teachers.

The list of formal and informal subcoalitions identified here is not

all inclusive nor were these same subcoalitions found in every school. The significant point is that specific, identifiable subcoalitions representing specific interests were found in all schools. Some of these subcoalitions were relatively enduring while others formed and broke apart with the rise and decline of specific issues. Also, interestingly enough, specific administrators and teachers would at times form informal alliances that would bridge their own spheres of influence to tackle an emergent school-wide problem.

With respect to the process of governance and decision-making, the next significant question becomes: "How does the mix of formal and informal subcoalitions serve to retard or propel the school in its intended direction?"

#### Differentiation and Integration of Subcoalitions

Open system theory, in contrast to classical hierarchical theory and social system theory, places special emphasis on the dependency relationship an organization has with its surrounding environment (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Contingency theory, an extension of open system theory, stresses that shifting external and/or internal environmental demands requires an organization to be flexible enough to adapt its own structures and processes to meet the new demands (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967, 1969).

Thus, as the environment of a school moves from placid to turbulent (Emery & Trist, 1965) on any given issue, such as declining reading scores, increased truancy, or decreasing tax revenues, a corresponding shift must take place in the school's activities to treat the requirements of the new trend. For example, when one of the high schools of our study detected a demographic shift in its community, and hence in the student population (open system theory), the content and procedures of the guidance program were

modified accordingly (contingency theory) to provide the desired new services more effectively.

According to the precepts of contingency theory, if an organization is to have a capability to respond readily to changing environmental demands, it must be composed of subunits (e.g., departments, subsystems, subcoalitions) that are both differentiated and integrated. Differentiated subsystems (subcoalitions) work on different problems or different parts of the same problem the organization has encountered. Each subsystem has its own tasks (e.g., obtain federal grants, improve learning diagnostic capabilities), its own time frame (e.g., long term, short term), and its own structural characteristics (e.g., formal or informal sanctions, work norms).

Integration refers to the quality and intensity of the collaboration that exists between the subsystems that are necessary to achieve a relative unity of effort that facilitates a successful response to a changing environment. Close integration of subsystems usually requires such organizational characteristics as multi-directional communication channels, flexible leadership styles, decentralized decision-making. Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) have found in their studies that those organizations which exhibit a high order of differentiation and integration among subsystems were more effective in adjusting their activities to meet the requirements of a shifting environment.

Only in recent years has contingency theory made its initial inroads into the field of education (Tyler, 1973; Derr & Gabarro, 1972, Hanson & Brown, 1977). The data of our research suggest that in schools where the subcoalitions are not integrated in any meaningful way, but tend to work against one another, the schools make minimal progress toward resolving their special problems. In one of the secondary schools, for example, two strong pedagogical alliances emerged among teachers of different pedagogical per-

suasions regarding a school policy permitting unstructured student time. The two subcoalitions clashed over the policy for such a period of time that a meaningful test of the concept was never carried out.

However, the researchers encountered many situations where the formal and informal subcoalitions became highly differentiated and integrated and responded successfully to a very intense environmental pressure. Such was the case with efforts to initiate an individualized instruction program. When the policy of implementing individualized instruction was announced, various formal and informal subcoalitions took charge of different parts of the task. One mini-team took a leadership role in developing behavioral objectives, a multicultural subcoalition worked on individualized learning experiences for minority group children, the specialists worked out student evaluation programs, the central office specialists held workshops for teachers, and parent groups were invited to participate in program planning and classroom activities.

In terms of contingency theory as it reflects on the implementation of the individualized instruction program, the various subcoalitions became highly integrated and differentiated. In fact, it might be said that the various subcoalitions joined to form a much larger coalition that drew together in a cooperative effort most of the administrators, specialists and teachers.

It is important to note that the leadership roles of the principals typically played important parts in the levels of differentiation and integration of subcoalitions achieved in schools. The researchers concluded that those school administrators who were most knowledgeable about the informal coalitions and could work through them instead of against them tended to have the most success in implementing the new academic programs.

In short, these administrators were able to build a large coalition out of several smaller subcoalitions.

Granting the existence of bureaucratic and semi-professional spheres of influence in schools, the question becomes: "How are those decisions made where these two spheres of influence overlap?"

### The Negotiated Order

The spheres of influence do not, of course, come as neatly separate entities. As Figure 1 illustrates, a considerable amount of overlap exists between the spheres and this area is referred to as the "contested zone." Figure 2 illustrates the type of decisions that fall in the contested zone, ranging from setting the master schedule to campus supervision.

Key issues with respect to the contested zone revolve around such questions as: how decisions are made, how collaborative actions are structured and how problems are solved. A process must be worked out which insures a relatively clear understanding by all parties regarding what must be done, who is to do it, and when. The process must insure minimum levels of conflict and thus insure sufficient order "to get the job done."

The hospital literature is useful in providing some insight into this important issue because hospitals also have a "contested" zone between professionals and bureaucrats. In a case study by Strauss et al. (1963) they write that in the contested zone ". . . professionals and nonprofessionals are implicated together in a great web of negotiation." Thus when a problem flares up ". . . a complicated process of negotiation, of bargaining, of give-and-take necessarily begins," and the authors refer to the outcome as the "negotiated order."

The negotiations in schools are informal rather than formal virtually

everyone participates when their interests are involved. When a troublesome situation arises for an individual or group, they seek to spin a network of negotiation around it. Teachers negotiated with administrators for a different approach to handling tough discipline cases, administrators negotiated with teachers for more parent contact, students negotiated with teachers for less homework, teachers negotiated with janitors for replacing a burnt out lightbulb now instead of tomorrow, department chairpersons negotiated with office secretaries for typing a specific letter ahead of all the others waiting on the pile, and so on.

The agreements made in the contested zone were usually temporary and fragile, subject to renegotiation the next time the same issue surfaced. Because of the constant flow of small and large tasks that emerged in the contested zone, the teachers and administrators were constantly shifting their energies and efforts to new problems and negotiations that enabled them to get through each day. The end product of the ongoing negotiation process was to bring an acceptable degree of order and stability to a zone of potential disruption and discord.

### Loosely Coupled Systems

An additional concept that helps provide insight into the negotiated order is Karl Weick's (1976) notion of "loosely coupled systems." Weick (1976:3) writes that the concept

... intends to convey the image that coupled events are responsive, but that each event also preserves its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness. Thus, in the case of an educational organization, it may be the case that the counselor's office is loosely coupled to the principal's office. The image is that the principal and the counselor are somehow attached, but that each retains some identity and separateness and that their attachment may be circumscribed, infrequent, weak in its mutual effects, unimportant, and/or slow to respond.

As pointed out earlier in this paper, the separate spheres of influence maintain degrees of autonomy and decisional discretion. Thus, the spheres have at times "loose coupling," which suggests they are tied together weakly or infrequently with qualified interdependence.

The researchers observed that a large measure of the coupling takes place in the contested zone of the school and the firmer (clearly established and agreed upon) the negotiated order the tighter the coupling and vice versa. The researchers found that the tightness in the intersphere coupling between the teachers and the administrators varies in specific situations, and frequently the membership of these two bodies find themselves acting in concert where they might normally act with relative autonomy.

Primary situations signaling a tightening of the intersphere coupling are as follows: (1) when responding to legal decisions, such as modifications in the language programs in accord with new state laws; (2) under conditions of crisis, such as the time the new sex education program in a secondary school came under fire from an active group of parents; (3) in situations where outside evaluation is eminent, such as the pending arrival of an accreditation team; (4) when the potential for a negative community reaction exists, such as the careful selection of instructional materials so that they do not offend any ethnic population; and (5) when time is extremely limited, such as the approach of a federal grant application deadline.

Given the lack of a "command structure" bridging the semi-professional-bureaucratic interface, the question becomes: "Are the teachers and administrators willing to give one another complete discretion of action in their own sphere of influence?"

### Informal Management Between Spheres

The researchers found that just because the administrators could not directly control many decisions and activities that fell within the teachers' sphere of influence, by no means did the administrators give up trying to influence them indirectly. Administrators and teachers in all of the schools had developed what might be called tactics of informal management, some of which were direct and open while others were indirect and sub rosa.

Administrators Informally Managing Teachers. As an illustration of management tactics, some administrators were very adept at manipulating the teachers sense of an abstract concept they called "Professionalism." Administrators were often heard telling teachers that "you should not do that because it is not the professional thing to do," or "we must start doing (X) activity in the classroom because it is best for kids," or "the parents want it." When the teachers accepted the administrators' abstract definition of the situation, then they were responding to informal control procedures. In other words, the administrators had devised informal means of tightening the coupling between the spheres of influence.

Administrators from time to time informally influenced teachers by subtle and sometimes unsubtle reminders of the teacher evaluation process. Also, administrators generally were "keepers of intrinsic rewards." By selectively praising some teachers in open gatherings of faculty members, the administrators were frequently able to direct others seeking such rewards in a desired direction.

Teachers Informally Managing Administrators. Teachers in the Sherwood Schools were also observed using informal tactics of managing administrator



behavior. At times it would be very undramatic, such as a single teacher asking the principal for additional resources for a specific class. At other times, however, it could get very dramatic, such as when a group of teachers marched into the principal's office and demanded a greater voice in the selection of new personnel and threatened to march down to the central office and see the superintendent if they did not get their way.

A common occurrence was for teachers to form coalitions among subgroups and then take collective stands on an issue in faculty meetings. The sense of unanimity among teachers often made a convincing impression on the administrators. Edwin Bridges (1970:12) has captured the essence of the tactics of informal management with his discussion of the administrator as a "pawn" of subordinates. He describes three such conditions: (1) pawn without his knowledge, (2) pawn against his will, and (3) pawn by choice.

However, attempts at informal management between spheres of influence were not always well received, and frequently the members of each sphere found themselves actively protecting their domain from outside intrusion.

#### Teachers Defending Their Domains

As Figure 1 illustrates, the teachers often made conscious efforts to protect their sphere of influence. Corwin (1973:165) observes:

The professional employee . . . denies the principle that his work always must be supervised by administrators and controlled by laymen. Because of his training, pressures from his colleagues, and his dedication to clients, the professionally oriented person considers himself competent enough to control his own work. Hence, he sometimes must be disobedient toward his supervisors precisely in order to improve his proficiency and to maintain standards of client welfare--especially if there are practices that jeopardize the best interests of students.

Depending on whether the teachers viewed the administrators' attempts at intervention as consistent with their own objectives, individuals and

subcoalitions of teachers tended to form in support or opposition to the intervention. Tactics of teacher resistance through argument typically fell into the following patterns: (1) professionalism, "We know what is best for our kids," (2) past success, "I have been successfully using my technique for fifteen years and see no reason to change now," (3) predicted failure, "We know several schools where that was tried and it didn't work," (4) planning time, "We would need considerable released time to prepare for this; and (7) added cost, "We would require a lot of expensive equipment for such a project."

One of the more interesting defensive tactics used by teachers the researchers called the "pocket veto." The concept of pocket veto is used because it becomes manifest through inaction, in other words, a lack of response to requests or mandates for action or change. Many teachers were magnificent in making it appear as though they were in complete support of an administrator's formal or informal intervention while all the time they were ignoring its every intent. It is important to note that these teachers typically were not lazy or incompetent; they genuinely saw themselves as the guardians of the classroom and had to hold the line against what they considered to be fads and "classroom gimmicks" that enjoy a short burst of popularity across the country and then fade away.

Corwin (1974a:228) identifies a wider range of tactics that have become associated with the teacher militancy movement, and they include ". . . political lobbying, campaigns in school board municipal elections, public criticism of boards of education, day-to-day disputes with administrators, resignations, work slowdowns, professional holidays, mass resignations, withholding signed contracts, and blacklisting of uncooperative school districts."

### Administrators Defending Their Domains.

The researchers found that different school administrators used different protective tactics for defending their domains, but all did in fact employ some tactics. Administrators had one advantage over teachers in that administrators could directly say no to the teachers' requests. The formal hierarchical roles of administrators permitted that type of response. However, administrators seemed to avoid direct negative responses to the teachers' requests because administrators usually wanted to appear supportive of the teacher role whenever possible.

The administrators' tactics of defending their domains against a perceived outside intrusion attempt (e.g., proposals, demands) fell into the following patterns: (1) ignore it, decide not to decide and hope the proposal dies a natural death; (2) delay it, leave the proposal off the agenda of the faculty meeting; (3) study it, form a study committee and pack it with sympathetic members; (4) buck it, pass the buck upward and claim the superintendent won't support such a proposal; (5) publicly support it, privately use a pocket veto.

As was the case with the teachers, in taking actions as these, the administrators were generally not seen by themselves, or the researchers, as unmotivated or self-seeking. They typically had in mind what they considered to be in the best interests of the school.

### Conclusion

With respect to contemporary issues of school governance, Corwin (1974a: 238-39) has observed:

Most administrators were trained in an era when the problems of classroom teaching could be reduced (so it was thought) to the psychology of individual learners and when the central administrative problems seemed to revolve around efficient

internal management. The current generation of teachers, by contrast, has been reared in a sociological era characterized by rapid social change and group conflict. Administration has become largely a matter of managing an increasingly complex balance of forces from outside as well as from within the schools. Many school administrators still in positions of authority today are not trained to cope with these problems.

Corwin's view adds to the argument that our conceptual frameworks are proving to be less than satisfactory in their utility toward useful description, analysis, and prediction of behavior and events in educational organizations.

This paper has resulted in the construction of an organizational model which draws useful concepts and ideas from the three conventional frameworks of classical hierarchical theory, social system theory, and open system/contingency theory. Specific attention is given to the interaction of the bureaucrats and semi-professionals in schools.

The process of decision-making is a derivative of many forces and takes place in many sectors of the school. It takes place as a unilateral activity conducted in the confines of sheltered spheres of influence. It also takes place as the product of informal negotiations where there is an overlap of interests between the bureaucrats and semi-professionals.

Within the spheres of influence there are formal subcoalitions which have their own objectives, members, norms, sources of power and senses of legitimacy. As the school's environment shifts between placid and turbulent, problem situations arise and different subcoalitions emerge to involve themselves in the ensuing decision-making. Sometimes several subcoalitions become differentiated and integrated as they take on a problem, and at other times they directly or indirectly combat one another. At times administrator and teacher subcoalitions join forces in making decisions, and thus bridge

the separate spheres of influence, while at other times they go their separate ways. The principal, by his or her awareness and skill, seems to be a key figure in whether or not the subcoalitions are moved toward differentiation and integration or whether they simply go their own ways.

Hence, school governance, defined as the control over the decision-making process, certainly is not the product of a hierarchy. Rather, school governance seems to have coalescent and disjunctive qualities at the extremes. At times control over decision-making seems to be dominated by administrators or teachers or both (within their domains) or shared (in the contested zone). In this sense governance seems to be coalescent--the work gets done, differentiation and integration exist between subcoalitions, and there are few surprises. At other times, however, struggles between spheres and/or within spheres develop, differentiation and integration of subcoalitions is negligible, and limited unity, thus predictability, surrounds the decision-making process. In this context school governance seems to be relatively disjunctive with the consequence of being unable to respond effectively to the changing demands of the community.

Certainly, the complexities of school governance are enormous and also extend far beyond the range of this paper. However, trying to understand issues of governance and decision-making as a process taking place within an arena of interacting spheres of influence seems to be an encouraging approach to a complex problem.

FIG. 1 INTERACTING SPHERES MODEL

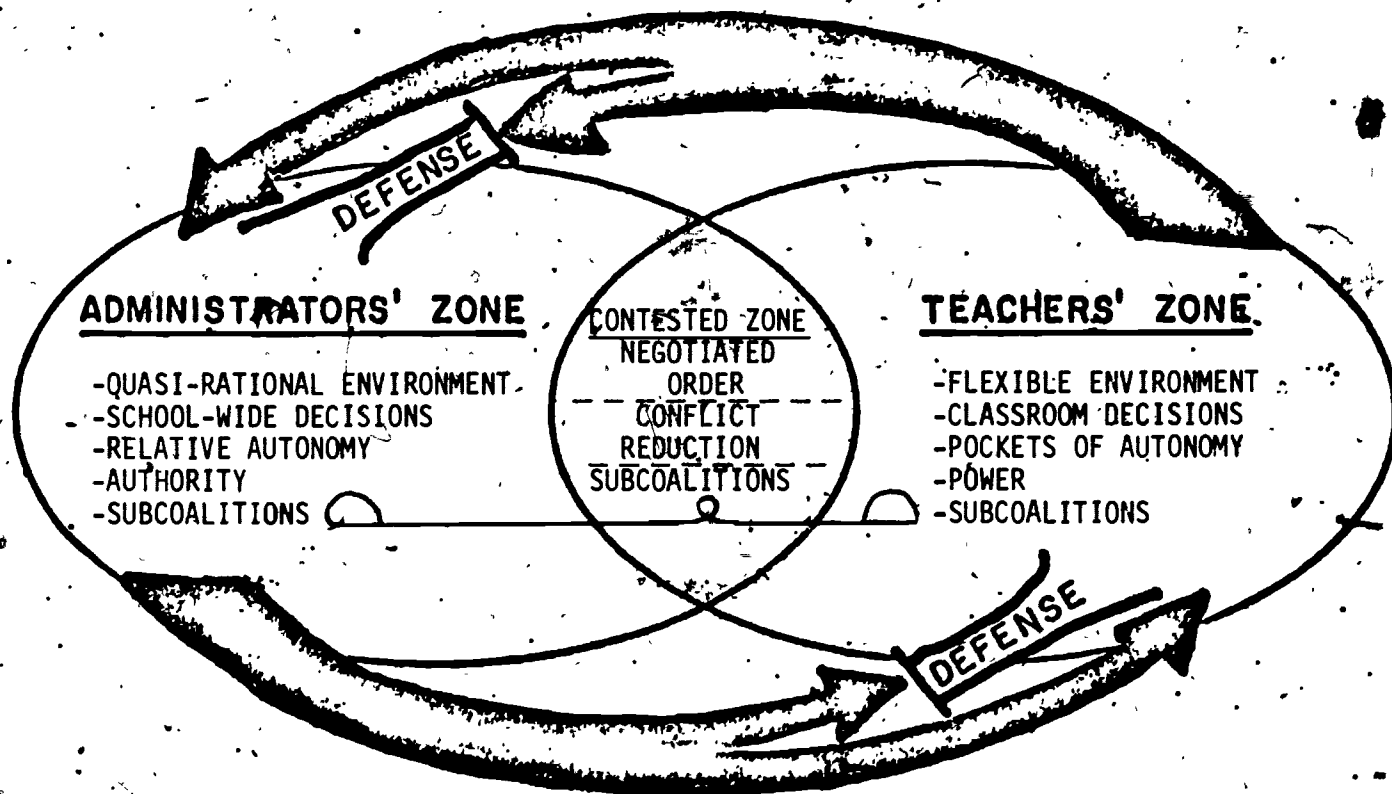


FIGURE 2

## DECISION-MAKING CATEGORIES

Administrators' Sphere	Contested Sphere	Teachers' Sphere
<u>Allocation Decisions</u>		
Budgeting: School-wide budget responsibility	Special project money utilization (e.g., stoves vs. football equipment)	Specific department spending (e.g., books, field trips)
Scheduling: Use of school facilities	Master schedule preparation	Student placement in honors classes
Personnel: Classified or administrative employment	Certificated employment	Selection of department heads
<u>Security Decisions</u>		
Protection: Use of police on campus	Campus supervision	In-class safety
Attendance: Legal attendance policies	Campus attendance control	In-class attendance procedures
Discipline: Campus discipline	Referred discipline problem cases	In-class discipline measures
<u>Boundary Decisions</u>		
Represent school in community activities	Dealing with parents on campus	Teacher ties with union activities
<u>Evaluation Decisions</u>		
Probationary teacher performance	Tenured teacher performance	Student performance
<u>Instructional Decisions</u>		
Teaching-Learning: Emergent crisis over controversial subjects	Large scale innovation	Classroom instruction
Curricular decisions: Mandated subjects	Special programs (e.g., bilingual, accelerated)	Course content

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