Educational Administration Quarterly
Vol. 30, No. 2 (May 1994) 214-226

Organizations or Communities? Changing the Metaphor Changes the Theory

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Educational administration must develop an identity of its own. The basic theories and root metaphors of the field center on organization, whose assumptions include legitimacy, hierarchy, and self-interest. This conceptualization makes great demands on management and leadership for teachers and principals. Families, communities, and friendship networks are examples of collections of people which are different from those of organization. If educational administration were to understand schools as communities, it would need to address new questions, such as different ties for connecting staff, students, and families. Our understanding of authority and leadership would also shift; in communities the sources of authority for leadership are embedded in shared ideas. Finally, a new theory of school as community and new conceptions of administration are preferable to theoretical pluralism.

A major problem facing educational administration today is that as a field of inquiry and practice it is essentially characterless. It has been too receptive to influences from too many other areas of knowledge and too many other disciplines. As a result, educational administration has little or no identity of its own, with little or no sense of what it is, what it means, where it is going, or even why it exists. Further, I believe that educational administration will remain characterless as long as it continues to import its mindscapes and models, concepts and definitions rather than inventing them. As long as it imports, educational administration will remain on the periphery of both social science and education, forever belonging to neither. You can't borrow character, you have to create it.

Calling educational administration characterless hits hard and hurts deep. Like most of you, I am vested enough in our field so that as educational

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Editor's Note: This was an invited address by Division A of the American Educational Research Association and was delivered at its Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, April 13, 1993.

administration goes, so go I. I feel, nonetheless, that the time has come for us to take a hard look at the basic theories and root metaphors that shape the way we understand schools and that shape the way we understand leadership and management within them.

The metaphor of choice is organization.[1] Schools are understood as formal organizations, professional organizations, organic organizations and other kinds of organizations. And what goes on in them is understood as organizational behavior. It is from organizational theory and behavior that educational administration borrows its fundamental frames for thinking about how schools should be structured and coordinated, how compliance within them should be achieved, what leadership is, and how it works. From management theory, itself a derivative of organizational theory, educational administration has borrowed its definitions of quality, productivity and efficiency, and its strategies to achieve them. It is from economics, the parent of organizational theory, that educational administration has borrowed its theories of human nature and human motivation—theories built on the simple premise that as human beings, we are motivated by self-interest and thus seek to maximize our gains and cut our losses.

The phrase "to organize" provides a good clue as to how the metaphor organization forces us to think about schools. To organize means to arrange things into a coherent whole. First there has to be a reason for organizing. Then a careful study needs to be done of each of the parts to be organized. This study involves grouping the parts mentally into some kind of logical order. Next a plan needs to be developed that enables the elements to be arranged according to the desired scheme. Typically this is a linear process. As the plan is being followed, it becomes important to monitor progress and make corrections as needed. Finally, when the work is completed, the organizational arrangements are evaluated in terms of original intentions. These principles seem to apply whether we are thinking about organizing our bureau drawers or our schools.

Schools must be considered legitimate in the eyes of their relevant publics. Schools, as formal organizations, seek legitimacy by appearing "rational." John Meyer (1984) points out that as organizations, schools must develop explicit management structures and procedures that give a convincing account that the proper means-ends chains are in place to accomplish stated purposes. Organizing schools into departments and grade levels, developing job descriptions, constructing curriculum plans, and putting into place explicit instructional delivery systems of various kinds are all examples of attempts to communicate that the school knows what it is doing. Further, school administrators must convince everyone that they are in control. They do this by using rules and regulations, monitoring and supervising teachers,

and other regulatory means. Teachers, in turn, develop similar schemes in efforts to control students.

There is an assumption in organizations that hierarchy equals expertise. Those higher in the hierarchy are presumed to know more about teaching, learning, and other matters of schooling than those lower, and thus each person in a school is evaluated by the person at the next higher level. Not only does the metaphor organization encourage us to presume that hierarchy equals expertise, it encourages us to assume that hierarchy equals moral superiority. As teachers, for example, move up the ranks not only is it presumed that they know more about teaching and learning and other matters of schooling but that they care more as well. Those higher in the hierarchy are trusted with more responsibility, more authority, and less supervision.

Though initially organizations are creatures of people, they tend over time to become separated from people, functioning independently in pursuit of their own goals and purposes. This separation has to be bridged somehow. Ties have to exist that connect people to their work, and ties have to exist that connect people to others with whom they work. In schools as organizations the ties that connect us to others and to our work are contractual. Each person acts separately in negotiating a settlement with others and in negotiating a settlement with the organization itself that best meets her or his needs.

Self-interest is assumed to be the prime motivator in these negotiations. In order for schools to get teachers to do what needs to be done, rewards and punishments must be traded for compliance. Teachers who teach the way they are supposed to get good evaluations. Good evaluations lead to better assignments and improved prospects for promotion. Teachers who are cooperative are in the loop of the school's information system, and get picked to attend workshops and conferences. A similar pattern of trading rewards and punishments for compliance exists within classrooms and characterizes the broader relationships that exist between students and their schools.

Both management and leadership are very important in schools understood as organizations. Since motivation comes from the outside, someone has to propose and monitor the various trades that are needed. In the classroom it is the teacher and in the school it is the principal who has this job. Both are overworked as a result. Leadership inevitably takes the form of bartering. Principals and teachers and teachers and students strike bargains within which principals give to teachers and teachers give to students something they want in exchange for compliance. As a result everyone becomes connected to their work for calculated reasons. Students behave and study as long as they get desired rewards. Teachers respond for the same reasons. When rewards are no longer available or are no longer desired, both teachers and students give less effort in return.

Not all groupings of individuals, however, can be characterized as organizations. Families, communities, friendship networks, and social clubs are examples of collections of people that are different. Because of these differences, the practices that make sense in schools understood as organizations just don't fit. Metaphors have a way of creating realities. Because different metaphors create different realities, truth is always relative and related to its generative metaphor. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain, truth is both subjective and objective. It is always subjective between conceptual systems and only objective within conceptual systems. Changing the metaphor for the school from organization to community changes what is true about how schools should be organized and run, about what motivates teachers and students, and about what leadership is, and how it should be practiced.

In communities, for example, the connection of people to purposes and the connections among people are not based on contracts but on commitments. Communities are socially organized around relationships and the felt interdependencies that nurture them. Instead of being tied together and tied to purposes by bartering arrangements, this social structure bonds people together in special ways and binds them to concepts, images, and values that comprise a shared idea structure. This bonding and binding are the defining characteristics of schools as communities. Communities are defined by their centers of values, sentiments, and beliefs that provide the needed conditions for creating a sense of *we* from a collection of *I*s.

Life in organizations and life in communities are different in both quality and kind. In communities, we create our social lives with others who have intentions similar to ours. In organizations, relationships are constructed for us by others and become codified into a system of hierarchies, roles, and role expectations. Communities too are confronted with issues of control. But instead of relying on external control, communities rely more on norms, purposes, values, professional socialization, collegiality, and natural interdependence. Once established, the ties of community become substitutes for formal systems of supervision, evaluation and staff development; for management and organizational schemes that seek to coordinate what teachers do and how they work together; and indeed for leadership itself.

The ties of community also redefine how certain ideas are to be understood. Take empowerment, for instance. In organizations, empowerment is typically understood as having something to do with shared decision making, site based management, and similar schemes. Within communities, however, empowerment of teachers, students, and others focuses less on rights, discretion, and freedom and more on the commitments, obligations and duties that people feel toward each other and toward the school. Collegiality in organizations results from organizational arrangements (variations of team teach-

ing, for example) that force people to work together and from the team building skills of principals. In communities, collegiality comes from within. Community members are connected to each other because of felt interdependencies, mutual obligations, and other emotional and normative ties.

There is no recipe for building community. No correlates exist to implement. There is no list available to follow, and there is no package for trainers to deliver. If we were to change the metaphor for schools from organizations to community, and if we were to begin the process of community building in schools, then we would have to invent our own practice of community. This would require that we create a new theory of educational administration and a new practice of educational administration—a theory and practice more in tune with children and young adults; sandboxes and crayons; storybooks and interest centers; logarithms and computer programs; believing and caring; professional norms and practices; values and commitments; and other artifacts of teaching and learning. We would need to create a theory and practice of educational administration more in tune with meaning and significance, and the shared values and ideas that connect people differently. And these new connections would require that we invent new sources of authority for what we do, a new basis for leadership—themes I will return to later.

Political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, and theologians all use the word community but mean different things by its use. For our purposes I offer the following definition: Communities are collections of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together bound to a set of shared ideas and ideals. This bonding and binding is tight enough to transform them from a collection of *Is* into a collective *we*. As a *we*, members are part of a tightly knit web of meaningful relationships. This *we* usually shares a common place and over time comes to share common sentiments and traditions that are sustaining.

The theory of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* can help us to understand this definition and the forms it might take as schools become communities. Gemeinschaft translates to community and gesellschaft to society. Writing in 1887, Ferdinand Tönnies (1957) used the terms to describe the shifting values and orientations that were taking place in life as we moved first from a hunting and gathering society, then to an agricultural society, and then on to an industrial society. Each of the societal transformations he described resulted in a shift away from gemeinschaft toward gesellschaft, away from a vision of life as sacred community toward a more secular society.

Tönnies's basic argument was that as society moves toward the gesellschaft end of the continuum, community values are replaced by contractual ones. Among any collection of people, for example, social relationships don't just happen; they are willed. Individuals associate with each other for reasons,

and the reasons why they decide to associate are important. In gemeinschaft, natural will is the motivating force. Individuals relate to each other because doing so has its own intrinsic meaning and significance. There is no tangible goal or benefit in mind for any of the parties to the relationship. In gesellschaft, rational will is the motivating force. Individuals relate to each other to reach some goal, to gain some benefit. Without this benefit the relationship ends. In the first instance, the ties among people are thick and laden with symbolic meaning. They are moral ties. In the second instance, the ties among people are thin and instrumental. They are calculated ties.

The modern formal organization is an example of gesellschaft. Within the organization, relationships are formal and distant having been prescribed by roles and expectations. Circumstances are evaluated by universal criteria as embodied in policies, rules, and protocols. Acceptance is conditional. The more a person cooperates with the organization and achieves for the organization, the more likely she or he will be accepted. Relationships are competitive. Those who achieve more are valued more by the organization. Not all concerns of members are legitimate. Legitimate concerns are bounded by roles rather than needs. Subjectivity is frowned upon. Rationality is prized. Self-interest prevails. It is these characteristics that undergird our present policies with respect to how schools are organized, how teaching and learning takes place, how students are evaluated, how supervision is practiced, how principals and students are motivated and rewarded, and what leadership is and how it works.

Community, according to Tönnies, exists in three forms: community by kinship, of place, and of mind. Community by kinship emerges from the special kinds of relationships among people that create a unity of being similar to that found in families and other closely knit collections of people. Community of place emerges from the sharing of a common habitat or locale. This sharing of place with others for sustained periods of time creates a special identity and a shared sense of belonging. Community of mind emerges from the binding of people to common goals, shared values, and shared conceptions of being and doing. Together the three represent webs of meaning that tie people together by creating a sense of belonging and a common identity.

If educational administration were to understand schools as communities, it would need to address questions such as the following: What can be done to increase the sense of kinship, neighborliness and collegiality among the faculty of a school? How can the faculty become more of a professional community where everyone cares about each other and helps each other to learn together, and to lead together? What kinds of relationships need to be cultivated with parents that will enable them to be included in this emerging community? How can the web of relationships that exists among teachers

and between teachers and students be defined so that they embody community? How can teaching and learning settings be arranged so that they are more family-like? How can the school itself, as a collection of families, be more like a neighborhood? What are the shared values and commitments that enable the school to become a community of mind? How will these values and commitments become practical standards that can guide the lives community members want to lead, what community members learn and how, and how community members treat each other? What are the patterns of mutual obligations and duties that emerge in the school as community is achieved?

Though not cast in stone, community understandings have enduring qualities. They are resilient enough to survive the passage of members through the community over time. They are taught to new members, celebrated in customs and rituals, and embodied as standards that govern life in the community. As suggested by Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton (1985), enduring understandings create a fourth form of community—community of memory. In time, communities by kinship, of place, and of mind become communities of memory.

Talcott Parsons (1951) used Tönnies's concepts of gemeinschaft and gesellschaft to describe different types of social relationships. He argued that any relationship can be described as a pattern comprising five pairs of variables that represent choices between alternative value orientations. The parties to this relationship, for example, have to make decisions as to how they will orient themselves to each other. When taken together, these decisions represent a pattern giving rise to Parsons's now famous "pattern variables." The pairs of variables that comprise this pattern are now familiar to us:

- Affective—affective neutrality
- Collective orientation—self-orientation
- Particularism—universalism
- Ascription—achievement
- Diffuseness—specificity

In schools, for example, principals, teachers and students have to make decisions as to how they will perform their respective roles in relationship to others. Teachers have to decide: Will relationships with students be more that of a professional expert who treats students as if they were clients (affective neutrality)? or, will relationships be more that of a parent with students treated as if they were family members (affective)? Will students be given equal treatment in accordance with uniform standards, rules, and regulations (universalism)? Or, will students be treated more preferentially and individ-

ually (particularism)? Will role relationships and job descriptions narrowly define specific topics for attention and discussion (specificity)? Or, will relationships be considered unbounded by roles and thus more inclusive and holistic (diffuseness)? Will students have to earn the right to be regarded as "good" and to maintain their standing in the school (achievement)? Or, will students be accepted completely, simply because they have enrolled in the school (ascription)? Do we decide that a certain distance needs to be maintained in order for professional interests and concerns to remain uncompromised (self-orientation)? Or, do we view ourselves as part of a student-teacher *we* that compels us to work intimately with students in identifying common interests, concerns and standards for decision making (collective orientation)?

Parsons believed that the five pairs of pattern variables, when viewed as polar opposites on a continuum, can be used to evaluate the extent to which social relationships in an enterprise resemble communities or resemble more gesellschaft-like organizations. For example, though no school can be described as emphasizing one or another of the variables all the time or as never emphasizing the variables, schools can be fixed on this continuum based on the relative emphasis given to each of the polar opposites. This fixing across several pairs of variables can provide us with a kind of cultural DNA (a pattern of variables, in Parsons's language) that can be used to place the school on a gemeinschaft-gesellschaft continuum.

In addition to Parsons' five variables, two other polar opposites are worth considering: the concepts of *substantive* and *instrumental*, and those of *altruistic love* and *egocentric love*. Substantive and instrumental speak to the issue of means and ends. In organizations, a clear distinction is made between means and ends which communicates an instrumental view of human nature and society. In communities, these distinctions are blurred. Ends remain ends, but means, too, are considered ends.

Altruistic love and egocentric love address the issue of motivation. Like Tönnies, Mary Rousseau (1991) believes that the motives that bring people together are key in determining whether community will be authentically achieved. To her, it is altruistic love which is the deciding factor. Altruistic love is an expression of selfless concern for others that stems from devotion or obligation. It is more cultural than psychological. Egocentric love, more characteristic of organizations, is self-gratifying. Relationships are implicit contracts for the mutual exchange of psychological satisfactions.

Taken together, these seven pairs of variables portray different ties for connecting people to each other and for connecting them to their work. In school as community, relationships are both close and informal. Individual

circumstances count. Acceptance is unconditional. Relationships are cooperative. Concerns of members are unbounded and thus considered legitimate as long as they reflect needs. Subjectivity is okay. Emotions are legitimate. Sacrificing one's self-interest for the sake of other community members is common. Members associate with each other because doing so is valuable as an end in itself. Knowledge is valued and learned for its own sake, not just as a means to get something or to go somewhere. Children are accepted and loved because that is the way one treats community members. The bonding of relationship ties helps the school become a community by kinship and a community of place. The binding of idea ties helps the school become a community of mind. In time, these collective sentiments bring people together as a community of memory and sustain them even when they become separated from each other.

The ways in which we understand authority in schools and what we believe about leadership differ depending upon which metaphor, organization or community we accept.[2] Consider, for example, the following leadership questions: Whom should one follow? What should one follow? Why should one follow? When schools are viewed as organizations, *whom* typically means the designated leader. *What* is the leader's vision and the pattern of expectations that derive from the organization's purposes. The reason for following, the *why* question, is that the leader and the organization are able to coax compliance through the use of bureaucratic clout, motivational technology, and interpersonal skills.

When "follow me because of my position in the school and the system of roles, expectations, and rules that I represent" is the answer, schools rely on bureaucratic authority in the form of mandates, rules, regulations, job descriptions, and expectations all backed up by consequences for noncompliance. When "follow me because I will make it worth your while if you do" is the answer, schools rely on the personal authority of the leader. Followers, it is presumed, will respond to the leader's personality and to the progressive motivational environment that is provided. All the leader has to do is negotiate the right contract that exchanges need fulfillment and other benefits for cooperation and compliance.

Though bureaucratic leadership has few advocates, personal leadership is widely advocated in the educational administration literature, but there are problems with this view. For example, the underlying motivational rule behind personal leadership is "what gets rewarded gets done." Use of this rule tends to trigger its inverse—"what does not get rewarded does not get done." Hence, use of this rule tends to lead to calculated involvement. Compliance is traded for rewards as long as one perceives that the exchange is a fair one. When teachers and students perceive that rewards are no longer

worth their investments, or when they are no longer interested in the rewards being offered, they are likely to unilaterally renegotiate the contract by giving less.

Basing leadership practice on personal authority, as Haller and Strike (1986) point out, raises moral questions too. Should we follow our leaders because they know how to meet our needs, and because they are charming and fun to be with? Or should we follow our leaders because they have ideas that we find compelling? Leadership based on personal authority places glitz over substance and results in vacuous leadership practice.

In communities, the sources of authority for leadership are embedded in shared ideas. One source is moral authority in the form of obligations and duties that emerge from the bonding and binding ties of community. Another source is professional authority in the form of a commitment to virtuous practice.[3]

When bureaucratic and personal authority move to the side and moral and professional authority move to the center, our understanding of what leadership is and how it works changes. Professional and moral authority are substitutes for leadership that cast principals and teachers together into roles as followers of shared values, commitments, and ideals. This shared followership binds them into a community of mind.

Implications of community are not limited to issues of authority and leadership. With community as the theory, we would have to restructure in such a way that the school itself is not defined by brick and mortar but by ideas and relationships. Creating communities by kinship and of place, for example, will mean the dissolution of the high school, as we now know it, into several small schools rarely exceeding 300 or so students. The importance of creating sustained relationships would require that students and teachers stay together for longer periods of time. Teaching in fifty-minute snippets would have to be replaced with something else. Elementary schools would have to give serious consideration to organizing themselves into smaller and probably multiaged families. Discipline problems would no longer be based on psychological principles but moral ones. This would require abandoning such taken-for-granted notions as having explicit rules linked to clearly stated consequences that are uniformly applied in favor of the development of social contracts, constitutions, and normative codes. In-service and staff development would move from the administrative side of the ledger to the teacher side as part of teachers' ongoing commitment to practice at the edge of their craft. Extrinsic reward systems would have to disappear. The number of specialists would likely be reduced and pull-outs would no longer be common as families of teachers and students, like families of parents and children, take fuller responsibility for solving their own problems.

All of these changes would necessitate the invention of new standards of quality, new strategies for accountability, and new ways of working with people—the invention of a new educational administration, in other words. The word *invention* is key. Imported conceptions of educational administration that might make sense when schools are understood as organizations no longer make sense when the metaphor is changed to community.

I imagine that my remarks so far have raised a number of questions in your minds. Let me try to anticipate some of them: "Aren't you setting up a false dichotomy by referring to gemeinschaft and gesellschaft and by drawing extreme contrasts between communities and organizations?" No, I do not think so. The use of polar opposites along a common continuum is a strategy with a long tradition in sociology. Gemeinschaft and gesellschaft represent ideal types that do not exist in the real world in their pure forms. They are, as Weber (1949) pointed out, polar mental representations that can help us categorize and explain on the one hand and track movement along a common continuum on the other. Thus schools are never gemeinschaft *or* gesellschaft. They possess characteristics of both.

Though I believe that most schools are now too gesellschaft and that we need a realignment in favor of gemeinschaft, it is important to recognize that the gesellschaft perspective is both valuable and inescapable. We live, after all, in a gesellschaft world—a society characterized by technical-rationality, which has brought us many gains. Without gesellschaft, we would not have a successful space program or heart transplant technology. Nor would we have great universities, profitable corporations, and workable governmental systems. There would be no hope of cleaning up the environment, and, as a nation, we would not be able to defend ourselves.

Still, we need to decide which theory should dominate which spheres of our lives. Almost everyone will agree that the family, the extended family, and the neighborhood should be dominated by gemeinschaft values. The corporation, the research laboratory, and the court system, on the other hand, might well lean more toward gesellschaft values. In modern times, the school has been solidly ensconced in the gesellschaft camp with unhappy results. It's time that the school was moved from the gesellschaft side of the ledger to the gemeinschaft side.

"Why do we have to change the theory? Why not just consider community to be another kind of organization—perhaps a social or organic organization? And why reinvent educational administration? If community is just another kind of organization, all we need to do is add some practices to what we have that fit this kind of organization." Unless the root metaphor for the school is changed, I fear that whatever might be considered new with community will be understood in terms of the already established categories (Mannheim,

1940). The concept of uncertainty absorption (March & Simon, 1958), the tendency to understand new ideas in old terms, will ensure that despite some surface changes, underneath the schools and administration within them will remain exactly as they are now.

"What about theoretical pluralism? Why not develop a new theory of school as community and new conceptions of administration but not replace anything with them. Let's add community to all the other theories and models that we now have. Then, using a meta-contingency approach we can select different theories from this menu for different problems or select several theories to heighten understanding of the same problem. Isn't this inclusive approach a better way to build a theory and practice of educational administration?" No, I do not believe an inclusive approach is the way to go. To begin with, even if it did make sense to use a meta-contingency approach as long as the root metaphor for the school remains organization, we may not be studying the right thing. Root metaphors create theoretical categories that are fixed in our collective minds, and, as suggested earlier, new ideas are absorbed into the categories suggested by the metaphor organization. Applying a theory of community to schools understood underneath as organizations creates meanings, realities, and practices that are different than if the underlying theory itself were community.

The appeal of theoretical pluralism is inclusiveness. Yet it is inclusiveness that contributes to the loss of character in educational administration. Sociology does not include everything nor does medicine, architecture, or baseball. Established fields are not characterized by inclusiveness but by exclusiveness. Established fields are constructed from ideas and conceptions that come from within, not those borrowed and then patched together from the outside. Established fields make up their minds about what counts and what doesn't and they are intolerant of the latter. We need to do the same thing in educational administration. A good place to begin is by *changing* the root metaphor for schools from organization to community.

NOTES

1. The argument for changing the metaphor from organization to community is summarized from *Building Community in Schools* (Sergiovanni, 1994).

2. The discussion of sources of authority for leadership is summarized from *Moral Leadership* (Sergiovanni, 1992).

3. Among the many dimensions of virtuous practice the following, summarized from Flores (1988), MacIntyre (1981), and Noddings (1992), seem particularly important to teaching: a commitment to exemplary practice; toward valued social ends; a concern for not only one's own practice but for the practice itself. Commitment to exemplary practice means practicing at the

edge of teaching by staying abreast of new developments, researching one's practice, and trying out new approaches. It means accepting responsibility for one's own professional development. Toward valued social ends means placing oneself in service to students and parents and to the school and its purposes. It requires the embodiment of the caring ethic in teaching. This embodiment requires replacing the medical metaphor of objectively delivering expert services to clients with the family metaphor of providing for students' needs as if they were our own children. Concern for the practice of teaching means understanding differently what teaching practice is in a school and who is responsible for it. Teachers are not only concerned about their own practice but about the larger practice—the practice of teaching itself that exists in the school. As teachers come to share in this common practice, colleagueship becomes redefined as a morally held web of mutually held obligations and commitments.

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