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ABSTRACT Consideration of the research agenda of the Center for Educational Policy and Management (CEPM) in Eugene (Oregon) is aided by placing it in the context of current issues in educational policy and management, and by identifying policy and management decisions that can benefit from CEPM's research agenda. Three decision-making domains are the foci of disagreement in education. The domains include the structure of student work, aiming at the improvement of learning; the structure of teacher work, including instructional practices and the work environment; and administrator work structure, including policy-setting and working conditions. At the same time there are three types of issues: technical issues, meaning instrumental or "how-to" problems; cooperative issues, involving human interaction aspects of educational activities; and assumptive or semantic issues, concerning educational values and cultural constructs and ideology. The three decision domains--student, teacher, and administrator work structures--each have different technical, cooperative, and assumptive issues. For each type of issue within each domain, different research has been done, by CEPM and others, and different research needs exist. (RW)

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Issues of Human Resource Management in Schools  
and the Relevance of Research

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### References

This paper is one in a series of program development documents prepared under the auspices of the Center for Educational Policy and Management (CEPM) at the University of Oregon. Funding for CEPM is provided in part by the National Institute of Education. Earlier documents (Duckworth 1981a, 1981b; Hersh et al. 1981; Kehoe et al. 1981; Lane and Kelly 1981; Johnson 1981; and Stallings 1981) have surveyed the states of research and practice in the management of human resources in schools. These documents have yielded a scientific agenda for research to be sponsored by CEPM. The present paper places this research agenda within the context of policy and management issues that are perplexing educators across the country. My interest is in increasing the awareness among researchers of the complexity of issues affecting the reception of their work by policy makers and practitioners. Moreover, I wish to identify some of the policy and management decisions that can benefit from the sorts of research recommended in the CEPM agenda.

I will discuss three decision domains which are loci of chronic public and professional disagreement. These domains are the determination, respectively, of student, teacher, and administrator work structures. The paradigm regards the work of these actors as a function of a structure of agenda, resources, and incentives, each of which is subject to decisions made by the worker as well as by others. Issues emerge in the decision arena--the field of decision participants and situations--where work structures are determined. My discussions during the last year with researchers, policy makers, and practitioners have revealed that such issues involve not only facts and efficient means for given ends but also the ends themselves, underlying values, and power relationships among participants. Hence, a narrow technical view of issues is inadequate.

The argument is organized in three sections. The first section describes the three domains and identifies important problems in each. The second section introduces the conceptual distinction among technical, cooperative, and assumptive issues and suggests a relationship between type of issue and strategy of research and dissemination. In the third section, this conceptual framework is applied to each of the three domains.

### I. Decision Domains and Current Problems

CEPM began with a commitment to the improvement of school effectiveness as expressed by student achievement, which led to theory building about determinants of such effectiveness. CEPM also began with a substantial tradition of research in problems of educational policy and management that reflected the difficulties inherent in administering schools--satisfying diverse constituents, coordinating the work of professionals in a bureaucracy, and controlling the behavior of students (e.g., Tucker and Zeigler 1980; Packard et al. 1978; Duckworth 1979). Commitment and tradition have coalesced in the current research paradigm and have been further enriched by new research on the political, economic, legal, and technical environments of schools (Eberts and Pierce 1980; Baugh and Stone 1980; Brodie and Williams 1981; Gersten and Carnine 1981). New starts have been made in the field of professional development as well. This burgeoning institutional activity is revealing the complexity of decision-making at all levels of school governance and its implications for the improvement of student achievement.

The determination of student work structure constitutes the first decision domain. There is a press for new decisions, especially in secondary schools, about the instruction of students whose achievement is unsatisfactory. How to structure student work so that slow learners attain the competence required for economic well being, fast learners acquire the knowledge and skill required by occupations that depend on expertise, and teachers face a task that is manageable are matters of considerable debate. Of even greater

dispute are learning goals for heterogeneous groups of students. Past CEPM research has looked at the problems in managing instructional technology, and current research includes a study of teacher expectations for students. While research on classroom processes remains peripheral to CEPM's research agenda, projected research should provide information on the organization of instruction in secondary schools for various groups of students whose achievement is unsatisfactory.

The second decision domain comprises the determination of teacher work structure. Many groups--citizens, administrators, and politicians--have criticized teacher work effort and have attempted to exert control over it. At the same time, teachers have sought and won increased control over their own work conditions. Decisions about desirable instructional practice will have little effect on achievement unless they are backed up by decisions about appropriate teacher work structure. We label this type of endeavor as "instructional leadership," but in fact a broader consideration of institutional roles and interactions is involved. For instance, the comparison of public and private schools tends to yield an unflattering portrayal of both teachers and administrators in public schools. CEPM has conducted research on relationships among teachers and administrators in instructional change efforts, on effects of collective bargaining on teacher work conditions and administrative discretion, and on the principal's role in managing teacher-specialist interaction. Current research includes a study of teacher work motivation and a study of peer coaching for improved practice. We expect future CEPM research, both relating to staff development and administrative leadership, to inform attempts to alter teacher work structure so as to improve student outcomes.

The third decision domain comprises the determination of administrator work structure. Here the decision arena includes those in a position to influence the work conditions of school principals, including higher echelon policy-makers in the public school bureaucracy and in other governmental offices. The scope of participation in goal-setting, the generation of incentives for administrators, and, especially, the mobilization of resources for school instructional programs are all topics of dispute. Should policy be set within the administrative corps of a school district, by a broader consensus of citizen activists, by teachers' representatives, or by state and federal officials? Should administrators be trained to regard instructional management as their first priority? Should career advancement be predicated on school effectiveness? Or should administrators be establishing alliances with the business community in order to replace declining public resources?

Arguments are being advanced for a less directive and more supportive role for governmental agencies with respect to school administration. These arguments assume a more proactive role for school administrators in instructional management than may be realistic for incumbents. Further research on the interaction of environmental agents and administrators in policy-setting is needed to inform decision-makers about ways in which administrator work can improve student achievement. CEPM has studied district responsiveness to community clients, career patterns among administrators, and administrators' reactions to conflict. Current work includes investigations of the context of administrator work--e.g., collective bargaining, labor markets, and federal legislation. In addition, future research may focus on strengthening the institutional foundations for education at the state level--e.g., academic priorities in state regulations and resource allocations.



## II. Types of Issues and Interests in Knowledge

I have discussed three domains of decision-making in education that affect student achievement and have remarked on some of the problems that seem to vex practitioners, policy makers, and citizens in each of these domains. Some would wish to define these problems as generic to American education as a whole and to suggest that public school personnel and clients nationwide share a common interest in finding solutions. Such a conclusion is misleading. Instead, I detect multiple and diverse stakes in these decision domains, different ways of posing problems, and great confusion about the meaning and purpose of educational goals.

This complexity can be reduced by distinguishing among three types of issues along lines suggested by contemporary philosophical distinctions (Habermas 1971) among human interests and the sorts of knowledge they require. The problem in identifying issues for research is thus related to the more general problem of how knowledge can inform human action.

Practitioners most commonly seek answers to questions of instrumentality. "How do I accomplish x?" they typically ask. In response, change agents in education offer a variety of techniques that will transform the status quo into a more desirable reality. Causal relationships are the object of much educational research and the focus of most methodological criticism of that research. The ideal kind of research is controlled experimentation, if one wants to provide "how to" or "if-then" knowledge to educators. The result of preoccupation with this type of inquiry is the "R&D Fixer" expectation of educational researchers and the precipitous leap from symptom manifestation to the search for solutions in the public's mind.

It is far from my wish to discredit this sort of issue formulation and research orientation in education. Important advances in knowledge have been made and need to be supplemented. However, we need to give much more attention to two other sorts of issues that are usually in the background when technical issues are raised and which often emerge only as technical solutions are proffered and attempted. These are issues in human cooperation and in the assumptive or semantic framework within which technical issues are posed.

Schooling is a social process, and decision-making about the structure of administrator, teacher, and student work addresses change in human interaction rather than the "installation" of some new mechanism. The cooperation of different actors on matters of dissatisfaction or frustration depends not only on good technical thinking but also on reciprocity of interests, mutuality of understanding, and what Lindblom and Cohen (1979) call "interactive problem-solving" procedures. Habermas talks about communication and interpretation as the important processes here. When issues are posed as problems needing cooperative solutions among interdependent actors, questions are raised about differences in perspective, value, and investment and how these may be altered to increase reciprocity (*quid pro quo*), mutuality (zone of consensus), and legitimacy (due process). For example, Stallings (1981) has suggested some important areas of cooperation among administrators and teachers if achievement is to be improved, and Johnson (1981) has described the range of possibilities for administrator-teacher cooperation in improving instruction. In addition, several critics of technical-issue research (Wolcott 1977; Fullan and Pomfret 1977) have indicated how important ownership of technical changes is if cooperation is to be achieved. Research on organizational development has advocated a focus on cooperative issues

(Runkel et al. 1979), although often to the relative neglect of technical issues. Evaluation research (Bank and Williams 1980) has emphasized the interpretability of evaluation data by teachers as well as administrators. Similarly, policy research has come to emphasize the importance of mutual adaptation of investments and designs for change if cooperation--and therefore implementation--is to be obtained (Berman and McLaughlin 1978).

Cooperative issues can benefit from research that describes the multiple realities present in many social organizations and that identifies exemplars of interactive problem-solving. Not only diversity of perspectives, but also the natural history of communication and interpretation among perspectives, are the topics of investigation. Furthermore, the comprehensibility of research findings to the multiple parties concerned is as important a criterion of quality as construct validity is to correlational research.

Issues of technique and cooperation are not the whole story, however. The discussion thus far has dwelt on problems in appropriate and acceptable action, but such problems often reflect self-limiting or paradoxical assumptions about educational values and facts. Those assumptions are issues of the general culture and its differentiation into ideologies of interest groups. Beliefs about "disadvantaged" or "culturally different" students, about "professionals" or "nine-to-five workers," and about "planning" or "responsiveness" are gestalts for thought and speech about educational issues. They shackle issue elaboration to semantic frameworks embedded either in the very conditions that create dissatisfaction or in uncriticized ideologies. Bowers (1976) has written about reification of conceptual constructs involved in "technicism" as a thought-strangling force in education. The same criticism

can be made of constructs symbolizing different perspectives among parties involved in public schooling and of traditional ways of thinking about the purposes and legitimate institutions of education. Edson (1980) has remarked on the legacy of early twentieth-century American statements on academic and vocational education in secondary schools; and, in many ways, recent attempts to break out of this assumptive framework (e.g., Coleman et al. 1974) have only confirmed the power of that framework. Scriven (1973) has advocated that educational program evaluators look beyond formal program goals and designs to the real impact of programs.

The formulation of issues should emphasize the assumptions that are shared across society and that are reified in the statements of public agencies. Research on decision-making about administrator, teacher, and student work structures should include a critical examination of the inadequacies of policy assumptions across the spectrum of political affiliation and interest group advocacy.

If the interest of technical issues is in instrumental behavior, and of cooperative issues in interpretive knowledge, the interest of assumptive issues is in self-insight and the transcending of semantic distortions in conventional wisdom. As CEPH develops its research efforts, issues in decision-making about work structures in schools need to be analyzed in terms of assumptions that ground both problems in cooperation and instrumentality. The final section of this paper offers some thoughts along these lines.

### III. Decision Domains and Types of Issues

Let us now return, with the conceptual distinctions introduced in Section II, to the three domains of decision-making identified in Section I. In each of these domains, I shall attempt to illustrate technical, cooperative, and assumptive issues that seem to be plaguing educators today and that imply an interest in different kinds of knowledge to be generated by research.

#### A. The Determination of Student Work Structure

The concern here is the unsatisfactory level of student achievement in public schools, which has received a wide press. Technical solutions have been sought and found to teaching basic skills in reading and math, particularly with initially low-achieving students. Technical problems remain, however, with intervention in skill deficiencies in secondary schools and with the extension of technical solutions such as direct instruction to a wider range of students and to more advanced levels of achievement.

Moreover, the technical issue of instructing truly "exceptional" students, such as the handicapped and the gifted, within the public school is still a pressing problem. Debate over the efficacy of homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping of students continues. Curricular structure at the secondary level is also a technical issue; the broadening and diversification of the curriculum that was thought to increase student motivation is now seen as diluting instruction. Under either regime, the structural differentiation of low-achievers and non-college-bound students from their more academic peers is argued to depress achievement.

CEPM's concern with the technical issue of instruction has focused on the identification and implementation of effective teaching techniques

and on the organization of the diversity of curriculum offerings and requirements. At present, the technical issues--effective teaching and curriculum--seem better resolved at the elementary rather than the secondary level. Technical questions remain of increasing student motivation and reducing interference from student misbehavior and vandalism, however, especially at the secondary level.

Cooperative issues need further study at both levels, however. The technical solutions found for reading and math achievement at elementary levels are not to everyone's liking. Students may resist regimentation. Some parents reject the technical concern as too limited a view of educational goals; others are disturbed by the side effects of such treatments on social development and intellectual motivation. Teachers in substantial numbers reject technical solutions because they violate basic occupational self-conceptions or deprive the teacher of interpersonal rewards that are central to work motivation. On the other side of the fence, some advocates of technical solutions are really aiming at noneducational values such as classroom order and student behavioral control rather than the cognitive and skill goals. Hence the debate has become polarized and seldom dwells strictly on achievement concerns. Thus it is apparent that research on the varying goals involved and the communication between parties is needed to improve the chances both for technical solutions and for the security of place given academic achievement in local school priorities. Otherwise, there will remain the mutual disdain between "humanists" and "behaviorists."

Cooperative issues in secondary education often reflect the salience of differential objectives. One of the reasons for the low level of technical development in research on secondary education may reside in the diverging interpretations of educational goals for heterogeneous students and in the segmentation of the teaching faculty into isolated departments. There may

be no dominant voice calling for continuing language development--instead there are the "literature" teachers and the "communication skills" teachers. The uncertain efforts of secondary schools to make reading and writing common objectives across subjects indicate the difficulty in articulating a technical research agenda. Instead, there are professional journals for each of the disciplines, and synthesis of their findings is rare with respect to the treatment of heterogeneous students.

Not only are the different interpretations of educational purposes and techniques more isolated from one another at the secondary level, but this heterogeneity of treatment is regarded by many as a virtue. It is felt that students benefit from exposure to different kinds of teachers. Of course, to some extent this is predicated on the belief that there is no technology of teaching. However, it also confuses the desirability of diverse content and personal examples in education with the desirability of inconsistent treatment of students' learning problems. Here we move beyond the problem of communication and negotiation among diverse perspectives to semantic factors that obscure that problem and limit its solution. Declarations of purposes for secondary education formulated in the early twentieth century simply are inadequate for the 1980s. Ideological commitments to perpetuating a stratified work force, on the one hand, and providing formal access to equal educational opportunity, on the other, wrestle each other in the semantic fog surrounding secondary education. Until there is an analysis of the paradoxes surrounding the sorting function of secondary education and the political status conferral function, not much progress is likely to be made on technical or interpretive problems.

## B. The Determination of Teacher Work Structure

The quality of teachers' performance in the classroom, whether in devising treatments for heterogeneous students or simply maintaining an educational program that is adequate for general goals, has been increasingly perceived as a matter of personal discretion and motivation. This perception is becoming unacceptable to all except teachers. Concern over the survival of public education is related to recent attempts to make teachers accountable for student performance, to define teaching competencies that would serve as criteria for certification and evaluation, to build incentives for inservice and continuing professional education, and to install management systems which would render teacher performance more visible to administrators. Implicit in all these efforts is the figure of the instructional leader who would assign objectives, assess performance, and sanction performers. The school principal, special district administrators, and the district superintendent have been called upon to play this role. The technical problem is how administrators can use the various tools described above to improve teacher performance. Very preliminary research in elementary schools has suggested a strong, even "tyrannical" role for principals (Edmonds 1979), but many doubt the generalizability of these findings. At the secondary level, research has dismissed the notion of a strong bureaucratic structure within which such a leader might function. Thus the technical concern remains very much alive.

We argue that the problem as posed above is misleading. The search for "effective schools" needs to pay more attention to the role perceptions of teachers and administrators and to the communication process between these groups if we are to understand how such a thing as instructional leadership comes to happen. While it is evident that administrators expect and are



expected to exercise leadership in some facets of school life, that leadership is extended to influence on teacher performance through a highly political process. Administrative impotence is widely illustrated in accounts of failures and firings. At the district level, the frequency and duration of teacher strikes, plus the tendency of contract provisions to restrict any instructional leadership behavior by the principal, must also be counted as a sign that the political underpinnings of such leadership are widely lacking.

Some have claimed that such leadership might be generated collectively by teachers, either at the level of the school or of the professional association (Little 1981). Research on teacher interaction and normative orientation may cast doubt on this claim, however. It is not simply a matter of shifting the technical concern over teacher performance from administrative strategies to those of professional associations. In teaching, professional support for performance norms is necessary but not sufficient. The collegial culture seldom functions outside of organizational initiatives and crises, and these are handled by administrators. What is needed is a recognition of the different perspectives on classroom instruction held by administrators and teachers and the different investments in preferred ways of working. Once this is grasped, the potential bargaining processes that can convert administrative support into influence and teacher territorial jealousy into a commonwealth orientation can be studied as variations within a realistic set of limits rather than as an all-or-nothing power plays by administrators.

Study of such bargaining processes might reveal the assumptive blinders that prevent administrators and teachers from going beyond a zero-sum notion of power and benefit. The codification of semantic constraints in contract provisions has been studied, but the culture within

which such semantic devices are interpreted has been shown to vary across schools.

I shall have some remarks on administrator assumptions below. For the present, let me suggest that teachers, because of training, isolation from one another, and exclusion from school-level decision-making, rarely seem to perceive problems as systematic. Solutions for problems are articulated as changes in other people to make the individual teacher's work easier. Moreover, the folklore of student idiosyncrasy and teacher intuition encourages them to demand autonomy on ideological grounds. Hence teachers are apt to reject system changes as burdensome and irrelevant. "Teaching," rather than "student learning" or "schooling," often defines teachers' semantic framework for perceiving administrator behavior.

### C. The Determination of Administrator Work Structure

The degree of instructional leadership exercised by administrators is a function of a number of contextual factors, most notably the policy processes for which administrators are accountable. Hence, one looks to technical changes in governance mechanisms so as to increase instructional leadership. The improvement of policy processes is often attempted by redefining the policy arena. Increased involvement of higher echelons of government has been seen as a way to generate incentives (including sanctions) for administrative intervention in instruction (e.g., on student placement relevant to desegregation, or on course requirements relevant to minimum competencies). Increased parental involvement has been seen as another source of incentives and of community support for the instructional program.

Increased teacher involvement has been seen as a way of both improving agenda and increasing the legitimacy (another resource) of administrative intervention. District specialists in curriculum seek involvement in order to ensure that administrators are faithful to technical innovations planned by experts.

Attempts to alter policy processes in order to improve administrative work, however, inevitably take on more than a technical cast. Extending arenas of policy formation changes the mix of values that will seek expression and thereby complicates the process of achieving cooperation. Furthermore, administrators themselves must cooperate with policy or the extension of policy influence will be fruitless. Thus, a too heavy-handed approach can result in policy frustration through a thousand ploys known to administrators. This is not to say that cooperative issues should take primacy. Mann (1980) has recently chided political scientists for preoccupation with process to the neglect of outcome, and the thrust of CEPM's research effort is to examine the effects of policies on student achievement.

As with the other decision domains, analysis is needed of vested interests of different parties in the policy process, endemic suspicions among parties regarding motives, and some articulation of the different values at stake. I suspect that administrators vary in the language they use to convey their expectations to teachers and in the assumptions they bring to their own influence attempts. The study of other public agency managers has revealed some of the self-limiting perceptions of school administrators in this regard. The main assumptive issue could well be the institutionalization of the ideology described by Raymond Callahan (1962) in administrator training programs and associations. Alternatively, the new rhetoric of "instructional leadership" could tempt some administrators and their publics to overreact in change efforts. Lighthall (1973) has suggested that failure of organizational change in schools is often traceable to arrogance in administrators

who set out to impose a unilateral, managerial ideal of education on teachers. Analyses of school policy processes that produce a consensual basis for instructional leadership would be helpful. Also, procedural mechanisms that allow instructional leadership to proceed with consent, where consensus is not attainable, need to be identified.

Discussion of policy processes evokes some of the most complex assumptions in modern social thought. For example, issues like voucher plans or tuition tax credits (which would increase parental determination of administrator work), application of the public's right-to-know to collective bargaining processes (which might tend to sustain administrative agenda for instructional programs), the civil rights of students (which may constrain administrative influence on the instructional program), and the shifting of educational programs from the federal government to state governments (which may change incentives, agenda, and resources for administrators) all involve beliefs about justice and democracy. Another profound assumptive issue is whether education is a public or a private good. I am hardly prepared to resolve these issues in the present paper. What I would suggest is that research on the determination of administrative work structure probe the philosophical aspects of policy issues in order to illuminate the semantic frameworks operating and increase the self-awareness of participants.

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