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ABSTRACT

Differences in the success of the kindergarten and the middle school as educational innovations are discussed in an effort to illustrate the impact that organizational culture can have on the adoption of educational structures. Preliminary discussion reviews theoretical and empirical literature on organizational culture, levels of culture, features of culture in educational organizations, and the role of organizational culture in change. Subsequent discussion focuses on cultural effects on the kindergarten and middle school. The kindergarten serves as an example of an innovation which developed with little difficulty into a vital part of the educational system. But the middle school was an innovation that encountered mixed success. It is argued that the strong cultural values and assumptions resulting from the early success of kindergarten programs facilitated the eventual adoption of the kindergarten as an integral level of the schooling structure. In contrast, the middle school, which was introduced without a common awareness of the value system underlying its creation, was thrust upon teachers and administrators before needed cultural changes could develop to undergird structural change. It is concluded that the future success of the middle school may depend on the construction of a culture of middle school values and assumptions. About 50 references are cited. (RH)

INTRODUCING NEW ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES IN EDUCATION: THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE FORMATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES

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ABSTRACT

Organizational theorists have recognized that organizations may be viewed as mini-societies based upon commonly-held cultural values and assumptions. Modifications in group culture may in some instances bring about changes in organizational structures. From the standpoint of organizational culture, the relative successes of the evolvement of two innovative organizational structures--the kindergarten and the middle school--into the American educational system are assessed. A review of relevant theoretical and empirical literature focusing on the successes of the evolvement of these organizational structures is provided.

INTRODUCING NEW ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES IN EDUCATION: THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE FORMATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES

In recent years, a strong conceptual base delineating elements of organizational culture has been developed. Organizational theorists argue that organizations function as mini-societies, each having its own unique culture. Culture is usually viewed as the vehicle by which people determine the meaning of the numerous ambiguous events occuring in the complex organizations in which they work. Although unique cultures tend to develop within individual organizations, it has been theorized that organizations of a particular type or "species" tend to develop specialized cultural features and values. Hence, organizational cultures develop differently in some types of institutions than in others.

Educational organizations as a gross category, for instance, tend to develop their cultures around normative institutional practices. Survival of educational institutions depends largely upon their abilities to conform to certain institutional norms or expectations--teacher certification requirements, use of certain grade categories, conformity of curriculum to certain prescribed expectations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1978). More highly technical organizations, by contrast, rely more heavily upon rational bureaucracies as a basis for their cultures. Manufacturing plants, for instance, tend to operate closely in accordance with a predetermined set of company procedures and handle problem solving via a more highly structured chain of command.

Culture has been conceived as existing at two distinct levels, namely form and meaning--i. e., both physical and symbolic realities (Taylor, 1984). Changes in organizational structures and practices (cultural form) often tend to impose new sets of values and assumptions (cultural meaning) upon organizational members. A school principal may, for instance, ask a faculty to accept a new teaching strategy incongruent with the teaching strategies most frequently used in that particular school The principal must not only introduce the new strategy (a form) to the teachers, but must also challenge the

teachers to accept the values (the meaning) inherent in the new teaching strategy. In this instance, the principal is attempting to "enact" a new cultural element into the "sacred" culture (Corbett, Firestone, & Rossman, 1987). It is possible that the teachers may utilize the strategy out of a sense of duty while never adopting its underlying values.

Introduction of individual cultural elements into an organization is a rather common thing; however it is also possible, albeit less common, to enact an entire culture that is contrary to the organization's generally-accepted culture. Such cultures may be the result of the introduction of new organizational structures into an organization. Throughout the history of public schooling in the United States, a number of innovative organizational structures have come into existence as a result of perceived inadequacies of previous structures. Some of these structures (e.g., the public school kindergarten) have gained widespread acceptance over time while others have virtually ceased to exist once their initial novelty has worn off.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the relative successes of two innovational educational structures which have come into existence in the United States as a result of perceived weakness in other well-established organizational structures. The two structures investigated are the kindergarten and the middle school. The study consists of a review of relevant theoretical and empirical literature focusing on the successes of the evolvement of these organizational structures. Successes are traced to the development of commonly-held cultural values among those who work in these institutional structures. Failures, on the other hand, are linked to evidence of fragmented value systems among those who work in the institutions.

Organizational Culture

In a cultural sense, organizations are viewed as mini-societies made up of socially

connected groups of individuals. The culture of an organization develops out of social interactions between group members based on a set of commonly accepted social norms and customs (Morgan, 1986). To the extent that these norms and customs lead a group to common perceptions of organizational reality and the achievement of their goals, the group becomes "internally integrated" (Schein, 1985).

Although social scientists have defined organizational culture in a number of ways, more recent definitions of culture have focused upon the meaning of organizational events (Bolman & Deal, 1984; Corbett, Firestone, & Rossman, 1987; DeRoche, 1987; Erickson, 1987; Firestone & Wilson, 1985; Morgan, 1986; Smircich, 1985) and upon group problem solving dynamics (Lortie, 1975; Schein, 1985; Van Maanen & Barley, 1985). Bolman and Deal (1984) described organizational life as a series of ambiguous events and conceived of culture as a set of processes that help a group sort through these ambiguities. These cultural processes center upon the organization's ability to create a set of symbols to describe the reality of its internal events. This concept of culture formation is illustrated by Morgan (1986) who defines culture as "a process of reality construction that allows people to see and understand particular events, actions, objects, utterances or situations in distinctive ways" (p. 128). Similarly, Corbett et al. (1987) state, "[Culture] provides the contextual clues necessary to interpret events, behaviors, words, and acts--and gives them meaning. Culture also prescribes the ways in which people should act, regulating appropriate and acceptable behaviors in given situations" (p. 37).

The process of giving meaning to events can be taken one step further. Once meanings are derived as explanations for ambiguous events, these meanings can serve as a basis for future organizational actions. Medical students' instruction in emergency room care is a good example of this process. Students are taught to recognize certain physical symptoms and to act in specific ways contingent upon the particular symptoms present. Meaning is attributed to each symptom to reduce uncertainty in determining a victim's immediate

needs. This concept of attributing meaning to events is reflected in Van Maanen and Barley's (1985) definition of culture as a set of taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs, and values that serve as a means for dealing with group problems. In the previous example, the instructor hoped to instill in each medical student a set of assumptions that would serve as a basis for interpreting and acting upon future medical emergencies.

In educational organizations, the set of assumptions for dealing with group problems is usually instilled in a less direct manner. One of the main ways cultures are developed in educational institutions is through a pattern of interacting work roles (Schein, 1985; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Each work role within an organization may be viewed as a personalization of a particular set of group-held values and beliefs. Teachers, for example, become the personalization of instruction. They may be viewed as storehouses of knowledge or as possessors of skills to facilitate learning. Principals are often viewed as the personalization of order and structure in the school. As individuals both inside and outside the organization come to identify organizational members with their work roles, a system of interrelationships develops based upon each member's sense of belonging to the organizational "team." Cultural meaning is enhanced through an understanding of the nature of the interaction among the various work roles of the members of the organizational team.

The purpose of the organizational team is to work toward attaining the organization's core mission while simultaneously working toward integration of group members into a unified whole (Schein, 1985). Culture may be viewed, then, as a learned product of group experience. An organization's culture is transmitted to group members who over a period of time learn the appropriate organizational responses to problems that arise within the organization. These responses eventually become taken-for-granted assumptions once they have been proven to solve problems repeatedly and reliably over time. Assumptions, in turn, serve as a basis for defining or refining the organization's core mission.

This notion of culture as learned problem solving is reflected in the definition of culture as:

> a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 1985, p. 9)

Levels of Culture

Schein (1985) conceived of organizational culture as operating at three levels. At the most visible level are the organization's artifacts and creations, i.e., its constructed physical and social environment. Elements of culture at this level include specific organizational technologies, art (including symbols, stories, and legends), and overt behaviors. At the intermediate level, culture is manifested in organizational values. At this level, events are analyzed and assigned meaning in accordance with a sense of what ought to be. Values become a guide for decision making behavior based upon convictions the group holds about reality; hence values predict behaviors.

Artifacts and values tend to facilitate reliable solutions to organizational problems. Over a period of time, those solutions that have consistently produced desired results are transformed into invisible, unconscious, habitual assumptions. This group of underlying assumptions comprises Schein's deepest level of culture. Assumptions are essentially perceptions of the way things are by nature; hence assumptions become windows to the world of organizational events. In sum, assumptions provide organizational members not only with an understanding of what goes on in an organization, but also with a sense of how the organization ought to operate.

Features of Culture in Educational Organizations

Much of what has been said about organizational culture to this point can be generically applied to life within any particular organization. It is possible, however, to extend the unit of analysis of organizational culture from a single organization to all organizations of a particular type. There exists, for instance, a body of conceptual literature which describes the culture of educational organizations (and other institutional organizations) as distinct from the cultures of more highly technical institutions (e.g., manufacturing firms).

Meyer, Scott, and Deal (1983) proposed that institutional organizations, and more particularly educational organizations, are structured according to a different organizational model than are technical organizations. The technical model of organizational structure is based upon a series of relationships among the various technical production processes that go on in an organization, and in effect depicts the organization's structure as a blueprint for goals, activities, and policies. In a petrochemical company, for instance, the production department relies upon the shipping department to keep an adequate supply of raw materials on hand, the maintenance department to ensure that machinery is operating properly, and the quality control department to detect defects in the production process.

By contrast, the institutional model views the relationships among the various subunits that make up the organization as being much more loosely related to one another. Institutional organizations would fit into an organizational category described as "loosely organized systems" (Kaplan, 1982), and the series of loose relationships among subunits within an institutional organization has been described as "loose coupling" (Weick, 1976). The relationship between the principal's office and the school counselor's office is a good illustration of this concept--both offices perform functions which, though ultimately interrelated, remain relatively unattached from the functions of the other office (Weick, 1979).

Loose coupling is evident in a number of educational practices. A prime example is instructional supervision. Educational administrators tend to develop and maintain the assumption that the professionals at lower levels of the organizational hierarchy (i.e., teachers) are operating within accepted rules and guidelines and can therefore be trusted to perform their teaching duties without the need for close supervision. The presence of a structural hierarchy within the school, however, gives society the image of administrative control over teachers' instructional practices, and, as a result becomes a justification for those practices. At the same time, the technology of teaching continues to operate largely unchecked, the rare exception being the principal's annual contractual observation (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

The formal organizational structure of educational institutions not only serves to preserve their social images, but also gives the institutions the "appearance of rationality" (Meyer, 1984; Meyer & Rowan, 1978). Meyer, Scott, and Deal (1983) cite this "appearance of rationality" theme as a possible explanation for the wide-scale homogeneity of school structures throughout American school systems. Schools attempt to adapt their hierarchical arrangements to fit the generally accepted model of schooling, yet instruction and other technical activities are actually uniquely adapted to the needs of each school and, therefore, intentionally "decoupled" from schools' formal organizational structures (Meyer & Rowan, 1978; Scott, 1987).

As stated earlier, Schein's (1985) definition of culture stresses a group's ability to develop assumptions to be used in solving problems of both "external adaptation" and "internal integration." By conforming to the institutional structural model, schools establish a framework that enhances the development of culture. The institutional model's appearance of rationality serves as an aid in solving external adaptation problems: the public seldom tends to question school practices when appropriate controls appear to have been put into place to ensure that teachers will correctly perform their instructional

duties. At the same time, however, the model's loose structure allows teachers a maximum amount of freedom in addressing internal integration problems, i.e., problems centering upon ways in which teachers can work together to shape technical processes to meet actual school needs. Although both internal and external adaptation problems must be addressed if the school is to develop a culture which will meet its needs, Meyer and Rowan (1977) assert that organizational survival is most dependent upon solving the external adaptation problems.

Stated differently, schools exist primarily to maintain a "schooling rule" (Meyer & Rowan, 1978), i.e., the sum total of all the ritualistic requirements schools must meet in order to conform to society's image of what a school should be. These ritualistic requirements include program accreditation, certification of personnel, classification of students, and guidelines for teacher evaluation. The ultimate success or failure of schools is more frequently judged "according to their conformity to [these] institutional rules, rather than by the effectiveness of their technical performance" (Meyer, Scott, & Deal, 1983, p. 56). The public, for instance, would tend to be impressed by the fact that the local high school has gained regional accreditation even though the school may be graduating students who are only marginally literate.

The Role of Organizational Culture in Change Processes

Group culture is of utmost importance in determining the success of organizational innovations, particularly when these innovations require modifications of the programmatic or philosophical policies of an organization. As previously noted, Morgan (1986) argued that culture is in essence the enactment of shared reality. When a new shared reality develops that is in some way incongruent with an existent organizational structure or policy, an organizational change results. Changes in shared reality, and, as a result, in group cultures are frequently very difficult to implement. In many cases, this is due in part to the presence of many different and competing value systems within a single

organization (Morgan, 1986). These competing value systems may bring about organizational "subcultures" that struggle for control of the organization.

Even when cultural changes are implemented, Schein (1985) warns that much of what is called change involves mere surface rituals rather than fundamental structural adaptations which sustain these rituals. Change, then, can operate at a number of cultural levels, from the extremes of mere structural or physical realignments to complete reappraisal and redefinition of the deeper values or assumptions held by members of an organization. Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch (1974) differentiate these two levels of change in a similar fashion, labeling as "first order change" mere structural rearrangements, and as "second order change" actual changes in the frames of reference with which organizational members view organizational problems.

Examples of surface or first order change are rampant in educational institutions. Technical artifacts such as new curricula are introduced into school systems, yet many teachers continue to value the "tried and true" curriculum they have taught for years. In response to the large number of students passing from grade to grade without required skills, a school system may introduce a set of more stringent promotion requirements. This artifactual change may have little effect on the system's promotional policies; school building-level committees appointed to review retention cases may still allow marginal students to pass to the next grade based upon previously-established assumptions about the positive values of social promotion. Technological artifacts (e.g., computers) may be placed in classrooms to give schools the appearance of being up-to-date in pedagogical practices, yet teachers may not be provided with the necessary training to use the equipment. As a result, teachers may tend not to incorporate these devices into their teaching strategies, and may even view their presence in the classroom as a threat to other teaching strategies which they hold in a place of high esteem. Considering these examples, no wonder that Sarason (1971) concludes that as regards most educational change

processes, "the more things change the more they remain the same" (p. 2).

There are examples, however, of deeper-level second-order changes that take place within schools. Second-order changes require that groups examine and possibly redefine particular values and assumptions, and gain legitimacy only after they have been subjected to "social evaluations, such as the endorsement of legislatures or professional agencies" (Rowan, 1982, p. 259). Sarason (1971) recognized that true change often takes place when an organizational member (often a leader) observes existing behavioral regularities that are not personally pleasing or that do not meet organizational needs, and proposes a set of new "intended outcomes" and a set of strategies for realizing these outcomes. When these intended outcomes are consistent with group-held values and assumptions about what should go on in the organization, a large number of people become committed to their achievement, and, as a result, long-lasting changes take place.

Frequently changes in organizational structures require the "enactment" of new organizational cultures. Enactment of new organizational cultures may be hampered in cases in which changes in organizational structures challenge existing structures. In a school in which the principal is not a strong cultural leader, for instance, teachers may tend to cling to previous behavioral patterns and cultural assumptions rather than accepting a set of new cultural assumptions about the nature of their relationships to their students. Strong cultural leadership on the part of the principal, on the other hand, would tend to serve as an impetus for altering the faculty's socially constructed view of their work roles. It should be noted, however, that the principal is but one ingredient in the social network that builds an effective school. A commitment by the entire staff to nurturing such a culture is essential as well (Johnston, Markle, & Forrer, 1984). Without such a commitment by an entire school staff, a given change in organizational structure may not be successful over time; i. e., it will be successful in form (physical change in the structure) but not in meaning (a full appreciation by the

staff of the value of the change in structure).

Cultural Effects on Innovative Structures--Two Examples

In order to illustrate the impact of organizational culture on the success of innovative educational structures, two examples--the kindergarten and the middle school--will be discussed. These two organizational structures were introduced into American public schooling on a wide-scale basis in the early 1960's. The kindergarten will serve as an example of an innovation which has developed into a vital part of the American educational system with little difficulty. The middle school, on the other hand, has experienced mixed success as a viable educational structure for schooling young adolescents. Each of these examples will be, in turn, considered here.

Example 1: The Kindergarten

In the early 1960's, the public education system in the United States consisted of 12 grades. Although a few public school systems had experimented with the kindergarten prior to the 1960's, most parents wishing to have their children educated prior to enrollment in the first grade relied upon private nursery schools or kindergartens. In the 1960's and 1970's, however, public schools began experimenting with the kindergarten as an optional preschool experience (Robinson, 1987). Although these early kindergarten programs had mixed results, they served as a basis for introducing the artifact of the kindergarten into American public schooling. Austin (1970) reports that this period of experimentation with preschool education was coupled with the development of larger social concepts of freedom and humanitarian principles of living developed by Western societies during the post World War II years. It was believed that a great deal more could be done to foster the cognitive, social, and emotional growth of young children than had been done in previous years.

With these humanitarian beliefs in mind, in the mid-1960's, a group of American

educators developed Head Start, a federally funded voluntary preschool program, to combat the effects of poverty on the lives of disadvantaged preschoolers. In effect, Head Start became a means for a more widespread introduction of the kindergarten artifact into American public schooling. Elementary teachers receiving students who had completed the Head Start program, were, in turn, amazed with the success of the students in the first grade as compared to similar students who had not been enrolled in Head Start. As a result, educators began to form a set of values associated with learning at the preschool level. These values were communicated to other educators, and to the public at large. As a result of these commonly-held values, more and more school systems experimented with regular kindergarten programs.

When these new experimental programs proved successful over time in helping prepare students for the first grade, educators and private citizens began to form assumptions about the necessity of kindergarten as a preparation for the first grade. Once these assumptions were adopted, formal measures were taken (via acts of state legislatures and changes in state and local school policies) to make kindergarten a mandatory part of a child's public education experience. Specific practices also emerged as being the things that kindergartens "just do" if they are to be kindergartens (Goodlad, Klein, & Novotney, 1973). Hence, the adoption of a set of assumptions about the benefits of a preschool education to a child's success in school led to states' mandating kindergarten as a part of the public education system.

Since that time, when educators have confronted problems associated with children's developmental readiness for the first grade, the same set of assumptions has been used as a basis for solving those problems. Students about to enter the first grade, for instance, may be viewed by teachers as being too immature or as lacking the skills essential to success in the first grade. Applying the assumption that preschool education is beneficial to a child's development of readiness for school, educators have in many

cases developed testing procedures (e.g., Gesell Institute of Human Development, 1978, 1979) for determining readiness for school, and have created additional levels of preschool education (e.g., "pre-kindergarten," "developmental kindergarten") designed to meet the needs of children who do not meet readiness criteria for entry into kindergarten (Bear & Modlin, 1987).

Assumptions about the value of preschool education have now become widely accepted. In a recent survey, Robinson (1987) reported that kindergarten programs have become a part of the public education system in all 50 states, and that 39 states now offer kindergarten programs to 100% of the five-year-olds who request them. That children should have the opportunity to enter public school at age 5 seems to be a "given" in the 1980's (Robinson, 1987); hence quality preschool education has overwhelmingly become an inherent part of the American school systems' core mission. The common practice of referring to various school grading structures as K-3 or K-6 (as opposed to 1-3 or 1-6) is further evidence of the kindergarten's adoption into the formal school structure (Headley, 1965). A school district operating without a kindergarten would probably be viewed as lacking one of the essential elements of schooling. A person moving into such a school district would be prone to question the system immediately, even though the practices employed by the system's schools may be exemplary. Failure of the district to conform to this accepted rule for successful public school systems could jeopardize its standing with the public, and, in effect, threaten its survival.

In sum, the example of the kindergarten illustrates how attention to commonly-held values can lead to the eventual success of an organizational innovation. The idea of the kindergarten was developed as a result of larger social values, and was then implemented on an experimental basis. When the success of early kindergarten programs such as Head Start became evident, educators quickly formed strong feelings about the value of preschool education.

Example 2: The Middle School

Unlike the kindergarten, the middle school as an innovative educational structure was implemented in many instances with minimal planning and with minimal support from many of educators involved in the education of the students served by the schools. Prior to the emergence of the middle school as a major organizational pattern for the middle grades, however, most American school systems had organized their grading structures in a 6-3-3 pattern, referring to the intermediate level (grades 7, 8, and 9) as the "junior high school." The idea of the junior high school began to gain popularity around the turn of the twentieth century in response to several reports by national committees which suggested that various subjects originally reserved for high school study could be taught at the intermediate level (Davis, 1924). The original goals of the junior high were generally centered around establishing a course of study suited to the then perceived academic needs of students at the intermediate level; hence, from the beginning, the junior high school was designed primarily with curricular goals in mind. Attention was also given to the concern for students who were dropping out of school at early ages in order to enter the world of work. It was hoped that the appeal of the junior high school's program would serve to keep these students in school longer (Gruhn & Douglas, 1947).

By the late 1950's, however, these well-intentioned goals of the junior high school had become virtually meaningless (Schmidt, 1982). The school's subject-centered philosophy was recognized as failing to address students' needs. Moreover, once compulsory attendance became law, students were legally no longer able to drop out of school during the middle years. Over time, junior high schools became little more than miniature high schools (Eichhorn, 1966). Highly competitive extracurricular activities were included in the school program as incentives for students to stay in school after completing the junior high grades rather than as activities suited to the actual needs of

early adolescent students. In addition, since ninth grade students were earning Carnegie units, the school had to conform to the rigid scheduling patterns of the high school.

The rise of the middle school seems to have been spearheaded as a result of Conant's (1960a, 1960b) outspoken criticism of the junior high school, and his subsequent call for a re-examination of the purposes of intermediate-level education. Conant not only questioned the grading structure used in the junior high school, but also recognized the need to structure the middle grades program around the needs of the adolescent learner. A number of early "prototype" middle schools received an extreme amount of publicity, making them living exceptions to the established rule that junior high education was the best program for middle-level education (Alexander, 1987; Alexander & George, 1981).

As educators began to consider the junior high school as a less than successful institution, it became increasingly necessary to seek new values and behaviors that would redefine the mission of their schools. The problem of redefining the mission of the junior high school eventually led to the creation of the middle school, a new institution that would hopefully prove to be more effective in meeting the needs of young adolescents. In designing the middle school, educators first sought to determine those practices of the junior high which had failed to work, and then set out to replace them with new practices.

This massive reorganization effort called upon leaders at the middle level to make a number of structural and functional changes. The middle school's links to the high school would be severed by moving out the ninth grade. Rigid scheduling would be replaced by a scheduling model which resembled a marriage between the elementary and high school schedules. Teachers would be "reprogrammed" to focus upon teaching students rather than subject matter. In short, the middle school was to be the panacea to cure all the ills of middle-level education. To facilitate this reorganization of the middle grades, middle school advocates developed a group of assumptions about what intermediate level education

should be, and then encouraged leaders of individual schools and school districts to try these assumptions out in their schools.

The problem with this approach to implementing the middle school concept was that, in many cases, classroom teachers were not included in the initial planning phases which brought about the development of individual middle schools. There was no widespread experimental period as there had been with the introduction of the kindergarten. Instead, middle schools were thrust upon educators, replacing the long-standing junior high school structure with which these educators were familiar. Not all teachers readily accepted the assumptions of the middle school; in fact, some teachers were not even formally introduced to the assumptions. Yet they were forced to accept this new structural artifact based upon the values and assumptions held by someone higher in the educational hierarchy. Many teachers and administrators were unsure why their junior high schools had been converted to middle schools, and, as a result, continued to function in their work roles much as they had when their schools bore the name "junior high school." The cultural changes needed to make the structural change successful were not give an opportunity to develop.

As a result of this widespread confusion in the early implementation of the middle school concept, many schools made the conversion from junior high to middle school with few if any concrete goals in mind. Although many of these schools continued to operate much in the same way they had in the past, the use of new school names, and in some cases new grade-level structures served at least to unfreeze the assumption that the junior high school organizational pattern was the only appropriate organizational model for intermediate-level schools. Administrators and teachers in these early middle schools had to reconstruct reality in the face of the confusion brought about by the introduction of the middle school concept in their schools. In many cases the middle school assumptions did not "catch on," leading to tremendous confusion in the goals of the school.

Not surprisingly, even as early as 1969, Moss recognized goal clarity as a problem of

middle schools. Similarly, Alexander (1974, 1978) cited "lack of planning" as one of the major problems of the middle school movement, and as one of the major causes of teacher dissatisfaction and turnover in middle schools. Close planning among fellow professionals and within teaching teams in middle schools, on the other hand, has been found to be positively correlated with teacher job satisfaction (Bryan & Erickson, 1970; Pook, 1981). Considering this evidence, it is unclear whether a truly effective middle school culture has yet developed. Lack of goal clarity may be the result of a lack of commonly-held assumptions among middle school educators.

In its early years, the middle school dealt primarily with "external adaptation" problems. Following the demise of the junior high school, the newly-formed structure of the middle school presented a public image that suggested greater responsiveness to the various needs of early adolescent students (Klingele & Siebers, 1980). The organizational structure of the middle school tended to legitimate the activities going on within the institution although, in many cases, the practices espoused by advocates as distinguishing the middle school from other middle-grade structures were never put into place.

This "appearance of rationality" (Meyer & Rowan, 1978) has allowed middle schools to escape a major external adaptation problem that led to the demise of the junior high school, namely the problem of responsiveness to the needs of students. However, Klingele and Siebers (1980) contend that the middle school has escaped the uncomfortable philosophical position previously occupied by the junior high, only to find itself in another uncomfortable position--failure to establish an identity of its own due to a lack of consistent practices. This lack of a unique identity could be considered the next major external adaptation problem the middle school must address. As early as 1974, at least one researcher had already recognized the seriousness of this problem, estimating that approximately one-third of the middle schools he had studied were middle schools in name only:

> In too many cases a middle school has been organized. . .without careful planning of its goals, program, and evaluation. . . .[R]ole and identity have been critical problems in the burgeoning movement. They will remain so until well-developed goal statements are developed for each middle school, and for groups of middle schools under common administrative arrangements. . . (Alexander, 1974, p. 3)

Studies assessing the degree to which middle schools are implementing distinguishing practices suggest that many middle schools are also having difficulty dealing with internal integration problems, i.e., that first order changes of school policy have been implemented, but that second order organizational conformity to the new structures is lacking. In a survey of 43 New England middle schools, for instance, Gore (1978) found that interdisciplinary planning and flexible scheduling "were used by respondents in all grades but neither were dominant strategies" (p. 10). Similar results were found in studies of middle schools in Ohio (Bohlinger, 1981), Missouri (Beckman, 1981), and North Carolina (McEwin, 1981).

A recent national review of middle school practices (Binko & Lawlor, 1986) affirms the state-by-state findings. In this study, the researchers found, via responses from 280 middle school educators, that most of the interviewees could not give a rationale for their schools' programs, nor could they articulate the unique features of their schools. These findings are not so surprising considering that 42% of those surveyed stated they had received no inservice training dealing directly with the middle school concept. The distinguishing middle school practices most commonly reported by the teachers as being "in place" in their schools included differentiation of teaching methods according to student ability and increased attention to the social and emotional needs of the students. Practices regarded as least evident included team planning, advisor-advisee programs, and exploratory electives. Principals tended to report that more of the practices were

present in their schools than did teachers. In addition, teachers in schools over two years old reported that fewer distinguishing practices were present in their middle schools than did teachers in newer middle schools.

The previously cited findings about the absence of espoused middle school practices in middle schools over two years old may also suggest that distinctive educational structures, in an effort to survive, tend to succumb to pressures to adapt to the "schooling rule" (Meyer & Rowan, 1978), even though they may have been originally created as organizations which radically break with traditional institutional norms. In a longitudinal study of seven "exemplary" middle schools, Aromi, Roberts, and Morrow (1986) examined the degree to which selected middle school practices had persisted over a thirteen-year period. Although a number of practices had remained stable or expanded over the period, other practices, including team teaching and flexible scheduling, had declined. Included in the researchers' list of explanations for the decline of these practices were changes in "expectations of the public" and "shifts in the advocacy of educators" (p. 11).

The evidence from previous research overwhelmingly suggests that most middle schools are not really functioning as they should. If the findings of these studies are characteristic of middle school practices at large, there is evidence that middle school educators have done a fairly good job of handling external adaptation problems (presenting a good public image) through emphasis upon organizational procedures (Klingele, 1985), yet have done little about internal integration problems (concentrating upon the building of teams within schools dedicated to carrying out the schools' core mission). This pattern seems to fit with Meyer and Rowan's (1977, 1978) position that educational institutions exist primarily to maintain their own survival, and only secondarily to improve the education of their clientele. Wiles (1978) suggested a larger survival issue that middle school advocates will eventually have to concern themselves with--the survival of the

middle school movement itself: "Documentation of success is the key to the long-term survival of middle schools as a meaningful alternative to the more prevalent knowledge-based [junior high] curriculum designs generally formed at the intermediate level" (p. 3).

A possible solution to this apparent problem is suggested by Shockley, Holt, and Meichtry (1985), who assert that middle schools must have effective leadership if they are to escape the syndrome of being "caught in the middle" between elementary and high schools. This escape is achieved by educators' working together to establish a unique sense of mission for the middle school. In this approach, principals become cultural leaders devoted to developing in teachers a sense of the school's mission. Valentine and Kirkham (1985) substantiated that this role of the principal was a key to school effectiveness, according to the perception of teachers. If middle schools are to reach their full potential as service institutions, administrators must work to develop this sense of a shared mission among their teachers. Maintaining such a mission will ensure the continuing success of middle schools (Henson, 1986).

Comparing the Two Examples

The examples of the kindergarten and the middle school have been presented to illustrate the impact that organizational culture can have on the success of the adoption of educational structures. The strong cultural values and assumptions developed as a result of the early successes of kindergarten programs served as a supportive force in the eventual adoption of the kindergarten as an integral level of the public schooling structure. The middle school, on the other hand, was introduced without a common awareness of the value system underlying its creation. Although many educators recognized the weaknesses of the junior high school, they were not sure if buying into the middle school philosophy would necessarily be the proper remedy for the weaknesses.

The early middle school movement suffered from poor planning. In many instances, teachers and principals accustomed to the junior high model of schooling were expected to

convert their junior high schools to middle schools with little or no orientation to the middle school concept. The middle school concept posed radical changes to the ways students and teaching had been previously viewed; hence the middle school served as a challenge to the schooling rule. Although the kindergarten was also a challenge to the schooling rule, it represented no threat to an existing educational structure. The acceptance of the kindergarten into the public schooling system meant simply adding one more level to the elementary school; the acceptance of the middle school meant doing away with the junior high school.

Kindergarten advocates have done a good job of maintaining the success of their programs, thus ensuring the programs' continued existence. Middle school advocates have hopefully begun to realize that real change is more than the implementation of artifacts. The future success of the middle school may possibly be determined by the degree to which educators can build a culture around middle school values and assumptions.

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