Formal models

Central features of formal models

Formal model is an umbrella term used to embrace a number of similar but not identical approaches. The title 'formal' is used because these theories emphasize the official and structural elements of organizations. There is a focus on pursuing institutional objectives through rational approaches. The definition suggested below incorporates the main features of these perspectives.

> Formal models assume that organizations are hierarchical systems in which managers use rational means to pursue agreed goals. Heads and principals possess authority legitimized by their formal positions within the organization and are accountable to sponsoring bodies for the activities of their institutions.

The various formal models have several common features:

1. They tend to treat organizations as *systems*. A system comprises elements that have clear organizational links with each other. Within schools and colleges, for example, departments and other sub-units are systemically related to each other and to the institution itself.
2. Formal models give prominence to the *official structure* of the organization. Formal structures are often represented by organization charts

which show the authorized pattern of relationships between members of the institution. Structural models do not adequately reflect the many informal contacts within schools and colleges but they do help to represent the more stable and official aspects of organizations.

3. In formal models the official structures of the organization tend to be *hierarchical*. Organization charts emphasize vertical relationships between staff. In secondary schools and colleges staff are responsible to heads of department who, in turn, are answerable to heads and principals for the activities of their departments. The hierarchy thus represents a means of control for leaders over their staff.

4. All formal approaches typify schools and colleges as *goal-seeking* organizations. The institution is thought to have official purposes which are accepted and pursued by members of the organization. Cheng (2002: 52) claims that goal development and achievement is one of two main general elements in leadership: 'How to set goals, create meanings, direct actions, eliminate uncertainty or ambiguity and achieve goals is also a core part of leadership activities in education'. Increasingly, goals are set within a broader vision of a preferred future for the school (Beare et al., 1989).

5. Formal models assume that managerial decisions are made through a *rational* process. Typically, all the options are considered and evaluated in terms of the goals of the organization. The most suitable alternative is then selected to enable those objectives to be pursued. The essence of this approach is that decision-making is thought to be an objective, detached and intellectual process.

6. Formal approaches present the *authority* of leaders as essentially a product of their official positions within the organization. Heads and principals possess authority over other staff because of their formal roles within schools and colleges. Their power is regarded as positional and is held only while they hold these senior posts.

7. In formal models there is an emphasis on the *accountability* of the organization to its sponsoring body. Most English schools, for example, are responsible to the local authority (LA) and to their governing bodies. They are also answerable to the national inspection body, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). In many centralized systems, school principals are accountable to national or provincial ministries of education. In decentralized systems, heads and principals are increasingly answerable to their governing boards which have enhanced responsibility for finance and staff management.

These seven basic features are present to a greater or lesser degree in each of the individual theories which together comprise the formal

models. These are:

structural models
systems models
bureaucratic models
rational models
hierarchical models.

These different theories overlap significantly and the main elements are often very similar despite their different titles. There are variations in emphasis but the central components appear in most of the individual theories.

Structural models

> Structure refers to the formal pattern of relationships between people in organizations. It expresses the ways in which individuals relate to each other in order to achieve organizational objectives. (Bush, 1997: 45)

Structural models stress the primacy of organizational structure but the key elements are compatible with the central features of any formal model. Bolman and Deal (1991: 48) argue that the structural perspective is based on six core assumptions:

1. Organizations exist primarily to accomplish established goals.
2. For any organization, a structural form can be designed and implemented to fit its particular set of circumstances.
3. Organizations work most effectively when environmental turbulence and the personal preferences are constrained by norms of rationality.
4. Specialization permits higher levels of individual expertise and performance.
5. Co-ordination and control are essential to effectiveness.
6. Organizational problems typically originate from inappropriate structures or inadequate systems and can be resolved through restructuring or developing new systems.

The structural assumptions identified by Bolman and Deal, including the goal orientation, the rationality, the exercise of authority and the reference to systems, are consistent with the central features of formal models discussed earlier.

Structural models are often expressed in terms of organizational

levels. Five main levels can be identified:

1. The *central level*, including national, provincial or state govern-ments, and official bodies appointed by them, which are collectively responsible for overall planning, resource allocation and the moni-toring of standards.
2. The *local level*, including local and district authorities, which are responsible for interpreting government policies and, often, for administering the educational system.
3. The *institution* – schools, colleges, universities and other educational organizations.
4. *Sub-units*, such as departments or faculties in colleges and universi-ties, and departments and pastoral units in schools.
5. The *individual level* – teachers, students or pupils and support staff (adapted from Becher and Kogan, 1992: 9).

In the twenty-first century, new forms of organization have become apparent that do not fit comfortably into the five-tier structure identi-fied above. Increasingly, schools are becoming involved in networks or clusters in their local communities (Townsend, 2010). These networks are not part of the formal structure but arise organically, with or with-out an external stimulus, in order to meet the specified or emergent needs of the schools involved. In addition, schools in England, for example, are being linked through more formal structures such as fed-erations where their individual character is becoming blurred by joint governance and leadership arrangements (Bush et al., 2009).

School and college structures are usually portrayed as vertical and hierarchical. Evetts (1992), for example, stresses the hierarchical nature of school structures and the authority of the headteacher. Similarly, the structures of English further education colleges have traditionally been hierarchical and Hall (1994) notes that the departmental, pyramid structure has dominated in colleges for 30 years. Lumby (2001) com-ments that, in the twenty-first century, many colleges are adopting different metaphors for structure, including the 'Christmas tree', 'a less stark image than a pyramid' (ibid.: 91–2), and a series of concentric cir-cles. However, she concludes that 'some degree of bureaucratic hierarchy will always assert itself' (ibid.: 92).

Structures are not inevitably hierarchical. Those which are appar-ently hierarchical may be used to facilitate delegation and participation in decision-making. This may occur, for example, where budgets are delegated to departments.

The resilience of structure

It is easy to dismiss organizational structures as a rigid, over-formal presentation of relationships in educational institutions. Significantly, Porter (2006) notes that institutional structures have little or no impact on student engagement and development. All schools and colleges benefit from informal contacts not represented on organization charts, and the increasing interest in teacher leadership and distributed forms of leadership (Harris, 2004), suggests that more fluid and flexible arrangements are becoming apparent in many schools. While pyramidal structures can still be observed in many countries, they represent only part of the leadership activity in most schools. They may also conceal very different styles of management. Yet structures remain powerful influences on the nature and direction of development within institutions. Individuals are appointed to specific positions and this tends to influence, if not determine, the nature of their professional relationships. As Clark (1983: 114) makes clear, 'academic structures do not simply move aside or let go: what is in place heavily conditions what will be. The heavy hand of history is felt in the structures and beliefs that development has set in place'. Gaziel (2003) shows that structure is an important predictor of the management effectiveness of principals but has less influence on their leadership role.

Systems models

Systems theories emphasize the unity and integrity of the organization and focus on the interaction between its component parts, and with the external environment. These models stress the unity and *coherence* of the organization. Schools and colleges are thought to have integrity as prime institutions. Members of the organization, and those external to it, recognize the school or college as a meaningful entity. Staff and students may feel that they 'belong' to the place where they teach or learn. However, there are dangers in too great an emphasis on the organization rather than the people within it because of the risk of attributing human characteristics to schools and colleges. Greenfield (1973) has been the most trenchant critic of this tendency to reify organizations, as we shall see in Chapter 6.

Systems approaches share with other formal models the emphasis on agreed organizational *objectives*. It is assumed that the total system has objectives which have the support of its members. The institution is thought to develop policies in pursuit of these objectives and to assess the effectiveness of such policies. Systems theories play down or ignore

the possibility that goals may be contested or that individuals may have purposes independent of the formal aims of the organization.

Systems models emphasize the concept of a system *boundary*. The boundary is an essential element in the definition of the system, distinguishing the organization and its members from the external environment:

> Environment is typically seen as everything outside the boundaries of an organisation, even though the boundaries are often nebulous and poorly drawn. It is the environment that provides raw materials to an organisation and receives the organisation's outputs ... Schools receive students from the community and later return graduates to the community. (Bolman and Deal, 1989: 24)

O'Shea (2007) argues that systems have become more complex because of the increasing diversity of the student body, a greater emphasis on collaboration, and the drive to replace simple 'delivery' models of teaching. He adds that these more complex systems are also more vulnerable to failure. Collaborative arrangements are consistent with open systems theory.

Closed or open systems

Systems theories are usually categorized as either *closed* or *open* in terms of the organization's relationships with its environment. Closed systems tend to minimize transactions with the environment and to take little account of external opinion in determining the purposes and activities of the organization. Bolman and Deal's (1991) structural assumptions, noted earlier, imply a 'closed systems' approach:

> These assumptions depict organizations as relatively closed systems pursuing fairly explicit goals. Such conditions make it possible for organizations to operate rationally, with high degrees of certainty, predictability and efficiency. Organizations highly dependent on the environment are continually vulnerable to external influences or interference. To reduce this vulnerability, a variety of structural mechanisms are created to protect central activities from fluctuation and uncertainty. (Bolman and Deal, 1991: 48–9)

The shift to self-management in many countries, and the associated requirement to collaborate with many groups and individuals, has made it more difficult to sustain a closed systems approach. Boyd (1999: 286), referring to the US, claims that the closed systems approach 'was inadequate for understanding or dealing with the most pressing problems of school administrators ... Failing the test of practi-

cal relevance, the closed systems model was abandoned and the search was on for more useful models'.

The alternative theory is that of 'open systems' which assumes permeable boundaries and an interactive two-way relationship between schools and colleges, and their environment. Hoy and Miskel (1987: 29) argue that 'school systems are now viewed as open systems, which must adapt to changing external conditions to be effective and, in the long term, survive'.

Open systems encourage interchanges with the environment, both responding to external influences and, in turn, seeking support for the objectives of the organization. In education, open systems theory shows the relationship between the institution and external groups such as parents, employers and the local education authority. In this model, schools and colleges have wide-ranging links across an increasingly permeable boundary but organizations are able to influence their environment and are not simply responding to external demands.

Educational institutions vary considerably in the extent to which they may be regarded as closed or open systems. English further education colleges have extensive and vital links with employers, who sponsor students on many part-time and some full-time courses, and with the Learning and Skills Councils, which largely determine their levels of funding. Most schools may also be regarded as open systems because of the constant interaction with various groups and individuals in their neighbourhoods. Selective schools and certain universities, which enjoy high reputations and which do not have to compete vigorously for students, may be sufficiently impervious to external influences to be categorized as closed systems.

The distinction between open and closed systems is more blurred in practice than it is in theory. It may be more useful to think of a continuum rather than a sharp distinction between polar opposites. All schools and colleges have a measure of interaction with their environments but the greater the dependence of the institution on external groups the more 'open' it is likely to be.

The educational reforms of the past 20 years, in Britain and elsewhere, have increased the salience of the open systems model. Schools have to compete for pupils and their income is tied closely to their levels of recruitment. To be attractive to potential parents, it is important to be responsive to their requirements. This can lead to permeable boundaries with parents and others influencing school policies and priorities. The clustering of some schools into informal networks provides one contemporary example of open systems, with teachers working together to address common issues.

Systems theorists believe that organizations can be categorized as systems with their parts interacting to achieve systemic objectives. However, caution should be exercised in attributing these qualities to schools and colleges, which are complex human organizations. Schools do not operate smoothly like highly developed machines but some integration of their activities is desirable and this lends some credence to the systems model.

Bureaucratic models

The bureaucratic model is probably the most important of the formal models. There is a substantial literature about its applicability to schools and colleges. It is often used broadly to refer to characteristics which are generic to formal organizations. The 'pure' version of the bureaucratic model is associated strongly with the work of Weber who argued that, in formal organizations, bureaucracy is the most efficient form of management:

> The purely bureaucratic type of administrative organization ... is, from a technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most rational means of carrying out imperative control over human beings. It is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of its discipline, and in its reliability. (Weber, 1989: 16)

Bureaucracy, then, describes a formal organization which seeks maximum efficiency through rational approaches to management. Its main features are as follows:

1. It stresses the importance of the *hierarchical authority structure*, with formal chains of command between the different positions in the hierarchy. This pyramidal structure is based on the legal authority vested in the officers who hold places in the chain of command. Office holders are responsible to superordinates for the satisfactory conduct of their duties. In educational institutions teachers are accountable to the head or principal.
2. In common with other formal models, the bureaucratic approach emphasizes the *goal orientation* of the organization. Institutions are dedicated to goals which are clearly delineated by the officers at the apex of the pyramid. In colleges or schools goals are determined largely by the principal or head and endorsed without question by other staff.
3. The bureaucratic model suggests a *division of labour*, with staff spe-

cializing in particular tasks on the basis of expertise. The departmental structure in secondary schools and colleges is an obvious manifestation of division of labour, with subject specialists teaching a defined area of the curriculum. In this respect, English primary schools do not resemble bureaucracies because staff are typically class teachers who work with one group of children for much of their time.

4. In bureaucracies, decisions and behaviour are governed by *rules and regulations* rather than personal initiative. Schools typically have rules to regulate the behaviour of pupils and often guide the behaviour of teachers through bureaucratic devices such as the staff handbook. These rules may extend to the core issues of teaching and learning. In South Africa, 'the teachers ... were subjected to tight bureaucratic regulation, especially in the matter of the curriculum' (Sebakwane, 1997: 397). In many centralized systems, including Greece, bureaucratic control extends to prescribing school textbooks (Bush, 2001). Sandholtz and Scribner (2006) note that increased regulation and bureaucratic controls at school and district levels undermine teachers' professional development.

5. Bureaucratic models emphasize *impersonal* relationships between staff, and with clients. This neutrality is designed to minimize the impact of individuality on decision-making. Good schools depend in part on the quality of personal relationships between teachers and pupils, and this aspect of bureaucracy has little influence in many schools. Yet where staff are required to make an appointment to see the head, this may be regarded as an example of bureaucracy in action.

6. In bureaucracies the recruitment and career progress of staff are determined on *merit*. Appointments are made on the basis of qualifications and experience, and promotion depends on expertise demonstrated in present and previous positions. Schools and colleges fulfil this criterion in that formal competitive procedures are laid down for the appointment of new staff and for some promoted posts. Internal promotions, however, depend on the recommendation of the head or principal and there may be no formal process.

Applying the bureaucratic model to education

All large organizations contain some bureaucratic elements and this is true of educational institutions:

Schools and colleges have many bureaucratic features, including a hierar-

chical structure with the headteacher or principal at the apex. Teachers specialise on the basis of expertise in secondary schools and colleges and, increasingly, in primary schools also. There are many rules for pupils and staff, whose working lives are largely dictated by 'the tyranny of the timetable'. Heads and senior staff are accountable to the governing body and external stakeholders for the activities of the school or college. Partly for these reasons, bureaucratic theories pervade much of the literature on educational management. (Bush, 1994: 36)

The recognition that bureaucracy applies to many aspects of education is tempered by concern about its procedures becoming too dominant an influence on the operation of schools and colleges. There is a fear that the bureaucracy itself may become the *raison d'être* of the organization rather than being firmly subordinated to educational aims.

Bureaucracy is the preferred model for many education systems, including the Czech Republic (Svecova, 2000), China (Bush et al., 1998), Greece (Kavouri and Ellis, 1998), Israel (Gaziel, 2003), Poland (Klus-Stanska and Olek, 1998), Seychelles (Purvis, 2007), South Africa (Sebakwane, 1997), Slovenia (Becaj, 1994) and much of South America (Newland, 1995). Two of these authors point to some of the weaknesses of bureaucracy in education:

The excessive centralization and bureaucratization, which continue to exist [in South America] in spite of the reforms undertaken, affect the efficiency of the system. (Newland, 1995: 113)

The Greek state should start moving towards restructuring the organization of schools. Less complexity, formalization and centralization of the system, and more extended professionalism and autonomy of teachers and headteachers would be beneficial. (Kavouri and Ellis, 1998: 106)

These extracts suggest that bureaucracy is likely to be the preferred model in centralized education systems as the bureaucratic apparatus is the mechanism used to control subordinate levels in the hierarchy, including schools. Gamage's (2006) research in Victoria, Australia, suggests that the shift to site-based management has eased these controls and enhanced quality and innovation. 'When compared to what they experienced under centralized, bureaucratic models, the SBM [school-based management] has created more autonomous, flexible, better quality, effective schools' (ibid.: 27). However, where site-based management is accompanied by prescriptive policies and targets, as well as high levels of accountability (Taylor, 2007: 569), it may have the opposite effect of damaging the creativity and initiative of teachers, as Brehony and Deem (2005) argue in respect of England:

Up to the mid 1980s, publicly funded educational organizations did dis-

play bureaucratic features, including rules, staff hierarchies and complex procedures. However, professionals employed in these organizations retained discretion and autonomy in their work. Since then, the intro- duction of an audit culture and a greater emphasis on management and regulation of the work of teachers and academics, has decreased discre- tion and autonomy. (Ibid.: 395).

The bureaucratic model has certain advantages for education but there are difficulties in applying it too enthusiastically to schools and col- leges because of the professional role of teachers. If teachers do not 'own' innovations but are simply required to implement externally imposed changes, they are likely to do so without enthusiasm, leading to possible failure.

Rational models

Rational approaches differ from other formal models in that they empha- size managerial *processes* rather than organizational structure or goals. The focus is on the process of decision-making instead of the structural framework which constrains, but does not determine, managerial deci- sions. Although the distinctive quality of rational models is their emphasis on process, they share several characteristics with the other for- mal theories. These include agreed organizational objectives and a bureaucratic organizational structure. The decision-making process thus takes place within a recognized structure and in pursuit of accepted goals.

The process of rational decision-making is thought to have the fol- lowing sequence:

1. Perception of a problem or a choice opportunity.
2. Analysis of the problem, including data collection.
3. Formulation of alternative solutions or choices.
4. Choice of the most appropriate solution to the problem to meet the objectives of the organization.
5. Implementation of the chosen alternative.
6. Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the chosen strategy.

Davies and Coates (2005: 109) add that 'rational planning … allows decision-makers to carefully weigh-up the consequences of alternatives and to choose a course of action that maximizes the achievement of objectives'. The process is essentially iterative in that the evaluation may lead to a redefinition of the problem or a search for an alternative solution (see Figure 3.1).
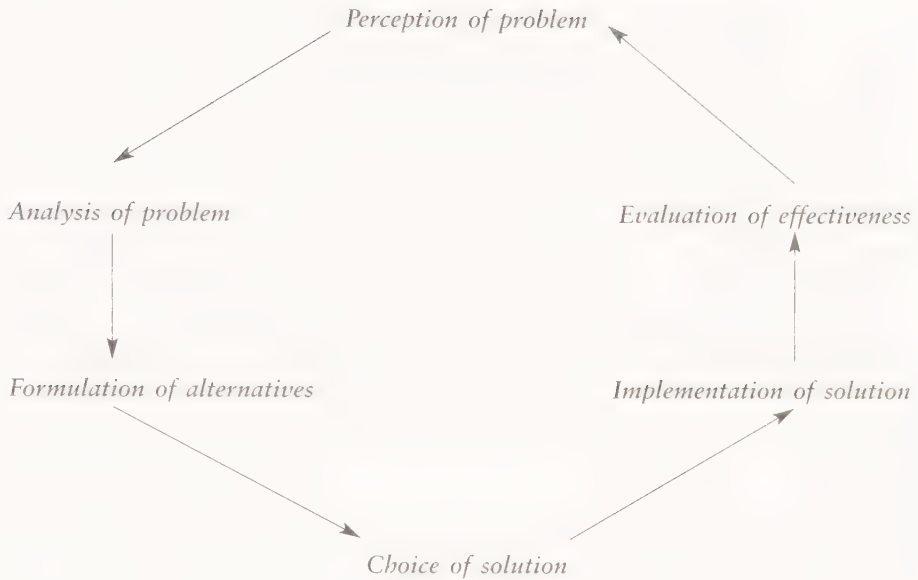
Perception of problem

Analysis of problem

Evaluation of effectiveness

Formulation of alternatives

Implementation of solution

Choice of solution

Figure 3.1 The rational process

Hoyle and Wallace (2005), however, note that, in practice, teachers and heads:

> make a multitude of decisions 'on the run' in contingent and evolving circumstances. Despite the increasing scope for rational planning made possible by management systems, electronic means of communication, and sophisticated data storage and retrieval technology, there remain limits to scientific rationality. (Ibid.: 36–7)

In Chapter 2, we noted that theories tend to be *normative* in that they reflect views about how organizations and individuals ought to behave. The rational model is certainly normative in that it presents an idealized view of the decision-making process. It has serious limitations as a portrayal of the decision-making process in education:

> There may be dispute over objectives, and the definition of the 'problem' is likely to be dependent on the particular standpoint of the individuals involved.
> Some of the data needed to make a decision may not be available.
> The assumption that the choice of solution can be detached and impartial is flawed. In practice, individuals and groups are likely to promote their own favoured solutions which in turn may reflect individual rather than organizational objectives.
> The perceived effectiveness of the chosen solution may also vary

according to the preferences of the people concerned.

Despite these practical limitations, Levačić (1995) shows that the rational model provides the preferred basis for the management of schools in England and Wales. She refers to the management consultancy report by Coopers and Lybrand (1988) which was influential in the introduction of local management in the early 1990s:

> The model of good management practice contained in the Coopers and Lybrand report is essentially a rational one. It advocates a system for allocating resources which is directed at the explicit achievement of institutional objectives. This requires clarity in the specification of objectives, gathering and analysing information on alternative ways of attaining the objectives, evaluating the alternatives and selecting those actions judged most likely to maximize achievement of the objectives. (Levačić, 1995: 62)

Watson and Crossley (2001: 114) show that similar principles underpin the management of further education in England and Wales: 'Many of the basic assumptions underpinning the [former] Further Education Funding Council's directives on strategy are rooted in a rational–scientific model that proposes the creation of a [strategic management process] that is sequential, linear and controllable'.

The application of rational principles to education can be illustrated through examining internal resource allocation in schools. There are five core principles (Bush, 2000: 105–6):

1. *Aims and priorities*. Resource allocation should be informed by clearly articulated aims and by determining priorities among these aims.
2. *Long-term planning*. Budgetary decisions should reflect an awareness of their long-term implications. This means going beyond the typical annual budget cycle to a consideration of the longer-term aims of the organization.
3. *Evaluating alternatives*. There should be a thorough consideration of alternative patterns of expenditure based on evaluation of past actions and assessment of the opportunity costs of different spending options.
4. *Zero-based budgeting*. This involves taking a fresh look at all areas of expenditure rather than simply making incremental changes to previous spending patterns.
5. *Selecting the most appropriate options*. Once the possible alternative spending patterns have been scrutinized, with an element of zero-basing, rational models require a choice of the most appropriate option linked to organizational objectives.

Levačić et al. (1999) conducted a large-scale review of inspection reports prepared by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) in England and then carried out detailed case studies of 13 schools deemed by OFSTED to be offering good value for money. These authors cautiously conclude that applying the rational model is beneficial:

> Both OFSTED inspection report and case-study evidence showed that teachers are increasingly following the rational model in establishing aims for their schools and then endeavouring through planning processes to involve all staff ... we have found a tendency for schools which have sound planning approaches and developed monitoring and evaluation procedures to be more successful in relation to the quality of teaching and learning, student behaviour and attendance. (Levačić, 1999: 25–6)

Hierarchical models

Hierarchical approaches stress vertical relationships within organizations and the accountability of leaders to external sponsors. The organizational structure is emphasized with particular reference to the authority and responsibility of the managers at the apex of the structure. Packwood (1989) provides a precise definition of the hierarchical model and locates it firmly within the bureaucratic framework:

> One of the basic properties of bureaucratic organisation is the way in which occupational roles are graded in a vertical hierarchy. Authority to prescribe work passes from senior to junior roles, while accountability for the performance of work passes in the reverse direction from junior to senior. Authority and accountability are impersonal in that they are attached to roles, not to the personalities of the individuals who occupy the roles. The headteacher has authority to define the work of the deputy headteacher in a school because he or she occupies the role of headteacher not because of who he or she is as an individual. (Ibid.: 9–10)

This view subordinates individuals to the organizational hierarchy. Subjective theorists are very critical of this stance, as we shall see in Chapter 6.

Hierarchical models emphasize *vertical communication* patterns. Information is passed down the hierarchy to all appropriate levels, and subordinates are expected to implement the decisions made by the senior managers. Difficult issues may be referred upwards until they reach a level where they can be resolved. In schools and colleges, the head or principal is thought to inform heads of department or other staff about policies and is the final arbiter of problems incapable of resolution at lower levels in the hierarchy.

Horizontal communication also plays a part in the hierarchy but Packwood (1989) argues that such contacts are for co-ordination rather than management. The subject leader role in English primary schools is an example of a lateral relationship. These staff communicate with class teachers about aspects of their subject but they do not have managerial authority over them.

Central to hierarchical models is the concept of *accountability*. Leaders are responsible to external agencies for the performance of subordinates and the activities of the organization. In schools, the accountability of heads to the governing body, and to the local education authority, serves to underpin their internal authority.

Hierarchical models have certain limitations when applied to educational institutions. Teachers as professionals claim discretion in their classroom work and there is increasing participation in decision-making on wider school issues. As a result, the significance of the hierarchy may be modified by notions of collegiality (see Chapter 4) and teacher autonomy. Hatcher (2005: 253) also points to the contradictions between notions of distributed leadership and what he describes as 'the hierarchical power structure of schools'. Distributed leadership is independent of the hierarchy, based on personal qualities rather than designated positions. Despite this emerging model, and because of the clear legal authority of heads and principals, the hierarchy remains significant for schools and colleges.

In certain societies, the significance of the hierarchy is further reinforced by the tendency to accept unequal concentrations of power (Walker and Dimmock, 2002). Bush and Qiang (2000), for example, show that China is the archetypal high power-distance society and that teachers have considerable respect for the positional authority of principals.

Formal models: goals, structure, environment and leadership

Goals

Formal models characterize schools and colleges as *goal oriented*. There is an assumption that institutions pursue specific objectives. These goals are invariably determined by heads and senior staff and formal theories do not regard the support of other teachers as problematic. All members of the organization are thought to be working towards the achievement of these official aims. Begley (2008) stresses the close relationship between leadership and the purposes of education:

> Educational leaders should keep the fundamental purposes of education

in mind as they make decisions, manage people or resources, and gener-
ally provide leadership in their organizations. Otherwise they will be
tossed about like a rudderless ship in a storm by the competing agendas
and interest groups that make up any community. (Ibid.: 21)

Begley (ibid.: 21–3) argues that three 'broad and transcending' purposes
characterize education:

1. Aesthetic purposes – the formation of character
2. Economic purposes – 'learning to earn'
3. Socialization functions – citizenship and social skills.

He adds (ibid.: 23) that 'a balanced attendance to all three fundamen-
tal purposes of education is critical to the educational leadership
process'. Davies and Davies (2004: 11) claim that 'direction-setting' is a
key element of strategic leadership while Cheng (2002: 61) stresses the
role of leaders in goal development and achievement. He argues that
leaders should be 'goal developers' and 'goal leaders' and should have
two main strategies to promote quality:

   develop appropriate institutional missions and goals
   lead members to achieve goals, implement plans and programmes,
   and meet standards.

The portrayal of schools and colleges as organizations actively pursuing
official goals set out in formal statements may be undermined by the
recognition that they often have multiple objectives. The diverse goals
of schools and colleges often emanate from different parts of the organ-
ization. For example, one can distinguish between individual,
departmental and school goals. In a secondary school an official goal
may refer to the fulfilment of the potential of all pupils. A departmen-
tal goal might relate to the attainment of particular standards of
competence in certain subjects. Individual goals may well reflect per-
sonal career ambitions. These goals are not necessarily compatible.

   Fishman (1999) makes a further distinction between external and
internal goals in commenting on the differences between Russian and
Western education. In centralized educational systems, there may be
limited scope for institutional leaders to determine school aims because
these are set by national or local government. However, even in highly
directive systems, there has to be some scope for local interpretation, as
Fishman demonstrates:

   Goal formulation cannot set one and the same result for all (that would
   be nothing but totalitarianism in education). Such goal setting should
   take into account the interests of the children, their abilities, the peculi-

> arities of the social environment and the capabilities of the school itself
> … the goal-setting process inside an educational system is not merely a
> banal transmission of the external goals. (Ibid.: 73)

Two examples of externally generated aims are the Millennium Development Goals applied to education: universal enrolment and completion of primary schooling; and gender equality in primary and secondary school access and achievement. Lewin (2005) argues that one consequence of these aims, which also strongly influence donor funding, is that many countries in sub-Saharan Africa have not developed coherent plans for the post-primary sub-sector. Elsewhere, I make a similar point and also raise concerns about quality:

> Focusing substantial resources on primary education often means that secondary, vocational or higher education can be neglected. There are also important questions about what is meant by 'quality education'. Increased enrolments often mean more children in the same space, leading to larger class sizes with inevitable consequences for quality. (Bush, 2008: 443)

Such broad externally developed goals are augmented by national and local policy, and by policy-making at the institutional level. The degree of centralization is likely to strongly influence, if not determine, the extent to which internal stakeholders can develop their own aims.

The organization's official goals may be a product of both external imperatives and internal requirements, but the assumption that they necessarily guide the behaviour and decisions of staff may be unrealistic or naive. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, formal goals may be contested or may provide only a limited guide to action. However, as a general rule, determining goals *within* schools, rather than *imposing them* on schools, is more likely to mean that they meet the needs of learners and the community. This should also enhance the prospect of staff 'owning' the goals and thus implementing them enthusiastically and effectively.

Organizational structure

Formal models present organizational *structure* as an objective fact. Schools and colleges are 'real' institutions which imbue teachers and pupils with a sense of belonging. Staff are thought to define their professional lives in terms of their position within the school or college. Structures may be typified in physical terms that imply permanence. Individuals are accorded a place in the structure such as teacher of year 2 or grade 3, or as head of the science department. The work of teach-

ers and other staff is defined in terms of their roles within the formal structure. The structure is assumed to influence the behaviour of the individuals holding particular roles in the organization. Structure dominates and individuality is de-emphasized. The role of school leaders and managers is strongly influenced, or even determined, by the official requirements of the post and there is only limited scope for interpretation by the post-holder. In this model, the emphasis is on 'role taking', accepting the position as it is defined, rather than 'role-making', reinterpreting it in line with the post-holder's attributes and preferences (Hall, 1997). When office doors are marked 'principal', rather than having the incumbent's name identified, this symbolizes the dominance of the formal organizational structure.

As noted earlier, the organizational structure tends to be hierarchical and vertical, with staff being accountable to their superordinate in the hierarchy. In schools, teachers are accountable to the principal, often through a middle manager such as a head of department. The 'ethos of top-down management' (Johnson, 1995: 224) is evident in South African schools: 'It [is] important to bear in mind the nature of power relations within schools. In most cases, power resides with the principal who has legal authority and is legally accountable' (ibid.: 225).

Structure is not simply a matter of organization charts and formal relationships. It can also have a significant impact on the ways in which school goals are pursued and the extent of their achievement. Dupriez and Dumay (2006) for example, argue that the aim of equality of opportunity can be influenced specifically by the school's organization structure.

Organizational structure can be remarkably resilient, and resistant to change. Tripp (2003) reports on Singapore's shift from a highly centralized structure to a more diversified one, based around schools as autonomous learning organizations:

> Any paradigm shift is at best a slow and difficult process and, although the government is putting a lot of energy into it, the changes are very large scale and made all the more difficult by a history of strongly hierarchical thinking and bureaucratic processes. (Ibid.: 479)

The external environment

Formal approaches differ in the way they typify relationships between the organization and its environment. The more rigid models, such as 'closed systems', tend to limit environmental links to the minimum required to sustain accountability. These perspectives characterize relationships in terms of the official links between the head or principal and such formal groups as national and local governments, and the

governing body. Interaction with other groups, such as parents, employers and other educational institutions, is de-emphasized. 'Closed systems' models assume that schools and colleges are impervious to such influences.

A significant aspect of bureaucracy, and particularly of closed systems, is that accountability to officials is regarded as more important than responsibility to clients such as students or parents. In South Africa, for example, despite an attempted shift towards self-managing schools in the post-Apartheid era, most principals still regard themselves as primarily accountable to the hierarchy, via district officials, rather than to the wider constituency of stakeholders such as parents, the community and learners themselves (Bush et al., 2008). This phenomenon is also evident in Slovenia:

> Heads know that parents and children are important but in fact they have been used to accepting the superior institutions and authorities as the real and powerful 'customers' on which they are really dependent. At the same time, parents and children have been used to seeing the school and its teachers as authorities who should be obeyed … This kind of relationship between heads and parents also suits and supports bureaucratic organisation and head centred leadership very well. (Becaj, 1994: 11)

Other formal models, such as 'open systems', postulate wide-ranging links with the environment. Educational institutions are portrayed as interactive organizations, responding to a changing environment and displaying their achievements to the local community. Schools and colleges in self-managing systems are increasingly adopting a more 'open' stance, conscious of the need for a good reputation with present and prospective parents, employers and the local community. Few educational institutions justify the label 'closed' in the twenty-first century.

In many countries, formal accountability to the hierarchy is sharpened by a system of inspection or monitoring designed to ensure that schools are conforming to the national curriculum and achieving appropriate learning outcomes. 'To support and monitor the provision of education and attainment of expected standards … , many countries put in place some form of external supervision often referred to as a schools' inspectorate' (McNab, 2004: 53). In England, the 'target-setting' culture means that many school leaders take decisions primarily on the basis of externally generated requirements, 'policed' by OFSTED, sometimes at the expense of their own professional judgement about what is best for their pupils. 'Any failure to meet centrally devised targets is guaranteed to bring an inspectorial body, like Ofsted, down upon their head' (Bottery, 2004: 53).

While recent research (Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson et al., 2008) shows the importance of school leadership in improving student outcomes, other internal and external factors are also significant. Harris et al.'s (2006: 409) study of English schools in challenging contexts points to the centrality of external variables in school improvement: 'While schools can raise attainment and performance through their own efforts, the external environment remains an important influence upon a school's ability to improve'.

Leadership

Within formal models, leadership is ascribed to the person at the apex of the hierarchy. It is assumed that this individual sets the tone of the organization and establishes the major official objectives. Baldridge et al. discuss the nature of formal leadership:

> Under the bureaucratic model the leader is seen as the hero who stands at the top of a complex pyramid of power. The hero's job is to assess the problems, consider alternatives, and make rational choices. Much of the organisation's power is held by the hero, and great expectations are raised because people trust him [sic] to solve problems and fend off threats from the environment. (1978: 44)

The leader is expected to play a key part in policy-making, and adoption of innovations is assumed to follow. The possibility of opposition, or indifference, to change is not acknowledged. It is believed that implementation is unproblematic.

In education there are several features that support this characteristic of unidimensional leadership. Official bodies and individuals behave as if the head or principal is the fount of all knowledge and authority. The head is the focal point for most external communications, and parents and community leaders generally expect to contact the school via the head. Many other groups tend to regard the principal as the public face of the institution and behave accordingly. In primary schools, in particular, there is a perceived identity between the head and the school which reinforces the 'top down' perspective on leadership.

The assumption of an all-powerful leader at the apex of schools and colleges has several limitations. While formal authority resides with heads, they require the consent of colleagues if policy initiatives are to be carried through into departmental and classroom practice. It is now a truism that staff must 'own' decisions if they are to be implemented successfully.

Heads of self-managing schools and colleges have to share power with other staff in order to cope with the sheer volume of work arising from their enhanced responsibility for managing finance, staff and external relations. This pragmatic response to change serves to modify the notion of all-powerful heads, but in many cases the effect has been to increase the role of the senior leadership team and not to empower more junior staff. The hierarchy remains intact but the apex comprises a team rather than a single individual. Wallace (2004: 57) uses the concept of 'orchestration, narrowly distributed among senior formal leaders', in his study of district-wide change: 'Orchestration implies steering the change process by organizing and maintaining oversight of an intricate array of co-ordinated tasks. It is the over-arching "complex change management theme" of a hierarchically ordered typology'. Similarly, Bush et al. (2005) found that school leaders taking part in NCSL team development programmes often enhanced the effectiveness of their senior leadership teams but were sometimes perceived to be remote from the rest of the staff.

Managerial leadership

Various types of leadership have been identified in the literature, as we noted in Chapter 2. The type of leadership most closely associated with formal models is 'managerial':

> Managerial leadership assumes that the focus of leaders ought to be on functions, tasks and behaviours and that if these functions are carried out competently the work of others in the organisation will be facilitated. Most approaches to managerial leadership also assume that the behaviour of organizational members is largely rational. Authority and influence are allocated to formal positions in proportion to the status of those positions in the organizational hierarchy. (Leithwood et al., 1999: 14)

This definition shows that managerial leadership is strongly aligned with 'formal models', as the description of the latter on page 40 demonstrates. Leithwood et al. (ibid.: 15) say that 'there is evidence of considerable support in the literature and among practicing leaders for managerial approaches to leadership'. They add that 'positional power, in combination with formal policies and procedures, is the source of influence exercised by managerial leadership' (ibid.: 17).

Dressler's (2001: 175) review of leadership in Charter schools in the United States shows the significance of managerial leadership: 'Tradi-

tionally, the principal's role has been clearly focused on management responsibilities'.

Myers and Murphy (1995: 14) identify six specifically managerial functions for school principals. Four of these are described as 'hierarchical':

    supervision
    input controls (e.g. teacher transfers)
    behaviour controls (e.g. job descriptions)
    output controls (e.g. student testing).

It is significant to note that this type of leadership does not include the concept of vision which is central to most leadership models. Managerial leadership is focused on managing existing activities successfully rather than visioning a better future for the school. 'Management functions to support learning and teaching, the core of the educational enterprise' (Hoyle and Wallace, 2005: 68).

Managerialism

In Chapter 1 (p. 1), I introduced the notion of managerialism, a focus on management processes at the expense of educational purposes and values. In this section, I provide a longer discussion of this concept. The shift in the language of school organization to favour 'leadership' at the expense of 'management' is partly semantic (Bush, 2008) but also reflects anxiety about the dangers of value-free management, focusing on efficiency for its own sake, what Hoyle and Wallace (2005) describe as 'management to excess':

> Effective leadership and management 'take the strain' by creating structures and processes which allow teachers to engage as fully as possible in their key task. Managerialism, on the other hand, is leadership and management to excess. It transcends the support role of leadership and, in its extreme manifestation, becomes an end in itself. (Ibid.: 68)

Managerial leadership is the model which provides the greatest risk of a managerialist approach to school organization. By focusing on functions, tasks and behaviours, there is the possibility that the aims of education will be subordinated to the managerial aim of greater efficiency. Simkins (2005: 13–14) claims that managerialist values are being set against traditional professional values and points to four central elements of the 'managerialist agenda':

> The replacement of public sector values by those of the private sector and the market.

The establishment of an impoverished concept of purpose within education that values measurable outcomes over those that are more elusive but more valuable.

The imposition of models of leadership and management that emphasize individual accountability, rigid planning and target-setting as the prime means of organizational control.

A redistribution of power, with the authority and autonomy of professionals being replaced by the power of managers to establish agendas and determine modes of work.

Evidence of a managerialist approach to education may be found in English and Scottish further education (Lumby, 2003; McTavish, 2003), in universities (Allen, 2003; Brehony and Deem, 2005) and in schools (Rutherford, 2006; Hoyle and Wallace, 2007). Goldspink (2007) aligns managerialism with 'New Public Management' and adds that 'tight linkage between teachers, schools and the centre is seen as both desirable and achievable' (ibid.: 29). Managerialism is often regarded with distaste, but Glatter (1997) warns that we should not regard 'leadership' as 'pure' and 'management' as 'dirty'. Rather, both are required to ensure that schools and colleges have a clear sense of moral purpose while also putting in place effective structures and processes to enable educational purposes to be achieved. Managerial leadership is an essential component of successful educational institutions but it should complement, not supplant, values-based approaches. Effective management is essential but value-free managerialism is inappropriate and damaging.

The limitations of formal models

The various formal models pervade much of the literature on educational management. They are normative approaches in that they present ideas about how people in organizations ought to behave. Schools and colleges are typified as goal-seeking organizations employing rational means to achieve the objectives established by official leaders. The educational reforms of the past 20 years, in England and many other countries, served to increase the significance of formal models. Because a 'top-down' model is operating in imposing change on schools and colleges, supported by a centralized inspection system, the assumption is that leaders should respond by managing their establishments in the same way, following a rational approach:

A major development in educational management in the last decade has

been much greater emphasis on defining effective leadership by individuals in management posts in terms of the effectiveness of their organisation, which is increasingly judged in relation to measurable outcomes for students. In the UK both major political parties have pursued educational policies which seek to diminish the traditional ambiguity and lack of coupling between inputs, process and outcomes in educational organisations. This is argued to require a rational–technicist approach to the structuring of decision-making. (Levačić et al., 1999: 15)

The 'measurable outcomes' include, in England, league tables, target setting and benchmarking, leaving schools vulnerable to a range of bureaucratic pressures. MacBeath (1999) points to the resultant tension between meeting the requirements of a centrally determined agenda and the specific needs of the school as an educational community.

Formal models are selective as well as normative. In focusing on the bureaucratic and structural aspects of organizations they necessarily ignore or underestimate other salient features:

A classical, rationalist model ... fails to take into account the wider dimensions of organisational history, culture and context. There has been a failure of management ... to understand that an apparently rational [process] may be a chimera in practice. (Watson and Crossley, 2001: 123)

There are five specific weaknesses associated with formal models:

1. It may be unrealistic to characterize schools and colleges as *goal-oriented* organizations. It is often difficult to ascertain the goals of educational institutions. Formal objectives may have little operational relevance because they are often vague and general, because there may be many different goals competing for resources, and because goals may emanate from individuals and groups as well as from the leaders of the organization. As we noted earlier (p. 56), goals may be imposed on schools by external agencies, such as local, state, provincial or national governments, or by global bodies such as the United Nations or the World Bank. These external aims jostle with internally-generated purposes, and with each other, to make goal-setting problematic.

   Even where the purposes of schools and colleges have been clarified, there are further problems in judging whether objectives have been achieved. Many of the goals associated with education are very difficult to measure. Policy-makers, practitioners and researchers often rely on examination performance to assess schools, but this is only one dimension of the educational process.

2. The portrayal of decision-making as a *rational* process is fraught with

difficulties. The belief that managerial action is preceded by a process of evaluation of alternatives and a considered choice of the most appropriate option is rarely substantiated. Decisions in schools and colleges are made by teachers, who draw on a whole range of experience as they respond to events. Much human behaviour is irrational and this inevitably influences the nature of decision-making in education. Hoyle and Wallace (2005: 37) add that there are 'cognitive' limits to rationality because leaders have limited awareness of what is happening inside and outside their schools. Moreover, rational pursuit of a particular goal may be derailed by the simultaneous prosecution of other, incompatible, purposes.

Educational institutions, in common with other organizations staffed by professionals, depend on decisions made by individuals and sub-units. Professional judgement is based as much on the expertise of the individual as on rational processes conditioned by the rule book. As Hoyle and Wallace (ibid.: 39) explain, teachers and other staff have 'the negative capacity to resist or undermine work towards achieving official goals'. That is why there is so much emphasis in twenty-first century literature on the need for teachers to 'own' change.

3. Formal models focus on the organization as an entity and ignore or underestimate the contribution of *individuals*. They assume that people occupy preordained positions in the structure and that their behaviour reflects their organizational positions rather than their individual qualities and experience. Critics argue that formal perspectives treat organizations as if they are independent of the people within them. Greenfield (1973) has been particularly critical of this view:

> Most theories of organisation grossly simplify the nature of the reality with which they deal. The drive to see the organisation as a single kind of entity with a life of its own apart from the perceptions and beliefs of those involved in it blinds us to its complexity and the variety of organisations people create around themselves. (Ibid.: 571)

Greenfield's alternative approach to organizations is discussed in Chapter 6 but the essence of his argument is that organizations are the creation of the people within them. He claims that formal models greatly underestimate individual variables and thus produce an inaccurate portrayal of schools and colleges. Samier (2002: 40) takes a similar view, expressing concern 'about the role technical rationality plays in crippling the personality of the bureaucrat, reducing him [sic] to a cog in a machine'.

4. A central assumption of formal models is that power resides at the apex of the pyramid. Heads and principals possess authority by virtue of their positions as the appointed leaders of their institutions. This focus on official authority leads to a view of institutional management which is essentially *top down*. Policy is laid down by senior managers and implemented by staff lower down the hierarchy. Their acceptance of managerial decisions is regarded as unproblematic.

   The hierarchical aspect of the formal model is most relevant to organizations which depend on tight discipline for their effectiveness. The armed forces, for example, are expected to carry out their orders without any questioning or elaboration. The situation is assumed to require compliance with instructions from superordinates.

   Organizations with large numbers of professional staff tend to exhibit signs of tension between the conflicting demands of professionalism and the hierarchy. Formal models assume that leaders, because they are appointed on merit, have the competence to issue appropriate instructions to subordinates. This is supported by the authority vested in them by virtue of their official position. Professional organizations have a rather different ethos, with expertise distributed widely within the institution:

   > Traditional models of school organization favour peaked hierarchies that concentrate power and leadership responsibility on the office of the principal. As these models struggle to effectively meet the needs of education in the new millennium, leadership structures that distribute leadership influence and empower teachers to play a greater role in the leadership of the school, are slowly being implemented. (Rutherford, 2006: 59)

   Where professionals specialize, as in secondary schools and colleges, the ability of leaders to direct the actions of subordinates may be questionable. A head who is a humanities graduate lacks the specific competence to supervise teaching in the faculty of technology. In professional organizations there is an authority of expertise which may come into conflict with positional authority.

   Heads are responsible for the quality of teaching and learning in their schools, but their authority over teachers may be ambiguous. Professional staff claim zones of autonomy based on their specialist expertise. The classroom is still largely the domain of the teacher and pedagogic matters are primarily the responsibility of the practitioner as a qualified professional. These areas of discretion may lead to conflict between heads and other staff. Such difficulties can be

avoided only if there is at least tacit acceptance of the head's overall responsibility for the activities of the school. This involves recognition by teachers of the head's right to take the initiative in many areas of school policy.

5. Formal approaches are based on the implicit assumption that organizations are relatively *stable*. Individuals may come and go but they slot into predetermined positions in a static structure. Bureaucratic and structural theories are most appropriate in stable conditions, as Bolman and Deal (1991: 77) suggest: 'Organisations operating in simpler and more stable environments are likely to employ less complex and more centralized structures, with authority, rules and policies as the primary vehicles for co-ordinating the work'.

It can be argued that assumptions of stability are unrealistic in many organizations and invalid in most schools and colleges. March and Olsen (1976: 21) are right to claim that 'individuals find themselves in a more complex, less stable and less understood world than that described by standard theories of organisational choice'. Rational perspectives require a measure of predictability to be useful as portrayals of organizational behaviour. The validity of formal models may be limited during phases of rapid and multiple change, such as that affecting most educational systems in the twenty-first century. The notion of a thorough analysis of a problem followed by identification of alternatives, choice of the preferred option and a process of implementation and evaluation, may be unrealistic during periods of turbulence.

Conclusion: are formal models still valid?

These criticisms of formal models suggest that they have serious limitations in respect of schools and colleges. The dominance of the hierarchy is compromised by the expertise possessed by professional staff. The supposed rationality of the decision-making process requires modification to allow for the pace and complexity of change. The concept of organizational goals is challenged by those who point to the existence of multiple objectives in education and the possible conflict between goals held at individual, departmental and institutional levels.

Despite these limitations, it would be inappropriate to dismiss formal approaches as irrelevant to schools and colleges. As Fitzgerald (2009: 63–4) indicates, bureaucracy is remarkably resilient and is being reinforced by new public management, for example in England and New Zealand: 'Despite almost two decades of change, the organization and hierarchy of

school replicates industrial models of working that differentiates people and activities according to position'. The stress on standards and targets in the English system has led to what Ball (2003) and Strain (2009), describe as 'performativity', a mode of regulated control, with central requirements being imposed on schools and colleges. The hierarchy is the vehicle for external control of school activities.

The other models discussed in this book were all developed as a reaction to the perceived weaknesses of formal theories. However, these alternative perspectives have not succeeded in dislodging the formal models which remain valid as *partial* descriptions of organization and management in education. Formal models are inadequate but still have much to contribute to our understanding of schools and colleges as organizations. Owens and Shakeshaft (1992) refer to a reduction of confidence in bureaucratic models and a 'paradigm shift' to a more sophisticated analysis. In subsequent chapters we examine several alternative perspectives and assess the extent to which they have supplanted formal models as the best ways and means of understanding and leading schools and colleges.

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