

The Demise of Bureaucracy and Emergent Models of Organizational Structure

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ABSTRACT

Bureaucracy – the basic structure of schools in the industrial world – is unsuited to the demands of our postindustrial demographically diverse information society. In this article, I discuss the dysfunctions of the bureaucratic model, including those dealing with division of labor and specialization, uniform rules and procedures, hierarchy of authority, impersonality in interpersonal relations, and lifelong career and loyalty to the organization. Then I examine emerging models, which are the antithesis of bureaucracy, including system 4 design, school-based management, transformational leadership, total quality management, and restructuring focused on student achievement.

The Demise of Bureaucracy

In a period of increasing demands for accountability, demographic changes in school population, and economic crisis, most schools are being forced to examine their fundamental structural assumptions. Bureaucracy – the basic infrastructure of schools in the industrial world – is ill-suited to the demands of our postindustrial demographically diverse information society (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Murphy & Meyers, 2008). Bureaucratic characteristics not only are being viewed as less than useful but also are considered to be harmful. Some of these negative features of bureaucracy include the following:

1. *Division of labor and specialization.* A high degree of division of labor can reduce staff initiative. As jobs become narrower in scope and well defined by procedures, individuals sacrifice autonomy and independence. Although specialization can lead to increased productivity and efficiency, it can also create conflict between specialized units, to the detriment of the overall goals of the school. For example, specialization may impede communication between units. Moreover, overspecialization may result in boredom and routine for some staff, which can lead to dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and turnover.

2. **Reliance on rules and procedures.** Weber (1947) claimed that the use of formal rules and procedures was adopted to help remove the uncertainty in attempting to coordinate a variety of activities in an organization. Reliance on rules can lead to the inability to cope with unique cases that do not conform to normal circumstances. In addition, the emphasis on rules and procedures can produce excessive red tape. The use of rules and procedures is only a limited strategy in trying to achieve coordinated actions. Other strategies may be required. But bureaucracy's approach is to create new rules to cover emerging situations and new contingencies. And, once established, it is difficult to remove ineffectual rules or procedures in a bureaucracy.

3. **Emphasis on hierarchy of authority.** The functional attributes of a hierarchy are that it maintains an authority relationship, coordinates activities and personnel, and serves as the formal system of communication. In theory, the hierarchy has both a downward and upward communication flow. In practice, it usually has only a downward emphasis. Thus, upward communication is impeded, and there is no formal recognition of horizontal communication. This stifles individual initiative and participation in decision making.

4. **Lifelong careers and evaluation.** Weber's (1947) bureaucratic model stresses lifelong careers and evaluations based on merit. Because competence can be difficult to measure in bureaucratic jobs and because a high degree of specialization enables most employees to master their jobs quickly, there is a tendency to base promotions and salary increments more on seniority and loyalty than on actual skill and performance. Thus, the idea of having the most competent people in positions within the organization is not fully realized. Loyalty is obtained, but this loyalty is toward the protection of one's position, not to the effectiveness of the organization.

5. **Impersonality.** The impersonal nature of bureaucracy is probably its most serious shortcoming. Recent critics of bureaucracy attack it as emphasizing rigid, control-oriented structures over people found to be incompatible with professional learning communities (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Kruse & Louis, 2009).

New viewpoints are leading to a decline in the use of bureaucratic structure in modern organizations (Crozier, 2010; Etzioni-Halevey, 2010). School administrators in the twenty-first century will see a change in some of their duties. One change will be a shift away from simply supervising the work of others to that of contributing directly to the school's goals. Instead of merely shuffling papers and writing reports, the modern school administrator will be a valued participant in a professional learning community (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2008).

The renowned organization theorist, Warren Bennis, represents one of the extreme critics of bureaucratic structuring in organizations. More than four decades ago, he forecasted the demise of bureaucracy (Bennis, 1966). In a more recent book, *The Essential Bennis*, he exposes the hidden obstacles in our organizations – and in society at large – that conspire against good leadership. According to Bennis (2010a), within any organization an entrenched bureaucracy with a commitment to the status quo undermines the unwary leader. This creates an unconscious conspiracy in contemporary society, one that prevents leaders – from taking charge and making changes.

In recent years, popular writers have expressed increasing dissatisfaction with bureaucratic structures. This is reflected in the phenomenal appeal of numerous best-selling books such as *In Search of Excellence*, *The Fifth Discipline*, and *Theory Z*. The basic theme permeating these books is that there are viable alternatives to the bureaucratic model. There is a strong implication that warm, nurturing, caring, trusting, challenging organizations produce high productivity in people.

Emergent Models of Organizational Structure

What appears to be emerging to replace bureaucracy is a heterarchical model of organization capable of performing collective activities toward the achievement of school goals. Leadership in these heterarchical organizations will need to be considerably different. In particular, significant changes are envisioned in the school leader. School administrators will lead from the center rather than from the top. The major focus of leadership will be in supporting teacher success in the classroom (Blankstein, 2010). Change management will be an integral part of the leadership role of the school administrator (Fullan, 2010). The school administrator will provide intellectual leadership to support teachers' change efforts (Smylie, 2010). The school administrator will manage a school culture that supports a professional learning community focused on learning for all (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2010). Whatever their title or formal role definition, it is clear that school administrators continue to be best positioned to help guide faculty toward new forms of organizational structure (Kruse & Louis, 2009).

System 4 Design

As the human relations movement emerged, new approaches to organization design were developed (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). One of the more popular approaches was Rensis Likert's System 4 design. Likert (1961, 1967, 1979, 1987) argued that the bureaucratic approach to leadership fails to consider the human side of organizations. His work focused less on the rational and mechanistic aspects of organizational structure and more on its social and psychological components.

After studying many organizations, including schools, Likert found that there was a significant relationship between organizational structure and effectiveness. Organizations that hewed to the bureaucratic model tended to be less effective, whereas effective organizations emphasized incorporating individuals and groups into the system as an integral part of leading. Likert developed eight dimensions or processes for use in comparing organizations: leadership processes, motivational processes, communication processes, interaction processes, decision processes, goal-setting processes, control processes, and performance goals.

Using these eight dimensions, Likert observed four design approaches that incorporate these dimensions. At one extreme, Likert identified a form of organization he called System 1. In many ways a System 1 design is similar to the ideal bureaucracy. In sharp contrast, he describes a humanistic, interactive, group-oriented design, which he

called System 4 (Likert, 1987). Intermediate designs, Systems 2 and 3, are variants of the two extremes, which have received little attention. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of a System 4 organizational structure and contrasts them with a System 1 approach.

Table 1

System 1 and System 4 Designs

System 1 Organization	System 4 Organization
1. <i>Leadership process</i> includes no perceived confidence and trust. Subordinates do not feel free to discuss job problems with their superiors, who in turn do not solicit their ideas and opinions.	1. <i>Leadership process</i> includes perceived confidence and trust between superiors and subordinates in all matters. Subordinates feel free to discuss job problems with their superiors, who in turn solicit their ideas and opinions.
2. <i>Motivational process</i> taps only physical, security, and economic motives through the use of fear and sanctions. Unfavorable attitudes toward the organization prevail among employees.	2. <i>Motivational process</i> taps a full range of motives through participatory methods. Attitudes are favorable toward the organization and its goals.
3. <i>Communication process</i> is such that information flows downward and tends to be distorted, inaccurate, and viewed with suspicion by subordinates.	3. <i>Communication process</i> is such that information flows freely throughout the organization upward, downward, and laterally. The information is accurate and undistorted.
4. <i>Interaction process</i> is closed and restricted; subordinates have little effect on departmental goals, methods, and activities.	4. <i>Interaction process</i> is open and extensive; both superiors and subordinates are able to affect departmental goals, methods, and activities.
5. <i>Decision process</i> occurs only at the top of the organization; it is relatively centralized.	5. <i>Decision process</i> occurs at all levels through group processes; it is relatively decentralized.
6. <i>Goal-setting process</i> is located at the top of the organization; discourages group participation.	6. <i>Goal-setting process</i> encourages group participation in setting high, realistic objectives.
7. <i>Control process</i> is centralized and emphasizes fixing of blame for mistakes.	7. <i>Control process</i> is dispersed throughout the organization and emphasizes self-control and problem solving.
8. <i>Performance goals</i> are low and actively sought by managers who make no commitment to developing the human resources of the organization.	8. <i>Performance goals</i> are high and actively sought by superiors, who recognize the necessity for making a full commitment to developing through training, the human resources of the organization.

Likert viewed the System 4 structure as the ideal state toward which school administrators should try to move their schools. Trust and confidence in the school leader is extremely high among System 4 members. A variety of economic, ego, and social factors are used as incentives in motivating participants. Communication flows freely in all directions—upward, downward, and horizontally. Decision making occurs throughout the school and involves all members equally. Cooperative teamwork is encouraged in setting goals, and members are expected to engage in self- and group control. School administrators actively seek high performance goals and are committed to professional development.

The System 4 structure, according to Likert, rests on the notion of *supportive relationships*. The underlying theory is that if a school is to be highly effective, the leadership and other processes of the school must ensure that, in all interactions between the school administrator and staff, each staff member will perceive the relationship as enhancing his or her own sense of personal worth and importance in the organization. Furthermore, Likert considered the members of the organization as being brought together through what he called *linking pins*. Every leadership position is linked to two groups of positions: a higher-level group of which the leader is a member and a lower-level group of which the leader is the head. For example, the principal is the manager of school personnel but also a subordinate to a leader at the central office in another group at the next level in the organization. Thus, the principal serves as an important communication link between two levels of organization — school and school district.

Likert's System 4 structure is probably more a prescription for an ideal school or school district than a description of existing organizations. According to Likert, a school's effectiveness increases as it moves from a System 1 to a System 4 structure. System 4, then, serves as an ideal organization model toward which school leaders may aspire. On the other hand, the System 1 structure, like the bureaucratic model, was based on the assumption that there is only one best way to structure organizations.

School-Based Management

The general public's dissatisfaction with schools has moved some to support *school-based management* (SBM) as a solution to the educational quality control problem (Patrinos, 2010). Related to this are widespread efforts to decentralize many large school systems, like the Chicago Public Schools, as a possible answer to their perceived administrative failings (Hess, 1995).

The rationale advanced for both decentralization and SBM is to improve performance by making those closest to the delivery of services — teachers and principals — more responsible for the results of their schools' operations. This change involves shifting the initiative from school boards, superintendents, and central office staff to individual school sites. The thinking is that if teachers had the authority to make decisions at the building level, without being subject to the school system's bureaucracy, much better progress could be made. Furthermore, the authority to run schools should be shared with parents in order to establish a coordinated home-school effort (Epstein, 2011).

School-based management is what management experts Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman (2006) refer to when they recommend breaking large businesses into smaller units to improve productivity. And an examination of some programs touted under the SBM banner suggests the process parallels older models of parent-teacher-administrator collaboration that effective schools and school districts have practiced for years.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership focuses on leaders who have exceptional impact on their organizations. These individuals may be called transformational leaders. This view of leadership is extremely rare. Although the number of leaders involved is minimal, the impact these leaders have on their institutions is significant.

James McGregor Burns' (1978) prize-winning book first drew widespread attention to the concept of transformational leadership. Burns claimed that transformational leadership represents the transcendence of self-interest by both leader and led. Later, in his examination of the concept of transformational leadership, Bernard Bass has contrasted two types of leadership behaviors: transactional and transformational (Bass & Avolio, 2005). According to Bass, transactional leaders determine what subordinates need to do to achieve their own and organizational objectives; classify those requirements; help subordinates become confident that they can reach their objectives by expending the necessary efforts; and reward them according to their accomplishments. Transformational leaders, in contrast, motivate their subordinates to do more than they originally expected to do. They accomplish this in three ways: (1) By raising followers' levels of consciousness about the importance and value of designated outcomes and about ways of reaching them; (2) by getting followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the team, organization, or larger polity; and (3) by raising followers' need levels to the higher-order needs, such as self-actualization, or by expanding their portfolio of needs.

Bennis' (2010b) modified notion of transformative leadership is the ability of a person to reach the souls of others in a fashion which raises human consciousness, builds meanings, and inspires human intent that is the source of power between leaders and followers. Leithwood (2011) used another modification of Burns, this one based on Bass and Avolio's (2005) two-factor theory in which transactional and transformational leadership represent opposite ends of the leadership continuum. Bass maintained that the two actually can be complimentary.

The most fully developed model of transformational leadership in schools has been provided by Leithwood (2011), who identified seven factors that constitute transformational and transactional leadership. His model conceptualizes transformational leadership along eight dimensions: (1) building school vision, (2) establishing school goals, (3) providing intellectual stimulation, (4) offering individualized support, (5) modeling best practices and important organizational values, (6) demonstrating high performance expectations, (7) creating a productive school culture, and (8) developing structures to foster participation in school decisions.

Restructuring initiatives are primarily about building a shared vision, improving communication, and developing collaborative decision-making processes. Transformational leadership provides such a focus. According to Kenneth Leithwood (2011), transformational school leaders are in continuous pursuit of three fundamental goals:

- *Maintaining a collaborative culture.* Strategies used by school leaders to assist teachers in building and maintaining collaborative professional cultures include involving faculty members in collaborative goal setting, reducing teachers' isolation by creating time for joint planning, and creating mechanisms to support cultural changes.
- *Fostering teacher development.* Teachers' motivation for development is enhanced when they adopt a set of internalized goals for professional growth. This process is facilitated when they become involved in establishing a school mission to which they feel strongly committed.
- *Improving group problem solving.* Strategies school leaders can use to solve problems collaboratively include ensuring a broad range of perspectives from which to interpret the problem by actively seeking different interpretations, being explicit about their own interpretations, and placing individual problems in the larger perspective of the whole school.

Transformational leaders in business have received much notoriety. Alfred Sloan reformed General Motors into its divisional profit centers. Henry Ford revolutionized the automobile industry by introducing the assembly line for the production of automobiles. More recently, John Welch of General Electric, Roberto Goizueta of Coca-Cola, and Steven Jobs of Apple Computer guided the metamorphosis of their companies. And Lee Iacocca saved Chrysler Corporation from bankruptcy and brought it to profitability. All have become transformational leaders by creating a vision of a desired future for their companies, by instilling that vision in their followers, and by transforming their vision into reality.

Total Quality Management

The Japanese transformed their economy and industry through a visionary management technique called *total quality management* (TQM). School leaders are finding that TQM principles can provide the formula for improving America's schools.

TQM, the latest business concept to reach the schools, is a systematic approach to education reform based on the philosophy of W. Edwards Deming (2000). Deming's work is not merely about productivity and quality control; it is a broad vision on the nature of organizations and how organizations should be changed.

Deming's philosophy provides a framework that can integrate many positive developments in education, such as term-teaching, school-based management, cooperative learning, and outcomes-based education. Deming's fourteen principles are based on the assumptions that people want to do their best and that it is the leader's job to enable them to do so by constantly improving the *system* in which they work. The

framework for transforming an organization is outlined in the following fourteen points:

1. *Create constancy of purpose for improvement of product and service.* For schools, constancy of purpose means thinking about the future. It requires expenditures in research and development and a continuous improvement of services for the client — the students.

2. *Adopt the new philosophy.* Implementation of Deming's principles will require a rethinking of the school's mission and priorities with everyone in agreement with them. What may be required is a total transformation of the American system of education as we know it.

3. *Cease dependence on inspection to achieve quality.* According to Deming, it always costs more to fix a problem than to prevent one. Examples of preventive approaches in schools are Head Start, Follow Through, preschool programs, and remedial interventions, including the latest intervention model to reach the schools Response to Intervention (RTI).

4. *End the practice of awarding business on the basis of price alone.* The lowest bid is rarely the most cost-efficient. Schools need to move toward a single supplier for any one time and develop long-term relationships of loyalty and trust with that supplier.

5. *Improve constantly and forever every activity in the organization, to improve quality and productivity.* For schools, this means requiring universal standards of achievement for all students before permitting them to move to the next level. Such provisions are stipulated in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110).

6. *Institute training on the job.* For schools, this means providing continuous professional development activities for all teachers.

7. *Institute leadership.* The primary task of leadership is to narrow the amount of variation within the system, bringing everyone toward the goal of learning for *all*. It means removing achievement gaps for all population groups – a movement toward excellence and equity, the ultimate goal of the No Child Left Behind legislation.

8. *Drive out fear.* Fear creates an insurmountable barrier to improvement of any system. In schools, faculty and staff are often afraid to point out problems, because they fear they may be blamed. School administrators need to communicate that staff suggestions are valued and rewarded.

9. *Break down barriers among staff areas.* In schools, different stakeholder groups have goals that conflict with each other. There needs to be collaboration among all stakeholders (students, staff, teachers, parents, community, and school leaders) in promoting learning for all. It is the essence of initiating and maintaining a professional learning community.

10. *Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets that demand zero defects and new levels of productivity.* Slogans, exhortations, and targets are prevalent in schools. However, according to Deming, implicit in most slogans, exhortations, and targets is the supposition that staff could do better if they tried harder. This offends rather than inspires the team. It creates adversarial relationships because the many causes of low quality and low productivity in schools are due to the system and not the staff. The system itself may need to be changed.

11. *Eliminate numerical quotas for the staff and goals for management.* Substitute aids and helpful supervision, using the methods described following.

12. (a) *Remove barriers that rob people of pride in their work.* (b) *Remove the barriers that rob people in leadership of their right to pride in their work.* Most people want to do a good job. Effective communication and the elimination of "de-motivators" — such as lack of involvement, poor information, the annual or merit rating, and supervisors who don't care — are critical.

13. *Institute a vigorous program of education and retraining for everyone.* The school leaders and staff must be retrained in new methods of school-based management, including group dynamics, consensus building, and collaborative styles of decision making. All stakeholders on the school's team must realize that improvements in student achievement will create higher levels of responsibility, not less responsibility.

14. *Put everyone in the organization to work to accomplish the transformation.* The school board and superintendent must have a clear plan of action to carry out the quality mission. The quality mission must be internalized by all members of the school organization (school leaders, faculty, staff, students, parents, community). The transformation is everybody's job (Deming, 2000, pp. 23-24).

Restructuring: A Focus on Student Achievement

A few years ago, the word restructuring was unheard of in education circles; today it is commonplace. Yet few educators share a definition of what restructuring means. Most definitions incorporate the following ideas: school governance (including decentralized authority), new roles for educators (instructional leader), accountability (focus on student learning), and reforming the nature of the curriculum and how it is taught.

Regardless of how restructuring is defined, unless the entire reform agenda focuses on student achievement and on discussion on how to attain it, restructuring will produce only minimal changes in students' education.

Nothing is more fundamental to schooling than its content. School administrators will find the following ten concepts, culled from the many subject-matter organizations, helpful in their work on restructuring the content of schooling (Bulach, Lunenburg, & Potter, 2008).

- *High expectations for all.* All students, if motivated and provided adequate opportunities, can learn important, challenging, and interesting content. Important knowledge is no longer for an elite. It is for all students, regardless of their social circumstances or career aspirations.

- *Emphasis on active learning.* Students will spend far less time passively receiving knowledge. They will spend far more time — sometimes individually, often in groups — doing, experimenting, and discovering knowledge and understanding for themselves.

- *Essential curriculum.* Schools should select the most important concepts and skills to emphasize so that they can concentrate on the quality of understanding rather than on the quantity of information presented, and students will acquire the tools to add to their knowledge independently.
- *Diverse pedagogy.* Educators will need to employ more diverse and more balanced kinds of teaching and learning experiences to implement curricula. This will require new kinds of teacher training and staff development for teachers and principals.
- *Responsiveness to student diversity.* School leaders should view the increasing cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity of the student population as an opportunity as well as a challenge. Curriculum content and pedagogical approaches must build on and be respectful of the diversity.
- *Time as a learning resource.* School time will need to be organized around learning, instead of the other way around. Teacher and principal needs will have to be secondary to the needs of learners. The typical fifty-minute, seven-period school day may need to be restructured to fit the curricula content.
- *Cooperative learning.* This concept has worked very effectively with at-risk students. Students will engage in far less competitive learning. In heterogeneous groups, they will work democratically and collaboratively.
- *Authentic assessment.* The type of assessment employed will be determined by the learning being measured. This means there will be increased use of performance as a means of assessment. Educators as well as students will be held accountable for what students can do instead of relying solely on standardized test results.
- *Heterogeneous grouping.* All of the recent reform documents call for ending tracking and reducing ability grouping.
- *Technology as a tool.* Computers, videodiscs, satellite TV, and other state-of-the-art technologies should be viewed as resources to enhance learning, not as symbols of excellence or innovation.

Conclusion

There are many dysfunctions of the bureaucratic model, including those dealing with division of labor and specialization, uniform rules and procedures, hierarchy of authority, impersonality in interpersonal relations, and lifelong career and loyalty to the organization. New viewpoints are leading to a decline in the use of bureaucratic structure in schools.

Likert's System 4 design grew out of the human relations movement and is the antithesis of the ideal bureaucracy (which Likert calls System 1). An important component of System 4 is the linking pin concept relating levels of organization.

The general public's dissatisfaction with schools has moved some to support school-based management as a solution to improving performance, by making those closest to the delivery of services—teachers and principals—more accountable for the results of their schools' operations.

Other contemporary perspectives on organizational structures in schools, ones that are at the frontier, take several forms. They include transformational leadership, total quality management, and restructuring with a focus on student achievement.

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