

# **National Implications: Closed Systems Stifle Innovation, Collaboration and Flexibility**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Educational leaders must work to establish organizational structures that help schools achieve and sustain their vision. The intent of this article is to briefly examine how closed systems stifle innovation, collaboration and flexibility in schooling. Innovation, collaboration and flexibility are key ingredients for creating successful instructional research based programs.**

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Organizational Theories can be classified as closed systems, open systems, and post-modernistic theories. University discussions and literature reveal that the theory of “closed systems” was developed in the early 20th century. The emphasis of the “closed system” focuses on “productivity through efficiency and effectiveness (Hermond 2006.)”

## **Theories Offer General Explanations and Guide Research**

The purpose of this article is to briefly examine how closed systems stifle innovation, collaboration and flexibility in schooling. In the textbook, *Educational Administration: Theory, Research and Practice*, Hoy and Miskel explore the institution of education as it relates to social systems. The authors explain how the theories in educational administration serve a comparative role to theories in physics, chemistry, biology and psychology. Theories help to offer general explanations and guide research (Hoy and Miskel 2001.)

## **Organizations As Bureaucratic Constructs**

Organizations that are multi-layered with bureaucratic constructs are examples of “closed systems.” An unfortunate theoretical assumptions associated with this system is the false perception that organizations of this type are self-contained.

Utilizing this approach may cause schools to have individuals operating within them that function in succinctly prescribed roles for specific tasks. Roles in this environment are in an essence “blueprints.” Organizational settings of this construct are marred with bureaucracy. “(B)ureaucratic expectations are formal demands and obligations set by the organization; they are the key building blocks of organizational structure.” (Hoy and Miskel 2001.)

Assumptions promoted with concept consist of the following: “(o)rganizations are self-contained entities and are not severely affected by external forces, problems can be solved logically and finally there is one best solution that can be reached” (Hermond 2006.) This line of thinking does not allow for a free flow of thought. Given the new standards placed upon educators, all stakeholders must possess the knowledge to think of education and instructional strategies as innovations.

## **Collaboration Encouraged**

Howard Gardner has focused his research on multiple intelligences. He is a proponent of observing students and their specific and unique learning styles as a means to help them in their journey to acquire knowledge and expand their knowledge base. Marge Scherer, author of the article *The understanding pathway: A conversation with Howard Gardner*, quotes Howard Gardner, “(s)tudents can become amazingly flexible when they have a teacher who cares about a subject and who cares about conveying it to them.” Gardner goes on the assert, “ I certainly believe that teaching should be systematic, but that does not mean that there is only one systematic way to teach . . . “ Utilizing the instructional approach outlined by Howard Gardner would not be permissible in a “closed system” Gardner describes an instructional approach that encourages collaboration as well as skillful integration (Scherer 1999).

## **Closed Systems Impede Student Achievement**

Closed systems impede student achievement by only offering an extremely narrow measure of student achievement. In many cases, school effectiveness is very

closely linked to performance on standardized tests. Assumptions, such as, “(i)f a school’s standardized test scores are low . . . the school staff (is) ineffective.” James W. Popham, author of the article ***Why standardized test don’t measure educational quality***, explains “ . . . because educational quality is being measured by the wrong yardstick, those evaluations are apt to be in error (Popham 1999.)

### **Concluding Remarks**

In conclusion, closed systems stifle innovation, collaboration and flexibility. These ingredients are critical aspects of success in instructional researched based programs. It is imperative for educational leaders to foster organizational structures that help schools achieve and sustain their vision.

### **References**

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University of Saint Thomas  
Educational Leadership and Cultural Studies  
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### ***Publications:***

Cloud, M. (2006). *Utopia Middle School* [Online: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/> 09/08/06]

Cloud, M., & Kritsonis, W. (2006) *National Agenda: Alternative Discipline Consequences to Enhance Student Achievement* [Online: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/> 08.17.06]

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### ***Workshops:***

**Project Success Enrichment**, (1999) Hambrick Middle School, Aldine Independent School District

### ***Professional Experience:***

2002-Present Assistant Principal, Strack Intermediate School, Klein Independent School District:  
Supervise Instructional Program and Provide Support for Language Arts, Foreign Language and Fine Arts, PDAS Trained and Certified, Team Leader Meetings, Assist with Standardized Testing, TAKS

Motivational Program, Develop Campus Improve Plan, Chair Site Based Decision Making Committee, Manage and Develop Proposals for Compensatory Education Funds, Coordinate and Implement Behavior Management Program, Student Discipline, Adaptive Behavior Backup, All Campus Public Relations, Assist with Personnel Selection at Campus and District Level, School Newsletter, News Releases, Daily Bulletin, School Announcements, Award Programs, Manage and Assist with District Level Public Relations and Community Activities, Student Orientation Programs, School Pictures, Lockers and locks, Cheerleading and Pep Rallies, Student Attendance Program, Supervise Faculty, Staff and Students, Supervise School Activities, Monitor Lunches, Arrival and Dismissal of Students, and Textbooks

2001-2002, Second Grade Classroom Teacher, General Education, Brill Elementary, Klein Independent School District: Provide individual and group instruction for students, Integrate the curriculum, Provide literature based reading, Extend vocabulary and language arts skills through the Project Success Enrichment program, Develop and implement a discipline management system, Guide student learning through questioning techniques based on Bloom's Taxonomy, Maintain contact with parents through newsletters, phone calls and letters, Assess individual student progress using portfolios, Modify lessons to include special needs children, Organize, distribute and correct papers, Construct and Administer tests

2000-2001 Coordinator Of Instruction and Special Programs, Mendel Elementary, Aldine Independent School District: Assist educators in developing teaching strategies, lesson plans, visual aids and assessment tools for increasing and measuring student performance, Supervise cafeteria and buses, Conduct in-services campus and district-wide, Prepare skills calendar for third and fourth grade, Complete weekly walk-throughs with feedback for all teachers, Prepare campus newsletters and calendar, Develop and implement a campus-wide discipline management system, Input all discipline data, Assist with Gifted and Talented Screening, Assist with organization of Title I materials, Serve as Public Relations Representative, Facilitate Model Classroom Project, Coordinate Mentor Program, Assist with Parent Conferences, Responsible for the organization and distribution of all testing materials, Complete all other assignments as designated by principal, Modify lessons to include special needs children.

1998-2000, Language Arts Teacher, Project Success Facilitator, Hambrick Middle School, Aldine Independent School District: Conduct in-services campus and district-wide, Assist educators in developing teaching strategies, lesson plans, visual aids and assessment tools for increasing and measuring student performance, Assistant Basketball Coach, Head Soccer Coach and Assistant Track Coach, Student Council Sponsor, Participate in the Model Classroom Project/Curriculum Writing, Mentor Teacher and Parent Involvement Committee.

1998-2000, Second Grade Classroom Teacher, General Education, Worsham Elementary, Aldine Independent School District: Provide individual and group instruction for students, Create whole language thematic units which integrate phonics, anthology and literature based reading, Extend vocabulary and language arts skills through the Project Success Enrichment program, Develop and implement a discipline management system, Guide student learning through questioning techniques based on Bloom's Taxonomy, Maintain contact with parents through newsletters, phone calls and letters, Assess individual student progress using portfolios, Modify lessons to include special needs children, Organize, distribute and correct papers, Administer tests.

1994-1998, Substitute Teacher/Teaching Assistant/Records Clerk, Aldine Independent School District

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2005, Galaxy of Excellence, Klein Independent School District

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### ***Affiliations***

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## ***Professional Summary***

*I have had the unique and profound pleasure of serving in numerous and varied roles in education. I have worked as a teaching assistant, substitute teacher, secretary, coach and sponsor. I have served in an administrative capacity at Strack Intermediate for five years as an Assistant Principal for grades 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>. While at Strack, I have enjoyed the pleasure of being an integral part of the selection of Personnel, development of the Campus Improvement Plan, the Campus Instructional Development Council, Implementation of TAKS Aligned Curriculum as well as Behavioral Motivational Strategies for students at Strack Intermediate in the Klein Independent School District.*

*It has also been my pleasure to serve on a district level in numerous capacities. I served as district wide trainer in conjunction with the Project Success Program in A.I.S.D. Recently, I have assisted with district-wide events such as the School Calendar Committee, Strategic Planning Committees, Freedom Trek, Convocations, a V.I.P. Luncheon, K.A.S.C. and District Job Fairs as a recruiter. I am presently looking forward to working with the implementation of K.P.D.A.S. and serving as a district trainer in the Klein Independent School District as I am a certified P.D.A.S. appraiser.*

*Currently, I am seeking to expand the scope of the student population that I am able to impact instructionally. I have worked extensively on disaggregating data in order to properly drive instruction. I believe in designed lessons that target the multiple-intelligences while systematically addressing higher level thinking skills for appropriate content objectives.*

*In response to increased standards for student achievement prescribed in the No Child Left Behind Act, principals must be even more proactive regarding protecting students from common academic pitfalls. I desire to be a proactive and innovative administrator that assists all students in reaching their full potential.*

*I whole-heartedly believe all principals should lead by example. I am also a proponent of instructional leaders seeking every opportunity to fully utilize their role as "servant-leader." As a leading administrator, I will make concerted effort each day to be visible and visit classrooms. This will allow me to personally ensure that students are receiving a proper, fair and supportive, educational environment.*

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