

# Reconceptualizing the School of Education:

Bridging the Cultures

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*Abstract: This article offers a conceptual model for a school of education that depicts the collegiate ideology, academic culture, mission statement, managerial climate, and organizational structure. It is designed to help administrators and faculty envision their school/college more holistically when dealing with issues and changes rather than forcing faculty and administrative visions to fit with the rhythms and confines of the academy. This approach should be modeled to graduate students in educational leadership programs who as professionals must advocate for similar change in their work settings.*

## Introduction

Educational administration literature offers promising practices for change and reform (Milstein, 1993; Mulkeen, Cambron-McCabe, & Anderson, 1994; Murphy, 1993; Murphy & Forsyth, 1999). Unfortunately, some practices may be restrictive and doomed to failure when implemented within existing, ineffective, and outmoded organizational struc-

### *Conceptual Model*

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tures (Hackmann & Price, 1995; Smart & St. John, 1996; Van Meter, 1999). Kezar & Eckel (2002) posited a framework for studying collegial culture that extends Bergquist's (1992) cultural archetypes and crosses with Tierney's (1991) institutional characteristics and activities. The result is their model for assessing change processes within university culture. They advocate for broader, more encompassing approaches when understanding and mapping any major change process. More importantly, Kezar and Eckel (2002) regarded matching the change strategy with the prevailing culture as key to successful outcomes.

Tierney (1998), Bennett (1998), and Beck and Foster (1999) asked why we improve old systems that still contain remnants of ineffective cultures when we should invent something new and more responsive. Our university culture should be aligned with the organizational structure. Twale and Kochan (1999) advocated that programs operationalize a vision, transform their programs, and thus, transform themselves. We are asking our graduating students to reform their public institutions, yet we are not embracing those same changes in our collegiate environments, thus they cannot witness reform in action.

If our students are to learn about transformation, we must permit them to be voyeurs of academic culture and organizational processes, especially if we are creating these new environments within academe, or working to reform existing structures. Perhaps the transformation means a move from an administrative hierarchy to a more flattened heterarchy (Murphy, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1991). Newman, Couturier, and Scurry (2004) indicated we are sending a conflicting message when we allow a gap to exist between our espoused values and subsequent outcomes. If we teach reform, we must at least entertain our own reform.

We offer a conceptual model of a School/College of Education to illustrate the relationship between collegiate ideology/ethos, academic culture, mission statement, managerial climate, and organizational structure. Through the model, we demonstrate the strength, congruities, gaps, weaknesses, and incongruities that often exist. We follow with suggestions that assist readers in examining their own colleges and specifically, their leadership preparation programs. Schools/Colleges of Education should use the model to assess the degree of alignment that exists within and between each of the layers as it relates to their holistic program.

#### Proposed Conceptual Framework: An Idealistic Depiction

Bergquist (1992) described the unique aspects and rhythms of the university governance structure as four distinct cultures which in some cases grow out of the independent nature of others. *Collegial culture* deals

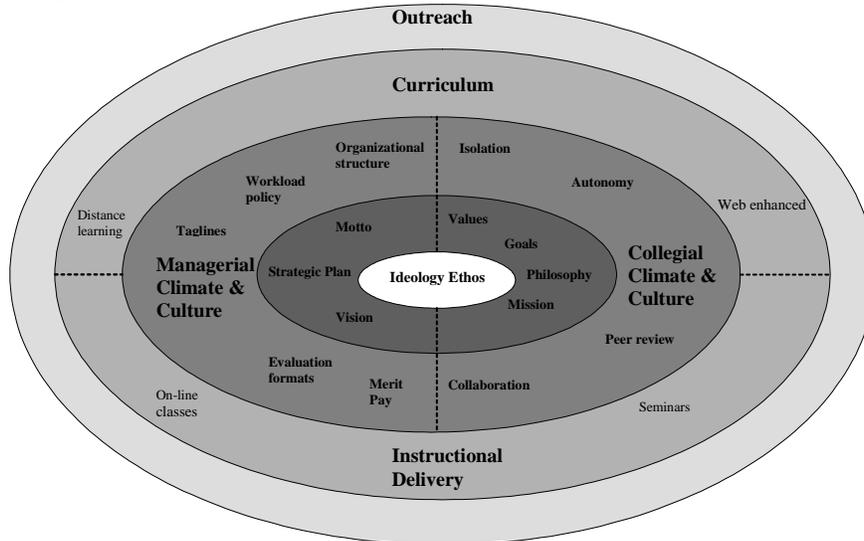
with academic freedom, autonomy, and peer acceptance staunchly guarded by faculty. The presence of these factors indicates a strong, positive culture and, their absence in the academic environment indicates a weak or nonexistent collegial culture. *Managerial culture* refers to the mission driven, clearly delineated, performance evaluation function often led by a hierarchical administration. Smart and St. John (1996) found that strong managerial cultures adhering to basic bureaucratic principles deter or destroy collegial cultural effectiveness. In other words, the managerial culture of the university may perpetuate an inherent tension that is juxtaposed against the goals and values of the collegium (Bergquist, 1992). While some tension is healthy and productive (Senge, 1990), constant incongruence between these groups may only render acute cosmetic change rather than facilitate attempts to undergo long term systemic change (Achilles, 1994; Forsyth, 1992). In the long run, we jeopardize faculty/administrative relations, academic freedom and integrity, and prevent positive, progressive growth.

*Developmental culture* encompasses professional growth, collaboration, and communication often needed to bridge the gap between the collegial and the managerial functions. Whether it is to improve the work environment through outside consultants or enhance individual growth through workshops and seminars, developmental culture tends to be not only the most needed and appreciated cultural aspect, but also the culture most likely cut in the budget. *Negotiating culture* addresses power, disenfranchisement, confrontation, conflict, and alienation through attempts at egalitarianism between the collegial and managerial cultures (Bergquist, 1992). Tierney's (1991) lens added another layer of analysis to Bergquist's classic framework that forces the user to question the nature of the environment and the alignment of practices to the mission. Once addressed, the idea is to reflect upon decision-making strategies, socialization processes, information processing, and leadership roles. Kezar and Eckel (2002) contend that change can be understood and better facilitated through keen understanding of how an institutional culture works. They approach the change strategy through a process that rests on the degree of administrative support, staff development, and collaborative leadership. To reach the desired goal, the process needs a strong design with visible and measurable outcomes.

Drawing from Schein's (1992) earlier work on organizational culture, Figure 1 depicts the centrality of the campus ethos and program ideology. Though central, they under gird and define the collegial and managerial cultures. The negotiating and developmental cultures pervade, support, and/or create tension in the collegial and managerial functions, though ever present, are not easily depicted in the framework in Figure 1

## Conceptual Model

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



(Bergquist, 1990). The ideology and ethos are made manifest in all that is the culture of that school/college. They include the curricular and instructional strategies faculty employ as well as outreach activities they develop, coordinate, and oversee.

Often stated as an ideal type in campus documents, campus *ideology and ethos* may be more easily articulated, made manifest, and more easily measured at faith-based institutions than at public land grants or comprehensive institutions, for instance. The land grant institutions must be all things to all people in the state while the faith-based school serves a more narrowly defined *master* and perhaps appeals to a smaller segment of the student population. This espoused campus ethos and its fundamental beliefs and values are congruent and aligned with actual organizational structures and managerial practices, procedures, and policies to achieve organizational effectiveness for the participants and programs (Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1985; Dennison, 1990; Schein, 1971). Articulating firmly through a professed ethos and lived ideology, what you are, what you do, and who you serve anchors the institution while simultaneously steering it on its intended course.

### Proposed Framework

Ideology includes *mission, philosophy, and core values* including vision statements, goals and objectives, and prevailing philosophy. These

may be located in strategic plans, accreditation documents, recruitment and promotional materials, and websites. Careful examination of these documents should indicate how operationalized the mission is and how well aligned or unaligned those espoused values are with visible actions, that is, whether faculty and administration have stayed the course or veered from it. These documents indicate trends, future directions, ways in which new entrants are being socialized into the culture, and what leadership regards as worthy of reward. The more clearly defined the ethos, the easier it is to translate it into meaningful purposes for constituents to follow (e.g., Twale & Schaller, 2002). Documents will reveal if cultural change is taking place, what support is being provided to facilitate that, if any, and what the future vision for the university/college/school holds.

Beyond these two circles lie the *collegial culture* and the *managerial culture* (Bergquist, 1990). The collegial culture embraces all things under faculty purview which includes curriculum, governance, academic freedom, and the major peer review processes of promotion and tenure. Our conceptual model in Figure 1 depicts the clear delineation between the two worlds but does not note the tension—a hopefully creative tension—that exists between the faculty and the managerial culture. Collaborative leadership and opportunities for faculty development can be an indication that faculty are valued by the administration. Mentoring of junior faculty and scholarly collaboration indicate a culture where faculty value each other.

The managerial culture embodies elements created in a traditional bureaucratic, organizational structure. Visibly guiding the culture is the organizational chart and administrative policies that affect faculty such as mandatory student evaluations, merit pay, and workload, faculty unions notwithstanding. Administrations develop recruitment materials, tag lines, mottos, and flashy websites to attract student populations and ensure economic viability. Control of financial matters and tenure lines for faculty coupled with increasing or declining enrollment have inclined administrations to merge departments or shift faculty lines from one department to another, increase adjunct faculty numbers, and/or search for off campus markets. Weick's (1976) notion of loose coupling may evolve into administrative juggling and gymnastic routines staged at the expense of academic integrity. Referring back to vision statements, strategic plans, and policy statements, administrators will chart the direction in which they want the culture to proceed. The degree to which it is an all inclusive process determines how collegial or managerial the culture really is.

The next circle includes *curriculum* and *instructional delivery systems*. The shifted placement of the dotted line illustrates their distance

### *Conceptual Model*

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from full faculty reach to acknowledge that the managerial culture sets controls. While curriculum development and pedagogical technique are faculty generated and researched, both may be subject to managerial decisions of class size, class location, and budget constraints that limit technological options and classroom aids. In addition, there may be state licensure requirements (e.g., internships or practica) or accreditation influences that may require specific assessments. To what degree are curriculum development, curricular change and innovation, technological enhancement, and teaching goals valued, encouraged, and rewarded? Professional development funding to facilitate such ends is also a significant indication of its value both to faculty and administration. Preoccupation with Full Time Equivalents (FTEs), class size, adjuncts, covering class sections, increasing on-line courses, and tapping market shares from nearby competitors signals a strong managerial culture. To be oblivious to issues of integrity such as job placement for graduates and instructor expertise are indications that managerial culture further focuses on the corporate rather than the academic.

Constituting the outer circle are *outreach* or extension efforts that enhance local and professional communities. These efforts begin with the recruitment of prospective candidates and progress to seamlessly include alumni involvement in advisory boards (Kochan & Twale, 2000). Outreach also includes undertaking projects that serve the local community, forming consortia with other institutions, maintaining regional and national standards, and meeting state and accreditation guidelines. One means to measure program success comes from graduates who become scholar practitioners and continue to more broadly extend the program's influence into the community for the long-term (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). A philosophy, mission, or ethos of service would indicate support for multiple outreach efforts on the part of a school/college of education. Advisory groups are vital means for faculty, curricular, and program reality checks and should be supported by an administration. Centers for scholarly research benefit faculty and students and the greater professional area and should also be encouraged and supported. Extension into the community to fulfill urban missions, address local social problems, or place interns benefits schools/college of education in myriad ways. Balancing those projects so that faculty, students, administrators, and community benefit equally is important.

In Figure 1, purposeful shading represents an overlay of *symbolic interpretation* by members of the collegium and the administration (Bolman & Deal, 1991), clouding perceptions and creating greater incongruence [darker areas] in some instances more so than others [lighter areas]. The dotted lines indicate a blurring as well as partial

indication of the we-they mentality that often coexists as the degree of symbolic shading darkens. Previous discussion of collegial and managerial actions in support of the mission, ethos, and philosophy has symbolic meaning. From perch or perspective, participants in the school/college perceive through a lens of symbolic action.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the model is the interpretations of actions from which subsequent actions occur on the part of faculty *and* administration. How it looks *is* how it is despite the best attempts to remedy the situation. The model offers a conceptual approach and framework within which administrators and faculty can examine reflectively their situations and address the future of their departments and their school/college of education. As Kezar and Eckel (2002) suggested, multiple approaches provide the best means to examine academic culture. Aligning the cultural components in our framework gives a grounded, visual picture and a clear direction to begin the task.

#### Conclusion

Training leaders to create equitable schools rests on the premise that our universities are equitable institutions in which our students can learn and grow. If we expect our students to take on the tough tasks associated with reforming K-12 schools, then we as faculty must not shirk our task of strengthening the academic culture. The ability to assess and perhaps reform our own academic world will give our K-12 administration students the direction and impetus needed for them to address reform in their cultures.

One way to strengthen schools/colleges of education programs would be to use our conceptual framework to examine the institution for congruity of ideology with the daily operations of the managerial and collegial cultures. Acknowledging that the managerial and collegial cultures legitimately come from different perspectives means that faculty have an obligation to represent the best of the collegial culture so that the managerial/business perspective does not cause universities to lose sight of the core ideology and ethos.

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**Darla J. Twale & A. William Place**

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