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EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT: CONCEPTS, EVOLUTION, MODELS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Abstract: Educational management studies how schools are guided and coordinated to achieve educational goals. This paper reviews definitions by scholars, traces management theories from classical to contingency approaches, and highlights Tony Bush’s six models of school leadership. It concludes with recommendations for integrating these models to develop context-sensitive and innovative practices that improve educational quality.

1. Introduction and Definitions

Educational management refers to the systematic coordination of people, processes and resources in order to achieve educational aims. Tony Bush notes that educational management must be centrally concerned with the purpose or aims of education without clear goals, management risks devolving into *managerialism* – emphasising efficiency over educational values. Ray Bolam defines educational management as “an executive function for carrying out agreed policy”, while Pradeep Sapre describes it as “a set of activities directed towards the efficient and effective utilisation of organisational resources to achieve organisational goals”. These definitions highlight that educational management integrates administrative functions with leadership to realise educational purposes.

2. Historical Evolution of Management Thought

Management theories have evolved through distinct phases:

1. **Classical era.** Frederick W. Taylor’s scientific management advocated analysing work flows to improve labour productivity. Henri Fayol later identified five functions of management — planning, organisation, commanding, co-ordination and control — emphasising orderly structure and hierarchy. Max Weber’s bureaucracy stressed formal rules and hierarchical authority. Together, these approaches emphasised standardisation and control.
2. **Human relations movement.** The Hawthorne studies led Elton Mayo to argue that worker attitudes and group relations influence productivity, showing that social factors complement economic incentives. This movement emphasised motivation, morale and informal organisations.
3. **Systems and contingency theories.** From the mid-twentieth century, scholars viewed organisations as *open systems* that exchange resources and feedback with their environment; subsystems interact interdependently. The contingency school posits that there is no single best way to manage; effective strategies depend on organisational context.
4. **Leadership-focused paradigms.** In the late twentieth century, attention shifted to leadership. Instructional leadership stresses the principal’s role in improving teaching and learning. Transformational leadership emphasises vision, motivation and organisational learning. *Distributed leadership* recognises that leadership is shared among principals, teacher leaders and other stakeholders; the most successful schools flatten their leadership structures and encourage teachers to shape instructional strategies.
5. **Digital and cultural turn.** Contemporary practice incorporates digital tools for data-informed decisions and online administration. School culture is now recognised as a lever

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for sustainable improvement: shared values, rituals and stories bind the community and guide behaviour.

3. Models of Educational Management

Tony Bush classifies theories of educational management into six models. Each emphasises different assumptions about organisations, power and decision-making.

Model	Key assumptions (short)	Implications for schools
Formal	Schools are goal-oriented, hierarchical systems; decisions follow rational procedures; teacher authority rests in formal positions.	Provides stability and accountability but can constrain agency and slow adaptation.
Collegial	Professional expertise is valued; decisions are made through participation, shared values and consensus.	Enhances motivation and ownership but requires time and high trust.
Political	Organisations consist of competing interest groups; decisions result from negotiation and the exercise of power.	Highlights the need for stakeholder management; exposes hidden agendas and conflicts.
Subjective	Organisations are interpreted through individual perceptions and meanings; reality is socially constructed.	Encourages attention to personal values and sense-making but may complicate coordination.
Ambiguity/Organised Anarchy	Goals are unclear; participation is fluid; decision processes are unpredictable.	Requires flexible leadership, tolerance for uncertainty and creative problem-solving.
Cultural	Shared values, beliefs and rituals shape behaviour; culture provides identity and cohesion.	Emphasises storytelling and rituals to build cohesion; culture can both support and impede change.

4. Discussion and Integration

No single model fully captures the complexity of educational management. *Formal structures* are necessary for order and accountability, but they must be balanced with *collegial participation* to cultivate professional commitment. *Political and subjective perspectives* remind leaders to attend to power dynamics and individual worldviews. The *ambiguity model* shows that schools sometimes behave like organised anarchies, especially during rapid change, requiring flexible leadership. The *cultural model* highlights the importance of shared values and traditions as levers for improvement.

In practice, an effective school leader integrates elements from multiple models. A principal might use formal procedures to meet legal obligations and ensure equity while engaging teachers, parents and students in collegial processes for curriculum development. Leaders must navigate political relationships with governments, unions and communities, understand teachers' subjective experiences and foster a culture of continuous learning. Recognising that no single

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model is sufficient aligns with the contingency perspective: management strategies should be tailored to the specific environment.

5. Recommendations for School Leaders and Policy Makers

Define clear, shared goals. Align management activities with the educational mission and develop a locally generated vision to avoid purely external compliance.

Balance structure and participation. Use formal systems for accountability but encourage collaborative decision-making to build ownership and professional learning.

Develop leadership capacity. Invest in instructional leadership and distribute leadership responsibilities across teacher leaders, parents and students to foster innovation and resilience.

Build a positive school culture. Celebrate achievements, tell the school's story, and use rituals to reinforce collective identity.

Remain adaptive. Monitor external and internal environments and adjust strategies. Adopt digital tools for data-informed decisions and efficient administration, ensuring technology serves human goals.

Engage stakeholders. Recognise political dynamics by involving parents, community members and policy makers in dialogue and negotiate priorities transparently.

6. Conclusion

Educational management has progressed from classical notions of efficiency and hierarchy to encompass human relations, systems and contingency thinking, and to recognise the centrality of leadership and culture. By understanding the historical evolution of management thought and the diversity of models available, school leaders can make informed decisions tailored to their contexts. Integrating formal structures with collegiality, attending to power and perception, embracing flexibility in ambiguous situations, and cultivating a strong culture will help schools navigate complexity and improve educational outcomes.

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