

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

All theoretical paradigms are limited, as social phenomena are too complex to be modelled exhaustively by mental abstractions. The paradigm remains a conceptual construct on reality and its adequacy must be determined in function of the purpose of the research at hand. However in order to avoid mere enumerative empiricism, when describing complex social reality, the researcher employs categories that are neither adhoc nor sheer common sense but are so systematically conceived, as to be capable of application to empirical realities in a coherent way and will enable to interpret data in a meaningful way.

PERSPECTIVES ON ORGANIZATIONS:

Parsons defines an organization as "the special type of social system organized about the primacy of interest in the attainment of a particular type of system goal." ¹

1. Parson. Structure and Process in Modern Societies, p. 19.

For Parsons in the most general sense "the values of the organization legitimize its existence as a system. But more specifically they legitimize the main functional patterns of operation, which are necessary to implement the values, in this case the system goal under typical conditions of the concrete situation."²

The basic approaches to organizations are those that view the organization as an 'open system' or as a 'closed system.'

The closed systems model, views organizations as instruments designed for the pursuit of clearly specified goals. Organizational arrangements and decisions are geared to goal achievement and are directed towards making the organization more and more rational in the pursuit of the goals. The major problem with this approach is that it tends to ignore external considerations. As Katz and Kahn point out, the closed system perspective excludes the interaction of the organization with its environment.³ As input and output related to the environment are major components of

2. Parsons. Structure and Process in Modern Societies, p.21.

3. Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn. The Social Psychology of Organizations, 1967, p.18.

the organization, it would be rather inadequate to use the closed system perspective. However the closed-system does explain some aspects of the organization. Organizations do try to maximise rationality, they try to buffer, level and smooth out environmental fluctuations. Organizational acts are partially based on a closed-system perspective.

The open-system approach regards the organization according to Gouldner as a material whole or system.⁴ The realization of goals of the system as a whole, is one of the several important needs to which the organization is oriented. The Katz and Kahn approach is built around the general open-systems model; the input-throughput--output, model. The open-systems model is much broader in its conceptual scope than the closed systems approach. At the same time Etzioni observes that the model is much more exacting and expensive when used for research. It is difficult to have the tools to take account of the various components. The measurement of the forms of output and input with respect to schools has not yet been sufficiently developed.

4. Gouldner. "Organizational Analysis" p.405.

THE SCHOOL AS A SOCIAL ORGANIZATION:

In the broader social context, education is the institutional formalization of the learning processes. It is as Parsons defines "an academic social system whose primary societal function is to act as a trustee of cognitive culture and the interests associated with it."⁵ The school according to Parsons is a social system and its primary function in the society, is of socialization and allocation.

The school as a social organization differs substantially from other complex organizations. The school is composed of a relatively small number of adults, teachers and administrators and a large number of children or youth. Unlike other organizations, the vast majority of adults are drawn from a homogeneous occupational category; that of teaching. The children or constituents are largely youth, who are systematically, graded by age. They are transient. The students move through the organization on the strict time schedule. A high turnover of students is somewhat of a unique organizational feature of a school. At least one tenth of the population is new every year. Each year a whole age cohort leaves, and all other age cohorts move to a new

5. Parsons. Op. Cit., p.18

level. The school moreover is a people processing organization. Students, like the adult members of the school, are formally expected and required to behave in certain ways. Within every school there exists an informal peer group structure that has been characterised as a sub-culture. In carrying out its day to day activities, the school functions with a great many children as compared to the number of adults. To keep a modicum of order, such a high ratio of adults to youth, requires the imposition of a great number of specific rules of behaviour. Finally, the precise function of the school for the community in general and the children in particular, is difficult to determine and to inherently articulate.

THE SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE FRAME WORK:

The analysis focuses precisely on the essentially educational aspects of the system. In order to describe and explore the nature of a fiduciary system, the conceptual frame work developed by Philip Selznick for a study of organizations is adopted. This model takes into consideration the aspects of both the open and closed systems. The components are systematic and readily operationable. Selznick conceives a social organization as a system,

consisting of three main sub-systems⁶:

1. The GOALS which the organization seeks to pursue.
2. The STRUCTURES which the organization sets up to embody its goals.
3. The SOCIAL BASE which the organization selects to pursue its goals and set up its structures.

Organizations are social units oriented towards the pursuit of specific goals. In this sense they can be conceived as tools which gain meaning and direction from their function, or as Etzioni puts it, organizations are "social units deliberately constructed and re-constructed to seek specific goals."⁷ Hence in order to understand a school, one should identify the specific function i.e. the goals, for the attainment of which the school was established and continues to exist and function at present. The school goals if they are specific, will, as Selznick observes, be translated into the "institutional embodiment of purpose", ⁸ through various structures which are specific activities. The school will have its own structures

6. Selznick Philip. T.V.A. and the Grassroots. Chps. 1, 2 and 3.

7. Etzioni Amitai. Modern Organizations, p.4.

8. Selznick Philip. Leadership in Administration, p.90.

for admission of students, recruitment of staff, teaching, training, management, public-relations, evaluation, motivation, reward system, etc. The goals have to be pursued and the structures have to be set up by a group of people, the administrators, staff and students, who form the social base of the school.

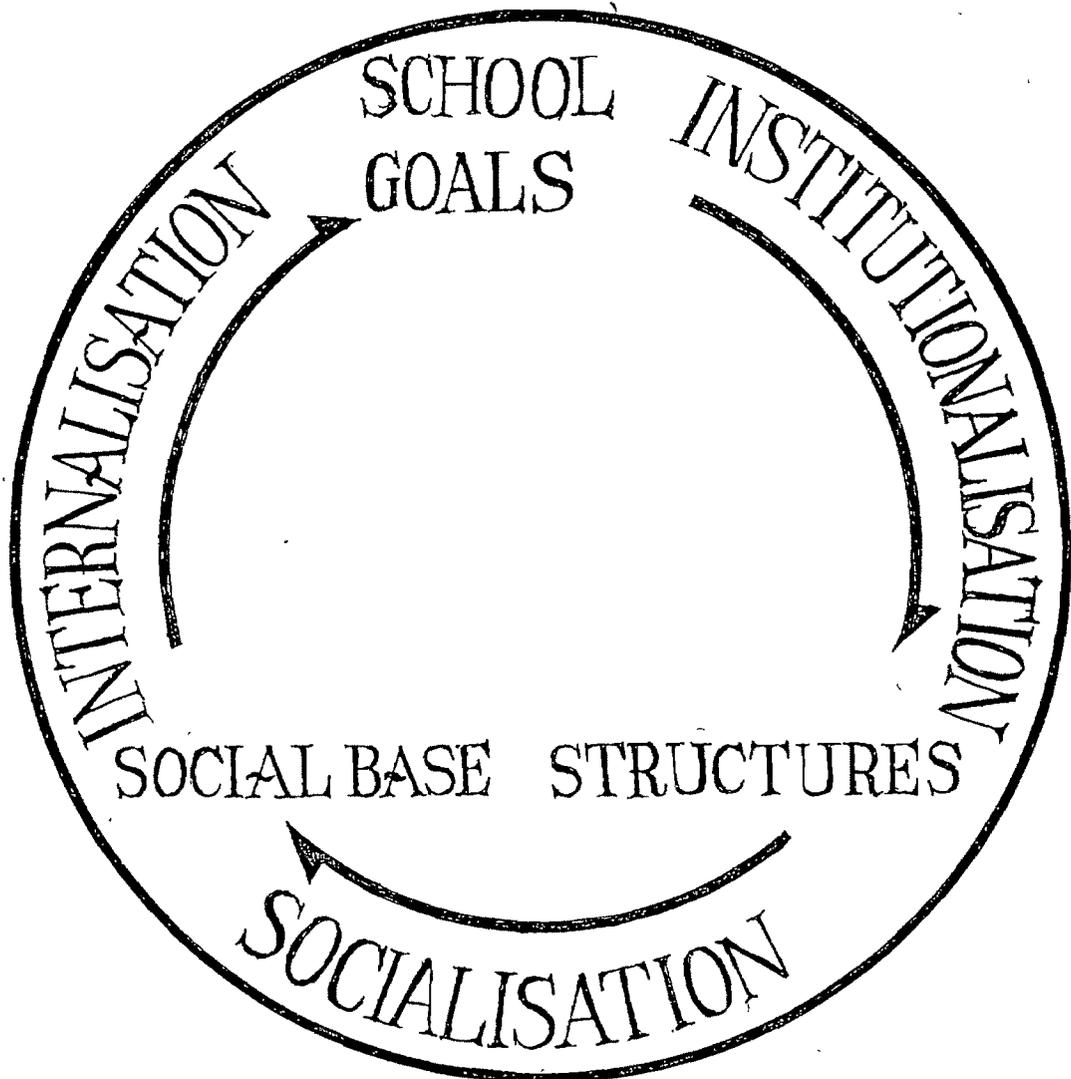
There are three important internal processes which result from an interaction of the three sub-systems.

- i) Institutionalization - by which the goals are embodied into the structures and are infused with value and meaning.
- ii) Socialization - by which the school personnel are oriented towards the school goals. A set of neutral people are changed into a body of committed people.
- iii) Internalization - by which the goals are assimilated by the personnel in varying degrees, so that they can identify themselves with the institution.

Figure 1 illustrates the three components of the school as a system and the processes that result from their mutual interaction.

FIGURE 1

INTERNAL COMPOSITION
OF A SCHOOL AS A
SOCIAL ORGANISATION



EXPLANATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL:

Organizational goals have been defined as "a desired state of affairs, which an organization tends to realize."⁹ Theoretically there could be as many states of affairs as there are persons in the organization. First of all it is essential to distinguish private from organizational goals. A private goal consists of a future state the individual desires for the organization. These again may not necessarily correspond with the actual organizational goals. However the school exists for the furtherance of certain specific goals, and one way of identifying the goals of the school, would be from the statements of the participants attesting what they thought the goals of the school were.

Output Goals:- Every school is established with the intention of contributing some identifiable output to the environment. Output goals are the goals of the school which immediately or in the future, are reflected in some product service, skill or orientation which will affect and is intended to affect society, like intellectual and character formation of students, training in specific skills, research in some area, programmes of community service.

9. Etzioni. Op. Cit., p.6.

Support Goals:- In order to attain output goals the school must devote some of its resources in maintaining the system. These set the conditions for the attainment of output goals. These support goals can be classified into four categories based on the functional imperatives of Parson: Adaptation, Management, Motivation and Position.

Goals as seen above are central to an organization and are the key to understanding the function of organizations. However these abstract realities have to be concretized into structures which are the institutional embodiment of goals.

School Structures

The goals express the aims and purpose of the school. This purpose has to be built into the social structure of the school. The neutral body of persons entering the school have to be socialized into persons committed to the goals of the school. There are formal structures set up by the school and informal structures which result from the interaction of the members among themselves. The social support that the school goals receive from the various network of relationships is of importance. Socialisation is an important function of orienting the members towards the school goals. It begins with the recruitment of staff and

admission of students and ends with developing an institutional core, highly committed to the values and goals of the organization. Socialization is achieved through training and sharing of experiences.

The selection of a suitable social base, is one of the key functions of a school, as the goals have to be pursued in and through the social base.

The Social Base of a School:

The goals and structures are built on the foundation of an underlying social base.

The students and staff joining a school bring with them their own cultural and socio-economic background. The main aspects of this background can be identified in terms of factors such as interest groups, socio-economic status and belief systems.

Interest groups are based on language, religion, and caste. Socio-economic status depends on income, occupation and education of parents.

Belief systems relate to matters of religious practices, family customs, discipline and career aspirations.

The process of internalization is a means of leading the personnel who came as outsiders into the school with their varied backgrounds and values, to assimilate the school goals and to increase their sense of commitment to the organization.

Organizational Context:

The Selznick's model which was described earlier, is more of a closed system than open, hence it does not take into consideration its relationship with the environment. However the analysis of the schools would be inadequate without an external analysis of the important dimensions of their environment. The environment being very complex, only three of its main aspects will be dealt with in the study.

1. The Sponsors:- Those who establish and finance a school, are responsible for communicating organizational doctrine and educational philosophy. They are the management of the schools.
2. The Beneficiaries:- The local or regional community from which the school receives its clientele.
3. The Supporters:- The validating Body which gives the school legitimation and financial support. This is the education system of the country.

Figure 2 illustrates the linkage of the Apostolic Carmel school with its main environmental dimensions.

FIGURE 2
EXTERNAL LINKAGES OF AN
APOSTOLIC CARMEL SCHOOL IN INDIA
WITH ITS ENVIRONMENT

