

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND PRINCIPAL PERSONALITY:
A STUDY IN RELATIONSHIPS

by

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ABSTRACT

The prime purpose of this study was to determine existing relationships between principal personality and school organizational climate. An understanding of the effect on a school's organizational climate of the age of the principal, his administrative experience and the length of time he had spent in his present position, and the size and location of his school, was also sought.

School organizational climate variables were measured by the responses of 195 teachers in twenty Manitoba secondary schools to Halpin and Croft's Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire. The personality of each of the twenty principals was measured by the response to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. A questionnaire completed by the principal provided information related to age, teaching and administrative experience, and tenure.

The twenty schools used for the research study provided examples of all organizational climate categories, and the principals of the schools provided at least one example of each of the eight personality types. However, the study produced no overall relationships between organizational climate and principal personality.

One significant relationship was found between the global climate category and the separate indices of personality: the organizational climate of a school is more open when the more sensing and less intuitive is that aspect of the principal's personality associated with perception.

Many significant relationships were proven amongst the dimensions of organizational climate and the indices of principal personality. The more introverted a principal, the more he hinders the staff's task accomplishment and remains aloof from them, although he may be considerate, work hard himself, and foster staff intimacy. The sensing rather than intuitive principal will emphasize production and foster good staff esprit with teacher involvement in the task accomplishment. The feeling rather than judging principal will emphasize production less and will be seen by his teachers as being rather aloof.

Many significant relationships were found to exist amongst organizational climate and dimensions of climate, and the principal variables of age, teaching experience, administrative experience and tenure. The older a principal, the longer he has spent in teaching and in administrative work, and the longer he has remained in his present position, the more he emphasizes production. He is also more considerate of his staff and less inclined to hinder their sense of accomplishment than is a younger colleague. The result is less staff disengagement, more intimacy and higher esprit.

No significant relationships were produced between principal personality and the principal variables of age, experience and tenure. Similarly, no significant relationships were determined amongst organizational climate and its dimensions, principal personality types and sub-indices, and the school variables of size and location. However, there

appeared to be a tendency towards a more open climate in the small rural school in contrast to the large urban school.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

I. STATEMENT OF THE GENERAL PROBLEM

That schools vary considerably in their "atmospheres" is not a particularly astute observation. Any superintendent or inspector moving from one school to another will notice differences in "tone" or "personality;" a visit of short duration will suffice in the sensing of a school's "climate." Prior to undertaking this study, the writer assumed that it was possible both to determine and, in some measure, to describe the organizational climates of schools.¹

Several questions then arose. To what extent would the organizational climate of a school reflect the leadership of its principal? Might any description of an organizational climate be expected to indicate the staff's social satisfactions and its sense of task accomplishment? In what way would the leadership behaviour of the principal be an expression of his personality? Would the school's size and location have a bearing on its climate? Might differences in organizational climate reflect the varying ages, experience, training and tenure of principals?

¹Halpin and Croft claimed to measure the organizational climate of schools, and their contention found support in research studies undertaken by Andrews, Brown, Millar and Schmidt. There is a more definitive treatment of the determination and description of organizational climates in subsequent chapters.

It was felt that seeking answers to these and related questions would be a worthwhile undertaking. 'As is the principal, so is the school' may well be a timeworn cliché. However, since the critical position of the principal in setting the tone of his school is so readily recognized by writers in the field of educational administration, it is imperative that his selection be approached with a concern for the type of climate he will establish.

Yet such has not always been the approach. Plaxton² noted that principals were generally selected from the teaching ranks using such criteria as success in the classroom, willingness to assume extra duties, ability to get along well with others, academic achievement and interest in administration as the basis for selection. He felt that administrator recruitment programs were handicapped by the lack of understanding of the personal qualities of effective educational leaders.

Concern about the personal qualities of school principals was of particular interest for the present study. If personality variables organize the principal's pattern of behaviour, and if relationships can be found between these variables and the types of organizational climates found in schools, then it should be possible to predict the results of placing a particular individual in a particular administrative position.

²Robert P. Plaxton, "Personality of the Principal and School Organizational Climate" (unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Alberta, 1965), p. 2. A portion of this study replicates Plaxton's research. Several references to his thesis will be made in ensuing pages.

To determine the school climate types and the principal personality types, two instruments were used: Halpin and Croft's Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire, henceforth to be referred to as the OCDQ, and the Myers-Brigg's Type Indicator, the MBTI, as developed by Isabel Briggs Myers.

The OCDQ provides a measure of eight dimensions of organizational climate, four of which are related to staff behaviour and four of which are associated with the behaviour of the principal. These eight measures are combined to produce profiles of organizational climate, six in all.

The MBTI contains four separate indices which are designed to bring out a person's four basic preferences. By combining the four preferences in all possible ways, sixteen personality types emerge.

A biographical questionnaire was also employed to provide information on age, years of teaching experience, years of administrative experience and length of time in the present position.

The OCDQ was administered to members of staff in twenty Manitoba secondary schools -- of varying sizes and in varying locales. The MBTI was administered to the principals of these schools; they also completed the biographical questionnaire.

With the data collected, this study attempted to determine relationships among the six overall types of organizational climates, the eight dimensions of climate, the four separate indices of personality, the sixteen personality types, the school variables of location and size

and the principal variables of age, experience and tenure.

In essence, then, this thesis was designed to report on the relationships existing between principal personality and the organizational climate of schools. An understanding of the effect on organizational climate of the age of the principal, his administrative experience and tenure, and his school's size and location, was also to be sought.

II. STATEMENT OF THE SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

In order that the general problem could be defined more clearly, answers to specific questions were sought:

1. What types of organizational climate are found in the twenty Manitoba schools?
2. What personality types administer these schools?
3. Are there relationships between the global climate ratings of the OCDQ and the personality patterns determined by the MBTI?
4. Do significant relationships exist between each principal personality type and the eight OCDQ subtests?
5. Are there significant correlations between the global climate rating and the MBTI sub-indices?
6. What relationships occur among the continuous scores on each index of personality and the scores on the dimensions of organizational climate?

7. What correlations occur among principal variables of age, teaching experience, administrative experience and length of time in present position, overall climate type, and climate sub-dimensions?
8. What correlations are found among the principal variables and the MBTI personality categories?
9. Are there relationships among scores derived from the administration of the OCDQ and the MBTI and the location or size of the school?

III. LIMITATION

It must be pointed out that the concept of organizational climate as proposed by Halpin and Croft is a somewhat restricted one. The questionnaire does not investigate interactions between teachers and pupils, or between the school and the community; the OCDQ deals specifically with teacher-principal interactions.

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter is designed to serve three purposes. Firstly, the backgrounds to the development of the OCDQ and the MBTI are helpful in understanding two concepts which are basic to the study: organizational climate as the result of interpersonal relationships, and leadership as the result of interaction between personality and the social situation. Secondly, certain conclusions reached from using the OCDQ and the MBTI in research related to educational administration are dealt with since they are re-tested in the present study. Thirdly, a description in some detail of the Plaxton study¹ is provided as background to that part of the current study which replicates Plaxton's endeavours.

I. LITERATURE RELATED TO ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

The Concept

In the introduction to their Monograph,² Halpin and Croft indicated that the development of the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire is based upon the idea that there had long been a need

¹Robert P. Plaxton, "Personality of the Principal and School Organizational Climate" (unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Alberta, 1965).

²Andrew W. Halpin and Don B. Croft, The Organizational Climate of Schools (Chicago: Midwest Administration Center, The University of Chicago, 1963).

for a concept which is to organization what personality is to the individual. Hence, they defined their term, organizational climate, as the organizational "personality" of a school.

The authors of the OCDQ then proceeded to limit their concept in this way:

Accordingly, . . . when we speak of the Organizational Climate within the present context we will refer exclusively to the social interaction between the principal and the teachers -- to the 'social component' of the Organizational Climate.³

Writing the year prior to the publishing of the questionnaire in 1963, Halpin and Croft also indicated the type of organizational climate they preferred:

A desirable organizational climate is one in which (a) it is possible for leadership acts to emerge easily, (b) self-fulfillment is provided to group members by giving them a sense of accomplishment, (c) the social satisfaction that comes from being part of a group is achieved by the members.⁴

Although they did extend related work on group climates in other fields specifically to the field of educational administration, Halpin and Croft were not the first to discuss organizational climate on the basis of interpersonal relationships. As early as 1955, Cornell spoke of organizational climate in discussing socially perceptive administration. Organizational climate was described as "a delicate blending of interpretations by persons in the organization of their jobs or roles in relationship to others,

³Ibid., p. 7.

⁴Andrew W. Halpin and Don B. Croft, The Organizational Climate of Schools, United States Office of Education, United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, No. SAE 543 8369 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 47.

and their interpretations of the roles of others in the organization."⁵

The emphasis on group interaction is reflected also in the writings of Argyris.⁶ He saw organizational climate as a pattern of the variables resulting from the interaction of three systems: formal organization variables such as policies and procedures; personality variables such as needs or values; and informal variables arising from the individual's struggle to adapt to the formal organization so that organizational goals and individual self-expression are both achieved. This pattern of variables tends towards a steady or homeostatic state similar to the relatively stable state of relationships between the principal and his staff as a group later developed by Halpin and Croft.

Still others writing at this time saw relative stability in interactions as the necessary component to organizational climate. Carlson stated:

Research supports the position that the structure of the organization lies in the stable patterns of interaction among individuals performing the work, rather than in the work performed.⁷

And Likert wrote:

Management will make full use of the potential capacities of its human resources only when each person in an organization is a member of one or more well-knit, effectively functioning work groups

⁵Francis G. Cornell, "Socially Perceptive Administration," Phi Delta Kappan, XXXVI (March, 1955), 219-223.

⁶Chris Argyris, "Some Problems in Conceptualizing Climate," Administrative Science Quarterly, II (March, 1958), 501-520.

⁷Richard O. Carlson, "Research and the School System as an Organization," The School Review, LXVI (Winter, 1958), 473-483.

which have high skills of interaction and high performance goals.⁸

In interpreting organizational climate as pertaining to relationships between the organization and the individual, Argyris was basing his concept on the same type of interaction theory as Getzels and Guba⁹ developed. However, while Getzels and Guba were concerned with administrative or leadership behavior as it affects morale in the organization, Argyris tended to be concerned with the broader concept of organizational behaviour. To Argyris, climate was more than morale since he saw morale as a process, but climate as concerned with both structure and process.

Developing an Instrument

Like Getzels and Guba, Hemphill¹⁰ and his colleagues were concerned with leadership behavior as it affects different levels of morale or atmosphere or climate. They developed one of the first instruments designed to measure such group dimensions as control, the degree to which a group regulates the behavior of individuals while they are functioning as group members; flexibility, the degree to which a group's activities are marked by informal procedures than by adherence to established procedures;

⁸Rensis Likert, "An Emerging Theory of Organizational Leadership and Management," Leadership and Interpersonal Behavior, Luigi Petruccio and Bernard M. Bass, editors (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1961), p. 18.

⁹J. W. Getzels and E. G. Guba, "Social Behavior and the Administrative Process," The School Review, LXV (Winter, 1957), 423-441.

¹⁰John K. Hemphill, Group Dimensions: A Manual for Their Measurement. (Research Monograph Number 87. Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University, 1956).

hedonic tone, the degree to which group membership is accompanied by a general feeling of pleasantness; and viscidty, the degree to which members of the group function as a unit. Hemphill's dimensions bear a relationship to the later OCDQ dimensions of intimacy, disengagement and esprit.

An earlier instrument devised by Halpin,¹¹ the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ), was the model on which much of the new instrument was based. The LBDQ, which has been used with school administrators, classified leaders on two dimensions -- initiating structure and consideration. However, the instruments are quite different since the LBDQ is concerned only with administrative behaviour while the OCDQ is concerned with the more inclusive type of organizational behaviour.

Hemphill¹² found that some dimensions of leader behaviour and some dimensions of group behavior are interrelated. This was verified in later research by Morris¹³ using Hemphill's dimensions and those of the LBDQ. He found significant relationships between the two dimensions of leadership, consideration and initiating structure, and four of Hemphill's group dimensions: polarization, participation, potency and viscidty.

¹¹Andrew W. Halpin, The Leadership Behavior of School Superintendents (Chicago: Midwest Administration Center, The University of Chicago, 1959).

¹²Hemphill, op. cit.

¹³Derek V. Morris, "Staff Characteristics and Principal Leadership" (unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1961).