

Foundational
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Foundational Complexities of Organizational Functioning Within an Educational Setting Evyonne Hawkins

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Each day we leave home for the day to enter a work environment where we all become actors. Every person from the bottom up has an assigned role to play in their particular subgroup; however, a role one may not consider is that of multiple logics operating behind the scene within an organization that may serve to divert or support their ability to function successfully within the parameters of assigned responsibilities. Institutions today should aim to function within the four frames of managerial wisdom and social science knowledge which include structural, human resource, political and symbolic lenses that provide clues as to what is really going on within the organization to avoid confusion.

Examples of foundational complexities under which organizations function can be found within many organizations in the areas of social science, health care, life sciences and manufacturing industries. The four frames of managerial wisdom and social science knowledge are defined by Bolman, L. G. and Deal, T. E. (2008) as: “ *Structural* (also referred to as *factories*), that focuses on establishment of rules, roles, goals and policies; *Human Resource* (also referred to as *families*), sees the organization as an extended family with needs, feelings, skills, and limitations; *Political* (also referred to as *jungles*), that sees organizations as competitive arenas of scarce resources, competing interests, and struggles for power and advantage; and *Symbolic*

(also referred to as *temples or tribes*) – that sees organization as having rituals, ceremonies, stories, play, and culture at the heart of organizational life (p. 14-15)”. In looking at a particular educational institution, to hear employees talk you would immediately assume the organization operates within the *Structural and Symbolic* frames. Terms often heard by employees include family, teams, hosting of ceremonies to celebrate achievements, and a culture where everyone works together for a common purpose. However, in reviewing the characteristics of reframing, the culture exceeds these boundaries, but appear to lack strong commitment in other frames.

The educational organization appears to function within the four frames of managerial wisdom and social science knowledge which is what Bolman and Deal recommend. The culture of the institution is committed to teaching and learning, collaboration, participatory governance, and its ability to adapt to changes necessary to address the immediate needs of the local business community. However, the *political* frame may not be as interdependent as thought. An example of this may be found within what can be called political frames of the institution where programs in high demand give the perception that more resources are allocated toward promotion of those areas and less resources put into areas that struggle; thereby, limiting other areas in their ability to produce as fast as other areas. This limitation of resources for some areas are characterized by what Besharov, M. L., & Smith, W. K. (2014) refer to as *fragmented centrality* that is influenced by long-time actors who demonstrate a clear hierarchy by some leaders over others and those leaders who are clueless to the fact that they have to perform by pushing for allocation of resources in their areas to build their programs. This lack of

performance by leaders has led to an inability to empower employees to be motivated to move beyond their current motivations and work toward organizational goals if there is no reward or support for their areas in matters of task leadership, relational leadership, and change leadership as described by Hartnell, C. A., Ou, A. Y., Kinicki, A. J., Choi, D., & Karam, E. P. (2019).

One of the strategies implemented by the educational institution was a program to aid in the building up of the culture through accountability training. With the institution having gone through 3 presidents in five years, morale and trust were two of the biggest internal issues. Silos were very prevalent and in a small institution as this one, not all employees knew each other. It was apparent which department each employee belonged by how they sat at annual meetings. The misperceptions and fallacies of this educational organization could perhaps be narrowed down to the us versus administration attitude, problems were related to lack of state funding support, too many permissions needed for simple decisions, some departments being pushed to comply with college policies and requests for information while other department administrators did not see it as important to push their areas, and power struggles among administrators. In this atmosphere, only a few employees had conversations with other employees not within their areas.

As the new leader of the institution, the current president immediately recognized problems that needed to be addressed up front and utilized what appears to be the Four Frames of Reframing and Motivating Language Theory of organizations described by Holmes, W. T. and Scull, W. R. (2019).

This included a sequence of events where the president identified the issues, <https://assignbuster.com/foundational-complexities-of-organizational-functioning-within-an-educational-setting/>

selected the best frame to address the issues, connected the frame(s), executed action, and positively influenced employee and organizational outcomes (p. 3). These efforts addressed not only the structural and political frames, but also the human resources and symbolic frames as well. As a result, a performance feedback system was implemented that reinforced similar characteristics outlined by Holmes and Schull such as work empathy, politeness, recognition of efforts, removal of barriers, and cultural changes. The goal was to increase cultural perception survey results within three years and within two years the goal was met and exceeded.

Living within one frame may work for a brief time, or even years, but eventually problems will arise that could have benefitted from having implemented the four frames of reframing earlier. A point of advice that can be taken from Watkins, D., Earnhardt, M., Pittenger, L., Roberts, R., Rietsema, K., & Cosman-Ross, J. (2017) is that when top executives do not adhere to their core values and policies, the tribe is bound to collapse from the top down. These authors recognized that “ traditional leadership is losing relevance and developing the competence of adaptive leadership is critical for effective success. Complex adaptive leadership provides a systems view of leadership that moves away from a linear view of the world and focuses leaders on the complex and dynamic nature of the environment...focused on the dynamic and complex systems that comprise leadership” (p. 153).

By organizations functioning within the four frames of managerial wisdom and social science knowledge that includes structural, human resource, political and symbolic lenses, perhaps the confusion of the Enron case will <https://assignbuster.com/foundational-complexities-of-organizational-functioning-within-an-educational-setting/>

cause employees to align their maps to stay on course by ensuring multiple systems are in place to aid in capturing what is really going on in the organization. This will also help to eliminate the urge to *blame* others or bureaucracy when something goes wrong because everyone is striving for the same goal and holding each other accountable for successes and failures of the organization.

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