

**EFFECTIVENESS-ORIENTED EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT: AN INTRODUCTION**  
*J. Scheerens, Department of Education, University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands*

The collection of papers and symposia that will be presented in theme 1 reflects the explicit aim of the theme-coordinators to relate educational organization and management to effectiveness issues. In about 50 of the papers organization and management variables are related to educational outcomes. Roughly 25% deals with issues of school evaluation as an instrument for school management and the remaining 25% address issues of school improvement and educational innovation inspired by the results of empirical school effectiveness research. The majority of contributions has the school level as its focus, whereas only a few papers look into the influence on school functioning of educational policy measures and organizational arrangements at higher administrative levels.

When one compares the contributions to theme 1 of ECER with the collection of papers in division A of the 1992 convention of the American Educational Research Association there are some striking differences.

A categorization – as rough as the one just made of the ECER-contributions in theme 1 – reveals that about 40% of the AERA-division A papers dealt with "restructuring" or "reframing" of education at large and school management in particular; 35% focused on questions about school leadership; 10% was somewhat related to effectiveness issues and 15% discussed other topics. Although there were some very interesting symposia at the 1992 AERA-conference about the contribution of economic theory (public choice theory, educational production functions) to educational administration issues the paradigm shift Boyd and Crowson foresaw in 1985 seems not yet to have taken place in American research in educational administration. The main aspects of this paradigm shift being: an outcome vs. a process perspective and the use of axiomatic (economic) theory as opposed to a more inductive and descriptive approach.

It would be altogether misleading to see the ECER-collection of papers as proof that European research in Educational Organization and Management is generally more outcome-related than American research under the heading of educational administration. Again it should be emphasized that effectiveness-related contributions were explicitly asked for in the call for participation of the ECER-conference. On the other hand the prosperity of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and School Improvement (ICSEI) in Europe may be

indicative of a change in perspective between the United States (where the label school effectiveness has definitely gone out of fashion) and Europe.

More or less from these trends within different educational research communities there are some important substantive issues related to the idea of a more outcome-oriented approach in educational organization – and management – research. Two of these are:

- The long causal chain between policy-measures and organizational arrangements on the one hand and student achievement on the other. Doubts in this respect are provocatively phrased by March in his statement that "changing education by changing educational administration is like changing the course of the Mississippi by spitting in the Allegheny".
  - The fact that organizational theorists have pointed out that the productivity concept that is common in educational effectiveness research is to be seen as just one (perhaps narrow) perspective on organizational effectiveness.
- It is to be expected that these issues will be addressed in the discussions the various contributions to theme 1 of the ECER will hopefully evoke. Finally, there are three orientations within the set of contributions that are worth being pointed at: First, there is an explicit international orientation present, particularly in the symposium organized by Creemers. There are at present some exciting efforts to design and conduct international comparative school effectiveness research. Secondly, there are some attempts in strengthening the conceptual and theoretical basis of school effectiveness research while using formal modeling approaches as a bridge between conceptual models and empirical research. This is the focus of the symposium organized by Scheerens. Third, following the tradition of the ICSEI-conferences, attempts are being made to link the world of school effectiveness research more closely to school improvement. The symposium organized by Reynolds is directed to this aim. Despite alternative approaches and substantive issues for debate an effectiveness-oriented approach to educational organization and management can be seen as a fruitful area of educational research.

## Reference

Boyd, W.L. & R.L. Crowson (1985). The changing conception and practice of public school administration. Review of Research in Education, 9, 311–373.