4-1983

A Study of the Relationship of System Openness to Community Education Programming in Selected Rural School Districts

Daniel James Patterson

Western Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dissertations

Part of the Educational Administration and Supervision Commons

Recommended Citation


https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dissertations/2435

This Dissertation-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.
A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF SYSTEM OPENNESS TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMMING IN SELECTED RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

by

Daniel James Patterson

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of The Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education Department of Educational Leadership

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
April 1983
A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF SYSTEM OPENNESS TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMMING IN SELECTED RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Daniel James Patterson, Ed.D.
Western Michigan University, 1983

The purpose of this study was twofold: First, to identify indicators of system openness that are related to the community education program components offered by a school district and, second, to investigate the extent to which the indicators of system openness relate to the community education program components offered by a school district.

The population of this study consisted of six community educators working in separate K-12 school organizations.

A survey instrument was developed to meet the requirements of this study: The measurement of community education programs and the indicators of system openness. A review of the literature on community education and system openness was used to develop the survey instrument.

The respondents completed the survey instrument and were interviewed in their respective school organizations. The interview was designed to gather information on the community education programs and the indicators of system openness. In addition, the interview was to provide information to the respondents as they completed the survey instrument.
The results of the study point out that the indicators of a system's openness—namely, cosmopolitanism of the leaders, external communications, and system openness—appear to have relevance to community educators in school organizations as follows:

1. Cosmopolitanism of leaders had a tendency to be higher in those school organizations that also had higher scores on the level of commitment to the community education programs as perceived by the community educator.

2. The exchange of information between the school organization and its environment was higher in those school organizations that had higher scores on the level of program commitment as perceived by the community education director.

3. System openness, as measured in the present study, had a tendency to be higher in those school organizations that had higher scores on the level of commitment to community education program.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This reproduction was made from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this document, the quality of the reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help clarify markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or “target” for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is “Missing Page(s)”. If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark, it is an indication of either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, duplicate copy, or copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed. For blurred pages, a good image of the page can be found in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted, a target note will appear listing the pages in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed, a definite method of “sectioning” the material has been followed. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. For illustrations that cannot be satisfactorily reproduced by xerographic means, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and inserted into your xerographic copy. These prints are available upon request from the Dissertations Customer Services Department.

5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases the best available copy has been filmed.

University Microfilms International
300 N. Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Patterson, Daniel James

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF SYSTEM OPENNESS TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMMING IN SELECTED RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Western Michigan University

University Microfilms International

Ed.D. 1983

300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Donald Weaver for his counsel and guidance throughout my studies. To Dr. John Sandberg and Dr. Ernie Stech I wish to express my appreciation for their time, efforts, and support.

A special thank you to the late Dr. Kenneth Simon who through his own special brand of humor assisted me in maintaining my perspective.

To my wife, Lyn, nothing can be said or done to express my feelings of gratitude to her, for it was she who encouraged me to pursue my career to the detriment of her own.

Daniel James Patterson
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** ..................................... ii

**LIST OF TABLES** ...................................... v

**LIST OF FIGURES** ..................................... vi

**CHAPTER**

I. **PROBLEM STATEMENT** ..................................... 1

II. **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE** ........................ 5

   Purpose of the Study ................................. 5

   Systems Theory ......................................... 5

   Open Systems Theory ................................. 10

   Relationship of Open Systems Theory to the
   School Organization ................................. 12

   Community Education ................................. 13

   Relationship of Open Systems Theory to
   Community Education ................................. 16

   Indicators of System Openness .................... 19

   Community Education Program Components .......... 22

   Summary ............................................. 22

III. **REVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY** ........................ 25

   Background ......................................... 25

   Sample Selection ................................... 26

   Pretest .......................................... 28

   Data Collection .................................... 29

   Specifics on Data Collection .................... 29

   Instrument Design .................................. 31

   Independent Variables ............................ 31
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Variables</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypotheses</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV. REPORT OF THE FINDINGS</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Presentation</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Selection</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests of the Hypotheses</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</strong></td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Community Education</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Further Research</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REFERENCES</strong></td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPENDIX A Survey Instrument</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BIBLIOGRAPHY</strong></td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

1. Survey Instrument Design: Listing the Independent Variables' Topic Areas and Corresponding Survey Instrument Question Number(s) ........................................ 32


3. Mean Scores of Communication Patterns Measured for Selected School Organizations .................................................. 45

4. Mean Scores of the Level of Involvement in Community Education for Selected School Organizations ............................................. 45

5. A Comparison of Advanced and Less Advanced School Organizations' Mean Scores on Selected Organizational Measures ........................................... 56
LIST OF FIGURES

1. An Illustration of the Input-Process-Output Model Related to the Environment .............................. 11

2. The Relationship of Cosmopolitanism of the Leaders to the Level of Commitment to the Community Education Program (Program Commitment) .................. 60

3. The Relationship of the Exchange of Information Between the School Organization and Its Environment to the Level of Commitment to the Community Education Program (Program Commitment) ........................ 62

4. The Relationship of the Internal Exchange of Information to the Level of Commitment to the Community Education Program (Program Commitment) 64

5. The Relationship Between System Openness and the Level of Commitment to the Community Education Program (Program Commitment) .................. 67
CHAPTER I

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Community education has been going through, and is continuing to go through, a period of rapid development both as a practical application and as a theoretical concept. This continuing process of expansion and development has led to varying levels of confusion as to what community education is and how it is operationalized. The net result of this confusion is that community education is generally explained and described in terms of its program components. The program components are more readily explained and understood than the more abstract theoretical concepts. This situation has created difficulties for community educators as they attempt to implement community education by providing various program components. Community educators often fail to take into account organizational characteristics (constraints or supports) that may prevent, or enhance, successful implementation of the concept.

Recent writings on community education reflect the influence of systems theory on community educators as they explain the community education concept (Oravecz, 1979; Schmitt, 1979; Weaver, 1979; Wood, 1979). While the importance of systems theory to the continued development of community education has yet to be researched, its promise and relevance has been addressed by these authors. Systems theory as described by Katz and Kahn (1966) refers to the interplay between an organization's inputs, throughputs, outputs, and that
organization's environment.

A key characteristic of systems theory that is currently receiving attention, is system openness, defined by Rogers and Rogers (1976) as "the degree to which an organization exchanges information with its environment" (p. 145). Theoretical support for application and further study of open systems theory as related to the input-throughput-output model of systems theory comes from the works of Hussian (1973), Immegart and Pliecki (1973), Katz and Kahn (1966), Miller (1978), and Thompson (1967). They stress the importance of the input-throughput-output model as a means of understanding a system's operation. A central part of this model is the level and extent of the organization's exchange of information with its environment (i.e., its openness). The importance of the communication link between the organization and its environment is pointed out by Rogers (1973) when he describes the environment as the source of inputs to an organization and as the recipient of that organization's outputs.

Applications of these theoretical concepts come from Hatley and Miskel (1973) and Mazmanian (1977). Hatley and Miskel reported on the utilization of open systems theory in a redevelopment effort of an educational administration department of a university. Similarly, Mazmanian describes the application of open systems theory to an adult education agency. Mazmanian (1977) viewed the agency as "an open system. The effectiveness of the agency's programs (output) depends upon the support it receives (input) for decision making and other activities (throughput) relative to future programming..."
outcomes (outputs)" (p. 2). Both reports stressed a client-centered outcome and the requirement of the system to include that client's needs in determining system's outputs—an idea central to community education as well (Schmitt, 1979; Seay & Associates, 1974).

The relevance of open systems theoretical constructs to community education appears to become more important with the reported success of Hatley and Miskel (1973) and Mazmanian's (1977) applications of the open systems theory to educational systems. Schmitt (1979) in comparing community education to social system theory, stresses the input-process-output model as a means of understanding community education. This approach illustrates the problem facing community educators who adopt programs (outputs) before they have a clear perspective of their local situation in terms of inputs or processes. Wood (1979) addresses the importance of open systems theory to community education by pointing out that the community education programs offered by a school district are, in part, a function of that school district's degree of openness to its environment. The program components identified by Wood (1979) are "Community Based Decision-Making, Leisure Education, K-12 Schooling Extended (Early Childhood and Adult), and K-12 Schooling (Youth)" (p. 21). Wood (1979) in discussing the relationship between system openness and a school district's program components, suggests that as a school district increases its involvement in the program components, its openness must also increase.

Due to the importance of, and concern over the organizational characteristic of system openness as it relates to the development
of community education program components, it was the purpose of this study to describe indicators of system openness for selected rural school districts related to an adaptation of Wood's (1979) community education components. Rural school districts were selected for this study due to the researcher's familiarity with these programs and for research considerations. Wood's model was chosen due to his work in relating the program components to system openness in the school-based community education programs.

The writer recognizes that not all community education programs are school-based. Cook (1978) described at least two models for delivery of community education programs where the school was not the prime sponsor. However, Cook concluded that despite recent attempts by agencies other than the school to deliver programs, the school system was still the primary sponsor of community education programming in this country. For that reason and because Wood's model of system openness was designed to describe openness related to school system community education programming, the present study was limited to a description of indicators of system openness in selected school systems.

Specific questions addressed by this study were:

1. What, if any, are the indicators of system openness that are related to community education program components offered by a school district?

2. Is there a relationship between indicators of system openness and the community education program components offered by a school district?
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Purpose of the Study

This chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to the purpose of this study and the questions being addressed by it.

The purpose of this study was to describe the relationship of system openness to the development of a community education program in a rural school district. The questions considered to be pertinent to this study were: (a) What, if any, are the indicators of system openness that are related to the development of community education program components offered by a rural school district? If such indicators do exist, (b) is there a relationship between the indicators of system openness and the community education program components offered by a rural school district? Accordingly, the literature review focused on systems theory and open systems theory, and their importance to the development of community education in school districts.

Systems Theory

The study of organizations by organizational behaviorists has progressed through several developmental phases in the past 70 years. The evolution of thought on organizational behavior has progressed from the mechanistic view of the scientific management approach,
to the human relations school with its emphasis on the individual, to the system school with its emphasis on the organization, its people, and components (Rogers & Rogers, 1976).

The system school, as a synthesis of the scientific management and human relations school with its stress on the study of a total organization as a set of interrelated components, human and structural, enables a wider view of the organization than either the scientific management school or the human relations school. Rogers and Rogers (1976) in addressing the focus of the system school and its meaning to the researcher, state that "system theory is holistic. It assumes that the complex interactions among the parts of a given system are destroyed by a dissection of the system through atomistic research procedures. Instead, wholes have to be studied and understood as total units, as systems" (p. 49).

Systems theory provides a conceptual framework through which organizational behavior may be studied (Immegart & Pilecki, 1973; Katz & Kahn, 1966; Miller, 1978). The application of systems theory to the study of organizations is viable because an organization is functionally a social system (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Both organizations and social systems consist of interrelated activities, of people working toward a common goal; organizations as differentiated from social systems, however, continue over time (Katz & Kahn, 1966). In expanding on the theme that organizations are a type of social system, Katz and Kahn (1966) present the view that organizations possess more of the following characteristics than other social systems. "Organizations have a maintenance," "production" and
"production supportive structure," "a formal role pattern," "regulatory" and "adaptive structures," and an "ideology" (p. 47). The role of systems theory in helping develop an understanding of organizational behavior is enhanced when the complexity of the organization is considered.

A classic model of the system school that has relevance for educational administrators as they study their organizations has been identified by Immegart and Pilecki (1973) as "Ashby's . . . input-process-output model" (p. 15). Ashby's input-process-output (IPO) model has been used as the basic framework for this study of the school organization due to the model's wide acceptance and use by systems theorists as they study and explain or describe organizational behavior.

An understanding of the input-process-output (IPO) model's components and their interrelationship is essential to understanding how the model can be applied to the study of an organization and its relationship to its environment. The environment, for the purpose of this study, was the totality of physical and social factors that were external to the local school organization and its physical structures, but within the governmental boundary of the local school district. This definition was developed by this writer based on a definition by Rogers and Rogers (1976) where the environment of a system was defined as, "the totality of physical and social factors external to the system's boundary that are directly taken into consideration in decision-making behavior of individuals in the system" (p. 75).
A system, in order to survive, requires inputs from its environment. These inputs, according to Rogers and Rogers (1976), consist of "matter-energy and information absorbed by the system from its environment" (p. 65). Katz and Kahn (1966) classify energy inputs in two categories relative to a system, "maintenance and production" (p. 32). They go on to state that, "inputs are also informative in character and furnish signals to the structure about the environment and about its own functioning in relation to the environment" (Katz & Kahn, 1966, p. 22).

The outputs of the system, according to Rogers and Rogers (1976), "are the information, matter-energy, and other products that the system discharges into its environment" (p. 65). Goldhaber (1974) relates this to the organization in defining outputs as, "the products or services which the system exports into its environment" (p. 42).

The process of the system, for which Katz and Kahn (1966) use the term "throughput," is described as "transformation of energy" and "reorganization of input" to provide service (p. 20). Goldhaber (1974) explains transformation as "the process by which the inputs are changed into outputs. . . . In an organization, transformation occurs as . . . people are educated and trained, and services are provided or sold" (p. 42).

Immegart and Pilecki (1973), in addressing the input-process-output model, state: "process systems theories provide analytic frameworks that deal with action stimuli (inputs), the subsystems (structures and processes) which act on input, and the output or
resultants of system action" (p. 45). The importance of the relationship between the inputs-processes-outputs to the success of an organization has been addressed by Goldhaber (1974), Immegart and Pilecki (1973), Katz and Kahn (1966), and Rogers and Rogers (1976). Immegart and Pilecki (1973) put the relationship into perspective in their statement, "the conscious, planned transformation of action stimuli into output is imperative to effective system functioning and ultimately system survival and environmental service" (p. 40). In addressing the input-process-output model, Immegart and Pilecki (1973) go on to state that, "to ensure the most functional output, attention must be given to the input-output linkage, or to the processing of input variables" (p. 90). In referring to this linkage, Immegart and Pilecki (1973) indicate that, "since outputs are directly and causally related to inputs by the processing subsystem(s), this linkage requires conscious consideration" (p. 93). Rogers and Rogers (1976) explain the relationship of the organization to the environment through both its inputs and outputs, concentrating on the exchange of information between the organization and its environment. The importance of this exchange of information to the maintenance and development of an organization is heightened when its position relative to the IPO model is considered. Rogers and Rogers's (1976) definition of organizational communication places communication in the center of the IPO model. In their words, organizational communication is "that communication which occurs within an organization and between an organization and its environment" (p. 26). Open systems theorists, Katz and Kahn (1966) and Rogers and
Rogers (1976), focus on the communication function in relation to
the IPO model with particular emphasis on communication between the
organization and its environment.

Open Systems Theory

Social scientists in studying social structures have tended to
study them as closed systems, that is in isolation from their envi­
ronment (Katz & Kahn, 1966). This closed system approach, while
applicable to some studies, is somewhat narrow when studying organi­
zational behavior due to the interrelatedness of the organization's
components and the role of the organization's environment. Katz and
Kahn (1966) in addressing the issue of closed system approaches as
compared to open system approaches to the study of organizations,
point out that:

System[s] theory is basically concerned with problems of
relationships, of structure, and of interdependence rather
than constant attributes of objects. In general approach
it resembles field theory except that its dynamics deal
with temporal as well as spatial patterns. Older formu­
lations of system constructs dealt with the closed systems
of the physical sciences, in which relatively self­
contained structures could be treated successfully as if
they were independent of external forces. But living
systems, . . . social organizations, are acutely depen­
dent upon their external environment and so must be con­
ceived of as open systems. (p. 18)

An organization is, in essence, an open system, that is the organi­
ization, "continuously exchanges information with its environment,"
the definition of an open system by Rogers and Rogers (1976, p. 51).
Consequently, to study an organization in isolation from its envi­
ronment, would be to negate an important influence on the
organization's ability to survive and produce. Open systems theory is a refinement of systems theory in that it provides an approach to the study of an organization and the organization's relationship to its environment. Systems theory, however, has been focused primarily on the system as an entity.

Goldhaber (1974) draws attention to the importance of open systems theory in relation to the organization, systems theory, and the IPO model in the statement that, "the constant flow of inputs which are transformed into outputs provides the dynamism characteristic of open system" (p. 43). Goldhaber (1974) specifically addresses the relationship of open systems theory to the IPO model, the basic tenets of which remain as previously discussed. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship, as Goldhaber perceives it, between the organization and its environment.

Environment-----Input-----Transformation-----Output-----Environment

|-------------------Feedback-------------------|

Figure 1
An Illustration of the Input-Process-Output Model Related to the Environment
(Source: Goldhaber, 1974, p. 40)

The importance of the information flow between the organization and its environment and the functioning of the IPO model previously addressed in systems theory, is central to open systems theory. Rogers and Rogers (1976) support Goldhaber's illustration in his
definition of openness of a system (organization) as "the degree of exchange of information with its environment" (p. 145).

Relationship of Open Systems Theory to the School Organization

The importance of open system and systems theory to the school organization has been addressed by Immegart and Pilecki (1973). They point out that in the relationship between the organization and its environment, the role of communication in maintaining and strengthening this relationship has particular relevance for the school organization as it exchanges information and services with its environment. Immegart and Pilecki (1973) consider the local school organization to be an open system, and further believe that the level of openness varies for each organization. They emphasize the importance of openness to the success of the school organization in meeting the requirements of the environment and in maintaining itself. They suggest that as the school organization becomes open, its chance of survival and for service to its environment increases. According to Immegart and Pilecki (1973), "as the open system evolves and draws on resources, itself, and its environment, the system's dynamic existence and contribution to itself and the environment are increased" (p. 32). An example of this condition would be the school organization that attempts to identify and develop curricula designed to meet the needs of its environment.

Community education, as a concept and practice, seeks to address the relationship between the needs of the environment and
the services provided by the school organization. Wood (1979) supports this in his statement that, "the openness concept can be illustrated by an examination of the major areas of program activity in a comprehensive local school system community education effort" (p. 19).

Community Education

Community education is, according to Seay and Associates (1974), "the process that achieves a balance and use of all institutional forces in the education of all the people of a community" (p. 3). The writer, in adopting this definition, recognizes that this is not the sole definition of community education; it does, however, reflect the historical growth of the concept and it encompasses many of the key elements identified in other definitions of community education.

Community education is a relatively new concept in the United States, its basic tenets having been developed in consonance with the school organization's development. While it was not the purpose of this study to redefine or explain the development of the concept in depth, it is important that the concept's historical development be reviewed to provide an understanding of the relationship of community education to the school organization and its environment.

Several authors, Clark and Olsen (1977), Minzey and LeTarte (1979), and Seay and Associates (1974), have provided outlines that trace the development of community education from early America to today. The evolution of community education as a concept, comes
from the local school organization's attempts to help people meet the challenges of life. Seay and Associates (1974) cited several time periods where the school organization has responded to periods of stress. Examples include: the Great Depression, World War II, the science gap of the 1950's, and finally, current environmental crises. While the school organization's response to these situations varied widely, the net result was that the school organization developed a tradition for assisting the people of its environment in meeting the challenges of life. Seay and Associates (1974) in expanding on the school organization's historical role in relation to its environment, point out that the leadership of school administrators and teachers did help a community handle rationing of scarce foodstuffs and gasoline more effectively. And the same School-Community cooperation proved to be vital as a learning procedure for elementary and secondary school students. When the school stayed open for adult evening classes and volunteer war service projects, and when the school library served all members of the community--whatever their ages--the community school was again serving in a time of national emergency. (p. 23)

One school district, according to Everett (cited in Seay & Associates, 1974) adopted the following statement of purpose which reflects the development of the concept: "the community education center . . . provided the means by which the needs and responsibilities of the community may be formulated in relation to the demands of a changing civilization for the continuous growth and enrichment of children and adults" (p. 22). These statements by Seay and Associates (1974) lend support to the statement that the community education concept is essentially a formalization of the local school
organization's role in meeting community needs. Support for this is found in the major tenets of community education as identified by Seay and Associates (1974) as previously reported by that author in the 1972 Community Education Journal, pages 16-19:

1. The community school recognized in actual programming the basic fact that education is a continuous process.

2. Educational objectives were stated in terms of desired changes in behavior.

3. Educational activities, supported by appropriate instructional materials, were based upon the problems, needs and interests of those for whom they were planned.

4. The school served the community and the community served the school.

5. A local community provided a focal point for understanding other large communities of people.

6. The community school challenged school and community leaders. (p. 28)

Similarly, Minzey and LeTarte (1979), through experience gained from the community education program in Flint, Michigan, identified four principles considered to be central to community education (p. 8). To paraphrase, they are:

1. The school serves all of the community.

2. The school facilities are a major resource.

3. Educational opportunities should reflect citizens' interests and needs.

4. Quality education is enhanced by a close relationship between school and community.

A review of these principles supports the statement that the community education concept, when adopted by a school organization,
firmly places the organization in a position of leadership in that community. Seay and Associates (1974) suggest the efficacy of such a role, regardless of the organization which might be implementing the concept. The writer recognizes that community education can and is being implemented in a variety of organizations. Boles and Seay (cited in Seay & Associates, 1974) have identified a broad range of formal and informal agencies and groups that provide education to the people of a community, any of which could implement community education. Cook (1978), in researching models of community education, found at least two that were not school based. Cook used financing as the basis in determining the models' initial selection; from this, he reports there were three models, one funded by the local school, one partially funded by the local school and other community resources, and the last, totally funded by community resources. He concluded, that while the school is not the only sponsor of community education, it is the primary one in the United States. Minzey and LeTarte (1979) lend support to this view in their statement, "the public school has proved to be the best organization for serving as the coordinating and facilitating device for the development and implementation of community education" (p. 15).

Relationship of Open Systems Theory to Community Education

The relevance of system openness to the implementation of community education becomes apparent as the relationship of open systems theory and community education is explained.
To describe the school organization as an open system holds meaning for the community educator in that the community education program's development is theoretically based on the interface of the school organization with its environment. Schmitt (1979) writes specifically to this point by presenting a rationale for the application of the input-process-output (IPO) model to community education theory. She also states that

input is two-fold: (a) the needs and problems of the community; and (b) the resources of the community. The process of community education is its catalytic, energizing function (Minzey, 1974) that synthesizes the input in such a way as to: (a) minimize the forces of the needs and problems of the community; and (b) maximize the potentials of the resources of the community. This results in the two-fold output of community education, that community problems are solved through: (a) meeting of needs; and (b) utilization of resources. (p. 139)

The program relationship between the school organization and its community (i.e., its environment) relative to implementation of community education is well established. Wood (1979) addresses the importance of system openness to a school organization's implementing community education in his statement, "the singular factor then which identifies the relative condition of the system's community education effort at any given moment is system openness" (p. 23). He further points out the need for a school organization to recognize, that when offering community education, the system must be prepared to change primarily by opening up to its environment.

The following reports by Hatley and Miskel (1973) and Mazmanian (1977) lend support to Wood's (1979) statement on the need for system openness relative to program development.
Hatley and Miskel (1973) reported on the application of the theoretical constructs of open systems theory to education systems and their subsequent success. They reported that, "the conceptual model was transformed into an applied model for planning and implementation of a revised program for the graduate study of educational administration" (p. 15). They suggest that the model has "considerable potential for other organizations" (p. 15).

Mazmanian (1977) presents a model for needs assessment that has been used by the Office of Continuing Medical Education at the University of Michigan Medical Center. This model, based on open systems theory, is used by the Center to identify the needs of the adult learner, and then to respond to these needs. The author presents a case for the use of continuous needs assessment in order to gain input from the environment.

The local school organization is not unlike the educational institutions identified by Hatley and Miskel (1973) and Mazmanian (1977) in that it also is intended to meet the educational needs of its environment, particularly if that school organization is implementing community education. The local school organization requires information from its environment in order to serve it.

This literature review then, suggests the premise that there should be a positive relationship between the system openness and the community education programs offered by a school organization. In order to test the relationship, it is necessary to describe indicators of system openness relative to community education in the school organization.
Indicators of System Openness

System openness has been discussed in terms of an organization's communication patterns, internally and externally, and in that organization's response to communication. Rogers and Rogers (1976) stress that the level of information exchange between an organization and its environment functions as an indication of system openness. They also acknowledge the importance of internal information flow in determining a system's openness. Wood (1979) identified four indicators of system openness relative to community education: "its role assumptions, its communication patterns, its planning procedures and its resource allocation procedures" (p. 23). The writer then, in light of viewpoints offered by authors Wood (1979) and Rogers and Rogers (1976) suggests the following three indicators of system openness:

1. The cosmopolitanism of the organization's leadership.
2. The external exchange of information between the school organization and its environment.
3. The internal characteristics of the organization.

Each of these indicators will be considered in detail.

Cosmopolitanism, as an attribute of an organization's members, appears crucial to the development of system openness in an organization. Wood (1979) points out that cosmopolitanism of the key decision makers is important to the level of openness of an organization. He suggests that unless the leaders can accept openness, they can, and will, limit the degree of openness possible in the
organization. He suggests that both the personal and professional styles of the leaders are important to the concept of system openness. Thompson (cited in Rogers & Rogers, 1976) stated that, "the individuals who provide an organization with openness are called 'cosmopolites' or 'boundary spanners'" (p. 67). In expanding on this idea, he points out that cosmopolites are found at both the top and the bottom of the organizational hierarchy. Those at the top are characterized by their participation in activities outside the organization. Those at the bottom are cosmopolites in that they provide operational contacts with the environment. The writer recognizes that cosmopolites appear at both extremes of the organizational hierarchy; however this study concentrated on those at the top, since Wood (1979) suggests that those at the top are the keys to openness. Rogers and Rogers (1976), in addressing the effects upon the organization of those individuals at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy, present the position that their effect depends on the organizational characteristics that permit action on upward communications.

The external exchange of information (i.e., the exchange of information between the organization and its environment) is an indicator of system openness according to Wood (1979) and Rogers and Rogers (1976). Rogers and Rogers (1976) cite a method whereby communication between the organization and its environment may be studied by gathering data on "the reported communication relationships of the organization with other units in its environment" (p. 66). With respect to community education in the school
organization, attention will be given to the communication channels used by the school organization to communicate with the individuals of the environment as well as with other community service providers.

Among the internal indicators of system openness as identified by Wood (1979) are the "professional styles of the leaders, planning procedures, communication and resource allocation procedures" (p. 23). The writer, in searching for a measure of internal openness, was led to the work of Likert (cited in Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1979). Likert's four management systems, Systems 1, 2, 3, and 4, according to Sergiovanni and Starratt (1979), rely heavily on the concept of organizational climate as an intervening variable between what supervisors and administrators do and organizational effectiveness "measured in system outputs of productivity, costs, and earnings."

The writer, in studying the organizational characteristics outlined by Likert (cited in Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1979), found a similarity between the characteristics and the organizational climate discussed by Likert. No attempt was made to equate Likert's Systems 1, 2, 3, and 4 to system openness; rather the writer adapted selected characteristics of the organizational climate that related to Wood's (1979) organizational characteristics. They are: leadership style of the organization, motivational forces, communication processes, interaction-influence process, decision-making process, and goal setting.
Community Education Program Components

Wood (1979), in addressing system openness related to community education program components, states:

The openness concept can be illustrated by an examination of the major areas of program activity in a comprehensive local school system community education effort. . . most community educators would agree that the potential community school program focus should include the following: K-12 schooling for youth; K-12 schooling for adults (adult basic education and high school completion); K-12 experiences for early childhood; recreation; avocational, social and cultural activities; sub-community or neighborhood problems; and community-wide problems. (p. 19)

Wood points out that each component, considered in the order in which it is stated above, requires increasingly more system openness.

The writer recognizes that local school organizations vary in their level of commitment to, and components offered by, their community education programs; as such, both of these, commitment to and components offered, were measured as separate variables. In addition to the previously discussed components of community education, Wood (1979) identifies multisystem openness as a necessity for any school organization, implementing community education. That is the interaction of various community systems to provide educational experiences to the people. As such, this characteristic was also measured as a separate variable.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe the relationship of system openness to the development of a community education program in rural school districts. The literature review supports the
suggested relationship between system openness and the outputs of an organization; specifically, in the school organization adopting the community education concept, the program components are considered the outputs of the organization. The theoretical constructs relating open systems theory to the school organization's implementing community education have not been tested through research. However, there is research concerning the successful application of open systems theory principles to other educational institutions. In view of the theoretical and empirical support for the application of open systems theory to educational systems, it is believed that this theory has particular relevance to school organizations implementing community education. Open systems theory has the potential of being a theoretical construct that community educators can refer to as they seek to increase their organization's effectiveness in delivering community education.

The review of literature suggests that the following indicators of system openness are related to the development of community education program components offered by a rural school district: cosmopolitanism, external exchange of information between the school organization and its environment, and internal exchange of information. These indicators constitute the independent variables relative to the second question of the study: Is there a relationship between the indicators of system openness and the community education program components offered by a rural school district? The dependent variables are the program components of the school organization's community education program, and the commitment to those
program components and the school organization's level of multi-agency involvement. The hypotheses of the study, statements of relationship between the independent and dependent variables, address the relationship of system openness to the development of a rural school district's community education program.
CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

This chapter is a review of the methodology used to study the relationship of open systems theory to the development of a rural school district's community education program. This chapter provides background information on the methodological procedures of sample selection, data collection, and data analysis used in this study.

Background

This study of the school organization was designed to provide a description of the indicators of system openness in selected school organizations addressing the following two questions:

1. What, if any, are the indicators of system openness that are related to community education program components offered by a school district?

2. Is there a relationship between indicators of system openness and the community education program components offered by a school district?

In developing the methodology to address these questions, the researcher was influenced by methodology developed for a similar study by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967). Their study, a description of the interrelationship between an organization's environment and structural pattern to selected measures of organizational

25
performance, presents a rationale for supporting a methodological design that addresses limited objectives within specific operational realities.

The objectives were to test theoretical constructs within a functioning organization. The factors of access to industrial operations and information limited the number of organizations to be included in the sample and subsequently the use of statistical analysis. The study of school organizations, also an application of communication theory to organizational effectiveness, was faced with similar operational restrictions, as reported in Lawrence and Lorsch (1967). Consequently, the methodology of Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) influenced the development of the methodology of the school organization's study in the areas of sample size and selection, data collection, and analysis procedures.

Sample Selection

Nonprobability judgmental sampling was used to select six rural school districts for the study. Individual sample selection was based on the following considerations:

1. The need for a commitment to openness from the community education director.

2. The need for a commitment from the community education director to complete the survey instrument and participate in the interview process.

3. The requirement to have school districts that represent various levels of the community education program continuum as
explained by Wood (1979).

Six rural school districts were selected for inclusion in the sample based on the following criteria: rural character, a full-time community education director, and a commitment to community education.

Specifics on sample selected were: All school districts in the sample were rural as identified by the writer and the Center for Community Leadership Training of Western Michigan University. Five of the school districts had full-time community education directors when the data were collected. The full-time status as community education director was expected to be reestablished in the one district that did not have a full-time director at the time the data for the present study were collected.

The school organizations were selected for their commitment to community education program levels identified by Wood (1979). The initial selection was accomplished through a review of public relations brochures published by the school organizations in geographic regions from which the sample was to be drawn. The initial sample selection was reviewed and approved by expert opinion from staff members of the Western Michigan University Center for Community Leadership Training. The Center had assisted in the development of, and was continuing to support, the school organizations in which it had implemented community education in the Center's region.

Each community education director from the sample was contacted to determine his/her willingness to participate in the study and to determine the correctness of his/her published level of community
education involvement in his/her respective community education school district. Each of the initial six community education directors selected agreed to participate and were accepted for the study. Their initial replies to the correctness of the published level of community education involvement supported the initial sample selection procedures.

Pretest

The survey instrument, interview process, and data analysis procedures were pretested at Western Michigan University. Two Doctoral Fellows at the Center for Community Leadership Training participated. Both individuals had graduate training and work experience in community education.

The process was as follows: Each respondent met with the interviewer and completed the survey instrument after which the interviewer questioned the respondent to obtain amplifying data on each of the independent and dependent variables. The interviewer analyzed the data collected from the survey instrument and the interview.

The pretest pointed out that the survey instrument and the procedures of data collection and analysis were manageable and appeared to be pertinent to the objectives of the study. However, the interview process, as originally designed, proved to be too restrictive in eliciting responses related to the independent and dependent variables. The interviewer found that when the respondents were allowed to discuss the independent and dependent variables in a
loosely structured manner, as compared to a directed question-answer format as originally planned, the respondents met the purposes of the interview. The respondents verified facts and amplified both the independent and dependent variables within the less structured format. Consequently, the interviewer decided to use the less structured method for the interview process.

Data Collection

Data were collected through the use of a personally administered survey instrument followed by an interview. The data collection procedures were designed to gather information on the perception of the school organization and its relationship to its environment on the part of the community education director.

The survey instrument was designed to collect data that could be numerically analyzed. The interview was intended to: (a) gather amplifying information on the independent and dependent variables, and (b) clarify and provide amplifying information to the respondents as they completed the survey instrument.

One researcher administered all survey instruments and conducted all interviews. Completion of both the survey instrument and the interview process were accomplished at the same time in a location mutually agreed upon by the respondent and the researcher.

Specifics on Data Collection

The survey instrument was handed to the respondent with the following typed instructions:
This interview is designed to gather information relative to the relationship of the communication processes of your school organization and the level of community education program development present in your district.

Your individual responses will be anonymous and neither you or your school district will be identified in the survey report.

Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge. Should you have any questions or comments about any item on the questionnaire feel free to bring them up at any time.

After completing the survey instrument, the respondents were asked open-ended questions intended to clarify and expand on their comments made during the completion of the survey instrument as well as to provide additional data. The researcher took written notes throughout the interviewing process. A summary report was written from these notes and the researcher's impressions were added for each of the independent and dependent variables being studied. Scores were developed from the survey instrument for each variable.

The respondents were not questioned relative to the independent variable of system openness. It was believed that to do so could have led to a bias in the research due to the need to provide the respondents with background information on the development of the variables. As a composite of the three independent variables, it was believed that it could not be effectively discussed in an interview. To discuss system openness, the respondents would have had to have been briefed on the three independent variables and their relationship, thereby adding a bias.
The survey instrument (Appendix A) was designed to collect data on both the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables are system openness, cosmopolitanism of the leaders, the exchange of information between the school organization and its environment, and the internal exchange of information. The dependent variables are level of community education program development, level of commitment to the community education program, and the level of interaction between the school organization and other service providers.

Independent Variables

To operationalize the independent variables, this researcher began with a review of the literature—the results of which are reported in Chapter II of this report. Table 1 contains information on the survey instrument and the independent variables. Following is a statement of how these variables have been further operationalized for the present study.

System Openness

System openness is a composite independent variable. The score is computed from the measurement of the independent variables cosmopolitanism of the leaders, the exchange of information between the school organization and its environment, and the internal exchange of information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Topic area</th>
<th>Survey instrument number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cosmopolitanism</td>
<td>A. Participation (local)</td>
<td>9-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Participation (external to the school district)</td>
<td>4-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External exchange of information</td>
<td>A. Media channels</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Use of councils/committees</td>
<td>22-24, &amp; 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Use of other information gathering channels</td>
<td>16-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Policy toward external communication</td>
<td>20, 25, 26, &amp; 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. Perceived attitude of community to school board</td>
<td>21 &amp; 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal exchange of information</td>
<td>A. Key leaders' attitude toward staff participation</td>
<td>30-32, &amp; 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Decision-making processes (organizational)</td>
<td>33, 42-45, 49-51, &amp; 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Communication patterns (organizational)</td>
<td>35-41, 46-48, &amp; 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Leader style</td>
<td>52, 55, &amp; 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System openness</td>
<td>A. Cosmopolitanism of leaders</td>
<td>4-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. External exchange of information</td>
<td>15-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Internal exchange of information</td>
<td>30-56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cosmopolitanism of the Leaders

The key leaders of school organizations for purposes of the present study were identified as the school board members, the superintendent, and the community education director. As leaders, the extent to which they participated in and supported external organizational activities—local, regional, state, and/or national—were determined to be possible measures of cosmopolitanism. Table 1 contains the topic areas measured and the survey instrument items that pertain to each topic area. The survey instrument (Appendix A) contains the specific details of each topic area being measured.

The Exchange of Information Between the School Organization and its Environment

This variable was operationalized through data collected on the use and existence of informal communication channels, formal communication channels, organizational structures (councils and committees), commitment to these organizational structures, citizen involvement in goal setting, decision making, data gathering, and the use of one-way media sources. Table 1 contains the topic areas measured and the survey instrument items that pertain to each topic area. The survey instrument (Appendix A) contains specific details of each topic area being measured.

The Internal Exchange of Information

This variable was developed from the indicators of system openness developed from the work of Likert (cited in Sergiovanni &
Starratt, 1979) and from Wood (1979). The internal exchange of information focused on the organizational behavior of the school board, superintendent, school administrators, community education director, and school staff in key areas. Specific areas studied were adequacy and accuracy of information for decision making, involvement in decision making and goal setting, trust and confidence, control functions, and the relationship of informal communication patterns to organizational goals. Essentially, the organization is thought to be more open as the extent of involvement increases in each of these previously mentioned areas. Table 1 contains the topic areas measured and the survey instrument items that pertain to each topic area being measured. The survey instrument (Appendix A) contains the specific details of each topic area being measured.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables of community education program level, the level of commitment to the community education program and the level of interaction between the school organization and other community service providers, are developed from the work of Wood (1979). Each variable is discussed as it relates to Table 2 depicting the dependent variables, topic areas, and survey instrument number.

Community Education Program Level

Wood (1979) identified the following community education levels: K-12 schooling for youth; K-12 schooling for adults (adult basic education and high school completion); K-12 experiences for early
childhood; recreation; avocational, social, and cultural activities; subcommunity or neighborhood problems; and community-wide problems. The Minnesota State Department of Education (Minnesota Community Education, 1977) developed goals of community education similar to Wood's (1979) community education program levels. They are:

1. To increase the use of physical facilities (both school and community) in the district.

2. Develop and use an active, representative advisory council.

3. Implement an ongoing in-service education program.

4. Coordinate efforts with other agencies.

5. Develop a balanced program for all segments of the community (pre-schoolers through senior citizens) in the areas of education, recreation, cultural and civic affairs, social services, and neighborhood concerns.

6. Implement an ongoing community assessment process to determine community wants, needs, and resources. (p. 20)

The researcher in developing the dependent variable combined aspects of Wood (1979) and the Minnesota State Department of Education (Minnesota Community Education, 1977) goals under general areas of response to educational problems and concerns that can be addressed by the school organization, guiding the community members in identifying educational concerns and problems and guiding the community in identifying community concerns and problems. The specific statements are listed in Table 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Topic Area</th>
<th>Survey instrument number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community education program level</td>
<td>A. To provide educational opportunities for the K-12 youth population.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. To provide extended educational programs for adults and early childhood. (Adult basic education, general educational development, high school diploma completion)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. To provide extended activities open to all community members. (Life enrichment, recreation, culture, social, and health)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. To respond to community identified educational problems and concerns that can be addressed by the school organization.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. To guide community members in developing a system of determining and resolving a broad range of educational concerns and problems.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to community education program level</td>
<td>F. To guide community members in developing a system of determining and resolving a broad range of community concerns and problems.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. To provide educational opportunities for the K-12 youth population.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. To provide extended educational programs for adults and early childhood. (Adult basic education, general educational development, high school diploma completion)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. To provide extended activities open to all community members. (Life enrichment, recreation, culture, social, and health)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Topic area</th>
<th>System instrument number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D. To respond to community identified educational problems and concerns that can be addressed by the school organization.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. To guide community members in developing a system of determining and resolving a broad range of educational concerns and problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. To guide community members in developing a system of determining and resolving a broad range of community concerns and problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interaction between the school organization and other community service providers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction between the school organization and other community service providers</th>
<th>System instrument number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Seeks to define area of service responsibilities.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Seeks to minimize duplication of programs by sharing information on future program plans.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Seeks to control duplication of programs by sharing techniques, materials, and by combining schedules and registration.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Joins in problem identification efforts with other community groups; plans appropriate action which each agency is voluntarily committed to doing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Joins in joint powers agreements (legal contracts) with other community groups.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Extent of Commitment to the Community Education Program Levels

While the number of community education program levels in which a school organization is participating was considered pertinent to the study, the extent of involvement was also important.

The second dependent variable is a measure of involvement for those community education program levels in which the school organization is involved. Table 2 indicates the dependent variable and the survey instrument number that relates.

The Level of Interaction Between the School Organization and Other Community Service Providers

The measure of the dependent variable addressing multisystem openness was developed by this researcher based on experience and consultation with the Center for Community Leadership Training of Western Michigan University. The levels of interaction progress from the level of program discussion to the formulation of legal contracts between community groups and the school organization. Table 2 contains the specific statements and the survey instrument number that pertains.

Hypotheses

Twelve hypotheses were developed as statements of relationship between the four independent variables, the indicators of system openness, and the three dependent variables, the community education program components offered by a school organization.
The 12 hypotheses were:

1. Cosmopolitanism of the leaders is positively related to the level of development of the community education program.

2. Cosmopolitanism of the leaders is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program.

3. Cosmopolitanism of the leaders is positively related to the level of interaction between the school organization and other community service providers.

4. The exchange of information between the school organization and its environment is positively related to the level of development of the community education program.

5. The exchange of information between the school organization and its environment is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program.

6. The exchange of information between the school organization and its environment is positively related to the level of interaction between the school organization and other community service providers.

7. The internal exchange of information is positively related to the level of development of the community education program.

8. The internal exchange of information is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program.

9. The internal exchange of information is positively related to the level of interaction between the school organization and other community service providers.
10. System openness is positively related to the level of development of the community education program.

11. System openness is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program.

12. System openness is positively related to the level of interaction between the school organization and other community service providers.

Data Analysis

Indicators of system openness related to community education program components were determined by computing mean scores for each independent variable of this study (i.e., the theoretical indicators of system openness) and comparing the mean scores with the two groups of school organizations (advanced and less advanced).

The independent variables were considered indicators of system openness related to community education programs when the mean scores were higher for each variable with the advanced school organization as compared to the less advanced school organization.

The relationship between the indicators of system openness and the community education program components offered by a school district were measured as follows: a mean score was computed for each variable plotted on a graph and discussed in terms of the relationship of the independent and dependent variables. The discussion of the relationship included summary data gathered from the interview portion of the data collection.
For the independent variables of cosmopolitanism of the leaders, exchange of information between the school organization and its environment, the level of interaction between the school organization and other community service providers, and the summary variable of system openness, a mean score was computed. This score was then plotted on the X axis of a graph.

The dependent variable of community education program level was measured by a mean score computed from the number of levels each respondent identified as part of their respective school organization's community education program. This score was plotted on the Y axis of a graph.

The dependent variable of community education program level was measured by a mean score computed from the extent of support responses divided by the number of community education program levels the respondents indicated their respective school organizations were involved in.

The dependent variable level of interaction between the school organization and other community service providers was measured by a summation of the number of levels the respondents checked as representative of their school organization's interaction with other community service providers.

The hypotheses were discussed in the relationship of the independent and dependent variables to a linear regression line drawn to represent a perfect correlation. A scatter plot of the data was used to direct the discussion. The statistical data was augmented by information from the interview process.
The research methodology, while patterned after an organizational study by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), was adapted to meet the requirements of this study of school organizations. The independent variables were designed to gather data on the leaders' attitudes and behavior toward personal and community involvement. In addition, the communication patterns between the community and school and internal attitudes and communication patterns were studied. The dependent variables were designed to reflect measures of the school organization's involvement in community education program levels. The degree to which the operationalization of the variables and methodology were effective is presented in Chapter IV of this study.
CHAPTER IV

REPORT OF THE FINDINGS

Data on the relationship of system openness to the level of development of community education in selected school organizations are reported here. Two questions were asked in this study. The first was: What indicators of system openness are related to the development of community education program components offered by rural school districts? The second question asked was, if indicators of system openness do exist, is there a relationship between the indicators of system openness and the community education programs offered by rural school districts?

The findings are presented in three sections: data presentation, sample selection, and tests of hypotheses.

Data Presentation

Data were collected through the use of a survey instrument (Appendix A) and an unstructured interview. The survey instrument was designed to collect quantifiable data. The unstructured interview was used to gather amplifying data on the effectiveness of the survey instrument in measuring the independent and dependent variables.

The independent variables together with an abbreviated title, in parentheses, are listed here:
1. The level of cosmopolitanism of the leaders (cosmopolitanism of leaders).
2. The external exchange of information between the school organization and its environment (external communication).
3. The internal exchange of information (internal communication).
4. System openness (system openness).

The dependent variables were:
1. The level of development of the community education program (program level).
2. The level of commitment to the level of development of the community education program (program commitment).
3. The level of interaction between the school organization and other community service providers (interagency level).

Survey Instrument

The data collected with the survey instrument on the independent and dependent variables are presented in Tables 3 and 4, respectively. The maximum possible score for the dependent variable "program level" was 6; for the remaining independent and dependent variables, the maximum was 5.

The independent variables were the proposed indicators of system openness as discussed in Chapters II and III of this study. The mean scores presented in Table 3 reflected the extent to which proposed indicators of system openness measured system openness—the higher the mean scores the more open the system.
Table 3
Mean Scores of Communication Patterns Measured for Selected School Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School organization</th>
<th>Cosmopolitanism of the leaders</th>
<th>External exchange of information</th>
<th>Internal exchange of information</th>
<th>System openness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
Mean Scores of the Level of Involvement in Community Education for Selected School Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School organization</th>
<th>Program level</th>
<th>Program commitment</th>
<th>Interagency level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following is a list of the proposed indicators of system openness with a brief statement discussing what measurement was represented by that indicator.

1. Cosmopolitanism of the leaders—a measure of the extent to which key school organization leaders support and participate in activities external to the school organization.

2. External communication—a measure of the extent to which the school organization has and implements policies that assist community members in influencing school organizational programming.

3. Internal communication—a measure of the extent to which information flows through the school organization and the leader's role in maintaining the information flow.

4. System openness—a composite variable of the three previous independent variables.

The dependent variables were the proposed measures of a school organization's level of involvement in community education. The mean scores in Table 4 reflected the extent of involvement in community education with the higher mean scores indicating higher levels of involvement.

The following is a list of the proposed measures of a school organization's level of involvement in community education with a brief descriptor:

1. Program level—a measure of a school organization's involvement in community education.

2. Program commitment—a measure of a school organization's commitment to the program levels that the individual organization is
participating in.

3. Interagency level--a measure of a school organization's involvement in establishing and maintaining communication channels and programming with other community service providers.

A more complete discussion of these independent and dependent variables was contained in Chapter III and again later in this study. The data contained in Tables 3 and 4 were used to address the two questions of the present study. The first question of the study, what, if any, are the indicators of system openness related to the development of community education program components offered by rural school districts? was addressed by comparing the mean score of the independent and dependent variables. That is, the mean score of each independent variable was compared to the advanced and less advanced school organizations. The school organizations were placed in the advanced or less advanced category based on the individual organization's mean score of the dependent variable "program commitment." Essentially, the independent variable was thought to be an indicator of system openness when the mean score of that independent variable was higher for the advanced school organization than the less advanced.

The second question of this study, if indicators of system openness do exist, is there a relationship between the indicators of system openness and the community education programs offered by rural school districts? was addressed by a presentation and discussion of a scatter plot and linear regression line computed between independent and dependent variables from the mean scores contained
in Tables 3 and 4. The hypothesis was that as the mean score on the independent variable increased there would be a corresponding increase in the mean score of the dependent variable. Further discussion and the presentation of data relative to the two questions were contained in the Tests of the Hypotheses section of this chapter.

The data presented in Tables 3 and 4 were mean scores computed for each independent and dependent variable listed by school organization. The difference in mean scores of the independent variables appeared to reflect varying levels of system openness among school organizations. The only difference in mean scores on the dependent variables was on the "program commitment" variable. There is further discussion of the measurements of the variables in the Unstructured Interview section of this report.

**Unstructured Interview**

The unstructured interview was intended to provide amplification of the data collected through the use of the survey instrument. Consequently, a summary of information obtained during the interviews was presented in relationship to the numerical data from Tables 3 and 4 for each variable.

**Independent variables.** The independent variables were the proposed indicators of system openness, previously discussed in Chapters II and III. The extent of openness of a school organization, on each independent variable, was measured by computing a mean score from ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 representing the
extent of openness.

Mean scores on "cosmopolitanism of leaders" ranged from 2.45 to 4.27 (Table 3) suggesting varying levels of community involvement on the part of the school board members, superintendent, and the community education director, the school organization's key leaders.

The respondents, in the interview, indicated the importance of community involvement on the part of these key leaders to the development of community education. This involvement appeared to be viewed as part of the key leaders' roles in developing and maintaining communication channels with the community. The purpose of such involvement, as stated by the respondents, was to gain knowledge of the community for better serving the community as well as to gain support for the school organization.

Those leaders who appeared to be involved solely to satisfy job requirements were viewed as counter productive to the development of community education since their participation was not perceived as genuine.

Mean scores on the variable "external communication" ranged from 2.73 to 4.13 (Table 3). The respondents, during the interviews, supported, through examples, a wide range of external communication patterns. Respondents from school organizations with lower scores tended to provide examples of a "telling" approach in which conventional media were designed to pass information from the school organization to the community (i.e., newspapers, radio, and brochures). The respondents from the school organizations with higher scores on "external communications" tended to point out examples of information
exchange designed to communicate between the school organization and the community (i.e., public hearings, survey research, and neighborhood meetings), in addition to the channels used by the school organizations with lower mean scores.

Mean scores on "internal communication" ranged from 3.40 to 4.10 (Table 3). The respondents, in addressing the school organization's level of "internal communication," perceived the community education program components as essentially a program separate from the school organization. As such, the information flow between other subsystems was not viewed as important to "program commitment."

The respondents, during the interview, indicated that the following aspects of community education tended to place it outside the mainstream of the school organization: the adult client, funding sources, instructors, and programming hours. These factors, as perceived by the respondents, essentially dictated the development of policies that, while established by the school board, were somewhat different than the policies for the K-12 program. As such, the level of "internal communication" was not reported as critical to the success of community education.

However, most of the respondents discussed the necessity of communicating with members of the school organization who had an effect on the successful operation of community education. The members identified were the school board, superintendent, administrators, teachers, and support staff. Five of the six respondents indicated they believed community education was a philosophy to be adopted by the school organization. They went on to state that the integration
of the philosophy of community education into the policies of the school organization was, to each respondent, a personal goal.

Mean scores on the composite variable "system openness," ranged from 3.20 to 3.96 (Table 3). The respondents were not questioned on this variable in the interview since their rationale and responses could have created a bias in other measures in the study.

Dependent variables. There were three dependent variables measuring the school organization's involvement in community education. The level of a school organization's "program commitment" and "inter-agency level" was measured by computing a mean score from ratings on a scale from 1 to 5. A score of 5 would represent the highest level. A school organization's "program level" was measured by computing a mean score from ratings on a scale from 1 to 6. A mean score of 6 would represent the highest level of involvement. The school organizations' mean scores ranged from 4 to 6 on "program level" (Table 4). The respondents expressed difficulty in addressing this variable during the interview. They indicated that, while they might currently be performing or have performed in the past at each of the program levels being measured, the extent of involvement varied over time. Consequently, five of the six respondents indicated maximum involvement in community education program levels while stating they were not consistently performing at these levels.

The mean scores for the school organizations ranged from 2.83 to 4.83 on the measurement of "program commitment" as computed from the data gathered by the survey instrument. The respondents in the
interview indicated that the measurement of this variable appeared to reflect their school organizations' levels of development and involvement in community education.

The mean scores of the variable "interagency level" ranged from 2 to 5 (Table 4). One school organization had a mean score of 2 and the other five had mean scores of 5. The respondents, during the interview, indicated that this variable as measured was a difficult one in which to respond. Problems included the failure of the survey instrument to address the degree of involvement in time, resource allocation, types of interaction, and the willingness of the other community service providers to become involved with the school organization.

Summary

A review of the data presented in Tables 3 and 4, in view of the respondents' reactions in interviews, appears to indicate:

1. The survey instrument adequately measured the following independent variables: (a) cosmopolitanism of the leaders, (b) the level of exchange of information between the school organization and its environment, (c) the internal exchange of information, and (d) system openness.

2. The survey instrument adequately measured the following dependent variables: the level of commitment to level of development of the community education program.

3. The survey instrument did not appear to adequately measure these dependent variables: (a) the level of development of the
community education program and (b) the level of interaction between the school organization and other community service providers.

Further discussion of the independent and dependent variables relative to the two research questions of the study follows later in this chapter.

Sample Selection

The school organizations chosen for this study were selected using the judgmental sampling technique. The intention was to select three school organizations which, according to community education theory, would reflect advanced stages of development and three that would be less advanced. The terms advanced and less advanced were not intended to reflect positive or negative characteristics but rather to reflect stages of development. The process resulted in the selection of six school organizations which ranged from 2.83 to 4.83 out of a maximum score of 5.00 on the "program commitment" variable.

The school organizations were divided into two groups, less advanced and advanced, based on their respective "program commitment" scores. Group A, the less advanced group, consists of School Organizations 1, 2, and 3, initially selected as the less advanced. The respective mean scores for Group A were 2.83, 3.50, and 3.83 (Table 4). Group B, the advanced group, consists of School Organizations 4, 5, and 6, initially selected as the advanced. The respective mean scores for Group B were 3.83, 4.66, and 4.83 (Table 4). The two School Organizations 3 and 4, with mean scores of 3.83 were
placed in Group A or B based on the individual scores on the levels of commitment to the school organization's involvement in guiding the community. School Organization 4 had a higher score indicating it was more advanced. Additionally, the mean scores of School Organizations 3 and 4 as measured on the dependent variable "interagency level" were considered. School Organization 4 again had a higher score than School Organization 3. Consequently, School Organization 4 was placed in the advanced group.

Summary

The sampling procedure appears to have provided school organizations that represent both ends of the "program commitment" scale as measured by the survey instrument. The school organizations were grouped by their respective scores suggesting the effectiveness of the judgmental selection process. School Organizations 1, 2, and 3 were members of Group A representing the less advanced school organizations. School Organizations 4, 5, and 6 were members of Group B representing the advanced school organizations.

Tests of the Hypotheses

Indicators of System Openness

The first question addressed in the present study was: What indicators of system openness are related to the development of community education program components offered by a rural school district? Chapter II provided theoretical and empirical information
relative to this question. Chapter III dealt with measurement of the variables.

The mean scores of the proposed indicators of system openness (cosmopolitanism of the leaders, external communication, internal communication, and system openness) appeared to vary between school organizations, suggesting that the survey instrument discriminates.

Table 5 presented the mean scores of the independent variables for the advanced and the less advanced school organizations. A review of the data contained in Table 5 suggests that the independent variables, "cosmopolitanism of the leaders," "external communication," and "system openness," appear to have been related to the level of community education. The mean score for each of the three variables was higher for the advanced school organizations than for the less advanced. The variable "internal communication" does not appear to be related to level of community education since the advanced school organizations had a lower mean score (3.61) than the less advanced school organizations (3.73).

Relationship of System Openness to Community Education Development

The second question of this study concerned the relationship of indicators of system openness to the community education programs offered by a rural school district. This question was addressed through a discussion of 12 hypotheses developed as statements of relationship between the four independent variables and the three dependent variables. The independent variables were: cosmopolitanism
Table 5
A Comparison of Advanced and Less Advanced School Organizations' Mean Scores on Selected Organizational Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cosmopolitanism of the leaders</th>
<th>External communication</th>
<th>Internal communication</th>
<th>System openness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced school organizations</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less advanced school organizations</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of the leaders, the exchange of information between the school organization and its environment, the internal exchange of information, and system openness. The dependent variables were: the level of development to the community education program, the level of commitment to the community education program, and the level of interaction between the school organization and other community service providers.

The 12 hypotheses were:

1. Cosmopolitanism of the leaders is positively related to the level of development of the community education program.

2. Cosmopolitanism of the leaders is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program level.

3. Cosmopolitanism of the leaders is positively related to the level of interaction between the school organization and other

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
community service providers.

4. The exchange of information between the school organization and its environment is positively related to the level of development of the community education program.

5. The exchange of information between the school organization and its environment is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program level.

6. The exchange of information between the school organization and its environment is positively related to the level of interaction between the school organization and other community service providers.

7. The internal exchange of information is positively related to the level of development of the community education program.

8. The internal exchange of information is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program level.

9. The internal exchange of information is positively related to the level of interaction between the school organization and other community service providers.

10. System openness is positively related to the level of development of the community education program.

11. System openness is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program level.

12. System openness is positively related to the level of interaction between the school organization and other community service providers.
The following discussion is a recapitulation of the results of
the data collection process.

As shown in the previous section, the measurement of the inde­
dendent variables, the proposed indicators of system openness,
appears to have been successful. That is, the mean scores on each
of the variables differentiated between the school organizations.
As such, the following independent variables were presented as indi­
cators of a system's openness:

1. Cosmopolitanism of the leaders.
2. The exchange of information between the school organization
   and its environment.
3. The internal exchange of information.
4. System openness (the sum of 1, 2, and 3).

The measurement of the dependent variable "the level of commit­
mment to the community education program," appears successful. That
is, the mean score discriminated between the school organizations,
and the respondents indicated the scores reflected their school
organization's respective level of commitment to community educa­
tion.

The measurement of the dependent variables "the level of devel­
opment of the community education program" and the "level of inter­
action between the school organization and other community service
providers" did not appear to be adequate for hypothesis analysis.
That is, the mean scores for the school organizations clustered at
the top of the scale (Table 4). Additionally, the respondents indi­
cated the categories, as listed in the survey instrument, did not
reflect the school organizations' level of involvement in community education adequately. As such, the hypotheses developed from these variables cannot be discussed in this study. The following is a discussion of the hypotheses developed as statements of relationship between the independent variables, the four indicators of a system's openness, and the dependent variable, the level of commitment to the community education program level.

Hypothesis 1

This hypothesis could not be tested due to the lack of discrimination in the measurement of "program level."

Hypothesis 2

Cosmopolitanism of the leaders is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program.

The scatter plot shown in Figure 2 suggests that as the score on one variable increases the score on the other may also increase. A slope of .48 with a "y" intercept of 2.18, as computed by linear regression, indicates that as the scores increase for one of the variables there is a tendency for the scores to increase for the other. The interviewer, based on the statements from the respondents, developed a perception that the leaders of the advanced school organizations were more active and concerned about outside involvement than the leaders of the less advanced, suggesting the existence of a tendency for the score on one variable to increase as the score on the other increases.
The respondents of the advanced school organizations indicated that the superintendents sought to increase school board member involvement in outside activities. The superintendents initiated outside involvement by personal encouragement, policy, and budget recommendations that would support involvement. The respondents from the less advanced school organizations stated that school board and administrative staff involvement was essentially left to individual initiative.

The involvement or attempted involvement of the key leaders of the advanced school organizations in the community and regional concerns followed a planned approach while in the less advanced school organizations this involvement tended to be based on personal initiative. For example, in one of the less advanced school organizations, the community education director was deeply involved while the
superintendent was involved only when required (i.e., making a presentation). In addition, school board members tended to withdraw from the community due to pressure brought on them by budget decisions they had made that were dividing the community. The withdrawing on the part of the superintendent and school board, according to the respondent, was responsible for increasing pressure by special interest groups at school board meetings. The tension was heightened to the point where the respondent predicted the superintendent would be fired.

Hypothesis 3

This hypothesis could not be tested due to the lack of discrimination in the measurement of "interagency level."

Hypothesis 4

This hypothesis could not be tested due to the lack of discrimination in the measurement of "program level."

Hypothesis 5

The exchange of information between the school organization and its environment is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program.

A review of the scatter plot shown in Figure 3 suggests that as the score increases on one variable the score on the other may also increase. The slope of .58 with a "y" intercept of 1.94, computed by linear regression, indicates that as a score increases for one of
the variables there is a tendency for the score to increase for the
other. As previously discussed, the respondents of the advanced
school organizations tended to provide examples of more extensive
use of a greater variety of communication channels than the less
advanced.

Figure 3
The Relationship of the Exchange of Information Between
the School Organization and Its Environment to the
Level of Commitment to the Community Education
Program (Program Commitment)

The respondents of the advanced school organizations indicated
they consistently used the newspaper, radio, television, public
hearings, survey research, and neighborhood meetings to exchange
information with the community. On the other hand, the respondents
of the less advanced school organizations indicated they consist­
tently used the newspaper, radio, brochures, or flyers to communicate
with the community and rarely, if ever, used public hearings, survey
research, or neighborhood meetings to exchange information with the
community. Essentially, the advanced school organizations attempted to both provide information to, and solicit from, the local community. The less advanced school organizations tended to provide information, soliciting only when necessary (i.e., when required by public statute).

Additionally, the subjects on which information was exchanged varied between the advanced and less advanced school organizations. For example, the advanced school organizations provided and sought information on a broad range of community concerns: youth problems, delinquency, K-12 programs, sex education, and school tax bonds, in addition to adult education and leisure programs. The less advanced school organizations tended to pass along information concerning professionally designed adult education and leisure programs. Consequently the interviews suggested that a positive relationship may exist between the exchange of information and program commitment.

Hypothesis 6

This hypothesis could not be tested due to the lack of discrimination in the measurement of "interagency level."

Hypothesis 7

This hypothesis could not be tested due to the lack of discrimination in the measurement of "program level."
Hypothesis 8

The internal exchange of information is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education programs.

A review of the scatter plot shown in Figure 4 suggests that as the score on one of the variables increases, the score on the other decreases. The slope of -.86 with a "y" intercept of 7.09, as computed by linear regression, indicates that as a score increases for one of the variables the score on the other may decrease. This finding is the opposite of the hypothesis.

![Internal Exchange of Information](image)

**Figure 4**
The Relationship of the Internal Exchange of Information to the Level of Commitment to the Community Education Program (Program Commitment)

The respondents, during the interview, stated that community education was a separate program of the school organization. Further, they indicated that community education was providing a
community service that was in addition to the K-12 program. As such, the internal communications patterns of the school organization did not necessarily affect them. The community educators, rather than relying solely on the internal communications channels, communicated directly to the individuals with whom they needed to coordinate efforts. For example, when using facilities, they met with the principals and teachers involved. When custodial help was needed, they met with the custodians who would be doing the work. Additionally, when policy decisions were involved, they would discuss the policies with the administrative team, superintendent, and school board. Essentially, the community educators worked with the individuals of the organization who they believed should be informed while working within school policy.

The primary difference in internal communication between the advanced school organizations and the less advanced school organizations, as discussed by the respondents, was the superintendents' goals. The superintendents of the advanced school organizations were characterized as strong leaders who stressed open communication with the community. However, the superintendents did not have goals stressing open communication in the school organization. All had been in their respective positions less than 5 years. In contrast the superintendents of the less advanced school organizations did not, according to the respondents, have goals stressing open communication with the community. Additionally, the superintendents did not have goals stressing open communication in the school organization. Two of the three had held their positions in excess of 10
years, one less than 5 years.

None of the school organizations had low scores, less than 3.00, as measured by the survey instrument on the internal communications variable. No specific difference was found between the advanced school organizations and the less advanced school organizations based on a review of the individual items of the survey instruments.

**Hypothesis 9**

This hypothesis could not be tested due to the lack of discrimination in the measurement of "interagency level."

**Hypothesis 10**

This hypothesis could not be tested due to the lack of discrimination in the measurement of "program level."

**Hypothesis 11**

System openness is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program.

A review of the scatter plot shown in Figure 5 suggests that as the score on one variable increases the score on the other will also increase. The slope of 1.24 with a "y" intercept of .50, as computed by linear regression, indicates that as the score on one variable increases there is a tendency for the score on the other to increase also. As previously discussed in this chapter, system openness was not addressed during the interview due to the possibility of developing a bias by explaining this variable. Therefore, the
respondents did not provide information that would assist in the discussion of this hypothesis.

Figure 5

The Relationship Between System Openness and the Level of Commitment to the Community Education Program (Program Commitment)

Hypothesis 12

This hypothesis could not be tested due to the lack of discrimination in the measurement of "interagency level."

Analysis of Data Summary

The best indicators of a system's openness appear to be: cosmopolitanism of the leaders, the exchange of information between the school organization and its environment, and system openness. The internal exchange of information is the one indicator of system openness that does not appear to be related to the development of community education as measured by the survey instrument.
The relationship between the indicators of system openness to the community education program components offered by a school district was addressed through the analysis of 12 hypotheses.

The data suggest there is a tendency for the score on one variable to increase as the score on the other increases for the following hypotheses:

2. Cosmopolitanism of the leaders is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program.

5. The exchange of information between the school organization and other community service providers is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program level.

11. System openness is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program level.

The data suggest there is a tendency for the score on one variable to decrease as the other increases for the following hypothesis:

8. The internal exchange of information is positively related to the level of commitment to the community education program.

As stated, this hypothesis does not appear to be confirmed since it must be reworded to reflect a negative relationship between the variables.
CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study was designed to gather base line data on two questions: What, if any, are the indicators of system openness that are related to community education program components offered by a school district? Secondly, is there a relationship between the indicators of system openness and the community education program components offered by a school district?

The implications and recommendations from the study are discussed through a review of the methodology, data presentation, and analysis. The discussion is in two parts, implications for community education, and recommendations for further research.

Implications for Community Education

This study, a pilot study, provides information for discussion and further research. In doing so, it provides information on issues that are relevant to the community educator. The issues and discussion are presented relative to the hypotheses that the data suggest as having the most relevance to the community educator.

Cosmopolitanism of the leaders has a tendency to be higher in those school organizations that also have higher scores on the level of commitment to the community education program level as perceived by the community educator. That is, the extent to which the leadership of the school district attends professional meetings,
conferences and workshops outside the school district, attends local meetings, and is supported in such activity by policies which encourage attendance, appears to impact, positively, on the development of the level of commitment to community education within the school district. Further, the extent to which the school district's leadership participates voluntarily in those activities described above as opposed to participating as a matter of duty, would appear to be indicative of cosmopolitanism.

Respondents in the present study indicated during the follow-up interviews that they perceived the cosmopolitanism of superintendents and/or assistant superintendents rather than cosmopolitanism of other leaders within the organization as related most directly to the commitment to community education. Such a response is to be expected inasmuch as it is the central office personnel who most often represent the school district outside the local area and who influence board of education policy and commitment most directly.

Writings regarding the relationship between cosmopolitanism and commitment to community education among writers in the field of community education, appear to confirm the findings of the present study. Wood (1979) and Schmitt (1979) present the school organization as an open system. Wood (1979) points out that community education programs, an output of the school organization, appears to be a function of system openness. Rogers and Rogers (1976) present cosmopolitanism of the leaders as a measure of system openness. Consequently, it would seem to follow that perceived cosmopolitanism of
the leaders would likely be related to higher levels of community education programming. Findings from the present study tend to confirm the relationship between perceived cosmopolitanism among leaders and higher levels of community education programming.

Further, findings from the present study regarding the relationship between cosmopolitanism and program commitment would seem to indicate that the community education director who is interested in securing commitment to the community education concept must be particularly concerned with the cosmopolitanism of the superintendent and/or assistant superintendent.

The exchange of information between the school organization and its environment has a tendency to be higher in those school organizations that have higher scores on the level of program commitment than in those with lower scores as perceived by the community education director. That is, the extent to which the school organization uses a variety of communication channels to distribute and collect information and applies the information in decision making with regard to setting policy and developing programs would appear to influence the level of "program commitment."

As previously discussed, the less advanced school organizations tended to use one way communication channels such as newspaper, radio, and brochures. The advanced school organizations, in addition to the one way communication channels, used two way communication channels such as public hearings, survey research, and neighborhood meetings.
The literature regarding the relationship of the exchange of information between the school organization and its environment appears to confirm the findings of the present study. The school organization has been presented as an open system that develops programs to meet environmental needs (Hartley & Miskel, 1973; Immegart & Pilecki, 1973; Mazmanian, 1977; Schmitt & Weaver, 1979). The exchange of information between an organization and its environment has been presented as a measure of system openness. Essentially, the higher the exchange of information the more open the system (Rogers & Rogers, 1976). Wood (1979) suggests that the more open the school organization the higher the levels of community education programs that will be developed in that organization. The present study tends to confirm findings of Rogers and Rogers (1976) as well as of Wood (1979) regarding the relationship between system openness and program level.

Findings from the present study regarding the exchange of information between the school organization and its environment would seem to indicate that the community education director seeking to increase the commitment to community education should be interested in developing a broad range of communication channels based on assessment of purpose and receptiveness and willingness of the community members to share information. Additionally, the community education director may have to structure the events to maximize community member participation based on the members' skills and/or desires.
The internal exchange of information has a tendency to be higher in those school organizations that have lower scores on the level of commitment to community education programs as perceived by the community education director. That is, the extent to which accurate information is sought and shared between the superintendent, administrators, and staff within the organization indicates a higher internal exchange of information, but in the present study appears to negatively impact on the commitment to community education programs. It seems that one would expect the level of information exchange within the organization to impact the level of program commitment in the same way that external communication would impact it, that is, positively. However, such was not the case. The respondents, in discussing their respective programs, indicated that community education, as implemented in their districts, was essentially a separate subsystem relying primarily upon the support of the superintendent and school board. Hence, communication among other subsystems within the school organization was not considered essential to "program commitment." The respondents perceived the level of communication between community education and key leaders as quite high; while at the same time they viewed the internal level of communications between the key leaders and the other subsystems as quite low.

Possible explanations of the negative relationship are:

1. A misperception on the part of the community education director on the level of communication between the key leaders and the various subsystems of the school organizations, including

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
community education.

2. The survey instrument, in measuring the total organization, assumes community education communications exchanges with the community to be the same as that for the K-12 system which may not be the case.

Findings regarding the relationship between the internal exchange of information and the commitment to community education program level appear not to confirm the results of the present study. The literature suggests that an efficient, effective flow of internal communications is necessary to the successful development and implementation of programs that are designed to meet environmental needs (Goldhaber, 1974; Immegart & Pilecki, 1973; Katz & Kahn, 1966, Rogers & Rogers, 1976). With respect to the school organization, the efficient-effective internal communication flow is necessary to the development of higher levels of community education programs (Schmitt & Weaver, 1979). Findings of the present study do not indicate a positive relationship between internal communication and program level. In fact, findings of the present study regarding the internal exchange of information would seem to indicate that the community education director seeking to increase commitment to community education program level would assess the level of support of the school board, superintendent, and other administrators for change prior to taking action but need be less concerned with the other subsystems of the school organization. That is not to say the teaching and support staff of the organization are to be considered nonessential to the development of community education.
System openness, as measured in the present study, had a tendency to be higher in those school organizations that had higher scores on the level of commitment to community education program level as perceived by the community education director. That is, the extent to which the cosmopolitanism of the leaders and the external communication flow was high and the internal exchange of information was low, respondents in the present study indicated that commitment to community education was high. The respondents were not questioned per se, concerning the relationships between openness and program level because to do so might have biased the study. Additionally, a review of the literature revealed no specific studies addressing the three variables used in the present study in relationship to commitment to community education program development. The literature review does suggest the existence of a relationship between an organization's openness and its effectiveness in meeting environmental requirements (Goldhaber, 1974, Immegart & Pilecki, 1973; Katz & Kahn, 1966). Several writers in the field of community education suggest that as a school organization increases its level of openness, higher levels of community education programming will be possible (Schmitt & Weaver, 1979). The individual measures of system openness, as previously discussed, are likely to be present in an organization to some degree. That is, the leaders of a school organization generally exhibit some degree of cosmopolitanism. The school organization would likely exhibit some degree of information exchange with its environment and some level of internal communication. Consequently, these three measures of system
openness were combined to provide one measure of system openness.

The findings of this study would seem to indicate that the community education director seeking to increase the level of community education programming would assess the level of cosmopolitanism of the leaders, the external exchange of information, and the internal exchange of information prior to implementing change. Whereas the community education director should probably give consideration to all three factors impacting the level of commitment in the present study, no recommendations regarding the relative impact of one variable over another is possible based upon results from the present study.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following is a list of suggested modifications to the research methodology of this study:

1. Develop a more comprehensive measure of community education program development. The measure developed and used in the present study did not appear to discriminate among the school organizations.

2. Develop a more comprehensive measure of the level of interaction between the school organization and other community service providers. The measure developed and used in the present study did not appear to discriminate among the school organizations.

3. Develop a structured interview designed to gather specific data on the independent and dependent variables. The unstructured interview used in the present study did not provide amplifying information on all aspects of the study.
4. Collect data from multiple sources in the school organization (school board members, superintendent, administrative, teaching, and support staff). The present study was based on the perception of the community education director which may well have biased the results.

5. Develop a measure of the level of integration of community education and the K-12 program. The present study did not address this issue. By addressing this issue insight may be gained with respect to the apparent tendency towards a negative relationship between internal communication and program commitment.

6. Develop a broader measure of cosmopolitanism of the leaders to include a measure of attitude toward involvement in the community. The present study did not address this directly and in doing so may have biased the results by basing this variable on participation levels and policy statements.

7. Develop a more definitive measure of the receptivity to new ideas on the part of the key leaders. The present study in not addressing this as a measure of cosmopolitanism assumed that through participation and policy development the key leaders are demonstrating receptivity to new ideas.

8. Develop a measure of the school organization's environment. The present study addressed the environment only through the aspect of exchange with the environment; there are many other possible measures of environment within the organization which would be of concern to developers of community education programs.
REFERENCES


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
APPENDIX A

Survey Instrument
This interview is designed to gather information relative to the relationship of the communication processes of your school organization and the level of community education present in your district.

Your individual responses will be anonymous and neither you nor your school district will be identified in the report.

Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge. Should you have any questions or comments about any item on the questionnaire feel free to bring them up at any time.
1. Please check, in the box, those statements you believe represent your school organization's currently accepted mission:

☐ A. To provide educational opportunities for the K-12 youth population.

☐ B. To provide extended educational programs for adults and early childhood. (adult basic education, general educational development, high school diploma completion)

☐ C. To provide extended activities open to all community members. (life enrichment, recreation, culture, social, and health)

☐ D. To respond to community identified educational problems and concerns that can be addressed by the school organization.

☐ E. To guide community members in developing a system of determining and resolving a broad range of educational concerns and problems.

☐ F. To guide community members in developing a system of determining and resolving a broad range of community concerns and problems.

2. For each of the above statements that you have checked please circle the number that represents your perception of the school organization's commitment to support that mission statement.

A. To provide educational opportunities for the K-12 youth population.

No Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Great Extent

B. To provide extended educational programs for adults and early childhood. (adult basic education, general educational development, high school diploma completion)

No Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Great Extent

C. To provide extended activities open to all community members. (life enrichment, recreation, culture, social, and health)

No Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Great Extent
D. To respond to community identified educational problems and concerns that can be addressed by the school organization.

   No       Great
   Extent  1  2  3  4  5  Extent

E. To guide community members in developing a system of determining and resolving a broad range of educational concerns and problems.

   No       Great
   Extent  1  2  3  4  5  Extent

F. To guide community members in developing a system of determining and resolving a broad range of community concerns and problems.

   No       Great
   Extent  1  2  3  4  5  Extent

3. Please check, in the box, those statements you believe represent your school organization's position on working with other agencies.

☐ A. Seeks to define area of service responsibilities.

☐ B. Seeks to minimize duplication of programs by sharing information on future program plans.

☐ C. Seeks to control duplication of programs by sharing techniques, materials, and by combining schedules and registration.

☐ D. Joins in problem identification efforts with other community groups; plans appropriate action which each agency is voluntarily committed to doing.

☐ E. Joins in joint powers agreements (legal contracts) with other community groups.

For each of the following questions please circle the number that represents your perception of what exists.

4. To what extent does the superintendent attend regional, state, or national meetings/conferences? (MASA, AASA)

   No       Great
   Extent  1  2  3  4  5  Extent
5. To what extent do school board members attend regional, state, or national meetings/conferences? (NSBA, MSBA, or County SBA)

    No  Great
    Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

6. To what extent do you attend regional, state, or national meetings/conferences? (MCEA, NCEA)

    Great  No
    Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

7. To what extent does the school organization's policy support your attendance at regional, state, or national meetings/conferences? (MCEA, NCEA)

    Great  No
    Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

8. To what extent does the school organization provide funding to support your attendance at regional, state, or national meetings/conferences? (MCEA, NCEA)

    No  Great
    Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

9. To what extent does the superintendent participate in local organizations? (church groups, Kiwanis, Rotary, League of Women Voters, etc.)

    No  Great
    Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

10. To what extent do the school board members participate in local organizations? (church groups, Kiwanis, Rotary, League of Women Voters, etc.)

    Great  No
    Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

11. To what extent do you participate in local organizations? (church groups, Kiwanis, Rotary, League of Women Voters, etc.)

    No  Great
    Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent
12. To what extent is the superintendent's participation in local organizations job related? (church groups, Kiwanis, Rotary, League of Women Voters, etc.)

Great No
Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

13. To what extent is the school board members' participation in local organizations school position related? (church groups, Kiwanis, Rotary, League of Women Voters, etc.)

Great No
Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

14. To what extent is your participation in local organizations job related? (church groups, Kiwanis, Rotary, League of Women Voters, etc.)

No Great
Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

15. To what extent does the school organization use commercial media (newspaper, radio, and television) to inform community members?

Great No
Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

16. To what extent do the school administrators use public appearances (speeches, presentations) to inform community members?

No Great
Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

17. To what extent does the school organization use public hearings to communicate with community members?

Great No
Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

18. To what extent are the school administrators available for discussions with community members?

No Great
Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

19. To what extent does the school organization use community analysis or survey research to determine community members' concerns?

No Great
Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent
20. To what extent does the school organization attempt to communi-
cate with all community members?

Great
No
Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

21. To what extent do community members attempt to provide informa-
tion to the school board?

Great No
Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

22. To what extent does the school organization rely on advisory
councils, ad hoc committees, or study groups to provide them
with information?

No Great
Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

23. To what extent do the school administrators chair the school
organization's advisory councils, ad hoc committees, or study
groups?

No Great
Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

24. To what extent are the school organization's advisory council,
ad hoc committee, and study group members provided with in-
service?

No Great
Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

25. To what extent do the school administrators provide community
members with opportunities to share ideas/concerns on school
related issues?

Great No
Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

26. To what extent is membership on advisory councils, ad hoc
committees, and study groups open to all community members?

No Great
Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

27. To what extent do citizen groups attend school board meetings?

No Great
Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent
28. To what extent do community members influence the school board in its decision making?

Great No
Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

29. To what extent does the school board establish citizen groups to provide information for school board decision making?

Great No
Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

30. To what extent does the superintendent trust and have confidence in the school organization's administrators?

No Great
Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

31. To what extent do the administrators trust and have confidence in the superintendent?

No Great
Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

32. To what extent does the superintendent display supportive behavior towards others?

Great No
Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

33. To what extent does the superintendent actively seek and use the administrators' ideas?

Great No
Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

34. To what extent are you satisfied with organizational membership?

No Great
Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

35. To what extent is communication aimed, primarily, at achieving organizational objectives?

No Great
Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent
36. To what extent does the superintendent willingly share information with the administrators of the school organization?

No | Great
---|---
Extent | 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

37. To what extent is the superintendent's information accepted by the administrators?

Great | No
---|---
Extent | 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

38. To what extent is the communication from the staff and administrators to the superintendent adequate?

No | Great
---|---
Extent | 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

39. To what extent is the communication from the staff and administrators to the superintendent accurate?

No | Great
---|---
Extent | 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

40. To what extent is the communication between the administrators adequate?

Great | No
---|---
Extent | 5 4 3 2 1 Extent

41. To what extent is the communication between the administrators accurate?

No | Great
---|---
Extent | 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

42. To what extent is cooperative teamwork present among the administrators?

No | Great
---|---
Extent | 1 2 3 4 5 Extent

43. To what extent can the administrators influence the goals, methods, and activities of their units?

No | Great
---|---
Extent | 1 2 3 4 5 Extent
44. To what extent can the school board influence the goals, methods, and activities of the school organization?

No  Great
Extent  1  2  3  4  5  Extent

45. To what extent does an effective structure exist to enable one part of the organization to exert influence over the others? (administrative team)

Great  No
Extent  5  4  3  2  1  Extent

46. To what extent is the information available at the place where the decisions are made?

No  Great
Extent  1  2  3  4  5  Extent

47. To what extent is the school board aware of problems at lower levels of the organization?

No  Great
Extent  1  2  3  4  5  Extent

48. To what extent is the superintendent aware of problems at lower levels of the organization?

Great  No
Extent  5  4  3  2  1  Extent

49. To what extent is technical and professional knowledge used in decision making?

Great  No
Extent  5  4  3  2  1  Extent

50. To what extent is decision making based on internal group patterns?

No  Great
Extent  1  2  3  4  5  Extent

51. To what extent are the organizational goals set by internal group participation?

No  Great
Extent  1  2  3  4  5  Extent
52. To what extent are the control and review functions concentrated at the superintendent's level?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53. To what extent is there an informal organization present?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54. To what extent is the informal organization supporting the goals of the school organization?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extent 5 4 3 2 1 Extent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

55. To what extent are the control functions of the school organization punitive in nature?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

56. To what extent are the control functions of the school organization supportive in nature?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extent 1 2 3 4 5 Extent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Wolfe, A. E. Open systems approach: Can it work for public school organizations? (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 119 346)
