

**The Metaphors of Academic Administrators and Their Relationship
to Administrative Behaviour: An Exploratory Study**

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ABSTRACT

The assumption that a relationship exists between the metaphors of administrators and administrative behaviour occurs frequently in the literature of educational administration, but is one which appears to have been rarely researched. This study found no evidence of a systematic relationship between the metaphors of administrators and administrative behaviour.

The problem which the study addressed was one of clarifying the nature of the relationship between the metaphors of administrators and administrative behaviour. The purpose of the study was to extend understanding of the role or function of metaphor in organisational analysis through an examination of the relationship between the metaphors used by administrators and a selected area of administrative behaviour.

The setting in which the research was carried out is an institution of higher education, the subjects of the study being eighteen academic administrators from three teaching schools. The study comprised two major dimensions. One dimension involved the identification of the metaphors for organisation and administration used by the academic administrators. The second dimension of the study was concerned with a selected aspect of administrative behaviour, namely, the administrative arrangements used for decision-making. The administrative arrangements examined were those that were used by the academic administrators for the making of decisions about the introduction of masters' degree programmes.

Of the existing theoretical perspectives in organisational science, the cultural perspective was identified as the most relevant to the study's problem. Whilst there are different approaches to the study of culture in organisational settings, the approach favoured in this study has its roots in the thinking of Geertz and Goodenough, theorists who place particular emphasis on the role of symbols in the shaping of human behaviour.

ABSTRACT (continued)

The study was exploratory in nature and a parallel, concurrent case study approach was adopted for the purpose of examining the relationships between the metaphors of the administrators and the administrative arrangements used. Data were collected using the sequential mode of data collection (and analysis). The primary tool of data collection was the semi-structured interview. This method was triangulated, however, with document analysis and meeting observations providing complementary techniques of data collection.

In each of the three cases a wide range of metaphors were identified. Comparison of the metaphors used by each group of administrators revealed a similar pattern of metaphorical usage. Comparison of the administrative arrangements used by each group of administrators revealed both similarities and differences. When the identified relationships between metaphors and administrative arrangements in each of the three cases were compared, it was clear that there was no systematic way in which the metaphors were related to the behaviour.

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