THE SIX CRITICAL SYSTEMS

From Phillip Schlechty's *Creating Great Schools: Six Critical Systems at the Heart of Educational Innovation*

In complex social organizations like schools, rules, roles, and relationships (structure) tend to become organized around functions critical to the operation of the enterprise. The norms that define this structure are expressions of an organization’s culture, and it is these cultural expressions that are referred to when the term *social systems* is used. Among the more critical organizational social systems are the following:

The **Directional System**, which includes those systems through which goals are set, priorities are determined, and when things go awry, corrective actions are initiated.

The **Knowledge Development and Transmission System**, which includes those formal and informal systems that define the means by which knowledge related to the moral, aesthetic, and technical norms that shape behavior in schools and school districts is developed, imported, evaluated, and transmitted.

The **Recruitment and Induction System**, which includes those systems through which new members are identified and attracted to the organization and brought to understand and embrace the norms and values they must understand and embrace to be full members of the organization.

The **Boundary System**, which includes those systems that define who and what are inside the organization, and are therefore subject to the control of the organization, and who and what are outside the organization, and are therefore beyond the reach of the systems that make up the organization.

The **Evaluation System**, which includes those systems through which measures of merit and worth are assigned, status is determined, honor is bestowed, and the method and timing of negative sanctions are set.

The **Power and Authority System**, which includes those systems that legitimize the use of sanctions, define the proper exercise of power, and determine status relationships.