

Article Analysis 1:

Tooms, A. K., Lugg, C. A., & Bogotch, I. (2009). Rethinking the Politics of Fit and Educational Leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(1), 96-131.

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Rethinking the Politics of Fit and Educational Leadership

In this article, the authors delve into the rhetoric of educational leadership as it relates to inclusion or exclusion of individuals into their community, specifically through examination of the concept of a person being (or not being) a good “fit”. By moving past the common definition of the word “fit”, and examining it through the lenses of social constructionism, identity theory, and hegemony, the authors use the metaphor of a mechanical watch to show how these various components work together to determine “fit”.

A. How did the authors organize their manuscript so that the reader could understand the information?

Opening the article with a personal message from a “Dr. Jared Cook” explaining why an applicant did not get a position set a scenario that most of us reading this article could relate to. We’ve been there. Continuing the introduction with yet another instance of the same applicant answering similar questions with the same answers and this time being offered the position pulled in the rest of us.

Beginning the article like this immediately made it personal to the reader. At one time or another, whether or not we were offered the position we interviewed for, we have all heard the discussion of “fit”. From this point forward in the article, the reader is open to and personally invested in continuing reading the article (the first hurdle for any author) and understanding it (the authors ultimate goal).

Following this inclusionary introduction, the authors then clearly state the purpose of the article, the context in which they are going to examine their topic, and clearly outline the direction their topic will go and exactly how they will get there.

B. How did the authors go about explaining their rationale for the subject they are exploring?

The authors explained their rationale for exploring the concept of “fit” through the use of personal accounts, exposition of the multiple meanings and uses of the term “fit”, the use of the pocket watch metaphor which provided a conceptual “visual” to aide understanding, and through reviews of literature that either supported the rational behind their research or which contained information or concepts that contributed to the need for such research.

C. How clearly did the authors frame the problem statement?

Although the problem statement was officially detailed in sentences at the end of the introduction and more specifically within the purpose section, the author’s use of personal accounts on the first page (97) as well as in other places throughout the article, forced the reader to see the problem before the authors stated it, and consistently brought the reader back to the practical application of the problem, never allowing it to get lost amid the academic verbiage between.

D. How was the research question framed in order to make sense to the reader?

The research question, the meaning and use of the word “fit” as it applied to educational leadership, was framed in multiple ways in order to make sense to the reader. Beginning with

the personal account, continuing with definitions and examples of the terms that would be used to both ask and address the research question, and continuing throughout with examples and visual, conceptual metaphor, these techniques built on one another gradually, supporting the research question and never allowing it to stray far from the reader's mind.

E. How clearly did the authors link the problem statement and rationale to relevant empirical research?

Right away the authors began bringing in clear, relevant, empirical research to support and substantiate their research question. The cited research approached the topic from different directions, using various examples and assorted metaphors. Many articles and research will explain a concept, infer its meaning and foundations, and eventually, once the point is made (or assumed to have been made) end with a citation or two. Immediately including citations for the two theories (social constructionism and Identity theory) and the sociopolitical concept (hegemony) that would later be used in the gears of the "pocket watch" metaphor, laid the path for their accurateness and appropriateness in the metaphor before the reader actually arrived there.

F. What ways did the authors use to explain how their method(s) are suited to answer the research question?

The authors explained how their method was suited to answer their research question by immediately linking their question to personal accounts that would resonate with the reader, and then using relevant research to explain why their question was important, who else in the field agreed, and how it was applicable across different situations and scenarios.

G. How did the authors demonstrate their data analyses?

As a qualitative article, quantitative data was not collected or analyzed. However, anecdotal and empirical data was demonstrated throughout the article through the collection of citations that supported and expanded upon the purpose statement.

H. How did the author(s) link the problem statement to the research questions

The authors linked the problem statement (purpose) to their questions through the use of the watch metaphor. Providing the watch metaphor visually, and then periodically referring back to it as different aspects of the problem or questions were discussed helped the reader to keep the purpose even as the question broadened to include examples in other areas.

I. Are the conclusions and recommendations valid in your opinion? Defend your answer?**(Why do you think this?)**

The conclusions made by these authors are clear and valid as they don't as much tell educational leaders (and others) what they *should* do, who they *should* hire, or exactly what the "best fit" *is*, but rather they conclude with suggestions for aspiring administrative preparation programs, school leaders, and policy makers to be aware of their use of the concept of "fit", to be aware of the implications for job seekers (if you knew what the "best fit" was, would you still want the job?), for school leaders (has the "best fit" really been best and could something different actually have "fit" better?), and policy makers (who determines that "fit" is based on appropriate qualities necessary for a position, and not upon the personal, social, or other group perceptions of individuals).

J. What do you think the authors forgot or ignored?

This article covered its intended purpose, and branched out from the implications for educational leadership to other vital areas in society without being diluted or losing focus.