

<https://doi.org/10.53656/str2024-4-7-app>

*Research and Paradigms  
Научни изследвания и парадигми*

## **APPLICATION OF EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES IN STUDYING THE DYNAMICS OF STATE POWER STRUCTURES: IMPLEMENTATION OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL MECHANISMS OF INFLUENCE**

**Prof. Stoyan Denchev, DSc.  
Dr. Miriyana Pavlova, Assist. Prof.  
Dr. Steliana Yordanova, Assist. Prof.**

*University of Library Studies and Information Technologies*

**Abstract.** The specific force characteristics of state power structures play a major role when shaping the political and economic dynamics. They influence the processes of decision-making and they definitively define the distribution of public resources in each and every country or a group of formally united states.

In this article, we will try to analyze how and in what way should be applied educational strategies for studying the complex interplay between the dynamic characteristics of the force structures of power, paying special attention to their formal and informal mechanisms of influence from different perspectives. Through analysis and subsequent synthesis of known theoretical frameworks, and based on empirical research, we will define a complex understanding of how power manifests itself both on the basis of formal organizational hierarchies and through contemporary informal social networks.

The suggested research framework is based on the methodology of change, which is “enlightened” through the so-called architectural approach. This approach is applied inclusively in the complex and intricate dynamics of educational strategies, promoting its more equitable distribution of the power functions in the hierarchies of society as a whole and defining wider frameworks for coercive influence, through modern information and communication technologies.

*Keywords:* state power structures; formal and informal mechanisms; networks; governance; information and communication technologies (ICT); social dynamics

## **Introduction**

The structures of political (and economic) power in a country represent the real basis of all social organizations in it, and these structures definitively determine their authority and their influence within current social practice. Educational institutions, as the main foundations of the public organizations, must form in students an understanding of political power and its formal and informal structural and functional characteristics.

While formal power structures are clearly codified in organizational hierarchies, informal power structures actively operate through complex networks of relationships, norms and social interactions. Understanding the interplay between these formal and informal manifestations of modern information and communication technologies and mechanisms is essential to the exercise of power in its various contexts and forms.

## **ICT as a stimulus for social development**

Often, even today, the concepts of “information technologies” and “communication technologies” (known as ICT) refer to software and electronic means for collecting, storing, processing, transferring, providing, distributing and presenting information. In fact, the listed information activities have been carried out long before the advent of computers and modern means of communication. In this capacity, ICT is developing in response to the explosive informational growth of the governing and governed systems. Currently, since high school is known that ICT is understood as integrated sets of scientific, technological and engineering activities, specialized equipment and specific management techniques that are used in the creation, processing, storage, distribution and consumption of information. With their development, the “transparency” of the world also increases, and the speed and volume of information transmission become another factor for global integration. This integration can only be welcomed if its consequence is not the blurring of regional and cultural-historical features of development. The fact is that ICT includes both a technical and a social aspect that must be taken into account. On the one hand, various examples could be given of how information difficult to analyze and evaluate due to insufficient intellectual understanding becomes a destabilizing factor for development. On the other hand, from a social point of view, it is ICT that has made a qualitative change in mass communication systems. This change has a significant impact on all socio-economic processes. The appearance of destabilizing information is a signal of the gap between the availability of information and the possibilities for its correct assessment, a signal of the need for new intellectual development in the knowledge of the regularities of development. Unfortunately, this development is often dependent on various limitations: biological, educational, personal, i.e. limitations

of the intellectual resource, limitations of the speed of the intellectual self-knowledge of the society. For these reasons, the goal of the development of modern information and communication technologies should be such that they benefit both the individual and society as a whole, and do not contribute to the formation of a new type of social inequality and play the role of a destabilizing factor (Denchev 2019).

### **Driving forces of social development. Theoretical bases**

The processes of definition, research and analysis of the driving forces of social development have distinctive features that could be studied depending on the civilizational development of Homo Sapiens.

In his book “the Twilight of Democracy” Patrick Kennon (2015) stipulates that historically, the driving forces of the management of any social system are three: power (politics), bureaucracy (administration) and the private sector, which in retrospect gives priority to the administration. According to him, administration “lights the fire of changes and is their natural engine”, while “politicians only seek warmth on this fire”.

If we modernize Kennon’s triad and replace the private sector with business and civil sectors, we receive four global factors on which depends the ‘good’ governance of modern social systems, which are different in nature. Of course, we also note the crucial role of administration, without downplaying either the importance of power (politics) or the prestigious place of business, and even more so the particular typology of the real civil sector in the current social governance paradigm. If we go back in history, we could orient our research quests using the guiding principles of sociological perspectives, political science, and organization theory that suggest the essential differentiation of power structures. If we look for the organic connections of power with implicit knowledge, we will inevitably encounter the concept of M. Foucault (1997) regarding the relationship “power – knowledge” (Foucault 1996; 1980). This concept expresses the idea of regulating the behavior of public entities, emphasizing the role of technologies and mechanisms through which institutions impose norms and ideologies. Our analyses show that in this case we can also take Max Weber’s theories related to the typology of authorities as a reference point. Weber distinguishes several types of authority: traditional, charismatic, and ‘normative’, each of which is related to the legitimacy of authority within formal power structures (Weber 1978). On the other hand, network theory explains the role and importance of informal, networked power structures by synthesizing a virtual conceptual model that visually explains how ICTs influence social connectedness and facilitate the effective exchange of public resources across pre-established hierarchical boundaries (Scott 2000).

### **Formal power structures**

The formal structures of power are a natural, traditionally imposed form of society's existence. This form is practically embedded in organizational hierarchies, defining the meaning, roles, place and responsibilities of the so-called elites in making formal and substantive management decisions. Formal power structures are based on and governed by formal rules and procedures based on laws and accompanying other normative documents. In them, the management hierarchy is structured in the direction of "Top – Down" and fluctuates on the basis of management chains of command, as a rule, subjects at higher hierarchical levels manage and control those subjects whose hierarchy is below that of their formal superiors (i.e. they are their subordinates). The theoretical analysis of the formal power hierarchy, as well as the current social practice, show that the real possibilities for relative predictability of the formal power structures firmly ensure organizational coherence and definitely facilitate the achievement of the set goals. On the other hand, however, the functional essence of the formal structural components of power can (and this is increasingly happening) suffocate budding ideas for new, innovative solutions and the need for changes based on the direct implementation in practice of the latest achievements of ICT.

### **Informal power structures**

As a social implication, informal power structures and dynamics exist and develop on the basis of modern social networks. They essentially bypass formal hierarchical positions and provide opportunities for individuals or groups within them to acquire and exercise real power through charisma or demonstrated expertise. Informal power structures and dynamics facilitate the exchange of resources, the dissemination of information and knowledge, and the formation of interpersonal networks outside the influence of formal channels for this. It is clear that just as informal power can positively complement formally imposed authority and gaps in decision-making processes; it can also act irrationally by competing with hierarchically set organizational goals (Dzhouzef 2021).

### **Real power and intersectionality**

In 1989 Kimberlé Crenshaw in the essay "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics" coins the term 'intersectionality' as a mechanism to explain the oppression on Afro-American women (Crenshaw 1989).

From the point of view of modern social relations, which have a direct connection with the exertion of power, intersectionality is a concept of the person,

according to which multiple identities are gathered in it at the same time. The features that define this multitude of identities cannot be listed exhaustively, but still the most important of them are: ethnicity (race), skin color, nationality, language, education, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation or lack thereof, origin, marital status, property status, health, disabilities, even appearance, and many more<sup>1</sup>.

Essentially, the concept of intersectionality offers a multidimensional view of both the person and their actual social world. The intersectionality of formal and informal power structures reveals the mechanisms by which different dimensions of identity shape the experiences of individuals or groups of individuals for power and possibly for unjustified privilege. Analyses of intersectionality realized in a real power situation reveal how all power structures can either cause or maintain social inequalities by, breaking down or circumventing imposed power hierarchies (Shvab 2021).

### **Implications for governance and decision-making**

The interplay between formal and informal power structures has profound implications for governance and decision-making. That is why it is extremely important that they be studied in the various educational institutions (secondary schools, colleges and universities). Because effective governance requires balancing the stability and efficiency of formal structures with the flexibility and inclusiveness provided by informal social networks. Decision-making mechanisms must navigate power dynamics to ensure equal participation, accountability and transparency. Educational strategies, such as the presence and use of diverse initiatives, positive leadership, decentralization, and others, usually lead to relatively soft power asymmetries and encourage both individuals and specially formed groups to participate directly in decision-making processes (Dimitrov 2021).

### **Conclusion**

From the conclusions synthesized in the current study, we come to the generalization that the structures of real power represent a limited multi-vector space, which consists of both formal organizational hierarchies and informal dynamics based on modern social networks, which are based on classic and innovative ICT. By studying and exploring the different combinations of the natural interaction between formal and informal power structures, rules and 'recipes', university professors, researchers, scientists and practitioners can be derived for the exertion of power, in its various contexts and dimensions.

The 'consumed' complexity of real power dynamics requires a holistic approach (Holistic means complete. The word comes from Greek and holos means whole, complete, integral. According to the holistic approach, the person is

considered in its entirety - emotions, energy, physical body and soul) which does not deny but embrace the intersectionality of the identity and supports the participation of each and every individual in the processes of decision making (Kostova 2021). By following the mechanisms and methodology for applying the holistic approach, we could make the general conclusion that the dynamics of power structures based on modern ICT can be directed towards the realization and enforcement of more just and responsive societies and beneficial to them social systems.

### ***Acknowledgements***

This work was supported by the NSP DS program, which has received funding from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria under the grant agreement no. Д01-74/19.05.2022.

### **NOTES**

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intersectionality>.

### **REFERENCES**

- DENCHEV, S. 2019. *Informatsia i sigurnost*. Sofia: Za bukвите – O’pismenehy. ISBN:978-619-185-369-4-pdf. [In Bulgarian].
- KENAN, P., 1995. *Zalezat na demokratsiyata*, Sofia: Obsidian. [In Bulgarian].
- FOUCAULT, M., 1997. *Vlast*. Sofia: *Kritika i humanizam*. ISBN: 9545870311. [In Bulgarian].
- FOUCAULT, M., 1996. *Arheologia na znanieto*. Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo. [In Bulgarian].
- FOUCAULT, M., 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972 – 1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon, Pantheon Books, New York.
- WEBER, M., 1978. *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology*. G. ROTH & C. WITTICH (Eds.). Berkeley: University of California Press. (Original work published 1921).
- SCOTT, J. P., 2000. *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook*. 2nd. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications. ISBN 978-0-7619-6339-4.
- DZHOUEF, P., 2021. *Taynite strukturi na vlastta, Iztok – Zapad*. Sofia: Katehon, ISBN: 978-619-01-0884-9.
- CRENSHAW, K., 1989. Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, vol. 1, pp. 139 – 167. ISSN 0892-5593.

- SHVAB, K.; VANHAM, P., 2021. *Kapitalizam na zainteresovanite: Globalna iкономика v polza na progressa, horata i planetata, Iztok – Zapad*. Sofia: Katehon. ISBN: 978-619-01-0849-8. [In Bulgarian].
- DIMITROV, M., 2021. Krizata na politicheskoto liderstvo i vliyani-eto ñ v mediynoto prostranstvo. *Izdatel*, vol. XXIII, no. 2, pp. 60 – 66. ISSN: 1310-4624 (Print). ISSN: 2367-9158 (Online). [In Bulgarian].
- KOSTOVA, N., 2021. Kariernoto razvitie na personala – predpostavka za organizatsionna ustoychivost i prioriteten liderski angazhiment. *Izdatel*, vol. XXIII, no 1, pp. 27 – 39. ISSN: 1310-4624 (Print). ISSN: 2367-9158 (Online). [In Bulgarian].

✉ **Prof. Stoyan Denchev, DSc.**

**Dr. Miriyana Pavlova, Assist. Prof.**

**Dr. Steliana Yordanova, Assist. Prof.**

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies

Sofia, Bulgaria

E-mail: s.denchev@unibit.bg;

E-mail: m.pavlova@unibit.bg;

E-mail: s.yordanova@unibit.bg