        A number of problems are encountered in "structural interventions" (direct
changes introduced into the decisionmaking structure of a school) designed to create
a mechanism through which teachers can exercise power over matters, internal to the
school, that require decision and to provide a means through which the teachers of a
school can potentially influence educational policy decisions in the community at large.
The decisionmaking model we have been using emphasizes the leadership role of the
principal in creating a representative body of teachers who meet, discuss problems,
and make decisions on nearly all matters of school operation over which he previously
had control. Central among the problems encountered are (1) the hierarchical,
bureaucratic organization of schools and school systems, (2) the fact that changing
school structure does not necessarily improve decisionmaking, (3) the nature of the
trust relationship between teachers and principals, (4) the teachers' lack of
collaborative problemsolving skills, particularly in working with peers, (5) the time
required to make a new structure work, (6) the difficulty of insuring that the new
decisionmaking body is indeed representative while trying to have it act in the best
interests of the total school. Both the principal and his decisionmakers need to be
aware of potential organizational fall-out that requires attention to interpersonal
and group processes. (JS)

Developing Teacher Decision-Making Through Structural
Interventions

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The intent of this paper is to discuss problems associated

with the development of a teacher decision making mode in

a school through a change strategy that focusses on struc-

tural interventions in the school. There is no intent to

polarize structural interventions from those of process

but, in time, to indicate linkages between the two change

strategies.

The term "structural intervention" is taken to mean

any direct change that is introduced into the decision-

making structure of the school whose aim is (1) to create

a mechanism through which teachers can exercise power

over matters, internal to the school, that require decision

and (2) to provide a means through which the teachers of

a school can potentially influence educational policy decisions

in the community at large.

The basic strategy of inducing change in decision-

making procedures by concentrating on structural facets

of the school organization differs, then, from that des-

cribed in the previous paper. In that one, the focus was

on changes developed in the school through an initial concentration on the adequacy of interpersonal and group processes. The strategy to be discussed here ignores, at first, problems of process and emphasizes the immediate leadership role of the principal in so far as manipulating the school organization is concerned.

The model of structural change leading to teacher decision- making with which we have been working is, on the surface, a simple one. It involves, basically, the creation in a school of a representative body of teachers who meet, discuss problems, and make decisions--much like any other legislative group. It is important to note that this is not a consultative group whose goal is to advise the principal so that he can make decisions. Quite the contrary, it is a group in which has been vested the power to run the school and to make decisions on nearly all matters of its operation over which the principal previously had control. These matters would include the range from dealing with hall duty and space allocation to problems of curriculum, instruction, and employment of teachers. The termination or transfer of teachers might be excluded from its purvey, but not necessarily so.

There is a long historical and cultural tradition in this country that would lead one to suppose that this kind of decision-making structure could be transferred from the political

arena to the school organization without too much trouble.
The institution of education itself, different than business
and industry, has long preached the democratic way of life.
However, as we shall shortly see, our historical-cultural
tradition and our preachings seem to be not necessarily re-
lated to our everyday work life. That is, a number of pro-
blems attach to inducing a structural change into a school,
the aim of which is to enable teachers to govern themselves.
Central among these problems are the following:

1. School systems and schools tend to be organized
much like any other hierarchial bureaucracy. One member
of this symposium has likened the system to the "divine
right of kings." The current militancy of teachers groups
may induce some changes into the system (indeed, it already
has). But one suspects that administrative prerogatives
that are now being challenged by teacher associations will
outlast the challengers.

The relevance of this point for our concern here is
twofold. First, the model being suggested involves the
giving up of power on the part of the principal. In
effect he must say, "This is your school. Run it."
An administrative stance such as this involves a good
bit of risk and a great deal of trust in the teachers.
Further, it runs against the notion that administrators

administrate and teachers teach. In behavioral science terms, the development of a participative decision-making mode in a school almost certainly will produce a good bit of role ambiguity and conflict on the part of both principal and teachers.

The notion of giving up of power by the principal also has some psychological implications. For reasons that are not altogether clear, the field of education seems to draw into it people whose control needs tend to be somewaht higher than those of other occupational groups. Thus, not only does relinquishing of power by the principal run contrary to ac-cepted organizational practices but, in many cases it may be incompatible with a principal's need structure.

Second, as far as teachers are concerned, the idea of power distribution tends to run contrary to the expectations of many of how a school ought to be run. In our experiences with teacher decision-making structures, there have been a number of illustrations of the attitude that "He was trained to run the school--not we." This is, perhaps, a reflection of the large number of women in teaching. We tend to discount this particular interpretation, however, and suggest instead that because teachers have not been trained to expect to exer-cise administrative responsibility--in either their pre-service or in-service experience--the prospect of its assumption pre-

sents a not easily overcome hurdle. The implication of this
point is that, even given a principal who is willing to give
up his power, it is quite likely that many teachers will be
reluctant to take it.

2. By utilizing the strategy of intervening on a
structural level in order to create a teacher decision-making
mode, the risk is incurred that reinforcement will be given
to the all too prevalent, but rarely verbalized, notion that
all that needs to be done to improve the schools is to change
the structure. The introduction of new programs, decentraliza-
tion, and a myriad of other changes that have been inserted into
education are illustrations of this point. There have been
some successes, many failures, but with the net effect being
questionable. The point is that changing the structure does
not necessarily lead to improving the product. Other variables
intervene.

3. Perhaps the most critical of these intervening
variables is the nature of the trust relationship that exists
between the teachers and the principal. This is a very compli-
cated issue. Its roots are probably found in long-standing
distrustful attitudes about authority figures that most of us
have developed. People tend to be able to live more or less
comfortably with these attitudes--in effect, they don't surface--
as long as the authority figure behaves in a manner that is

expected. In the case of the school principal, this behavior would probably involve benevolence, relatively unilateral decision-making, and closedness as far as questions of emotionality are concerned.

The effective development of a participative decision-making model in a school places different behavioral demands on the principal than those just noted. Benevolence is no longer a virtue. Rather, the behavior required is that of empathic understanding. Unilateral decision-making is not the order of the day, and openness about one's emotionality is needed in order to open up channels of communications.

When teachers are confronted with perceptions of a principal's behavior, such as these, that are at variance with what they have come to expect it is quite understandable that they should be distrustful. The great bulk of their experience has taught them that not only don't authority figures behave this way but that, in all likelihood, they shouldn't. Our interpretation of teacher behavior under these conditions is, then, that in order to protect themselves from the risks implicit in potential engagement on different terms they characterize his behavior a phony or "playing a game."

4. A fourth problem associated with structuring a participative decision-making device into a school is what my colleagues and I see as a lack of collaborative problem-solving

skills on the part of teachers--at least so far as working with
their peers is concerned. It is fair to say that teachers have
been trained to assume a control position and direct the activ-
ities of children. But they have not been trained, nor does
the system typically require that they work collaboratively
with their peers.

Problem solving skills, in themselves, are not difficult
to learn. All of us are familiar with such things as problem-
definition, data collection, examining alternatives and so
forth. At issue, however, are the operational and behavioral
implications of the concept of collaboration in a school
organization. These are, minimally, the willingness to engage
on a level of mutual influence, the shedding of vested interests,
and an overriding organizational goal orientation. In other
words, though specific behavioral skills are very important,
the attitudinal dimensions of these skills are critical.

5. A fifth and very pressing problem that develops as
schools structure in participative decision-making is the
matter of time. A great deal of time is required in order
to make the structure work. In the one situation with
which we are most familiar, elected teacher representatives
have been meeting, as a group, almost weekly for two to three
hours at a time for over a year. Obviously, this time cannot
be taken out of the school day, given present practice.

Therefore, it is an afterschool operation. Not all teachers are willing or able to devote this much time after school hours to the school as an organization. That is, the problem of time has both attitudinal and practically realistic components. This is especially true when it is realized that decisions reached by the group frequently involve teachers outside the decision-making structure and an additional commitment of time by one of the decision-makers.

6. A final problem to be considered here is that of insuring that the representative decision-making body is indeed representative while, at the same time, trying to have it act in the best interests of the total school. If this situation sounds like the problems faced by any representative legislative body, then the intent of my communication has been accurately received. Our experience indicates that this is precisely the phenomenon with which teachers grapple. No solution is at hand except, perhaps to acknowledge the existence of the conflict openly.

The Initiation of a Teacher-Decision Making Structure into a School

In our opinion, based on experience, the introduction of a structure for teacher decision-making in a school calls for very direct action on the part of the principal. This may appear to be in contradiction with the idea of sharing the decision-making process, but we think not. The point is this.

The principal is the manager of the school organization. Part
of his managerial prerogative involves developing the kind of
decision-making structure that he believes will yield the most
productive organizational results. From this point of view,
then, the options are his--as will be the ultimate responsibility
in any legalistic sort of way.

Once the new decision-making structure has been created
and has started to function, a number of consequences can be
predicted that are not necessarily related to the decision-
making itself. For example, when power is shared with others
it is exceedingly difficult to retrieve on a unilateral basis.
Thus, while the principal makes the decision, initially, to
share his power, for him to reverse his stance would be very
risky and probably result in a good bit of organizational trauma
and a drastically lowered trust level.

Another obvious consequence is related to the sheer amount
of time that will be consumed in making decisions. Problems
that the principal might have solved on his own in a short
time may take hours in the group situation. This is frustrating,
and the principal will have to be prepared to deal with his own
frustration and those of the teachers. In a curious way, the
willingness of the principal to tolerate the time may reinforce
the perceptions of the teachers that he really is "playing a
game" and is only waiting for them to fail. That is, in the

process of demonstrating his trust in them by tolerating the slowness of their work together he may, in fact, lower the trust of some.

It needs to be noted, in addition, that not all teachers are tempermentally equipped to work in a school where decisions are made by their peers. The situation appears to run contrary to their attitudinal and value system. We are aware of several not so subtle subversion attempts that occured because of this.

Finally, changing the formal structure also has systemic implications for the informal structure. For example, the decision-making group quickly becomes somewhat of an "inner circle". Its members automatically have more ready access to the principal than do other members of the faculty. This suggests, unless this development is foreseen and plans made to deal with it, that a potentially large group of teachers may drift more and more into the periphery of the organization. Concomitant with this movement the likelihood exists that the principal will be charged with "playing favorites."

In other words, granting the success of the new structure, it is not an unmixed blessing. The issue of importance seems to be the need for both the principal and his decision-makers to be aware of the potential organizational fall-out so that steps can be taken (1) to insure a free flow of data about this

fall-out, (2) to diagnose the nature of the problems that appear,
and (3) to initiate appropriate action to resolve the problem
situation.

The Nature of the Decision-Makers Work

It is obvious that teachers cannot assume every prerogative
or function of the principal. Somethings are out-of-bounds.
But our observations of one situation with which we are most
familiar indicate that teachers, with a great sense of responsi-
bility, will attack a myriad of school related problems.
These run from such things as developing a hall and playground
duty schedule to recruitment of teachers to curriculum matters.
In this same situation, the teachers took the lead in developing
a petition to the board of education to hasten the integration
of the school district. A large number of teachers outside of
the school signed the petition, though at this time we can
only report that it has been received with no particular display
of enthusiasm by the board.

Results that May Be Expected when Teachers Make the Decisions

The results that can be reported from our own experiences
with innovating a teacher decision-making model in a school do
not meet the scientific criterion of hard data. This is so,
first of all, because the experience was a limited one. Secondly,
in programs of organizational research and development, it is
necessary to confront the very real limitations posed by the practical

impossibility of matching schools, obtaining control groups and so forth. Nevertheless, from both interview data and observation of behavior, it seems reasonable to postulate a number of developments that can be expected when such a model is developed.

1. Perhaps most important, from our point of view, is what we observed to be a heightened sense of power on the part of the teachers. A feeling that tends to get expressed indirectly is that the school will develop in a way that _they_ want it to and not necessarily in a manner designated by central authority.

2. Concurrent with the power syndrome is what appears to be a sense of ownership of the school. This is totally to be expected. When a person can control his environment he tends to become proprietary about it. On a school basis, this can be translated into organizational loyalty and concern with school goals.

3. We sensed in our experiences, and we suspect it will be sensed in other situations where the design is replicated, a higher commitment to the school as an organization. This is, perhaps, best indicated by reference to the huge number of man-hours that have been devoted to school-wide problems, after school, in the evenings, and on weekends.

4. There is some indication, as well, that in a school where teachers make the decisions, there will develop some sense of concern for the state of education outside their

own building. The illustration of the integration petition
cited previously is a small indicator.

5. Though it has been alluded to previously, another
by-product of the process is worthy of explication. It is
that the intervention on the structural level to establish a
collaborative decision-making process contains the potential
of breaking down the isolated teacher in the self-contained
classroom that is so familiar to us, particularly in the
elementary school. In other words, it may be expected that
if the teachers talk and work with each other in one situation
they will do the same in others.

This paper was started with a statement that its concern
was with an intervention in a school to create a structural
device by which teachers could work together to make the
decisions affecting the school. This change strategy is different
than one that focusses initially on matters of process.
Obviously, there are link-ups between the two. The process
strategy tends to end up in a structural innovation. The
structural strategy creates organizational fall-out that requires
attention being paid to interpersonal and group processes.

The central question is not of an either/or variety.
Rather, the question is, taking as a given the positive value
of a participative decision-making model, in which direction
is energy to be spent in a particular school? This question

can only be answered in the light of an analysis of the human

and material resources that are available in the specific situation.

We would not lay claim to having discovered the school

organization nirvana. Our experiences thus far have been positive,

but we would certainly feel that they need to be repeated and

tested in a variety of school settings.