DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 074 622 EA 005 023

AUTHOR	Townsend, Richard G.
TITLE	Conflict and the Collaborative Process: Antecedents and Consequences of Two Inter-Agency Programs.
PUB DATE	28 Feb 73
NOTE	21p.; Paper presented at American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (58th, New Orleans, Louisiana, February 26-March 1, 1973)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Administrative Organization; Agency Role; *Conflict; *Conflict Resolution; Educational Research; *Interagency Cooperation; Interinstitutional Cooperation; Policy Formation; *Political Influences; *Power Structure; Urban Environment

ABSTRACT

A conflict-cooperation-conflict model is offered of the genesis, functioning, and aftermath of an inter-governmental and inter-professional program in a major city. Outputs prior to this linkage are perceived as generating major conflicts which eventually were settled by decisions to parcel out certain school building responsibilities among city planners, municipal bondsmen, and public architects. This inter-agency effort is then seen as producing a number of outputs which in turn generate other conflicts which can be traced back to the new policy-makers and, even further back, to conflicts which preceded the collaboration. (Author)

ED 074622

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

CONFLICT and THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS:

ANTECEDENTS and CONSEQUENCES OF TWO INTER-AGENCY PROGRAMS

Paper Presented
at the
American Educational Research Association
Annual Meeting

New Orleans, Louisiana
February 28, 1973

Richard G. Townsend
Department of System Development and Adaptation
Boston University

EA 005 023

Scope and Justification

The aim of this paper is to yield a model that begins to explain the politics surrounding inter-agency collaborations. Rather than devising a unique model of his own, the researcher has developed a partial framework through the adaptation of existing schema to real-world phenomena. More specifically, an effort is made to exploit empirical particulars in constructing a systems sketch that incorporates aspects of a taxonomy of inter-professional and inter-governmental conflict. Then two case synopses covering recent school-building, one in Boston and the other in Chicago, are used as a reservoir of illustrations for the argument on the paper's focal point, that the world of inter-organizational policy-making can have antecedents and consequences with certain conflictive political dimensions. Finally, a few of the implications of this study are suggested.

If it can be assumed that subunits will become more dependent on each other as society becomes more sophisticated, the school-building activities in Boston and Chicago may be bellwethers of future inter-agency allignments involving educators. An investigation of the antecedents and consequences of those operations should add then to the discourse about the world of shared policy-making that schoolmen might experience before and after they affiliate with outside groups for such additional concerns as curriculum and personnel planning. If not a bellwether, the Boston and Chicago interactions still have value for their contrasts to the usual compartmentalized handling of locally funded projects in big cities; as an account of two major deviant cases, this report might be placed alongside studies about the common lack of inter-agency cooperation, suggesting how complicated and multi-faceted urban education can be. Finally an examination of the relationships between these new policy-making structures and the political conflicts which preceded as well as followed the establishment of these linkages offers us a chance to learn something about the dynamics and tensions of school facilities planning, a behavioral field relatively unplowed by social scientists or by students of educational administration.

New Structures for Policy-making

Decisions concerning the building of public schools in Boston and Chicago no longer are dominated solely by educators. During tenures of energetic mayors (Collins in Boston, Daley in Chicago), various municipal institutions not only started to collaborate with educators in the development of more than two scores of schoolhouses, but these non-educational offices began to exercise authority in helping determine those buildings' ultimate location, form and quality.

Thus since 1966 the development and execution of plans for new and renovated school buildings in Boston primarily has been the responsibility of the city's Public Facilities Department (PFD). Accordingly the capital budget analysts, designers, land planners, engineers, and real estate specialists of that organization are charged with such responsibilities as the preparation of construction bonds and educational specifications, the selection and acquisition of sites, and the management of contracts for architects and contractors. PFD, rather than the educators of Boston's School Department, has been coordinating with private and other public interests in this operation.

Schoolmen have provided conceptual direction for the educational programming, but even in this regard PFD has had some say-so.

And in Chicago, since 1968 the marketing of bonds to finance construction -- once the province of the Board of Education -- has been guided by investment counselors in municipal employ. Major responsibility for design management and construction supervision of new schools has shifted from educators to architects on the staff of the Public Buildings Commission of Chicago (PBC). Educators no longer are the preeminent force in all site selections -- the search there for new school locations has been led recently by Chicago's Department of Development and Planning. Here too non-schoolmen have contributed to the content of educational programs and specifications.

An Analytic Framework

By way of placing data of the Boston and Chicago situations into a meaningful pattern, the decision was made to adapt David Easton's theoretical sketch of political life,[1] a holistic approach which a number of other investigators of school affairs also have employed.[2] Aspects that are political are subsumed in the set of interactions through which valued objects are authoritatively allocated for society. Easton posits a systems model in which these interactions have a discernible order based, in short, upon the interdependencies of their political antecedents and consequences; a change in an early major variable has an impact on later political elements. Stresses upon the external environment of such a political system provoke inputs -- either demands or supports -- which impinge upon those authorities meeting or successfully coping with a sufficient number of relevant inputs.

Also central to Easton's schema is the notion that a particular subsystem such as a school-building arena can be gainfully distinguished from other political systems. In keeping then with the sequence and interactiveness of Easton's model, it can be presumed that changes in a school-building arena's policy-making structure are connected to antecedent demands and supports. At the same time, changes in that authority structure can be presumed to have consequences on such other elements of the political system as outputs, i.e., those responses made by authorities to demands which were able to work their way through the political maze. Easton's version of a systems model appears useful therefore for analytically relating certain kinds of inputs to outputs. Some outputs occasionally incite stresses which trigger new demands, thereby animating the conversion process whereby authorities deal with competing political goals and aspirations.

Stated simply, in this study an inter-agency collaboration's outputs and sharing of responsibilities are perceived as the results as well as the generators of conflicts within a political arena. The chain of circumstances is seen as working as follows: (1) outputs during the pre-collaboration stage generate conflicts, and eventually those conflicts are resolved by changes in the policy-making structure for an arena; (2) an inter-agency operation comes into being and produces new outputs; and (3) some of those outputs in turn generate new conflicts which can be traced back to the reassignment of policy-making responsibilities and, even further back, to the conflicts of the pre-collaboration stage.

In this analysis, "conflict" will be defined as an intense difference among political actors and institutions over operational content or timing; disparate outputs are held as acceptable by involved forces. This notion can be incorporated into Easton's framework. Conflict may be said to flow from the making of a demand-type of input that explicitly challenges the status quo and, if implemented, would lead to new or revised allocations of values by the authorities. It differs from a demand in that it includes two or more opposing demands. Easton indicates that conflicts over demands are the flesh and blood of all political systems; the school-building subsystems of Boston and Chicago do not appear to be exceptions.

Charles Adrian has a less Eastonian, though congruent, definition of conflict. To that political scientist, conflict is a competition and friction over policy development and administration. Adrian's definition appears in a taxonomy he has devised of inter-professional and inter-governmental relations, and it can take us some distance in operationalizing the notion of conflict surrounding inter-agency activities.

Adrian sees conflicts occurring along functional lines between local, state, and national bureaucracies. These conflicts are the result largely of different levels of professionalization among those bureaucrats. This friction marks relationships, for example, between the national bureaucracy and those of some of the states which have been slow to professionalize. Adrian also notices conflicts between special-purpose bureaucracies and state legislators. The bureaucrats tend to seek determinations which will be approved by their professional peer group, presumably those who are the most informed and "qualified."[3] Competitively, the legislators represent grassroots values, those which place no tribunal or expertise above the will of the people.

Subcategories of Conflict

Adrian does not describe interactions among professionals representing different functions, e.g., the law and medicine. Nor does he probe relationships involving educators or school-builders specifically. Nonetheless his vision of competition and friction can help the present researcher make a rough distinction between three general subcategories of conflicts affecting the school-building of public education.

A first subcategory can be labeled "conflicts between professionals"; the second encapsulates "conflicts between governmental levels"; the third, having qualities of the other two, involves "conflicts between members of the same profession working at different governmental levels."

The first type of friction can be recognized when different professions, with their variant points of view about the authoritative allocation of valued objects, have difficulty in accepting each other's norms, values, and positions. Such a conflict between professional educators and city redevelopers in Boston helped stimulate in 1966 the inter-agency operation which, as already indicated, altered that city's policy-making structure for school-building. Similarly, competition between professional educators and city planners, each with their own maintenance and enhancement needs, contributed to the initiation in 1968 of a structure whereby for the first time the Chicago Board of Education shared school-building authority with other institutions. Then as both the Boston and Chicago interdependencies matured, conflict followed between educators and architects.

Conflict between professionals also can come to light when specialists operating in one arena are regarded as less competent or informed than other specialists whom the public can draw upon. For example, before the formation of Chicago's school-building collaboration, the educators' Bureau of Architecture was pitted in such a competition with outside architects; once the joint operation began, differences surfaced between outside city planners and city planners working for the municipality. Meanwhile in Boston's collaboration, outside educators were at loggerheads with educators within the school system, and again professional resourcefulness was part of the issue.

The second general subcategory of conflict, the clash between different levels of government, can occur when contentions arise between groups which exercise or claim authority for controlling geographic areas. Often those affiliated with middle-level bureaucracies appear to be out of touch with popular and comfortable grassroots values. A review of recent Boston history reveals only one such protracted and acrimonious conflict and that was in the pre-collaboration stage between the city's school-builders and neighborhood interests pressing for improved facilities. In Chicago, however, three such conflicts appear in both the pre-collaboration and the collaboration stages: (1) between state legislators and those who build the city's schools, (2) between the city's political machine and those charged with school-building, and (3) between various neighborhood groups and the municipality's school-building authorities.

The final subcategory is exemplified by municipal professionals who challenge the preferred outputs of members of the same profession at federal, state or neighborhood levels of government. A resolution of these differences can occur when city authorities modify the output they had rejected (to fall within the range of outputs they will accept); this sort of working-out took place, for instance, in Chicago's pre-collaboration stage when educators at the municipal level acceded to a previously rejected recommendation of a panel of educators at the federal level that an outside consultant be hired to make long-range plans for desegregation; Chicago's educators made this output palatable by subsequently failing to implement procedures which would bring off the desegregation aspect of the consultants' long-range plan. As in other conflict situations, a resolution of intra-professional, inter-governmental competition also can unfold when authorities modify their preferred output to include aspects that they previously have excluded. Such a modification was developed for Boston's inter-agency operation when municipal architects spontaneously revised their plans to take account of selected objections a neighborhood-representing architect was raising.[4]

These political forces are summarized in Table 1, following. The left-hand column lists the conflicts which appear to have undermined the rationale for the old policy-making structures dominated by schoolmen. The middle column mentions the new division of policy-making labor which the inter-agency transactions are facilitating. The third column lists types of conflicts which seem to have resulted from the restructuring of authority.

Two caveats about this Table should be made. First, the various conflicts are not listed in chronological order; in the Table, all conflicts of the same subcategory are grouped together for convenience. Second, as the arrows imply, the elements of the three columns do relate to each other. But one should not expect perfect horizontal triads (with, say, the conflict listed in the first column stimulating the first responsibility mentioned in the second column which then generates the first conflict cited in the third column); precise patterns will not be found by reading exactly across the Table. What can be noted is that there is a general interconnectiveness consonnant with the dynamic of the Easton model.

re-Collaboration Stage	Changes in Authority for Policy-Making	Collaboration Stage
. Conflicts between Professionals		A. Conflicts between Professionals
1. Different Professions		1. Different Professions
a. Educators vs. Urban Redevelopers (Boston) b. Educators vs. City Planners (Chicago)	1. Meaningful inclusion of Public Facilities Department (Boston) and of Department of Development and Planning (Chicago) in site sections.	a. Educators vs. Architects
2. Same Profession		2. Same Profession
a. Board of Education Architects vs. Outside Architects (Chicago)	2. Assumption of design management and construction supervision by Public Facilities Department (Boston) and by Public Building Commission (Chicago).	a. Outside Educators vs. School Committee Educators (Boston) b. Outside City Planners vs. Department of Development and Planning City Planners (Chicago) c. Outside Architects vs. Public Building Commission Architects (Chicago)
	3. Guidance in bond administration by financial counselors in the employ of the city (Boston and Chicago).	
. Conflicts between Governmental Levels		B. Conflicts between Governmental Levels
1. Municipal School-Building Interests vs. State Legislators (Chicago)	4. Openness of educators to suggestions from collaborators on educational programming and on educational specifications (Boston and Chicago).	1. State Legislators vs. Municipal School Builders (Chicago)
2. Municipal School Builders vs. The Political Machine (Chicago)		2. Municipal School Builders vs. The City's Political Machine (Chicago)
3. Municipal School Builders vs. Neighborhood Interests (Boston and Chicago)		3. Municipal School Builders vs. Neighborhood Interests (Chicago)

Continued

Pre-Collaboration Stage (continued)	Changes in Authority for Policy-Making (continued)	Collaboration Stage (continued)
C. Conflict among Members of the same Profession at different Government Levels		C. Conflicts between Members of the same Profession at different Government Levels.
1. Municipal Educators vs. Educators at the Federal Level (Chicago)		1. Municipal Architects vs. Neighborhood-Representing Architects (Boston)

A MODEL OF THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

Table 1

From Pre-Collaboration to Collaboration Stages

A point of Table 1 is that the major recasting of the policy-making structure for Boston and Chicago's school-building cannot be explained as the outcome of only a single kind of political conflict; nor should the political aftermath of the collaboration be entirely represented by a single major friction. Rather, competitions may be discerned in the context of patterns where a pre-collaboration conflict is related to a change of policy-making authority which in turn is related to the nature of a particular conflict in the collaboration stage. Situations in Boston and Chicago tend to support this point. First, Chicago.

During the 1967-68 academic year, some Chicago neighborhoods were at a peak in their dissatisfaction with the staff of the Board of Education. Frustrated over the low level of amenity in many of their children's schools, they were worried too that educators might try to build educational parks for a mix of racial and income groups. When it turned out that money and commitment was not available for such extensive construction and redirection, the Board's staff -- wanting the aura of doing "something" progressive -- chose to implement a fiscally modest plan for mandatory busing in two neighborhoods. These educators failed to consult, however, with all the white communities to which the black students were to be transported and when great opposition materialized, the Board withdrew and severely tempered its staff's plans. White ethnic groups, outraged at the educators even attempting to implement these busing schemes, launched a campaign to defeat an upcoming referendum for more school-building funds. It was at this point that one of Mayor Daley's key trouble-shooters convinced other citywide leaders that the Board should cancel the imminent referendum and instead finance the needed schools through the bonding powers of the Public Building Commission, an agency that floated general revenue bonds to construct and operate municipal properties. This action paved the way in 1968 for municipal bondsmen to start handling the revenue-raising for new schools as they had done for other PBC projects. After 1968, the political appointees of the Daley organization who ran the Public Building Commission and the Department of Development and Planning brought to the school-building arena a "feel" for the pressures and cross-pressures of urban politics. Neighborhood interests still were disturbed on occasion with the school builders (conflicts erupted over the placement and character of facilities), but the political stresses were no where near as intense as when the Board's staff, in complete control of this arena, had miscalculated public sentiment enough to stimulate marches and picketing at city hall.

The refusal of state legislators to support local demands for more money for education can be counted as the start of another thread from Chicago's collaborative situation. This refusal meant that the Board of Education was forced to find cash for school construction elsewhere. Partly as a result, city politicians agreed to let the educators tap the Public Building Commission's bonding capacities for twenty schools. While the collaboration's bondsmen were still preparing their first school-building prospectus, another conflict over finance evolved. Several taxpayer-maximizing legislators, depreciating the city's involvement in this arena and alarmed at the city bypassing the legislature and electorate to set up an inter-agency operation for school-building, introduced bills into the General Ass [illegible] te the collaboration. This attack was turned back in Springfield, however, by other political forces, including allies of Mayor Daley.

A long Chicago thread begins in the early 1950s with the Bureau of Architecture within the Board of Education buffering by comparison with more modern and economical private architects, putting the "stodgy" and expensive design management of Chicago's schoolmen into some disrepute. Subsequent school plans often were prepared by architects outside the schools' bureaucracy, thereby setting a precedent for those outside the professional ranks of the Board sometimes to make vital design determinations. Then during 1959 and in the mid-1960s, schoolmen were accused of making deficient field-checks of the work of their building contractors. In 1968, when the city's Public Buildings Commission began financing the new schools, Mayor Daley and other political leaders of the municipality chose to strengthen the design and construction control of PBC's non-educators, ostensibly to avoid the risk of the mismanagement of public funds. With this design and construction responsibility, in time a high-quality PBC staff found itself having to contend with private architects it had hired; those private offices resisted being overseen (or "dictated to") by public architects, i.e., "bureaucrats." Quite likely, the conflicts of 1969 and thereafter between these private and public architects would not have surfaced if Chicago's educators and their relatively unsophisticated in-house architects still had their pre-1968 status as the central professionals in school-building. In the collaboration stage, conflicts also erupted over such matters as open vs. traditional plans and flexible vs. conventional furniture, and possibly these types of differences also might not have taken place if educators still were working with more domesticated architects than PBC provided after 1968.

Another thread in Chicago begins with the political conflicts of the 1960s between the Board's facility planners and the land-planning professionals working for the city. The educators' reluctance to divulge planning information became a focus for the city planners' resentment, particularly when it appeared that Chicago had lost over $26,000,000 in federal credits through the educators failing to give the planners advance information about the building of schools. Members of the city planning profession also complained about professional educators refusing to situate schools on sites in conformity with Chicago's comprehensive land plan. Ultimately, this conflict dissolved when the city, as a quid pro quo for allowing the Board to tap the money-raising powers of its Public Building Commission, required that its planners become the lead profession in selecting school locations. Once the new school-building program got underway, the municipality's planners chose to situate several of the new schools in major inland parks. Had Chicago's Department of Development and Planning not been a party to the school-building operation, it might have blocked this use of open space just as it had stopped some other attempts to take park land. Also, had the government's city planners contested such a diversion of recreation area, city planners putside the municipal structure would not have needed to rally their professional and political forces in a conflictive and somewhat vain attempt to deter the park takings.[5]

Two threads in Boston share a starting point -- that, on the whole in the mid 1960, the city's stock of schoolhouses was old, decaying, and manifestly inadequate.

Urban redevelopers, involved in renewing over a third of the city's land area, blamed educators at the School Building Commission for the slow-moving creation of new facilities that were not especially supportive of any comprehensive plan for Boston's physical facilities. Beyond this, the design management and construction supervision of the relative few schoolhouses that the educators did produce was said to be handled by professionals who, to judge simply by their record, were marginally equipped for their demanding tasks; even beyond this, public construction in Boston generally was tainted by newspaper reports of scandals concerning the contracting procedures. To counteract these situations, redevelopers persuaded the state legislature to endow a Public Facilities Department with special broad powers to build new schools rapidly, efficiently, and in numbers unseen in Boston for over 70 years.

The building professionals who were hired to staff the Public Facilities Department opted for "revolutionary" types of schools, with different student-teacher relationships and with students having greater responsibility than in the past for their own education. They and the educational consultants that PFD hired soon found themselves championing open-school plans against elements in the school bureaucracy who favored designs with more traditional self-contained classrooms. Some of the educational consultants regarded the school staff as guilty of fo[illegible] dragging and obsolescent thinking; the two groups of educators, never very close, has some near ruptures in their working relationships at programming conferences; but in the end the outside educators prevailed, twelve relatively open-plan schools were authorized for construction.

The situation later at an annex for a school exemplifies the school's bureaucracy's unwillingness to adapt an open-plan program proposed by PFD architects. In this case, the principal of the school prevailed, his seniors being unwilling to offend him (he was two years away from retirement and respected throughout the system) by publicly overruling his preference for the more traditional design.

With neighborhood interests pressing on Boston's pre-collaborative stage for more and better schools, the mayor advocated the establishment of a Public Facilities Department whose director he could name and hold responsible for expeditious and responsive performance. While the city did not have community organizers dealing with school-building matters in various neighborhoods, from almost the start the PFD did seek out community opinions with the diligence of a political agency; later the school system's new Educational Planning Center also worked closely with community groups on questions related to new facilities. Conflicts materialized often about open-plan buildings, neighborhood interests having heard for instance about schools which had not succeeded with such arrangments. Communities typically did come to believe, however, in this new approach after concerted efforts at persuasion by municipal school-builders. Given the antagonism that many in Boston's school system had toward this type of design, it is conceivable that this type of conflict also would not have materialized if PFD was not in a policy-making position.

This brief account provides grounds for rough hypothesizing about the school-building arena as a political system. The above synthesis gives some credance to the idea that the collaborative process can move from (1) a number of political conflicts to (2) a change in policy-making authority which favors inter-agency collaboration and then back to (3) a number of political competitions. As operationalized with the notions of conflict, the Easton model appears to be a theoretically satisfying way to organize data on the antecedents and consequences of a transfer of power. Events going on outside the authority structure can be tied together with inter-agency responsibilities. The issues of one stage can be identified as resurfacing in other forms during a later stage.

Implications of this Study

From the pre-collaboration portion of this study, it may be inferred that a set of conflicts can lead to the formation of inter-agency operations; the airing of dissatisfactions between different organizations possibly can set a stage for the cooperative working-out that may serve the problem-solving needs of interacting agencies. Accordingly, those who look for school systems to engage in reciprocal relations with other bureaus may want to give some thought to nurturing or even accelerating, either covertly or overtly, conflicts between different governmental levels, between members of the same and different professions, and between members of the same profession at different governmental levels. Out of such conflicts might come decisions to resolve or accommodate differences through an administrative structure which facilitates some inter-agency cooperation. Inter-organizational disagreement may be turned into a stimulant for new mechanisms for group accomplishment.

That the inter-agency operations in Boston and Chicago were not unions which professional school people sought in an attempt to improve their services or to help mitigate urban problems leads one to suspect that municipal authorities in other cities migh also increasingly question the legitimacy of schoolmen continuing to monopolize or even dominate particular functions such as school-building. The educators' claim to professional control and public trust, especially in these times of community participation, may lose some of its power and appeal as conflicts reveal that urban educators appear to be insensitive to the values of other professionals (with their own claims to expertise and their own critics to respond to) or of other levels of government (with their sense of popular support). As in Boston and Chicago, municipal authorities may turn to groups other than the local educators, commissioning them to reflect popular values and to help coordinate certain technical means for new performances.

[1] His most detailed treatment of the systems idea is in his A Systems Analysis of Political Life (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1965).

[2] See for example Jay Scribner, "A Functional Systems Analysis of School Board Performance," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, School of Education, University of California at Los Angeles, and David O'Shea, "School Board-Community Relations and Local Resource Utilization," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Education, University of Chicago, 1971.

[3] Charles R. Adrian, "State and Local Government Participation in the Design and Administration of Intergovernmental Programs," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, CCCLIX, (May, 1965), 36-43.

[4] This episode is interestingly told in William L. Roberts, "New School Construction in Boston: A Study of The Politics and The Process," unpublished master's thesis, Department of Urban Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, January, 1972.

[5] For more extensive coverage of this particular conflict, see Richard G. Townsend, "Classrooms vs. Trees in Public Trust Lands, Paepecks vs. Public Building Commission of Chicago," Journal of Urban Law, November 1972, 257-272.