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ABSTRACT

A study was made of the crucial role of the college dean in implementing curriculum changes in schools of education. With the passage of the Education for Handicapped Children law, reform in teacher education programs became necessary. College deans were given federal grants along with the responsibility of overseeing major educational innovations. The following duties on the part of the dean, critical to supporting the faculty at a time of change, were identified: (1) managing a temporary system to carry out project activities; (2) allocating resources; (3) performing ceremonial functions; (4) acting as a persuader; (5) providing social and political support; (6) serving as liaison to outsiders; (7) disseminating information; and (8) interacting on a personal level with project staff, faculty, and others related to the grant. (JD)

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## THE EDUCATIONAL DEAN: AN EXAMINATION OF BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH SPECIAL PROJECTS

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Detroit, Michigan

## THE EDUCATIONAL DEAN: AN EXAMINATION OF BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH SPECIAL PROJECTS

The present investigation concentrated on the role of the dean in schools and departments of education as they attempted to manage a federally-funded change project. Although the role of the dean has been studied in the larger context (Cyphert and Zimpher, 1977; Conant, 1967; Dejnozka, 1978), we aimed at narrowing our observations to a particular set of behaviors associated with a specific set of activities.

### BACKGROUND

In 1975, the Education for Handicapped Children Act became public law. The implications of this piece of legislation have been assessed by some to be far-reaching and the bill's number, "94-142," has become a buzz word for professionals expected to implement the reforms implied in the law which include:

1. establishing structures where handicapped children will be educated in an appropriate environment (e.g. regular classrooms instead of special classrooms, in many instances);
2. guaranteeing an educational program that is tailored to specific needs of a particular handicapped child;
3. increasing the involvement of parents in creating and monitoring their handicapped child's educational program.

In anticipation of the legislation, and from an awareness of the new skills that would be required of teachers, the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH) offered schools and departments of education in colleges and universities small grant awards (\$40,000) to plan and develop new teacher-preparation programs. According to Behrens and Grosenick (1978), three requirements were imposed by the funding agency on recipients.

1. The Dean of the School or Department of Education had to agree to direct the project.
2. The grantees had to agree to plan and implement a program that would respond to the needs (and regulations) of local, state, and national agencies.
3. The grantees had to agree to involve professionals from many departments of the university in the project and make sure that it not become the sole province of special education.

The first requirement carried in the invitation from BEH and the subsequent awards that became known as Deans' Grants piqued our interest for two reasons. We knew from the literature on innovation and change in the public schools that school leaders were central in facilitating change efforts. Fuller and Pomfret (1976), Berman and McLaughlin (1975), Emrick (1977), Miles (1978), and Runkel, Schmuck, Arends and Francisco (1979) all had produced evidence that showed that without the principal's active support and endorsement, almost any effort by outside change agents, such as the federal government, would fail. A recent investigation of our own (Reinhard, Arends, Kutz and Wyant, 1979 and Wyant, Reinhard and Arends, 1980) produced the same results. However, this evidence did not exist in the literature on change in higher education, nor had the role of key administrators in promoting change in colleges and universities been carefully examined.

Second, requiring the dean, the top administrator in schools and departments of education, to serve as director of a special project that carried rather precise intents from the funding authority was expecting a set of behaviors not traditionally associated with the formal authority and status of that role. To examine this strategy, we sought information that would answer the following questions.

1. When deans of education are put into the role of Project Director, and where they are expected to stimulate change within their own organization, what behaviors will they perform?
2. Which of these behaviors will be viewed as facilitative and helpful by faculty and staff in schools and departments of education, and which will be perceived as restraining and/or unhelpful?

## METHODS

For this study, we adapted a methodology that we had developed earlier in our attempt to examine the role of principals in relation to externally funded change projects (Reinhard, Arends, Kutz and Wyant, 1979, and Wyant, Reinhard and Arends, 1980). Information was collected from two basic sources--from documents (proposals, evaluation reports, etc.) and from structured interviews during on-site observations. We use the term mini-case studies to characterize our actual field work and later analysis. We acknowledge the influence of Stake (1976, 1977, 1978), Denny (1979), Lofland (1971), and Guba (1978) on the conceptual and methodological frameworks we selected.

### Site Selection

In 1979, over one hundred institutions of higher education had been awarded Deans' Grants from BEH. From a list of these projects provided by the University of Minnesota's National Support System Project (a technical assistance network for Projects), we randomly selected a pool of fifteen sites from which the final sample of ten was chosen. The following criteria were used to guide site selection:

1. Geographical Representation: We wanted projects that represented various parts of the United States.
2. Size and Mission: We divided the total population of grantees into two different types of teacher training institutions: large multi-purpose universities with a research mission, and smaller colleges whose major focus was teacher training, because we wanted to study Deans' Grants in a variety of settings.
3. Period of Funding and Dean's Tenure: We required that those sites included in the sample would be at least in the second year of an award and that the dean would have been at the institution for at least one year. We did not want to study sites that were just beginning or projects where the dean was not broadly known by the faculty.
4. Willingness to Participate: We chose sites only from those who were willing to participate in the study and help make arrangements for data collection. No site that we contacted turned us down.

Table 1 displays the characteristics of the ten sites selected:

TABLE 1

Distribution of Selected Case-study Sites

Type of Institution	Northeast	North Central	South	South-east	West	Totals
Large/ Research	1	1	1		1	4
Small/ Teacher Training		1	1	2	2	6
Totals	1	2	2	2	3	10

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to arrival, we sought permission from the dean to collect data at his<sup>1</sup> site and arranged for interviews through a contact person assigned by the dean. We requested interview time with the dean, with the grant's

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<sup>1</sup>We will use masculine pronouns throughout this report because all of the deans in the sample were men.

project coordinator<sup>2</sup> and with six to ten faculty members. We asked the contact person to select some faculty members who were very knowledgeable and supportive of grant activities and some who were not so involved and/or critical of activities.

Interviews were guided by a set of questions more thoroughly described in the complete monograph of this research (Sivage, Reinhard and Arends, 1980). Essentially, we attempted to obtain information from our respondents that would allow us to understand the dean's project in the context of its particular setting and to identify specific behaviors exhibited by deans as they attempted to direct and manage their projects. We sought this information from two perspectives--the perspective of the dean himself and the view of faculty members or staff. We also asked respondents to make judgments about the degree to which identified behaviors were helpful or unhelpful in accomplishing the goals and activities of the projects.

We spent two days at each site observing Deans' Grant Projects and interviewing personnel. Each interview lasted from forty-five minutes to two hours. The data we report and discuss in the next section comes from the ninety-two individuals (ten deans, nine project coordinators, and seventy-three faculty members) interviewed at the ten sites in the sample.

Each researcher was responsible for writing up field notes from the interview protocols at each site visited. We had designed a format for our case write-ups in order to simplify content analysis. After all the site visits had been completed, each researcher did a preliminary analysis of three cases. The team met to compare the results of these independent analyses and establish inter-rater reliability. Thereafter, we analyzed our own remaining cases to compile general lists of supportive and nonsupportive behaviors.

The resulting lists were combined and grouped to fit various conceptual frameworks which had emerged from our observations, and our review of literature on higher education change processes.

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<sup>2</sup>In the process of preparing for data collection, we found that most projects had a person assigned to coordinate activities. We found this person to be well informed about the project and the dean's relationship to it.

## RESULTS

Although the aim of this investigation was not to evaluate Deans' Grants or to measure the degree to which deans were involved, an overall observation made in the process of conducting our research is worthy of note. In each of the ten institutions we visited we found a high level of involvement on the part of the dean. Deans were knowledgeable about their projects, had spent considerable effort in getting them launched, and, by the time of our arrival, enjoyed considerable faculty support and participation.

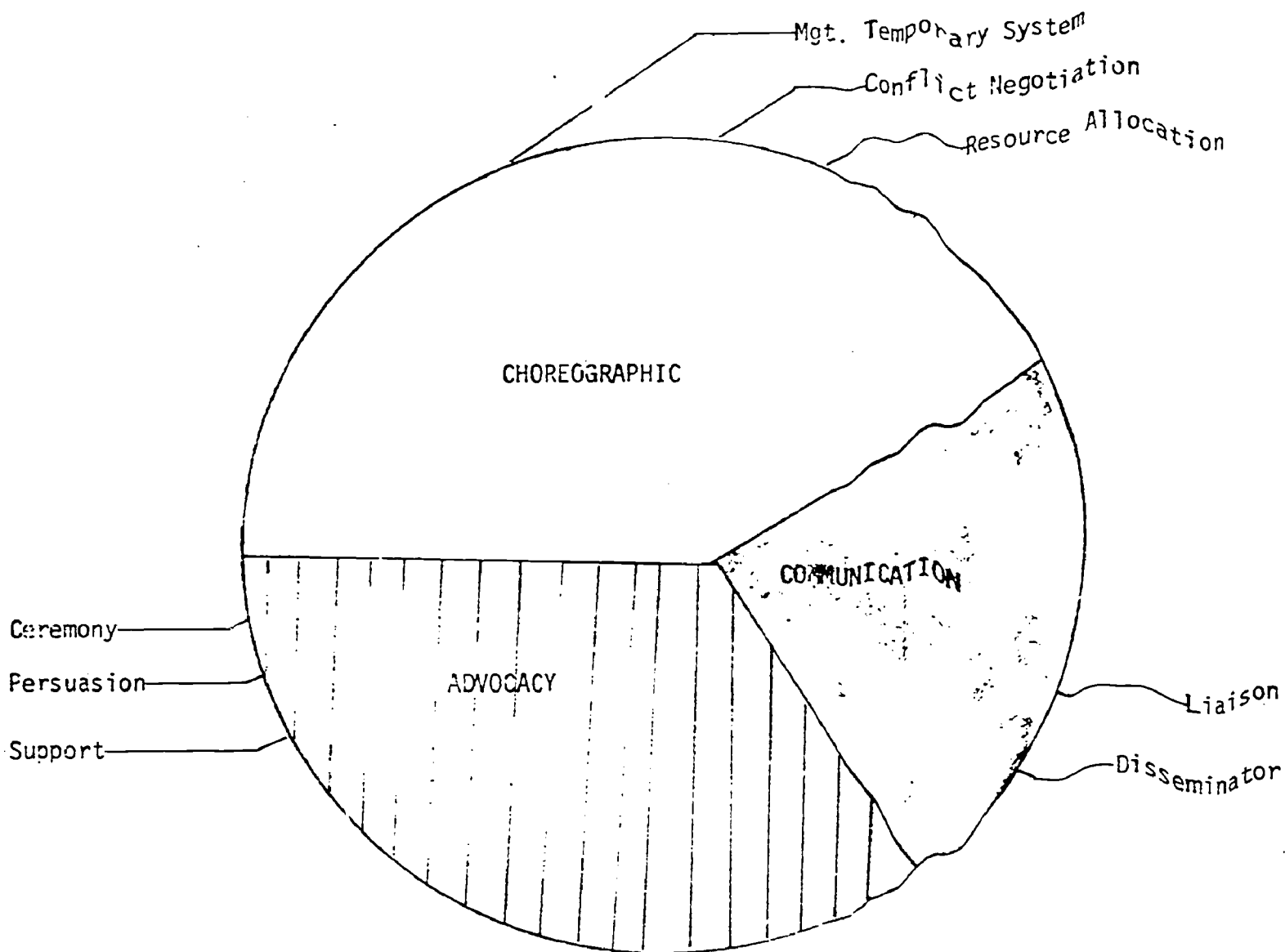
In this section we discuss the results of our analysis across the ten cases. We describe in two ways what we believe to be the critical set of behaviors of deans in relation to their projects. First, we describe categories of behaviors performed by deans that appear to influence the project. Second, we describe the respondents' judgment about the degree to which behaviors facilitate or restrain the work of project staff and faculty as they strive to implement the project's goals and activities.

### What Deans Do To Support Deans' Grants

As would be expected, deans perform many tasks associated with special projects. All in all, we were able to identify 244 independent supportive behaviors across the ten sites reported by the deans themselves or by members of their faculty. Over 30 behaviors were reported to be unsupportive. We found these behaviors could be divided into three general categories. For instance, some behaviors were directed toward setting up the special project within the existing organization and then insuring its maintenance through allocation of resources and the negotiation of conflicts as they arose. We have named this general set of behaviors "choreographic." Other behaviors reported are those we have chosen to call "advocate behaviors." These include instances where deans chose to interact on an interpersonal level with those associated with the project-- sometimes in purely ceremonial ways; other times using powers of persuasion on behalf of the project, and providing support. Behaviors associated with serving as a "communicative" link for messages to and from the outside and for disseminating messages internally comprise the third category.

Figure 1 on the following page displays the categories of behavior we observed. It is a categorization of incidence of reported behaviors. The categories do not represent the proportion of the deans' time spent on these behaviors. While some deans performed some behaviors more often than others, these behaviors were observed in every instance and seemed to cut across the sites we studied. Each category is discussed in more detail in the remainder of this section.

Figure 1: Categories of Supportive Behavior





## Choreographic Behaviors

In the field of dance, choreographers provide the composition for and then strive to get several skillful individuals working in unison to perform a dance arrangement. We show evidence of similar activity performed by deans. The most frequently reported behaviors of deans were those aimed at setting up the overall composition (structures and processes) that guided the activities of Deans' Grants and those aimed at helping maintain that system once it was going.

Building and Maintaining a Temporary System. To implement the aims of the Deans' Grants in all of the ten sites required a creation of some type of "temporary system" to plan and carry out a variety of project activities. In some of the larger projects this meant that new project staff had to be recruited and hired, special space for that staff acquired and procedures devised for the resources of the grant to be expended. In other projects, it meant forming special task forces whose members would serve as advisors to the dean or act as the governing board for the grant and its activities. The following examples show the actual behaviors of deans as they were reported to us.

- The Dean helped set policy under which the Coordinator was to work.
- The Dean assisted the Coordinator in developing objectives and timelines.
- The Dean established a task force that was to provide overall direction for the project.
- The Dean encouraged key faculty to serve on the project's advisory council.
- The Dean placed the project Coordinator in the office next to his.
- The Dean arranged for a college-wide retreat to discuss the project.
- The Dean set up monthly meetings with the Coordinator and project staff to review budget and progress.
- The Dean set up key committees and got faculty to serve on them.
- The Dean set up an advisory committee and served as chair of that committee.

Respondents reported behaviors as facilitative if they believed the temporary system created by the dean was working well. Behaviors of deans associated with creating and maintaining the temporary system were highly visible and important to faculty. These behaviors symbolized for faculty the high priority deans placed on the project.

Behaviors viewed as unhelpful were most often those associated with space and role. Placement of project staff, particularly a newly employed coordinator, seemed to be an important issue. Respondents, in almost every case, believed it was important for project staff to have easy access or to be in close proximity, to the dean. It was perceived as unhelpful when deans did not provide easy access.

Helping achieve clarity around role was also a set of behaviors by deans that respondents were quick to report. A special project within an existing organization upsets stable role relationships that exist and produces uncertainty among various role holders--the dean, the project coordinator, staff and faculty--about the exact behaviors expected. In some projects it seems that the deans had to spend considerable time and effort in making sure everyone understood and was satisfied with the work to be performed by the coordinator. In instances where the coordinator lacked appropriate skill and credibility, faculty were critical of the dean. Many times he had to set up structures that would insure that this person be granted the cooperation of senior faculty. In other projects, deans had to make their own roles clear; this normally meant assuring faculty that even though the dean believed in the aims of the project he would not do anything to interfere with the content of the curriculum of the teacher education program without faculty consent and that there would not be an overemphasis on special education. This issue was further complicated by the perception of regular faculty that special education faculty was already enjoying an increasing number of resources.

Acquiring and Allocating Resources. A critical set of behaviors, particularly emphasized by faculty, dealt with the way the dean acquired and allocated the resources associated with the grant and its activities. This included resources from the grant itself and other resources in the school or department that they had some authority to use. Examples of these behaviors include:

- the Dean gave every faculty member who developed a module in the summer a \$500 bonus.
- the Dean provided over \$20,000 from funds of the college to put faculty on summer salaries to plan an interdisciplinary course on mainstreaming.
- the Dean provided a half-time secretary and travel money from the departmental budget to help with Dean's Grant activities.
- the Dean talked to BEH and got an increase in our budget.
- the Dean contacted BEH when our proposal was not approved and assisted with renegotiations.
- the Dean released moneys from the grant for retreats and faculty release time.

Though the actual moneys for dean's grants were small, they seemed to provide a relatively large addition to the discretionary funds that the dean had available. The ways deans used these funds were highly visible to faculty and others associated with the grant. The decisions deans made about allocating their own resources as well as grant resources reflected their commitment to the project.

Negotiating Conflict. As might be predicted, no change in program or curriculum in higher education proceeded without considerable disagreement and conflict. Several theorists have made observations about the highly political and sometimes capricious anarchistic nature of organizations of higher education (Cohen and March, 1974; Baldrige, 1970, 1975, 1978; Weick, 1976). The curriculum reform in teacher-preparation programs advocated by the funding agency of Deans' Grants were aimed at upsetting the prevailing stability of the existing environment. From our observations, a sizable portion of the dean's effort was spent negotiating compromises between various factions and groups within his school or college as new practices were being discussed and implemented. Examples from the respondents we interviewed included:

- the first coordinator was not doing the job to everyone's satisfaction; the Dean had to step in and find another person that met the faculty's approval.
- when there are problems that need resolution, the Dean has made his office available.
- when one faculty member produced a product that was unacceptable, the Dean talked to him and got him to revise it.
- the Dean worked with faculty members who were showing resistance toward the new course.
- the Dean worked with people in the public schools to obtain their permission....
- the Dean has helped negotiate the differences between the regular education and special education factions.
- the Dean got all constituencies together to solve the problems.

### Advocacy Behaviors

A second category of behaviors we observed occurred when the dean chose to act as an advocate for the goals of the project and for the individuals involved in project activities.

Performing Ceremonial Duties. Respondents in each of the ten sites we studied reported some behaviors on the part of the dean in relation to Deans' Grants that were purely ceremonial in nature. These behaviors ranged from physical presence at an important meeting or introducing a

guest speaker at a luncheon seminar for faculty to co-signing certain memoranda. The deans, without exception, described the importance of these behaviors.

Nothing of substance in relation to the project was being accomplished with these ceremonial duties, nor did they involve serious decisions or actions. However, deans and faculty alike expected this type of behavior on the part of the dean and these ceremonial activities seem to lead to commitment and to the overall well-being of the project. Project participants were critical of deans who did not perform these duties.

Acting as Persuader. The funding agency for Deans' Grants probably had this set of behaviors most in mind when they required the dean to be the project's director. Undoubtedly, they would be pleased to hear that in fact the deans we observed did perform this role. A high proportion of the behaviors reported by respondents could be classified under this category. They were the second most reported type of behavior. An illustrative list of behaviors includes the following:

- at the first faculty meeting, the Dean made it clear that this project would be an all out effort.
- the Dean spoke about the grant and about mainstreaming in his "State of the College" address.
- the Dean used his clout at departmental meetings.
- the Dean convinced the faculty that this was an important effort.

In this role, deans were using the formal authority of their position to motivate and encourage others in their schools or departments to join behind an effort they deemed important. Advocacy behaviors were perceived as facilitative, even by critics of the project, if they were consistent and straightforward. Faculty and project staff seemed to expect the dean to take a strong stand on issues as long as he maintained the faculty's right to make final curriculum decisions. What was viewed by project staff and faculty as unhelpful or unfacilitative was nonperformance of these advocacy behaviors. For example a coordinator at one site told us "the Dean will not stand up in front of the total faculty and ask for support of the Dean's Grant." A response from a faculty member that "the Dean didn't keep faculty members aware of the implications of the grant" echoes the same sentiment at another site.

Providing Social and Political Support. A final category of behaviors involving advocacy behaviors we observed could best be called social and political support. In every project we visited, respondents expected the dean to give support to project and faculty personnel and saw lack of support as unhelpful and not facilitative. Examples from respondents include the following.

- our Dean is supportive of the project Coordinator.
- the Dean has given consistent support through all the different stages of this grant.
- I was touched that the Dean remembered that I was interested in physical education programs for the handicapped and sent me a personal note with a copy of an article he had picked up on that topic.

Support could vary from a pat on the back during a difficult time, a wink during an important meeting, or public acknowledgement and recognition for work and effort. We suspect that these sets of behaviors associated with the dean are not only satisfying socio-emotional needs of faculty and staff, but also enhancing the status and influence of the recipient in the eyes of other organizational members. We are reminded of the story told by W. Michael Blumenthal, who was Secretary of the Treasury during the Carter Administration. He said that he had learned that:

...when it comes to having and exercising influence, appearance matters a great deal. If you see the President every day, but nobody knows that you see him, your ability to get things done suffers as against if you see him once every three weeks but the fact that you do becomes known.  
(p. 51)

Support, particularly if it is made public, and access to those in formal authority provide the recipient with status and influence not enjoyed by all members of the organization. At the same time, failing "to compliment" and/or taking a "standoffish position" were viewed by project staff and faculty as undesirable and unfacilitative in accomplishing the aims of the project.

### Communicative Behaviors

A final set of behaviors attributed to deans as they served as project directors for their grants, we have named "communicative." It would appear that deans, partly because of their formal position and partly because they serve as project director of the grant, became the center of communication in relation to the project and its activities. These include messages coming into the project from the outside, those that circulate internally, and those sent to the outside world.

Serving as Liaison with Outsiders. From the reports of deans and faculty alike, a major set of facilitative behaviors that emerge are those associated with acting as a communication link or liaison between the project and outside agencies and persons. For example, we heard the following:

- the Dean volunteers information about the project to his colleagues elsewhere in the State.
- our Dean writes about the project in his quarterly report to local schools.

- our Dean has written articles about our project that have been published in national journals.
- our Dean is a constant source of information about what the national and state groups are thinking about.

The deans in Dean's Grant projects have been positioned so they could cultivate information sources from funding agencies, other projects, and national support and professional groups of one type or another. Faculty and staff viewed this type of behavior as facilitative and expected the dean to perform in this liaison role.

Although such acts did not constitute a large proportion of the total behaviors reported, deans were observed to spend some of their efforts acting as spokesperson for the project to groups and individuals outside the college or school. Behaviors associated with this role ranged from giving speeches at national conferences and writing articles for journals or newsletters to holding seminars and special meetings with teachers and administrators in the public schools. The role also involved submitting reports and giving presentations to keep superiors in the larger college or university informed about the grant and its activities.

Respondents at each site reported many communicative behaviors that were perceived as facilitative. In only one instance did we hear where the dean had spoken "negatively" about the project to some outside group, and, of course, faculty reported this as unhelpful.

Disseminator. Just as deans were in a central position to serve as a liaison with those outside the project, so were they central to disseminating information from the outside to members of their faculty and staff. Examples of these behaviors reported by the respondents include:

- the Dean spoke about the project to small groups of faculty whenever he got a chance.
- the Dean discusses his ideas about mainstreaming curriculum with faculty members.
- the Dean writes a column in the college newsletter explaining the grant's goals and activities.
- the Dean has sent several letters and memos to faculty and staff explaining the Deans Grant and its activities.
- the Dean went to a conference and brought back information for the faculty.

We don't mean to imply that all communication (or even most) were transmitted through the dean. In many cases it was the project coordinator who disseminated information. We highlight this set of behaviors because when the dean was involved, it was perceived as supportive.

## SUMMARY

We found a high level of involvement by deans in the federal projects they were asked to direct for the purpose of stimulating change in teacher-preparation programs. We identified three broad categories of behavior that seem to consume the time of the ten deans we studied.

- Choreography: Setting up the structures and processes under which the grant was to operate and providing maintenance.
- Advocacy: Interacting on an interpersonal level with project staff, faculty, and others related to the grant.
- Communication: Serving as a communication center for messages to and from the outside world and as disseminator of information internally.

Deans themselves, along with project staff and faculty, perceived the involvement of deans as critical for insuring the success of projects. Negotiating conflicts, allocating resources, providing social support, serving as an advocate and being an effective project spokesperson were behaviors performed by deans. When they were performed effectively, they were perceived by faculty and staff as helpful in accomplishing the goals and activities of the project. Conversely, forgetting to remain sensitive to faculty authority, neglecting to achieve clarity around project roles or failing to provide the appropriate amount of social and political support to faculty and staff was deemed unhelpful and restraining to the project.

## DISCUSSION

This study provides the first steps toward describing what deans do that supports or hinders curriculum change in higher education. It also illustrates striking similarities in behavior of deans across and within sites and has raised some important questions for future research.

Although we did not select sites on the basis of their project's success, we learned that none of the ten projects we visited was failing or in serious trouble. We also found that at all sites, deans and faculty were cooperative, facilitative to our investigation, and willing to share information with us quite openly. Our data sources reported far more instances of supportive behaviors than of unsupportive ones, and, within sites, reports from all respondents were amazingly consistent in their characterization of the dean's behavior in relation to the project. The ten deans were significantly more involved with the Dean's Grant than with other grants and contracts in their institutions, and all deans appeared to have the confidence of their faculty. Across sites, faculty members seemed to place high value on knowing what the dean thought of people, issues, and activities in the college; the individuals we interviewed also seemed to have that information.

The characteristics we have described would generally be considered positive and desirable. The perceived well-being of a project may make a difference in the way people view and report the dean's role. Is the dean an important contributor to the failure of a project? Are the dean's behaviors different in such cases? Do faculty members know less about and have less confidence in a dean when the Dean's Grant project is going badly?

We also found that the ten deans did not participate directly in conceptualization and development of curriculum change; those activities remained primarily the province of faculty. Instead, our findings suggest that the necessary supportive behaviors were ordinary and familiar: bringing together the right group of people, providing released time and other support mechanisms for project activities, and, in general, creating an optimal environment for the work to be done.

We asked people to describe behavior: what did the dean do that helped the project; what did he do that didn't help. Our findings suggest that the necessary supportive behaviors may, in fact, have a subtle, nonverbal worth. For example, we learned that project members valued easy access to the dean, and we learned that faculty members valued having the dean attend project meetings and activities. We do not know what made such access valuable, what messages were conveyed by proximity, or how gestures of closeness were interpreted as furthering project efforts.

The scope of our study does not provide information about the quality of the curriculum emerging from projects using the dean as principal investigator, nor does it define the nature of the dean's effect on those outcomes. Exploring the inferred meaning of the dean's behavior and its relationship to outcomes is, therefore, a relevant direction for further research. Furthermore, if it is accurate that educational administration is only loosely coupled to instructional activities as some theorists have described (for example Weick, 1976; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; and March, 1978), we wonder if involving the top administrator produces any real change in curriculum and instruction or does it merely present the illusion of success in that a set of special activities associated with a project have been successfully carried to completion, while school goes on as usual?

At the same time, the evidence collected in this study points to key behaviors that deans perform to support curriculum change. Knowing the specific behaviors that are perceived as helpful as compared to the more general admonition that administrative support is important can be useful to funding agencies that choose to use the strategy employed by BEH and by deans who decide to put their energy behind a particular project or reform effort.

If the dean's role and Dean's Grants can be shown to be influential to producing worthwhile change, other funding agencies will be attracted to the same strategy. We have two concerns about that possibility. Our



first concern is that if this strategy is more frequently used, it will absorb more and more of the dean's efforts and may, finally, be diluted through becoming commonplace. Our second concern is that the Dean's Grant's particular focus for change, education for the handicapped, is well supported by other external forces: the federal mandate itself, changes in state certification in special education, pressures from schools to provide training for their teachers who have handicapped students in regular classrooms. What Dean's Grants may accomplish, therefore, is not clearly the result of their being organized with this unusual strategy

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