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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire survey of 1,506 teachers in 89 elementary and secondary schools in eastern Massachusetts examined teachers' reactions to declining enrollments and school district retrenchment policies. The hypotheses tested suggest that, in districts whose reduction-in-force (RIF) policies include performance evaluations as well as seniority as criteria for dismissal, teachers facing imminent dismissal will seek greater participation in school decision-making because such RIF policies would increase teachers' uncertainty. This will be especially true, the hypotheses propose, when teachers have less contact with supervisors or principals. The survey gathered data on district enrollment changes and RIF criteria and on teacher age, sex, educational background, contact with administrators, and preferences for participation in school decision-making. Examination of the survey results using analysis of variance revealed little support for the hypotheses. Districts with quite different RIF criteria and enrollment declines showed only small differences in teacher preferences for decision-making participation. However, further evidence is being gathered to trace longitudinal changes as enrollment declines deepen and RIFs increase. (RW)

TEACHERS UNDER DURESS: SOME EFFECTS OF DECLINING ENROLLMENT AND DISTRICT STAFFING POLICIES

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INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

The national trend toward declining pupil enrollments is well documented (National Center for Education Statistics, 1980). Yet national figures disguise significant regional differences. While communities in the Midwest and Northeast are closing schools, those in the Southwest are coping with a swelling population. Even within regions there are often notable variations. For example, in Eastern Massachusetts some districts have lost half their enrollments since 1970 while others have grown by 10 to 50% during the same period.[1] Under these circumstances it is not surprising that educators did not plan for contraction, particularly when staffing needs rather than buildings or curricula were considered. As a knowledgeable official of the Massachusetts Teachers Association once said to one of my graduate classes: "Who could have believed that layoffs of tenured teachers would actually occur? Sure we read the statistics on enrollment, but we always hoped for an upturn in births or thought that at least normal attrition (through resignations, retirements or deaths) would take care of position cuts."

Declining pupil enrollments and the passage of property tax referenda, such as Proposition 2½ in Massachusetts, have forced many school districts to try to develop orderly mechanisms for staff contraction. This situation raises a series of agonizing questions. On what bases will staff be retained or released? Should the more senior teachers be kept while their younger, less experienced colleagues are let go? Or should other criteria, particularly performance evaluations, be considered? How will teachers, particularly in their colleague relationships, respond to the process of RIFing?

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[1] These figures are documented in the annual publications of the Department of Education's Enrollment Projections for Public Schools in Massachusetts and in data I obtained directly from a number of school districts.

In this paper I will consider one way in which teachers may cope with conditions threatening their job security. Specifically, I will examine the proposition that they will attempt to control or influence staffing decisions; i.e. appointments, promotions, transfers, and releases when: (a) their jobs are threatened by enrollment decline or budget cutbacks, (b) the process of staff reduction is based on ambiguous or unacceptable criteria and procedures and (c) they have minimum contacts with supervisors who evaluate them. A discussion of the theoretical rationale for this proposition will be followed by a preliminary test of its appropriateness.[1]

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In brief:

The paper's rationale can be summarized as follows. As bureaucratic organizations, schools have a formal division of authority extending from the superintendent to principals, teachers, and pupils. At the same time teaching tends to be solitary-work with one adult directing a classroom of children. The structural looseness of school systems gives teachers considerable autonomy or freedom from supervision. Generally speaking their work has a low level of interdependence with that of their colleagues (Lortie, 1977). Consequently, teachers tend to be uninvolved in educational decisions beyond the domain of their own classroom.

The onset of staff reductions has the potential to alter traditional role-relationships among practitioners. If the criteria and procedures for RIFing are ambiguous or unacceptable to teachers, staff dissatisfaction may trigger demands for a significant role in school decisions. More specifically, the possible use of poorly constructed or measured performance indicators may

[1] This report is based on the first of three teacher surveys to be conducted each Fall from 1980 to 1982. Obviously, longitudinal analysis will provide a more thorough test.

galvanize the demands of teachers to control or influence decisions affecting employment and job security.

From the literature:

Drawing on Max Weber's rational model of bureaucratic organizations, school systems are portrayed by Bidwell (1965: 974) to have clear lines of authority based on a hierarchical ordering of roles. Furthermore, individual merit and competence are central to one's recruitment and promotion to staff positions. He concludes this description by noting that schools function "according to rules of procedure which set limits to the discretionary performance of offices by specifying both the aims and modes of official action" (italics added). This last point will be considered later when we examine RIF criteria and procedures.

The so-called rational bureaucratic model of organization does not take into account the discretionary powers enjoyed by teachers in the classroom. Often physically isolated from other adults and freed from close supervision by administrators, "teachers usually have considerable autonomy in handling the interpersonal aspects of teaching" including the "timing, pacing and myriad details of classroom management" (Lortie, 1977: 33). In effect, the structural looseness (Bidwell, 1965) or loose coupling (Weick, 1976) of school systems is conducive for the development of a professional work-orientation among teachers. On the surface at least they are free to exercise their professional judgment in the delivery of services. The presence of other factors may inhibit this type of professionalism.

First, even if teachers are conceded the right to set the pace and timing of learning conditions, their selection of curriculum content or materials may be overruled by administrators or even school board members. They often do not have the ultimate authority or power to determine what should be taught or how.

This absence of control may arise partly from a lack of a common technical language based on a systematic body of knowledge (Dreeben, 1970; Lortie, 1975). Another constraining factor may be the legitimate preferences of parents and members of the local community. Whatever it's cause, teachers generally have not been granted the right of self-regulation associated with a professional status (Hall, 1969; Lortie, 1975; Myers, 1973).[1]

Second, schools organized into self-contained classrooms provide limited opportunities for the formation of colleague standards. Although teachers are freed from intensive administrative supervision they infrequently see others at work (Dreeben, 1973). Furthermore, a low level of task interdependence (Lortie, 1977) promotes a highly individualistic orientation. In other words there is less incentive for colleague communication or collaboration when the work setting is divided into autonomous units. Alternative structural arrangements, for example team-teaching, are more conducive for regular discussion and planning of classroom strategies. Whether this occurs or not depends in large measure on work interdependence (Bredo, 1977; Cohen et. al., 1979). For example; the crossgrouping of pupils by ability or subject area requires less coordination than joint teaching of a lesson. In addition, school staffs with a low proportion of teaming appear to have less participation in school-wide decision making than those with more extensive collaboration (Johnson, 1975). In short, teachers may have autonomy (i.e. independence from supervisory influence) without obtaining peer control or consensus over professional practice.

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[1] Some educators (e.g. Covert, 1975; Featherstone and Featherstone, 1977; McDaniel, 1979) have expressed skepticism about the feasibility or advisability of this pursuit toward professionalism. Etzioni (1969), McDaniel (1979) and others have classified teaching as a semi-profession. Such distinctions are fruitless. The more important question is: What are the opportunities "for individual self-expression, for free exercise of judgment, and for the self-determination of work activities?" (Dreeben, 1970: 16).

As an alternative to hierarchical control and a means of increasing the professionalism of teaching, some scholars have advocated a participatory model of school organization and governance (Corwin and Edelfelt, 1977; Featherstone and Featherstone, 1977; Lieberman, 1956; Lortie, 1975; Moeller and Mahan, 1971; Tumin, 1977). This theme has also been part of recent collective bargaining agreements (Mitchell et. al., 1981). Have teachers won a significant role in educational decision-making? Although a negotiated contract provides the legal skeleton for school management, administrators and teachers are ultimately responsible for its effective implementation. Johnson's study (1981: 19) clearly illustrates the variety of possible responses from principals to contractual language:

> ... Some enhanced the opportunity to involve teachers in school management while others strictly limited teachers to advisory roles. A few used the contract to manage the school and insisted on literal compliance with its provisions, while most minimized its role and relied instead on reciprocal relations with teachers to get things done.

Similarly, teachers may want broad participation in all aspects of school functioning, or they may be satisfied with their union's enforcement of contract provisions restricting administrative infringements on their classroom or out-of-class periods. Central to this discussion is the scope of teacher involvement. More specifically, do they have a role in the hiring, promotion, or firing of staff; or are they limited to more immediate concerns such as the selection of instructional materials? Generally speaking, teachers have been more concerned about instructional decision-making than purely administrative matters (Crockenberg and Clark, 1979; Carson and Friesen, 1978). As I will shortly argue, their professional interests may widen if job-retention becomes an issue.

The channel of involvement is another consideration. During the 1960's and 70's teachers across the country took militant action, including strikes and non-compliance with district directives, in order to win legal recognition of the right to organize and to engage in collective bargaining. In some instances such militancy has served to increase union membership (Guthrie and Craig, 1973). Additionally, as teachers have acquired power they have increasingly viewed themselves as professionals capable of establishing work standards and participating in the decision-making processes of the school system (Corwin, 1970, 1974; Cox and Elmore, 1976; Spring, 1978).

This drive toward colleague control of, or influence on, school affairs has been limited by internal divisions among instructional practitioners (Rotigel, 1972). Some prefer individual autonomy to collegial discipline (Lortie, 1975). Others are more supportive of a hierarchical model of governance. Both groups may feel that informal contact with administrators is the way to attain their educational objectives. At least one social scientist (Moeller, 1968) found that teachers in highly bureaucratic school systems had a higher sense of power when they had personal contact with administrators. Following this line of reasoning, union mobilization of teacher colleague groups may be mitigated by persistent, satisfying contacts of staff members with administrators.

In addition to union negotiations and informal contacts, a faculty council may be a vehicle for influencing school decisions. In the San Jose Teacher Involvement Project (Crockenberg and Clark, 1979) each school's instructional staff, usually with the help of their principal, drew up a formal constitution specifying the council's function. In some buildings, the faculty offered advice or dispensed pertinent information. In others, the principal needed to consult staff members before taking action. In still others, the latter approved

or authorized administrative action. While most teachers opted for an advisory or consultative role, a few sought and obtained more direct control of school operations. As Crockenberg and Clark (1979: 116) report the level of involvement "depended on the issue, the degree to which it affected significant professional interests of the faculty, and the willingness of the teachers to take risks in assuming responsibility for their decisions."

Other "models for teacher participation" (Myers 1973: 100-105) have been proposed. However it is not my intention to be all inclusive on the topic of governance. Rather the discussion of the scope and mechanisms of teacher influence on school decisions leads us to two fundamental questions for investigation: Will the likelihood of staff releases (due to declining enrollments or budget measures like 2½) prompt teachers to seek a direct role - whether through informal or formal consultation or through a union contract or council deliberations - in personnel decisions, an area usually reserved to administrators? More importantly, under what conditions is this likely to occur?

To address these questions we will focus on some basic tenets of school organization and governance. As an ideal type a rational hierarchical model stipulates lines of authority and power from superintendent to instructional personnel. In practice, the autonomy of teachers and their recently won right to collective bargaining mean that a negotiated order of management prevails in most school systems. Principals may be authoritarian or democratic administrators. Staff members may be contentious or open to formal and informal negotiations. The point is that unless internal dissensions dominate school relationships, a mutual understanding of, if not agreement on, rights and responsibilities will develop among all parties. The onset of declining enrollment and budget cuts contains the potential to undermine this legitimate order of management.

If staff contraction becomes necessary but the criteria and procedures for RIF are ambiguous or unacceptable to staff members, then the stage is set for increased demands of teachers to control or influence decisions affecting their employment and job security. As presently conceived, constructed and used, most measurements of teaching performance do not provide a clear answer to the questions: Who stays? Who goes? And on what basis? More precisely, administrative discriminations about effective teaching tend to be arbitrary and unsubstantiated by continual classroom observations (Johnson, 1980).[1] This may be the result of the poor quality of the instruments or the inadequate training of, or time available to, administrators. Another more fundamental reason is often found in prevailing role relationships among practitioners.

As long as a class doesn't violate school rules of decorum, e.g., no excessive noise, a principal or department head is unlikely to make an extended visit to a classroom (Lortie, 1977). He or she may not want to intrude on the normal flow of classroom interaction. In some institutions teachers may have limited contact with administrators in a work context. Yet some research (e.g., Corwin, 1970; Gross and Herriott, 1965) has shown that the active involvement of supervisors is preferred by staff members. In Corwin's view teachers complain most about "being evaluated without being observed" (1970: 135).

We come then to the major reasons why I have hypothesized that RIF criteria which include performance evaluations pave the way for teacher agitation should the day of dismissal be at hand. Staff evaluations have traditionally been diagnostic, prescriptive and generally non-punitive. Furthermore, written comments

[1] There are many possible reasons for this. In addition to the poor quality of evaluation instruments, administrators often do not have the skills or the available time to make a thorough and fair assessment. Furthermore, philosophical or personality differences with staff members may bias their interpretations.

are likely to emphasize positive qualities and competencies. If a principal or department head is expected to make more discriminating assessments which will be included in layoff decisions, then controversies over interpretations are likely. The more so if such assessments and interpretations are derived from a poorly constructed instrument used on one brief classroom visit.

In effect, I am hypothesizing that this situation threatens the negotiated order of management established in schools. In the process it may galvanize teachers to see questions of staffing as part of their "professional interest". A school board's imposition of RIFing policies and procedures may be viewed as an encroachment on teachers' professional status and as a "shared ordeal" to be confronted through collegial efforts. If this is so, the school board inadvertently will have created the type of solidarity and collegial feeling found in the established professions (Lortie, 1975: 74).

Unlike evaluations, years of service to a district provide a more measurable, and thereby a more acceptable criteria among teachers (Martin, 1977: National School Board Public Relations Association, 1976). One knows where one stands on a seniority list and can make reasonable estimates of being fired. Total teaching experience or degrees obtained can usually be used to break ties in dates of appointment. Although seniority creates other problems which are discussed in another paper (Phelan, 1982) it is an orderly way of accomplishing staff contraction while preserving existing role-relationships in a school (Murnane, 1981). At least a teacher is not as threatened by a principal's suggestions for improving performance.

Staff preferences for participation in staffing decisions may be related to differences in social background. Previous research has shown that men are "slightly more professionally oriented" than women (Corwin, 1970; 342). Age

and teaching experience are probably more important factors (Cole, 1969). Now, younger teachers of the 1970's "never knew a time without collective bargaining by teacher unions" (O'Donley, 1977: 34). Consequently they may be more inclined than their older colleagues to seek control over staffing decisions. Other background characteristics such as degree of graduate education may be indicators of a commitment to teaching as a professional career.

Finally, the impact of a district's enrollment pattern and RIFing policies may be counfounded by staff composition, e.g. proportion of younger members.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Data Sources.

The research reported here is part of a three-year study of colleague relationships within the differing contents of enrollment change, RIF policies and procedures, and actual staff releases. Sixteen school districts, geographically spread from Northeastern Massachusetts to Cape Cod on the South, were selected for participation in the study. Eight of these districts had experienced declines ranging from 10% since 1975 to 37% since 1969. With relatively stable or increasing enrollments, the remaining eight had been chosen as a control group. However, these districts will need to be closely watched and analyzed as a result of staff reductions due to Proposition 2½.

Every effort was made to construct a sample which matched changes in enrollment with variations in RIF language and socio-economic composition. To illustrate, two moderate income communities near Boston had equally sharp contraction (i.e., greater than 30% since 1970-72) in school population but differed completely in retention policies; one with a strongly worded seniority clause and the other with multiple criteria including performance. Similarly, two more affluent

middle-class suburbs and one working-class city had a 25-30% decline since 1973 but placed a different emphasis on seniority: namely, the last consideration among several, one of many criteria with no priority, and the most important factor. Three other communities shared more modest enrollment declines but represented varied RIF clauses and socio-economic composition. Similar heterogeneity appeared in the "control" group although three of these systems did not have a RIF clause.

Since the district sample was not selected at random, the reader may ask how the study's results can be generalized across Massachusetts and the United States. This question overlooks the primary purpose of the project to explore the effects of different staffing policies on the professional commitments of teachers. In other words, we need more knowledge about teacher responses to alternative educational strategies for coping with organizational contraction.

Wherever possible within each district, four elementary schools, one middle or junior high school, and half of the high school departments were selected at random.[1] Adjusting for differences in the grade structure and distribution of schools, and the non-participation of one high school, we arrived at a 1980-81 sample of 89 schools. Within each unit, the principal and all regular classroom teachers were invited to participate in a series of surveys and interviews during 1980-83. Despite the strong feelings of voter rejection and job insecurity generated by Proposition 2½, 56% (N = 1,506) of the eligible teachers completed a self-administered questionnaire during the period October 1980 - February 1981.[2]

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[1] I first divided elementary schools into (a) traditional and (b) alternative organizational forms. If possible, two of each type were then selected. In one high school two "houses" rather than departments were the participants.

[2] These were regular classroom teachers (including music, art, and physical education) employed on a full-time basis (with the exception of kindergarten) at one of the 89 schools. All teachers in two small high schools (located in stable systems) were surveyed. Responses in January - February 1981 were the result of our follow-up of the Fall survey.

Of those responding, 49% are located in one of the eight declining districts. Two-thirds are female and a striking 85% hold tenure.[1] This sample is slightly skewed toward a younger generation of teachers (i.e. 67% born during the 40's or 50's) but a generation with high credentials (i.e. 52% with at least a Master's degree and only 13% without some graduate study).

Method of Analysis.

The basic analytical model takes teacher preferences for teacher participation in personnel decisions as the dependent variable, and the district context, enrollment change and RIF language, as the major independent variable. Elaboration of this model occurs when we add intervening organizational factors, e.g. principal-staff contact, and individual background variables, e.g. age. After further analysis of existing data supplemented by later surveys and interviews, we will have a clearer view of the hypothesized influence discussed in this paper.

There are five steps to the analysis of the survey data. First, a measure of teacher preferences for school decision-making was determined from the question: "What role do you believe teachers should play in decisions on the following?". Eight items were listed including appointment of teaching staff, appointment of school principal, tenure decisions, staff retention, transfer of teachers, and instructional techniques. For each item response alternatives and scores assigned were:

(1) Administrators should make decisions with little or no role for teachers.

(2) Administrators should informally consult teachers.

(3) Administrators should formally consult teachers.

(4) Teachers should make decisions with little or no role for administrators.

[1]Tenure is usually given after three years of service.

Guttman scaling techniques were applied to the data in order to determine if there was a hierarchical structure to responses. Although a scale was constructed, it severely reduced variability to pass or fail for each item. I found that a simple additive measure which included degree of preferred role-involvement, was more successful in subsequent analyses of variance.

Responses to two key items were summed; namely, appointment of teaching staff and appointment of school principal.[1] Taking the sample as a whole the majority of teachers, as expected, did not seek a formal decision-making role in both personnel areas ($\bar{X} = 4.18$; $SD = 1.42$). It will be interesting to see if the long-term effects of Proposition 2½ and declining enrollment induce movement toward more direct influence. Such an outcome is suggested from a breakdown of responses by district, which show declining systems with multiple RIF criteria obtaining the highest average scores. More on this later.

As a second step in the analysis, I arranged school districts according to the critical contexts of enrollment pattern and staffing policies. Three groups emerged: five declining districts holding several RIF criteria including performance evaluations, three with decisive seniority clauses, and eight non-declining systems. Logically, the first group appeared more vulnerable to both pressures of reduction and staff uncertainty about their position in the RIF process, as well as the process itself. Those districts following strict seniority provided members with greater predictability and security, at least for older, more experienced teachers. The eight stable or increasing systems become a mixed or "tarnished" control group. In a few cases there were genuine concerns about the impact of 2½. On the other hand, when the survey was completed in the Fall of 1980 these concerns were probably less focused on RIF procedures. Unlike the declining systems, the entire process was new to them. I expect that subsequent

[1] These items were selected in part because they were consistent with the theoretical considerations previously discussed. They also showed the clearest variability and attained a relatively high correlation ($r = .417$).

investigation will lead to some recasting of district groups.

Third, I performed a separate analysis of variance with the measure of teachers' preferences as the dependent variable and our district groups alone, and then in combination with salient background variables. As we shall see, an individual's date of birth and highest degree or level of course work had some explanatory power. Selection of these variables followed the rationale discussed in the proposal.

Fourth, the organizational context of administrative-teacher contact is considered. Three survey items dealing with the frequency of interaction between teacher and principal or department head made up an additive index. The items dealt with (a) informal classroom visits by these administrators, (b) discussions on classroom matters, and (c) conversations about school district policies. After calculating a mean score for each school (with at least 10 respondents) I treated the contextual variable as a covariate in the analysis.

Fifth, a district's staff composition by age and experience was examined. After standardizing and averaging responses to date of birth, and calculating the percentage of teachers having at least ten years of experience, I correlated these measures with the dependent variable, teacher preferences. A significant result identified a factor to be included in the basic model.

RESULTS

What role should teachers play in decisions on appointments of instructional staff and of school principal? When our measure of teacher preferences for input or control is entered into a one-way analysis of variance[1] by our grouping of enrollment patterns and RIF clauses, the district context obtains an eta value of .18 (R^2 = .032). Mean deviations form the grand mean (4.18), follow the

[1]Program ANOVA from SPSS (Nie, 1975) was used throughout the analyses.

predicted direction; namely .38 for the five declining districts with multiple criteria, -.13 for the stable systems, and -.25 for the three contracting systems with strong seniority clauses. While these differences are small, they do provide some support for the proposition that teacher pursuit of colleague control over personnel decisions is most likely to occur under the stressful conditions of declining enrollment and ambiguous reduction clauses.

An elaboration of the analytical model occurs when age and educational credentials are added. Respondents were divided by district, date of birth, and highest degree or level of course work. Table 1 shows that each factor makes an independent contribution to the explanatory power of the model.[1] After adjusting for the effects of date of birth and degree, the district context continues to have an impact, namely .18 instead of .17. The most important characteristic of respondents is their educational credentials which has a beta of .20.

Admittedly, the model as a whole explains only 7.8% of the variance in teacher preferences. This figure improves slightly when differences by sex are added ($R^2 = .087$).[2] But, statistical significance, or the lack of it, should not be confused with substantive significance. With data gathered in the Fall of 1982 and 1983 a longitudinal analysis will show if the trends uncovered here are significant and intensifying.

A breakdown of teacher preferences for different categories of each factor is presented in Table 2. When we adjust for the confounding effects of other factors, the district context changes very little from the results of the one-way analysis of variance. Turning to the breakdown by date of birth, older

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[1] Preliminary tests confirmed that there were no significant statistical interactions among these factors.

[2] Sex is not included in Table 1 because the unadjusted eta of .10 dropped to a partial beta of .07, accounting for less than 1% of the variance.

TABLE 1

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

TEACHER PREFERENCES BY DISTRICT CONTEXT,

DATE OF BIRTH, AND DEGREE

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Signif. of F	ETA[a]	BETA[b]
District	85.490	2	42.745	22.843	.001	.17	.18
DOB	52.903	3	17.634	9.424	.001	.10	.14
Ed. Credentials	98.777	4	24.694	13.197	.001	.18	.20
Explained	219.051	9	24.339	13.007	.001	R=.280	R^2=.078
Residual	2,584.148	1381	1.871				N=1,391

[a]This statistic is equivalent to a simple beta from a bivariate linear regression of the dependent variable on a factor.

[b]Values for beta represent the independent contribution of each variable after adjusting for the other factors.

TABLE 2

TEACHER PREFERENCES BY CATEGORIES OF DISTRICT CONTEXT, DATE OF BIRTH, AND EDUCATIONAL CREDENTIALS: MEAN VALUES

FACTOR AND CATEGORY	MEANS[1]	N
DISTRICT CONTEXT		
DECLINE & SENIORITY	3.95	247
NON-DECLINE	4.04	717
DECLINE-MULTIPLE CRITERIA	4.55	427
DOB		
1950 OR LATER	4.37	350
1940-49	4.12	591
1930-39	4.10	278
1929 OR EARLIER	3.70	172
ED. CREDENTIALS		
COLLEGE DEGREE	3.69	178
SOME GRAD. STUDY	3.99	489
MASTER'S DEGREE	4.34	253
BEYOND MASTER'S DEGREE	4.47	455
Ph.D. OR Ed.D.	4.67	16

[1] These means are adjusted for the confounding effects of the other variables.

teachers - especially those born prior to 1930 - wanted, on average, less influence on personnel decisions than their younger colleagues. Consistent with more traditonal role-definitions, they probably consider staff appointments as the exclusive prerogative of administrators. As previously noted, younger teachers are less likely to give such deference.

As one might expect, increments of graduate study, particularly at the Master's level or above, are associated with preferences for increased influence over staffing matters. Perhaps teacher contact with advanced course work or with university professors kindled an interest in professional standards of control.

Other contextual variables beside district were examined.[1] When the school level measure of principal (and department head) contact with teachers is added to the model, the findings prove disappointing (r^2 = .0008). Perhaps the problem lies with the indicator used. Or, administrator-teacher contact may not be as important as we expected. Further research on this point is planned.

Turning to district composition by age and experience, only the standardized measure of date of birth attained a significant correlation with teacher preferences (.176). After dropping the individual indicator of age, the district-wide variable was entered as a covariate in the ANOVA analysis. This step only slightly changed the values of beta for district context and degree.[2] Furthermore, it did not add, but rather reduced, the explanatory power of the model (R^2 = .065 instead of .078). Apparently age at the individual level of analysis was more important than its compositional effect by district.

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[1] One of these, level of schooling, attained statistical significance only when it interacted with district context. Pending further study, this variable is not included here.

[2] Beta for district increased from .18 to .19, and for degree decreased from .20 to .18.

SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS

I had hypothesized that teachers facing RIF decisions based on ambiguous criteria and procedures, e.g. performance evaluations, would be more likely to seek control or influence on staffing decisions, i.e. appointments, promotions, transfers, and releases. Furthermore, this relationship would be more pronounced when staff members had minimum contact with their supervisors. The results do not fully support these propositions. There are several likely reasons for this:

First, as discussed in the theoretical framework, teachers are generally more concerned about and involved with curriculum and instruction than with staffing matters. Preoccupation with classroom events meshes well with a modified hierarchical model of governance. In effect teachers are saying to administrators: "Give me the tools, e.g. books, supplies, etc., and leave me alone to do my job." As it stands, this statement probably overgeneralizes their actual views and misses the diversity of career committments. Still, it does touch upon a prevailing individualistic orientation which needs to change before colleague participation in school decisions becomes widespread.

Second, the full effects of declining enrollment and the budget cuts of Proposition 2½ are more likely to appear following the large scale RIFing and transferring of teachers during 1981. At the time of the Fall 1980 survey, practitioners could hope that a way out would be found. Unfortunately, as required by state law, notices of intent to RIF members were sent out in April and May of 1981. Although property reevaluations and state reimbursements during the summer helped some, but not all, districts to recall teachers, the trauma of mass layoffs is more pervasive today than a year ago. Despite recent changes in Proposition 2½ the restrictions on budget increases are still formidable.

Although this paper is far from definitive it does provide a preliminary indication that teachers are reassessing their professional roles. Only further study will show if teachers are seeking greater voice in decisions on staff appointments, reductions, etc. In the meantime school administrators can reduce the pains of retrenchment if they work out the details with teachers. To be fired is difficult enough. Not to understand why one was selected is a tragedy which contracting school systems can ill afford.

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