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ABSTRACT

Research has documented that individuals feel a greater sense of responsibility and commitment to an organization when they are active members in organizational decision making. To investigate the level of student involvement in doctoral level counseling psychology programs, student involvement surveys were completed in the spring of 1983, by 28 students and 33 directors (a response rate of 42 percent) whose program directors were listed as members of the Council of Counseling Psychology Training Programs. The surveys assessed formal and informal mechanisms of involvement; impact, barriers, and current level of satisfaction; and ideal levels of student involvement. An analysis of the results showed that both directors and students conceptualized high levels of student involvement as necessary ingredients of well functioning programs, listing increased morale, satisfaction, and commitment as the organizational rewards of such involvement. However, directors, more than students, perceived student involvement as having greater impact on major decisions made by the faculty. Students reported being significantly less satisfied with their levels of involvement than were directors. Both directors and students described similar ideal levels of student involvement and similar barriers to that involvement in terms of student academic and financial demands. (The Student Involvement Survey is appended). (BL)

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Student Involvement: A Survey of Counseling Psychology Training Programs

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Paper presented at the 1983 APA Convention in Anaheim, California.

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Student Involvement: A Survey of Counseling Psychology Training Programs

Abstract

Research in the areas of management and organizational behavior lends support to the importance of involving all organizational members in decision making processes. This involvement allows the individuals involved to meet their needs of self-determination within the organization as well as improves the quality of the decisions made. Japanese managers have been aware of the advantages of employee involvement in a form known as Quality Control Circles (Ouchi, 1981). In this organizational schema, employees who work together form circles that meet weekly to study problems, collect and analyze data and formulate and implement problem solving steps. Consequently, conflict between the needs of the employees and the organization are diminished and employees are more likely to be loyal, committed and productive (Pascale & Athos, 1981).

The theory and research cited above might usefully be applied to student involvement in counseling psychology training programs. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the level of student involvement in Ph.D. counseling psychology training programs as a way of assessing their health. In the Spring of 1983 a survey of counseling psychology training programs assessed their levels of student involvement. Directors and students completed questionnaires which investigated both formal and informal mechanisms of student

involvement, the impact of that involvement, "ideal" levels of student involvement, and barriers toward reaching these levels. Analyses identified the nature and extent of student involvement across training programs as well as differences between the perceptions of student involvement by Directors and students. Results of the survey are presented and discussed.

Introduction

Theory and research in the areas of management and organizational behavior lend support to the importance of involving all members in the decision-making processes of an organization. This body of knowledge might usefully be applied to the issue of student involvement in counseling psychology training programs by conceptualizing students as members, albeit temporary ones, of the training program's organization. The purposes of this paper are twofold: (1) to extend this theory and research to the issue of student involvement and (2) to report the results of a survey of student involvement in counseling psychology training programs done in the Spring of 1983.

Theoretical Rationale

According to one organizational theory, the open systems approach (Katz & Kahn, 1966), members of an organization will seek to meet their needs of self-determination, accomplishment and the expression of individual skills and talents within the organization of which they are a member. Katz & Kahn express the belief that a continuing challenge and major task for organizational leaders is to direct this enthusiasm and motivation of the group members toward the accomplishment of the collective task. The creation of formal and informal mechanisms of involvement can be seen then as organizational attempts to involve their members in ways designed to meet both the needs of the organization and of the members

themselves.

The creation of democratic procedures which involve members in the decision making and policy formation processes of the organization appears to be the major way organizations have chosen to meet this challenge and improve the quality of work life for their employees (Tuttle, 1983). A recent and perhaps the most well known evolution of this form of participation is the Quality Control Circle, originated by Japanese managers as their way of insuring worker involvement in the decision making processes of the organization (Ouchi, 1981). In this organizational schema, employees who work together form circles, or small groups, that meet weekly to study problems, collect and analyze data and formulate and implement problem solving steps. Japanese managers report that within organizations that use these Quality Control Circles, conflict between the needs of the employees and the organization are diminished and the employees are more loyal, committed and productive (Pascale & Athos, 1981).

Indeed, it has become axiomatic and has been demonstrated repeatedly in small group research and in organizational studies (Aronson, 1980; Gray & Starke, 1977; Katz & Kahn, 1966) that people have greater feelings of commitment to decisions in which they have a part. Moreover, it appears that the distribution of decision-making and other leadership responsibilities within an organization improves performance by more fully utilizing all

members' knowledge and skills. This principle, of distributing the functions of leadership, cannot be extended indefinitely, of course, or the organization will be deprived of the effectiveness of the division of labor (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Katz and Kahn (1966) believe that the members' sharing in organizational decisions leads to their perception of being an important part of the organization which in turn leads to reduced turnover and absenteeism, increased productivity and increased spontaneous and innovative behavior by the organizational members.

These hypotheses have been supported by empirical research as well. White and Lippitt (1953), in a pioneering study, demonstrated that children showed better interpersonal relations, higher morale and greater productivity under a democratic style of leadership than in an autocratic atmosphere. Similarly, Coch and French (1953) found that increases in employee participation in the form of group meetings, led to increased production and to fewer symptoms of resistence and conflict with the management of these organizations.

More recently, French, Israel and As (1960) demonstrated that employee participation affected labor-management relations and job satisfaction but only when the employees felt that their participation was legitimate and of importance. Token participation or participation not perceived of as important did not increase employee morale.

In conclusion, legitimate employee participation in an organization's decision making processes appears to be important for improving the quality of work life, inlcuding increased morale, productivity and employee commitment as well as improving the actual quality of the decisions made by the organization. Principles generated by this body of organizational theory and research, then, might usefully be applied to counseling psychology training programs by conceptualizing students as important, although temporary, members of the training programs who bring with them expertise and enthusiasm and thus make important contributions to the on-going decision-making processes of the training program.

Method

In the Spring of 1983, two student involvement surveys were sent to the counseling psychology training programs whose Directors were members of the Council of Counseling Psychology Training Programs as listed on the 1981-1982 roster. The Directors were asked to complete one survey and requested to ask a student in their program to complete the second identical survey. Ninety surveys were mailed. Twelve were returned with notes saying that there was no longer a counseling psychology training program operating at that school or the survey had been sent in error. Thirty-three Directors completed and returned their surveys for a

response rate of 42%. Twenty-eight students completed and returned their surveys for a response rate of 36%. Of the surveys returned, 48% (N=16) represented APA approved or provisionally approved programs, 30% (N=10) represented programs that were not currently APA approved but were in the process of seeking approval while 21% (N=7) represented non-APA approved programs with no future plans to seek this approval. Tables 1 and 2 reflect further demographic descriptions of the programs who are represented in the study.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

Instrument

The survey instrument, entitled Student Involvement Survey, was constructed to assess formal and informal mechanisms of student involvement, and perceived impact of student involvement. In addition, respondents were asked to describe their "ideal" levels of student involvement, perceived or anticipated barriers toward these levels and their satisfaction with current levels of student involvement existing in their programs. (See Appendix A for the complete survey.)

Results

Mechanisms of Student Involvement

Formal Student Involvement

Results of the survey indicate that 94% of counseling psychology

training programs have at least one formal mechanism for involving students in the program. Of the remaining 6% (N=2), one of these programs is a newly created program (January, 1983) and one reports plans to formally include students soon. These formal mechanisms include elected, appointed or volunteer students who represent the other students' points of view. Seventy percent of the Directors surveyed reported that these representatives attend faculty meetings; moreover 52% of these Directors reported that these student representatives have full voting rights on all issues except those involving other students. Other duties of these formal student representatives include serving on committees, acting as liasons between students and faculty, handling faculty evaluations and mentoring new students. The most frequently mentioned task was committee work; the most often mentioned committee was the admissions committee. Thirty-nine percent of the programs surveyed included students on this committee; 19% mentioned the inclusion of students on the cirriculum committee; 16% mentioned the inclusion of students on the policy committee and 13% mentioned the inclusion of students on the faculty search committee.

Most of the student representatives are elected by the students or by a formal student organization but in one program only faculty members are allowed to vote in representative elections and in one program faculty select the student representative from a group of three students elected first by the students. In addition to

these formal student representatives, 36% of the programs surveyed have formal student organizations such as Graduate Student Associations or Counseling Psychology Clubs.

The students surveyed had very similar ideas about the duties of the formal student representatives. They mentioned that they periodically polled student opinion, promoted faculty-student communication and in general representated the interests of the students to the faculty. Other duties mentioned included serving on committees, representing the program to the Department, updating program brochures and helping the faculty prepare for APA site visits. It should also be noted that statistical tests indicate that program size does not seem to be associated with the existence of mechanisms for formal student involvement nor does APA accreditation. APA and non APA programs do not differ on their use of formal mechanisms of student involvement.

Informal Student Involvement

Organizational psychologists have also speculated that the existence of informal, less conspicuous mechanisms of worker involvement impacts the organization and is associated with increased performance and satisfaction. Indeed, 70% of the Directors surveyed and 61% of the students reported the existence of informal mechanisms of student involvement in their training programs. The theme of "doctoral students as junior colleagues" was mentioned by 15% of the Directors. In these programs students

are involved in programatic teaching, research, social events and workshops. Twenty-one percent of the Directors mentioned that the students sponsored workshops and seminars; other functions students are fulfilling for their training programs include planning social events, orientation for new students, organizing internship files, computer language files and organizing faculty brown-bag luncheons. Again, as with formal involvement, APA approved programs and non APA approved programs do not differ significantly in the degree of informal student involvement or in the kind of ways students are involved. This is true for small and large programs as well.

Additional Forms of Student Involvement

The survey requested the Directors and students to describe any additional forms of student involvement that exist within their training programs. Several Directors mentioned that Doctoral students are highly involved in the training and supervision of students in the Masters program. Other forms of involvement include the assignment of each Doctoral student to a faculty member to assist in teaching, research, supervision and social affairs, in return for financial aid (N-1), having the students do volunteer work in the clinic associated with the program (N-1), planning the annual faculty-student retreat (N-1) and participating in faculty-student sports teams (N=2).

Impact of Student Involvement

The Directors surveyed reported that students have had a significant impact on many areas of their training programs including program policy formation, program curriculum study and changes, admission of new students, program goals, program seminars, faculty hiring, student administered committees and faculty administered committees. Students surveyed also reported that student involvement has impacted these areas of their training programs although Directors and students differed significantly on their reports of the number of areas of student impact ($F=4.81$, $p<.05$). (See Table 3 for Directors and student's perceptions of impact.) In all cases, Directors perceived student impact to be greater than did the students. Directors and students differed most significantly in their perceptions of student impact on the areas of program policy formation, program curriculum, program goals and faculty hiring.

Insert Table 3 about here

However, most Directors and students agreed that there exists a positive relationship between student involvement and morale of both students and faculty. Fifty-five percent (N=18) of the Directors surveyed reported that student involvement was good for student morale while 27% (N=9) felt it was good for faculty morale as well. Directors spoke very positively of the impact of student

involvement saying that students bring knowledge and concern to their programs, help mold their programs to meet the individual student's needs and in general "keep faculty more honest."

Students also reported that student involvement is good for student morale (43%) (N=12) and faculty morale (36%) (N=10). However, 25% of the students (N=7) mentioned that student morale was low with a consonant feeling of having little impact on the program especially in the areas of policy and curricular changes. In addition, two students mentioned that the consideration of student opinion by the faculty depended greatly upon which particular student presented the idea. Thus, it is not surprising that the Directors and students differed on their reports of satisfaction with their current levels of student involvement. Directors feel more satisfied with the student involvement existing in their programs than do students ($X^2=5.46$; $p<.10$). In general, however, most Directors and students agreed that students have positively impacted their training programs and that a positive relationship exists between the morale of both the students and faculty and student involvement. It should be noted, as well, that small and large programs do not differ significantly on the number of areas impacted by student involvement nor do APA and non APA approved programs.

Ideal Levels of Student Involvement and Perceived Barriers

In addition to being queried about formal and informal

mechanisms of student involvement and their impact, Directors and students were also asked to describe "ideal" levels of student involvement and experienced or anticipated barriers toward this level. As expected, most Directors felt that ideal levels of student involvement have engaged students in all major areas of the program, including policy and curriculum decisions. Many Directors mentioned that student involvement was necessary for student learning, that students should have increasing responsibilities in the program, and that one goal of student involvement should be engaging students in providing feedback about the program's effectiveness. Several Directors mentioned that extensive student involvement is ideal and indeed is necessary to help students fashion their professional identities as counseling psychologists. One Director called it "self-involvement" and said it was necessary to maximize student learning and that student involvement must demonstrate a high level of faculty-student academic, professional and personal committment.

This was not the case with all Directors, however. Several Directors differed significantly from the ideal levels described above. These Directors conceptualized students more as "consultants" on major decisions and issues with the final decision making remaining as the sole prerogative of the faculty.

Students, too, conceptualize a high level of student involvement as the ideal. A common theme was the desire for

faculty to treat students as colleagues rather than as subordinates; many students expressed the desire for formal voting rights and attendance at all faculty meetings so that students and faculty could work together on issues important to the program. Many students expressed the concern and desire to be actively involved and have direct access to decisions that affect their training.

Regarding barriers, several Directors mentioned the lack of continuity of the students because of their matriculation through the program and the "resistance" that some faculty members show toward the involvement of the students. The most commonly mentioned barrier by the Directors, however (18%) is the time constraint placed upon the students by the academic demands of the program leaving them little time to devote to programmatic administrative work. Other barriers mentioned by the Directors are listed in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 & 5 here

Students also felt that a prominent barrier in the way of reaching the ideal level of student involvement is the "busy-ness" of the students as well as students' lack of motivation to participate. One student mentioned the awkwardness of being a student representative and described it as "losing my country"- feeling neither like a faculty member or a member of the student body. However, the most often mentioned barriers were faculty

resistence, and the apathy of the students, both mentioned by 18% (N=5) of the students. See Table 5 for further listing of barriers mentioned by the students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both Directors and students conceptualize high levels of student involvement as necessary ingredients of well-functioning counseling psychology training programs, mentioning organizational rewards similar to those discussed by organizational managers. These rewards include increased morale, on the part of faculty and students, increased satisfaction and increased committment to the program. In addition, many Directors prize the knowledge and concern that student's bring to their training programs and feel that higher quality decisions are made by the involvement of students with faculty in the decision making processes.

However, the results of this survey also indicate that Directors and students differ on their perceptions of student involvement; Directors perceive student involvement as having greater impact on major decisions made by the faculty than do the students. Consequently, students report being significantly less satisfied with their levels of involvement than are Directors. When asked to describe ideal levels of student involvement, however, Directors and students describe very similar levels of involvement and mention very similar barriers to this level, in particular the "busy-ness" of the students with academic and

financial demands.

It seems clear then, that although student involvement is an important aspect of well-functioning training programs, and is highly prized by both students and faculty, Directors and students need to work closely together to create levels of student involvement that are comfortable for both faculty and students and to create environments in which this involvement can grow and prosper.

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Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Surveyed Programs

(In Number of Programs)

	Program Size (In numbers of students)					
	none	small 1-10	medium 11-20	large 21-30	larger 31-40	very large +41
Full-time Students	0	3	15	7	4	3
Part-time Students	14	9	4	2	2	1

Table 2

Faculty

	none	small 1-5	medium 6-10	large 11-15	very large 16-25
Full-time	0	13	13	3	0
Part-time	3	13	10	1	1

Table 3

Comparison of Directors and Students Perceptions of the Impact of Student Involvement

Program Area	% of Directors who reported student impact		% of Students who reported student impact		
	%	N	%	N	
Policy	88	29	64	18	* p<.05
Curriculum	97	32	68	19	* p<.05
Admission	66	22	50	14	
Goals	79	26	54	15	* p<.05
Seminars	82	27	71	20	
Faculty hiring	82	27	39	11	** p<.001
Student Committees	73	24	50	14	
Faculty Committees	70	23	61	17	

Directors and Students also differed on the number of areas they perceived the student impact. F=4.81 60 df, p<.05

Table 4

Barriers Toward Student Involvement

Director's Perceptions

	%	N
"Busy-ness" of students with academic demands as well as financial obligations	18	6
Student turnover which leads to a lack of continuity; lack a "history"	<1	3
Faculty resistance	<1	2
Faculty teaching and advising loads are too heavy to involve students	<1	1
Pressure from the Department to accept more students in the program consequently having more students in the program than optimal	<1	1
A-political students	<1	1
Lack of financial aid which would permit students more time to devote to the program	<1	1
Lack of administrative autonomy of the program	<1	1
Lack of student "rewards" to the faculty for providing involvement	<1	1
Difficulty of keeping information confidential if students were to be involved in programmatic business	<1	1

Table 5

Barriers Toward Student Involvement

Student's Perceptions

	%	N
Faculty resistance	18	5
A-political students	18	5
"Busy-ness" of students with academic demands as well as financial obligations	11	3
Student turnover which leads to a lack of continuity; lack a "history"	<1	2
Lack of administrative autonomy of the program	<1	2
External standards such as APA Accreditation guidelines	<1	1
Awkardness of being a student representative; lose your "country"	<1	1
Faculty lack of cohesiveness	<1	1
Student lack of skills necessary to participate in programmatic decisions	<1	1
Faculty favoritism of certain students	<1	1
Lack of central meeting place for students	<1	1

CHECK ONE (1)

DIRECTOR

STUDENT

Appendix A

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

I. Demographic Data

A. Students

How many full-time doctoral students does your program have? (NOT including those on internship or post internship) _____

How many part-time doctoral students does your program have? _____

B. Faculty

How many full-time "core" counseling faculty does your program have? _____

How many part-time counseling faculty does your program have? (INCLUDING adjunct faculty) _____

C. APA Membership

Is your program APA approved? _____

If yes, when was it approved? _____

Are you in the process of seeking APA approval? _____

II. Formal Student Involvement

Please check the following type of formal student representation in your program: (Check as many as apply)

_____ elected (EX: The students vote on specific student representatives)

_____ appointed (EX: The Director asks a specific student to perform a specific funtion.)

_____ volunteer (EX: A student volunteers to be on a faculty-run committee)

_____ other

If you have checked any of the above, please describe the function, history and length of this student involvement.

_____

_____

_____

_____

What are the specific duties of your student representatives?

How many formal representatives (elected, appointed, volunteer or other form) does your program have?

How often and by whom are they elected? Selected?

III. Informal Student Involvement

Does your program have informal forms of student representation? (i.e., certain studnet evolve into leadership roles without formal mechanisms of student involvement structuring this involvement)

_____ YES _____ NO

If yes, please briefly describe the history of this involvement, (how long has it been operating? who initiated it?) its role and function (do students serve on committees, plan seminars, etc.).

IV. Areas of impact

In what areas have studeats been involved in your program? Please check each that applies.

_____ program policy formation

_____ program curriculum study and changes (course offerings, sequences)

_____ admission of students

_____ program goals

program boards, symposia

faculty hiring

student administered committees

faculty administered committees

For the areas of involvement that you have checked above, please briefly describe this impact in terms of program changes, re-assessments, morale of students, faculty morale and satisfaction, etc.

V. Additional areas of student involvement

Does your program have any other forms of student involvement that we have not mentioned? If so, please take a few minutes and tell us about it and how it works for you.

VI. Ideal student representation

What are your ideas about the ideal level of student involvement in Counseling Psychology training programs? What barriers do you forsee or have you experienced toward reaching this ideal level? How satisfied are you with your present level of student involvement?

OPTIONAL:

NAME _____

PROGRAM _____