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ABSTRACT

As part of a foundation for a multilevel analysis of career ladder reform among educational employees in Utah, this paper focuses on policymaking from the state perspective. Career ladder policy decisions are determined primarily through state legislative action, which are executed by the state board of education. This paper describes policy decisions, examines processes through which decisions emerge, and discusses implications of the state's capacity to influence the development of career ladder programs. Data were acquired from legislative and agency documents, interest group files, and from 7 informal and 42 indepth interviews with legislators, legislative staff, executive staff, agency officials, and interest group representatives. In Utah, career ladder decisionmaking is characterized by politicalization. Competing goals elicit conflict; for example, whether to break the lockstep salary schedule or to protect it. The impetus for career ladder enactment comes largely from the governor and legislators. Interest groups primarily exercise constraints on rules. Substantial delegated local capacities mitigate the impact of centralized mandates. Utah's policy commitment to the analysis of local district variance expresses confidence in districts' capacity to devise effective programs and enables the state to exert power in the evolution of career ladder reform. Four pages of references are appended. (CJH)

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CAREER LADDER POLICYMAKING IN UTAH
STATE PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

Although state government has assumed an increasingly active role in education policymaking since the early 1970's, (Campbell and Mazzone, 1976; Rosenthal and Fuhrman, 1981; Mitchell and Encarnation, 1984), the national "excellence movement" challenged governors and legislators to become even more assertive (Kirst, 1986). Many seized this "window of opportunity" (Kingdon, 1984). Whether state policymakers developed fairly comprehensive omnibus bills or more narrowly conceived initiatives, career ladder proposals surfaced as prominent items on their reform agendas (Bacharach, et al, 1985; Cornett, 1985; Olson, 1986).

The importance of mapping how state directives are determined, interpreted, and adjusted as policy makes its way from government action to actual operation is well documented (Bailey and Mosher, 1968; Berman and McLaughlin, 1978; Bardack, 1982; Farrar, et al, 1983). Perhaps because career ladder policies are relatively new, the relationship between state career ladder decisions, local district programs, school site effects, and subsequent state revisions is essentially uncharted territory. To address that gap in the literature, the symposium papers attempt to trace career ladder policymaking in Utah across state, local, and site arenas.

Utah is a favorable laboratory for such an analysis for several reasons. First, career ladder policy in this state is a fairly discrete reform. It constitutes, substantively and financially, the state's primary education policy change and operates as a categorical reform. It is more amenable to mapping than omnibus reform packages (Kirst, 1986). Second the statute allows local district development of career ladder programs. Since all forty districts have chosen to participate

there are forty arenas for the examination of local responses. Third, implementation has not been interrupted or forestalled by litigation. Though career ladder programs are new, they have been in place for two years, a sufficient time to trace initial site effects.

Purpose

As part of the foundation for a multi-level analysis of Utah's career ladder reform, this paper concentrates on policymaking from the state perspective. The paper describes the policy decisions, examines the process through which these decisions emerged, and discusses implications in terms of the state's capacity to influence the development of career ladder programs. State career ladder policy decisions have been determined largely through legislative action. The Utah State Board of Education has taken complementary action, but in response to legislative directives and in concert with legislative sentiments. Essentially, the legislature sets and the state board executes career ladder policy at the state level. Since the legislature is the primary decisionmaking body, it is the major focus of this paper.

Analytic Framework

Legislative decisions can be described in terms of the control mechanisms embodied in state statutes. Mitchell and Iannacone (1980) identify three types of controls which are used either singly or collectively, to influence the educational system:

resource allocations that are made to (or withheld from) various school programs or organizational units;

formal rules which distribute (or redistribute) authority and power within the school system, and specify the qualitative features and operating procedures for particular programs;

articulation of important ideological beliefs, goals or intentions which are aimed at guiding the thinking and behavior of educators or lay citizens.

The process through which the legislature selects, combines and/cr revises these control mechanisms can be viewed as a continuous, interactive process through which inputs, including demands for change are converted into outputs, including formal decisions (Easton,1965). The dynamic of the process resides in the interplay of influence among competing actors. Actors have influence when they select, modify, prevent or obtain decisional benefits; they have power when they command and choose to deploy resources to obtain influence in the political arena (Campbell and Mazzone, 1976). Actor relationships are conditioned by institutional arrangements and environmental contexts.

The ability of legislative policy decisions to affect educational systems can be assessed along two dimensions: the manner in which the control mechanisms available to the legislature—resource allocation, rule making, and articulation of ideologies, beliefs, goals—interact to reinforce or interfere with legislative intentions; and the manner in which the control mechanisms selected by the legislature are linked to or offset by the control mechanisms of local districts and school sites (Mitchell and Iannaccone, 1980). A comprehensive assessment of the state's ability to influence the educational system through its career ladder policy choices requires a thorough analysis of policy assumptions such as: the critical variable in school improvement is the teacher work force; changes in extrinsic rewards, namely the compensation schedule and the promotional options of teachers will encourage talented individuals to enter teaching, improve the performance of those who

are presently teaching, and hold the most able in teaching (Lortie, 1975; Murphy and Hart, 1985; Rosenholtz, 1984;); the incentives which influence occupational choice and the incentives which influence worker performance once an occupational choice has been made are fundamentally the same; evaluation systems which appropriately assess relative as well as minimum teacher competency can be developed and implemented (Wise and Darling-Hammond, 1984/85). A comprehensive assessment also requires an analysis of how career ladder policy choices complement or contradict other state statutes such as basic program funding, curricular requirements, personnel training, and certification (Lehne, 1983; Mitchell and Encarnation, 1984; Wirt and Mitchell, 1982). Such extensive assessments exceed the boundaries of this paper and the purpose of this symposium. The emphasis is on tracing how policies are determined and translated across levels. Thus this treatment is confined to the manner in which the control mechanisms of the career ladder statute conform to legislative intentions (addressed in this paper) and the manner in which those control mechanisms are related to or countered by the adjustment strategies of local districts and school sites (addressed in the Murphy and Hart papers and the symposium summation).

Data Sources and Methods

Data were acquired from official legislative and state education agency documents, interest group files, secondary sources, seven informal and forty-two indepth interviews. The documents, files, secondary accounts and informal interviews provided information about the Utah context, background on the career ladder issue, and verification of actor roles and relationships. Indepth interviews generated the principal data.

Interview informants were selected on the basis of five criteria: proximity to the decisionmaking process, potential for diverse perspectives, reputation for knowledge and candor, accessibility, and willingness to participate. Balanced by policy system position and issue stance, informants included legislators, legislative staff, executive staff, state agency officials, interest group representatives, and proximate observers of the process.¹ Field notes were validated on the basis of position and certainty of source; clarity, detail, plausibility of content; ability to corroborate information from sources within the interview method; ability to triangulate information across methods; and ability to verify information from informants reflecting diverse perspectives. Interpretations were audited by a policy participant and a proximate observer.

STATE LEVEL CAREER LADDER POLICY DECISIONS

Utah's career ladder statute² incorporates all three of the control mechanisms identified by Mitchell and Iannacone (1980).

¹Informants for the 1984 legislative session included 5 legislators, 2 legislative staff, 1 executive staff, 3 state education agency officials; 5 interest group representatives and 2 proximate observers. Informants for the 1985 and 1986 sessions included 8 legislators, 2 legislative staff, 2 executive staff, 5 state education agency officials, 5 interest group representatives and 2 proximate observers. Interviews were conducted between September and December of 1984, and during February and March, 1986. Two interviews were completed by telephone and lasted approximately one-half hour. All other interviews were done in person and averaged one hour in length. Interviews were conducted by Roald Campbell, Jennifer Kranz, and the author. All informants were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. Thus, they are cited only by respondent category.

²See House Bill 110, 1984 Budget Session of the Legislature of the State of Utah and Senate Bill 14, 1985 General Session of the Legislature of the State of Utah.

Resource Allocation

The resource allocation mechanism creates a fiscal incentive for districts to adopt some type of career ladder program. Career ladder appropriations have been set up as entitlements, based on distribution criteria used in the state's school finance equalization formula. Districts that elected to set up career ladder programs became eligible for state supplements of approximately \$1000 per teacher the first year (1984); \$2000 per teacher the second year (1985) and \$2300 per teacher the third year (1986). These funds are dispersed through the Utah State Board of Education. All districts sought and secured their share of career ladder categorical funds in 1984 and 1985.

The resource allocation pattern represents a commitment to phase in career ladder programs over a three year period. The initial request (\$41.4 million) for a "fully funded" career ladder program was compromised in 1984. A reduction (to \$15.3 million) was traded for an "informal agreement" to allocate an additional \$15 million in 1985 and an additional \$20 million in 1986. The legislature funded career ladder programs at the "promised" level in 1985, but added only \$5 million in 1986.

Formal Rules

The formal rules distribute power to school districts because participation is voluntary, career ladder programs can be developed locally, and administrators, teachers, and lay citizens have access to the career ladder planning process. The district's power is circumscribed by rules regarding plan contents and operating-monitoring procedures.

The qualitative characteristics of career ladder plans are generally defined by the statute and echoed more than elaborated, by the state

board of education regulations. The statute permits extended contracts and differentiated staffing; it requires that at least 50 percent of state career ladder funds be used for performance-based promotions.

In 1985 a new stipulation was added by the legislature—at least 10 percent of the performance-based promotion monies (5 percent of total dollars) must be distributed on the basis of outstanding classroom teaching. An extension of this provision (25 percent of total funds distributed on classroom teaching merit) passed the House in 1986, but was deleted in conference committee.

In 1986, the state board adopted a new regulation—10 percent of total funds must be distributed on the basis of outstanding classroom teaching.³ Despite these moves to a classroom teaching "merit bonus" emphasis, local districts still have considerable latitude because they define what constitutes a performance based promotion and what, if any extended contract options or differentiated staff assignments will be incorporated.

The statute requires districts to develop procedures for "fair, consistent and valid" evaluation of teachers and "periodic review" of career ladder plans. The state board requirements essentially restate these statutory rules; request a description of how career ladder projects relate to the implementation of revised curriculum standards; and specify application deadlines, proposal formats and reporting schedules. Since performance standards, program review components, and teacher evaluation

³See "Standards and Guidelines for Career Ladders in Education," a publication of the Utah State Board of Education, March 7, 1986. Copies are available through the Utah State Office of Education, Salt Lake City, Utah.

criteria are not defined, state monitoring is rooted in rather unobtrusive, process-oriented accountability provisions. As previously indicated, the state board approved all district proposals in 1984 and 1985.

Articulation of Ideological Beliefs, Goals, Intentions

The statute does not explicitly articulate beliefs, goals, and intentions beyond a general statement regarding the desirability of rewarding quality teachers. The policy reflects diverse views regarding the kinds or combinations of incentives that should be applied. Part of the legislation (performance promotion, staff differentiation) is aimed at redefining teacher work; part of the legislation (classroom teaching merit bonus) is aimed at rewarding current work; part of the legislation (extended contracts) is aimed at providing additional time for either traditional tasks or additional responsibilities. The policy simultaneously pursues three types of incentives, each rooted in quite different perspectives regarding the nature of teacher work and the salient aspects of improved teacher performance (Mitchell and Kerchner, 1983; Murphy and Hart, 1985).

Utah's career ladder policy is grounded in the maxim of local control. This maxim expresses confidence in the capacity of individual districts to devise and refine programs which are congruent with policy parameters and responsive to diverse needs. It assumes that the acceptance of a state policy can be enhanced by allowing groups who have a stake in the outcome to be involved in the design. It offers a means for developing consensus on the propriety, and perhaps the form of career ladders, as districts experiment with different versions and glean from those experiments agreement on the essential or exemplar features.

CAREER LADDER POLICYMAKING PROCESSES

In earlier work, factors affecting Utah's decision to adopt a state wide, decentralized approach to career ladders were identified (Malen and Campbell, 1985; Malen and Murphy, 1985). The work addressed a major dimension of the policy, but it does not explain the full range of or recent adjustments in policy features. A more comprehensive analysis of policymaking, in terms of contextual pressures, actor relationships, and feedback effects is offered.

Contextual Pressures

Demographic demands, fiscal constraints, a cultural commitment to quality education, the tradition of local discretion, and the conservative and consensual orientations of state policymakers condition career ladder decisionmaking.

Demographic Demands

Utah's demographic patterns are distinctive. Utah has more school age children per household than any other state. Between 1974-75 and 1984-85, when most states were faced with declining enrollments, Utah's K-12 population increased by 27 percent, to 403,305 students (Utah Foundation, 1985). Public school enrollments are expected to increase dramatically over the next two decades.⁴ There are substantial and sustained demands for service. These demographics generate troublesome policy issues, among them, a concern for the supply of quality teachers since class sizes are already the highest in the country, and a concern for the state's ability to finance growth along with reform.

⁴If current projections hold, the number of school age children will hit 627,000 in the year 2010 (Weaver, et al, 1984).

Fiscal Constraints

In the early 1980's Utah experienced its "longest and deepest recession in 40 years" (Robson, 1982). By making austere appropriations, instituting modest tax increases, tapping reserves, and adjusting collection timetables, the legislature supported small but steady advancements for most state services. The situation changed markedly in 1986. Revenue shortfalls (\$25 million reported before the session was underway, an additional \$30.5 million announced during the session) plagued the legislature (Parker, 1986b). The politics of marginal expansion gave way to the politics of redistribution as monies were transferred across education and other service sector categories in order to secure a modicum of funds for K-12 education—a 2 percent increase in the minimum program, a \$5 million increase in career ladder allocations but a \$3.8 million cutback in school building aids, compensatory and adult education programs (Parker, 1986a). Even with extensive campaigns to strengthen the economic base, only moderate gains in economic growth are anticipated and severe revenue deficits (ranging from approximately \$250 million to \$500 million in K-12 education and \$1.7 billion for the state as a whole by 1991) are projected (Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst, 1985; Utah Foundation, 1986).

Cultural Commitment to Quality Education

Utah's "moralistic" political culture (Elazar, 1965) fosters a strong commitment to education. For many Utahns, education constitutes the most important function of state government (Campbell, 1981) and for most legislators, K-12 education constitutes, in their words, the "number one funding priority ... even if other agencies have to be bled."

The state has been receptive to innovation in the area of education policy (Savage, 1978; Malen and Campbell, 1985). When Nation at Risk, directed and endorsed by two "native sons," (David Gardner, then President of the University of Utah and Terrence Bell, then Secretary of Education) called for reform, Utahns were especially eager, as all informants concurred, to "do something dramatic ... to reclaim a kind of 'front runner' reputation." Policy actors currently report that the "flair and fanfare of the reform movement" has subsided. Yet they add, "public interest can be rekindled and funds can be raised if people see change."

Tradition of Local Discretion

Although the state initiates innovative education policies and continues to absorb approximately 50 percent of total K-12 education costs, there is still a strong deference to local discretion (Wirt, 1977; Campbell, 1981; Malen and Murphy, 1985). Lawmakers typically view district officials as "the real experts," and district discretion as "a buffer when things get too hot." The local control ethic operates as a unifying theme for contending groups, "a way to bring people together;" a "selling point" for some legislators; a viable response when information is limited, and a ready means for affirming the salient citizen involvement principle. State activism is tempered then, by the cultural value and the political utility of decentralized approaches to education policy. There is a strong tendency, all agreed, to "adopt a bottom up instead of a top down strategy."

Conservative Orientations and Consensual Norms of State Officials

The conservative orientation of state officials is evident in the close relationship which exists between organized religion, politics

and business, and in the dominant position of the Republican Party (Pierce and Hagstrom, 1983). While members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) are not a monolithic group, the Church is a potent, conservative force which embraces, at least nominally, about 72 percent of the state's population (Gottlieb and Wiley, 1984). Since 90 percent of the lawmakers are Mormon, church preferences are well protected. Since nearly half of the legislators are also in business related occupations, the linkage between religion, politics and business is direct and pronounced.

At this time, Utah is essentially a one-party state. Since 1978 the Republican Party has maintained a majority position in both chambers and currently holds a decisive 23-6 advantage in the Senate and a 61-14 advantage in the House. Democrats have, for two decades, held the governorship. However, in 1985, when the Democratic incumbent (Scott Matheson) did not seek a third term, the Republican candidate (Norman Bangerter) was elected to that office. While educational issues often transcend party ties, financial options are affected by the more conservative Republican position (Campbell, 1981; Malen and Campbell, 1985). The pattern is to adopt a fiscally cautious stance, what informants term a "cash and carry mentality" evident in the reluctance to raise taxes, expend reserves, and float bonds.

The common partisan, professional and religious backgrounds nourish a consensual as well as a conservative orientation to state government. The norm is "to avoid stirring things up if at all possible ... to work things out in a calm and reasonable manner."

In the Utah context, there is a desire to be responsive to the call for education reform but there is also a recognition that comprehensive and expensive reform overtures are not realistic. While Utah ranks among the top three states in tax effort for education, the limited economic base and the disproportionate demographic demands mitigate the effects of that exceptional effort. Per pupil expenditures are currently the lowest in the country. The state is prone, therefore, to target monies on particular reforms and to apply management concepts from private business to the pursuit of school improvement. Policies which, as legislators bluntly stated, "break the lock step salary schedule" and "get the money to the good ones [teachers] without having to subsidize everybody" are persuasive to state officials. And approaches which preserve local district discretion, bolster local capability, and "induce rather than force change" are compelling as well.

Actors, Processes, Outcomes

Policy decisions are products of the interplay of influence among competing actors as well as reflections of contextual features. Career ladder decisions are being fashioned by the governor, key legislators, public education interest groups, and state education agency officials. The process through which these actors affect career ladder policy is analyzed in terms of their influence on the various control mechanisms.

Articulation of Ideological Beliefs, Goals, Intentions

In simplified terms, the articulation of certain views operates to provide both a definition of the situation, an enunciation of the problem to be addressed; and a definition of the solution, a specification of how things can be changed (Mitchell and Iannacone, 1980). The actors

who define the subjects of concern, who focus attention on particular categories of problems and solutions exert considerable influence on policy outcomes (Cobb and Edler, 1983). By giving direction to and setting the parameters for what is considered, they wield "the supreme instrument of power" (Schattschneider, 1960).

In the Utah context, the governor has played a critical role in articulating and promoting the belief that education reform is achieved through the creation of fiscal incentives for teachers, in focusing attention on the career ladder option as a viable incentive system, and in establishing this initiative as the cornerstone of the state policy system's education reform agenda. The Office of Governor is a powerful one in Utah (Gray, Jacob and Vines, 1983), and when these positional assets are augmented by personal resources, the individual who occupies the office can be a potent actor. While no single force defines an issue and elevates it to prominence on the governmental agenda, executive officials can be extremely influential, particularly when they function as policy entrepreneurs, when they assume responsibility "not only for prompting important people to pay attention, but also for coupling solutions to problems and for coupling both problems and solutions to politics" (Kingdon, 1984:21).

Initial Executive Articulation

In 1983, the governor assumed primary responsibility for articulating the state's education reform agenda. Governor Scott Matheson was an astute policy entrepreneur. In cooperation with legislative leaders, the governor appointed the Education Reform Steering Committee (ERSC) to garner support for two goals: major increases in education expenditures

and major changes in teacher compensation structures. Reflecting the governor's charge, the ERSC developed, as its lead recommendation, a \$41.4 million career ladder plan for teachers.⁵ To diffuse public education interest group reservations and acquire greater congruence with the contextual value of local autonomy, the initial proposal -- a single, centralized model was modified. The ERSC backed instead, a proposal for state wide but locally developed career ladder plans.⁶ An available solution, congruent with legislator orientations, endorsed by national reports, and adjusted to reduce interest group opposition was linked to the problem of imminent teacher shortages at the height of the excellence movement. Through the familiar task force strategy (Hines, 1976) the governor skillfully defined, effectively promoted and essentially set the state's view of education reform. The salient themes of fiscal rewards for quality teachers and local participation in program development guided those who sought to influence education policy. Embodying these themes, the career ladder label became a virtual synonym for educational reform. Informants from all perspectives concurred:

Career ladders and school reform are seen as the same thing ... They were in 1984, and they continue to be the key to reform in this state ... the only handle we have.

⁵For an explication of the governor's reasons for this decision and the less visible actors that augmented the governor's position, see Malen and Campbell, 1985.

⁶For a detailed description of the original proposal refer to Utah Education Reform Steering Committee, Education in Utah: A Call to Action, November, 1983, pp. 11-17. The redefined version was published by the Utah Education Reform Steering Committee in Addendum to Education in Utah: A Call to Action, January, 1984. The addendum states that the legislature should "allow local districts to establish career ladder plans for teachers" and should consider the career ladder provisions outlined in the first edition of A Call to Action as "one example" of a career ladder program.

Continuous Executive Promotion

Like his predecessor, Governor Bangerter has used the resources of this office, namely budget preparation and public visibility, to keep the career ladder issue on the state's decision agenda. In 1985, Bangerter backed the career ladder recommendations that Matheson had built into the transition budget for several reasons. First, as Speaker of the House in 1984, he was involved in the informal agreement to phase in the policy over a three year period. Second, as a new governor, he had no alternative menu. His first priority was business development (Bangerter, 1985b). There simply had not been time to articulate, let alone mobilize support for a markedly different education package. Third, the momentum created by the national reform movement and the ERSC's response to it was still present. Given the state's tradition of concern for education, executive staff recalled:

You had to have something out front ... a way to get money and support, in fresh ways, and career ladders served that function.

In 1986, amidst revenue shortages, Bangerter recommended an additional \$10 million for career ladders and argued for that position even if it meant cutting back the basic program (Scarlet, 1985). In addition, the governor gave career ladders top billing in the newly published education agenda, ALERT (Bangerter, 1985a). The governor was encouraged to take this stand by staff, by a small, "informal advisory group" which included several ardent supporters of the career ladder concept, and by the more unified stance of the public education interest groups.

Bangerter's promotional efforts have not been as explicit or as flamboyant as Matheson's. Bangerter has not advocated a particular career ladder model or advanced the concept through public hearings

and "grassroots" forums. Yet, the budget recommendations, state of the state addresses, media presentations, formal speeches to the legislature and informal interactions with policymakers go beyond a pro forma mention. The pre-session meetings with public school interest groups and the explicit request that these associations, as executive staff recalled, "let the legislators know you want career ladders to continue" also go beyond a pro forma endorsement. All informants agreed that the governor's efforts have served to "keep career ladders in the limelight," to "preserve their favored position." The preliminary plans for a "new blue ribbon commission" to build public support for a tax increase next session indicate that "he's taken the page out of Matheson's book, and he's going to keep them [career ladders] right out in front of us."

Executive Influence

By articulating the career ladder option, by merging the desirability of rewarding good teachers with the maxim of local autonomy, this actor set the state's education reform agenda, established the boundaries for negotiating rule provisions, and created the vehicle for legitimating financial allocations. Career ladders have become, all concurred, "the only game in town ...the only pump to prime."

The capacity to articulate ideas and set them on the agenda is not, Kingdon cautions, "the same as getting one's way" (1984:24). Although the governor has maintained that education reform can be achieved through career ladder reform, precisely what constitutes an educational improvement has not been made explicit, and what constitutes a career ladder has received less and less attention. The career ladder concept has become an umbrella for the aggregation of diverse and competing interests.

The governor has exerted only modest influence on these adjustments. Other actors have brokered the policy and translated the original career ladder initiative into a more generic teacher compensation program. Further, despite the governor's backing, the career ladder policy has become the "victim" of the legislature's response to a severely strained revenue base and a demographically over-burdened school system. In sum, the governor has shaped views of problems and priorities. However, policy goals remain elusive, formal rules are fluid, and allocations tend to fall below the governor's recommendations.

Formulation of Rules

Since the career ladder initiative is "the only game in town," actors have concentrated their efforts on linking their preferences to it by molding the rules for it. The actors primarily involved in negotiating the rules are legislators, public education interest groups, and, to a lesser extent, state education agency officials. These actors have conflicting goals but they have formed instrumental alignments, forged rule compromises, and fashioned incremental adjustments. In contrast to articulation, rule formulation is characterized more by private bargains than public promotions (Kingdon, 1984). The aim is action more than agreement (Kingdon, 1984; Mitchell, 1981) and the means is, in Edelman's apt phrase, "a deal not an appeal."

Conflicting Goals

When the career ladder proposal was presented in the 1984 legislative session, three "camps" emerged. There were actors who supported career ladders, actors who preferred merit pay and actors who preferred across the board salary increases.

The career ladder camp consisted of the Education Reform Steering Committee, the Society of Superintendents, the state education agency, and other public school administrator, school board, and parent organizations. While all saw the ERSC's career ladder proposal as a vehicle for legitimating major monetary requests, individuals within this camp also saw career ladders as a means for redesigning teacher work.

The ERSC had community visibility and legislative credibility. It had senators and representatives with expertise, brokerage skill, and positional power as committee chairs, caucus and chamber leaders. An exceptionally influential ally, the Society of Superintendents, was pushing hard for the ERSC proposal. Individuals in this organization, notably those who represent the larger districts, are "respected ... relied on ... listened to." Their expertise, status, visibility, common religious affiliations, and years of lobbying experience constitute potent resources. Backed by the state education agency and other public school lobby groups, this camp constituted a formidable force.

The merit pay camp was composed largely of individuals from the Republican Caucus. Factions within the Republican Caucus resisted the career ladder proposal on partisan, jurisdiction and conceptual grounds. Some legislators did not want to "rubber stamp the Democratic Governor." Some were not sure, as they put it, "what this career ladder business means" or "what climbing a ladder really does." Others viewed "straight merit pay" as the "most direct route" to their goal, "to break the lock-step salary schedule." The career ladder proposal was resisted, in legislators' words, because it was "a poor excuse for merit pay ... a sorry substitute for just getting the money to deserving teachers." Since the Republican

Caucus had numerical superiority and "purse string" authority, the merit pay camp had access to a potent resource. Although this camp developed during the session, its belated entry into the arena created division in the caucus and thereby jeopardized career ladder enactment and career ladder allocations.

The across the board salary increase camp consisted primarily of the Utah Education Association, the major teacher organization in the state.⁷ This organization resisted a state-wide career ladder program because it would divert funds from the primary goals—substantial and uniform salary increases and meaningful class size reductions. The UEA also resisted because major alterations in the compensation structures and the work responsibilities of teachers cut to the core of union interests. These alterations threaten the single salary schedule, a teacher association's primary means of protecting its members from economically arbitrary or capricious treatment (Bacharach, et al, 1985). Sizeable memberships and campaign "war chests," staff, communication networks, and a reputation for being able to "disrupt" and "beat back" bills, even, as state agency officials reported, "stop them when they put their mind to it," meant the UEA needed to be accommodated. On the career ladder issue, "some semblance of UEA acceptance" was viewed by all informants as essential.

Legislators contended, for instance:

without teacher backing career ladders wouldn't work even if we got them through ... Everybody's energy would be wasted ... If teachers didn't come along, it wouldn't be worth doing because nothing good would happen.

⁷The American Federation of Teachers is organizing chapters in the state. Their membership is at this time, is small. Nearly all of the state's 16,000 teachers are affiliated with the Utah Education Association.

Both passage of the bill and potential effectiveness of the program then, rested on UEA support.

Instrumental Alignments

As is often the case, these competing camps developed an instrumental alignment, not a conceptual agreement (Lindbloom, 1968; Mitchell, 1981; Kingdon, 1984). Both time constraints and ideological distance made the resolution of substantive differences unlikely. But other factors made cooperation essential.

For lawmakers, there was the contextual demand for reform. Even fiscally conservative legislators wanted "to do something." A senator captured the prevailing view:

It would have been difficult to leave the session without taking action ... Education was the king pin ... You had to at least look like you were doing something to respond, and most of us really wanted to.

Bargaining can be "touched off by high interest issues," (Mitchell, 1981: 58) and education reform was clearly a high interest item.

There was, from the UEA vantage point, a need to avert more stringent legislative mandates. There was a sense that

the legislature could have rammed anything down our throats ... there were diversionary bills worse than career ladders [notably merit pay] ... when we saw those ... we knew we had to negotiate.

This actor didn't want to lose the benefits of participation in negotiations, not the least of which is the opportunity to insert protections. As Kingdon argues:

A central interest group activity is attaching one's own alternatives to agenda items that others have made prominent...even if they haven't started the ball rolling, once it is rolling they try to insure that interests are protected in the legislation that emerges (1984:53)

More important, for education groups, there was the fiscal contingency. Scarce resources contribute to the likelihood that "interest groups will form coalitions to protect or enhance their position" (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980:83). The ERSC members, public education organizations and state education agency officials all realized that given the paucity of state resources, the Republican Caucus would not approve a significant budget increase without a major sign of reform. It was in their economic interest to meld a compromise position. They could not afford to let "the best opportunity in years" slip away. As an interest group spokesperson summarized:

In this state you've got to get money when you can and how you can and as much as you can. All of us had to accept career ladders and try to form them.

Financial stakes, "diversionary bills " and a climate that clamored for action catalyzed negotiations. Content expansion provided the currency for the creation of an instrumental alignment, a winning coalition.

The Resultant Compromises

The UEA "got behind" the career ladder concept. It was a more malleable and therefore more palatable alternative than straight merit pay. UEA alignment meant that the extended contract provisions would be liberalized. An enlargement of that provision, all maintained, "would placate the UEA. Without it, we couldn't have brought them along." UEA backing also required that evaluation protections be included. Given the perceived limitations of existing teacher evaluation systems and the UEA insistence on evaluation safeguards, this organization had a "handle" for restricting the merit pay portion of the proposal.

Factions in the Republican caucus needed to see their merit pay concerns in the bill. Their "bottom line" was half the funds. ERSC members and their allies worked with legislative staff to reflect that interest, but in rather vague language. Half the funds would be used for performance based promotions, a clause which could be interpreted as but not confined to classroom teaching merit. Job redesign, the original thrust of the ERSC proposal was protected in a staff differentiation option and in the ambiguity of the performance-based promotion section.

Local district planning with state monitoring was a "natural" compromise given the state's strong tradition of local discretion and strong commitment to consensual norms. The "real experts" could develop the plans; those most affected would have "input" in district planning committees; and unresolved conflicts could be shifted from the legislature to the local arena. A career ladder proposal, vividly but accurately described as "a camel with three humps," allowed competing interests to forge an alignment that would satisfy the need to "enact something innovative" and solidify the claim for a favorable share of the state's fiscal resources.

Ongoing Incremental Adjustments

Incremental adjustments are being made in two arenas, the legislature and the state education agency.

Legislative Adjustments No actor is advocating a major change in the career ladder policy. While a few legislators in each chamber would like to repeal the statute, they have not mobilized to do so largely because the policy has become a symbol of the state's commitment to education reform. Both political integrity and state ego are at stake. Select comments illustrate:

We said we'd give it time and continue it for three years. If we don't do that we can never talk reform again. We have to keep that promise.

If we don't keep it we've wasted two years and violated our commitment to the education family. We can't do that. We have to stay with it.

When you're last in funding per pupil you need to be first in something else ... we're on the cutting edge with career ladders.

In a setting that respects innovation in education, all informants contended, "We have to hang on to the one thing we really did."

There is, however, rivalry within the coalition of actors who combined and compromised their interests to enact a career ladder statute. They continue a "tug of war" in the legislature. The merit pay faction prompts a continuous negotiation of the rules but contending parties arrest their overtures. A brief synopsis of session activity illustrates these dynamics.

Legislators who view "the compromise bill" of 1984 as "a clever way to get everybody money," feel "duped." Their response has been to press for "what we wanted in the first place, a merit pay system, a new salary schedule." These legislators are not typically in chamber leadership positions (though the 1985 merit movement did acquire a pre-session endorsement from the Speaker of the House). They tend to be, what informants term, "peripheral but vocal" legislators. A significant asset, however is persistence. All informants reported, "They won't let it die ... They lobby hard and will call in chits on the issue." These lawmakers are backed privately by "a few superintendents" who believe in the merit pay approach and want "help in dealing with the political divisiveness, the teacher resistance, should they initiate that in their own districts." They are backed publicly by several individuals

on the state board of education. The "few superintendents" are viewed as particularly potent resources for the merit proponents. These superintendents represent large districts, "live" at the legislature and lend a sense of expert endorsement to the merit overtures.

The UEA, the Society of Superintendents, and key individuals in House and Senate leadership positions constrain the merit revisions in the legislature. These actors frame their stance in terms which transcend the relative virtues of merit pay and job redesign models. Their appeals are rooted in the cultural commitment to expertise and local autonomy. When the technical experts (be they teachers, district administrators or, at times, state education officials) contend that evaluation systems are not well-developed, the appeal operates to "slow down" the merit push. And, as interest groups and individual legislators remind others of "the promise" to let local districts plan and refine their own programs, they tap into a "genuine, almost sacred value." Armed with salient arguments and impressive resources, the major public school interest groups and individual legislators block the merit faction.

The UEA and the Society of Superintendents deter major merit adjustments. As legislators admitted, there is a "real reluctance to push too much merit ... we'd really hear it from the UEA and the Society." In a setting that clings to consensus norms, legislators do not wish

to open a can of worms ... awaken sleeping giants ... create an explosive situation ... put a match to the fires of the Superintendents and the UEA.

Some informants reported that the UEA is not influential. They claimed that the organization does not speak for the rank and file teacher, that the UEA is a "negative force" which "alienates and prompts a backlash"

with its "abrasive ... militant ... unrealistic" demands and strategies. There is, in short, "a lot of anti-UEA sentiment in the legislature." While informants criticized the UEA style and discounted the organization's impact, interview transcripts—even from informants who criticized and discounted—contain strong evidence of the UEA's capacity to impose constraints on the process. Legislators stated:

You don't want to ignite them ... rile them up ... provoke them into more overt action ... It's hard to take them on ... The UEA can harass and wear you down and you can't fight all the time so you give in ... The UEA can make life miserable. You have to deal.

Whether the constraint effects flow primarily from the UEA's power to "make some difference in certain elections," to "create real problems if they [sic] get so angry they [sic] walk out or cut back on work," or to "irritate and delay" is not clear. What can be said is that the UEA is not popular, but it is potent. The UEA response is, as one legislator summarized "in the back of your mind and it limits what you can realistically afford to do." In addition, individual legislators, because of their chamber positions, are in place to "block ... shut off" the merit moves in conference committee negotiations.

Moreover, lawmakers are unwilling to make major rule changes when they are unable to "fully fund" the career ladder. As legislators reported:

Maybe when we put all the money in we can insist on what we wanted in the first place, a merit pay plan. But until you fully fund it, you have to be careful. You can lose the education family because they have to abide by our rules even though we have't provided the funds ... That's not wise or fair.

Making the merit change in 1986 would have been the icing on the cake ... Groups were upset, especially the UEA, about school funding levels. That had a lot to do with it. You can't mess with it under those conditions.

The 1985 merit move was viewed as "a small price to pay to restore good will with those who felt betrayed." The 1986 merit move "was torpedoed by the UEA and the superintendents" in the House Education Committee. It did pass on the floor when the House leadership was "out trying to handle the final appropriation negotiations." But Senate leaders, encouraged by individual House leaders, and "heavy interest group lobbying" stopped the bill. Amidst frenetic efforts to balance the state budget, at a time when "nobody was going to be very satisfied because there just wasn't much money to pass out," raising another "hot issue" was simply not wise. There was then, no compelling reason to consider the merit revision and considerable reason to "set it aside."

State Education Agency Adjustments. The forces which arrest the centralizing moves to merit pay in the legislature operate to constrain policy adjustments in the state education agency as well. This agency has the resource base to assert considerable influence. The state board has the legal authority to approve plans, dispense funds and develop binding standards as well as guiding principles. The state office has data banks, staff resources and interstate connections with groups working on the career ladder reform. Further, the state agency has regained credibility through a change in leadership. The new Superintendent of Public Instruction is experienced, trusted and knowledgeable. His previous post, assistant superintendent and legislative liason, allowed him to develop connections with lawmakers and educators.

The state agency, is however, more a target of influence than a source of influence (Gamson, 1968). It is caught "in the crossfire" of legislative pressure for more merit, legislative pressure to "leave

well enough alone," superintendent pressure to "let us do our job" and teacher pressure to preserve existing arrangements. Attempts to rearrange the basic components would, in the words of one state official, "put us in a real turf fight with the superintendents" and "invite the UEA to blow the whole thing up in our faces." Both situations are to be avoided. As one board member put it, "You can't buck them when you have to work with them." Another added,

In this state there needs to be a sense of partnership ... mandates and orders just don't work very well.

Thus the agency tends to confine its explicit rules to those fashioned in the legislative arena. The major exception occurred in 1986. The state board initiated a new requirement—that 25 percent of career ladder funds be distributed on the basis of outstanding classroom performance. Pressure from interest groups prompted a reconsideration. When the board "stepped back", superintendents assumed "there would be no change in the binding language." They did not continue their resistance. The board adopted a new, but a less stringent regulation—10 percent of the total funds must be used for merit bonuses; the 25 percent figure became a recommendation.⁸

It is possible, of course, to regulate policy in more subtle ways, through the selection and exchange of information rather than the specification and formalization of rules. The state office and the state

⁸Some state board members view the 1986 action as a "clarification" rather than an extension of state board regulations. They maintain that the state board has always mandated that 10 percent of total funds be dispersed on this criterion. The language of the 1985 regulations imply that ten percent of performance based promotion funds, rather than ten percent of the total funds must be allocated on classroom teaching merit. Thus the 1986 board action appears to be an alteration as well as a clarification.

superintendent do coordinate communications through conferences, workshops, site visits, and informal interactions. The primary objective is to create a forum through which information can be exchanged and "good" ideas can bubble up and spread out." By arranging sessions for superintendents, legislators, district career ladder committees, UEA representatives, and other interested parties, the state agency does serve an important networking function. Since the state agency is still, as staff candidly admit, "struggling to figure out what might work well," and "flying by the seat of our pants," there does not appear to be a conscious or concerted effort to promote any one particular version of the numerous, and varied career ladder plans. When direct and indirect methods of redefining policy are examined, the state agency appears to be refraining from extensive use of its regulatory prerogatives.

Resource Allocation

Economic conditions and revenue projections impinge on appropriation decisions. The financial conditions of the state impose tight constraints on the players of its politics. State officials do have latitude, however. In Utah, state officials have restricted their financial flexibility by choosing to operate under what informants term "self-imposed" constraints apparent in their hesitance to raise taxes, use reserves, and float bonds. Allocation decisions are made within fairly tight bounds, and within a fairly "small circle" of official actors, notably the governor, the appropriations committee chairs, and chamber leaders.

Education appropriation decisions are shaped by the governor's position on taxation and distribution. Matheson's limited success in acquiring tax increases and Bangertter's limited success in securing

what he termed a property tax "restoration" indicate that the governor's endorsement may be a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for attaining tax increases. The close relationship between the governor's recommendations and the legislature's appropriations does suggest that this participant has considerable influence on the distribution of available revenues. The governor's requests may be sharply cut back, but the priorities are not usually reordered.

While informants acknowledge that allocation decisions are shaped by the governor, all maintain that these decisions are made by the legislators who chair the Joint Appropriations Committee and by those who hold chamber leadership positions. Informants from all perspectives stated that these individuals:

steer the money decisions ... committees get their marching orders and they are expected to carry them out ... they establish the appropriation decisions very early and there is very little wiggle room ... There is an opportunity to speak for or against the leadership's position, but people fall in line on the vote.

These legislators are able to exercise control in part because they are "articulate ... experienced ... more knowledgeable on the complex issue of school finance." Others "yield to their wisdom." Beyond these personal resources, there are positional assets which can be used as leverage. Legislators explained:

They are polite and even courtly, but they are tough ... They aren't above holding your bills over your head to sort of whip you in line.

There is little doubt in the interview data. As one interest group spokesperson summarized:

It's a caucus more than a committee system here ... The power is in the leadership of the Joint Appropriations Committee and the leadership of the House and Senate.

A legislator concurred:

In Utah, the crucial decisions, what is cut and not cut are made by the leadership. They meet and decide, and then plan the committee and caucus and floor strategies. It's highly disciplined.

While these legislators constitute the locus of accommodation, they do not operate in unison or in isolation. There are trades made between individuals and across chambers, as decisions about the sources and uses of scarce revenues are hammered out (Bates, 1986; White, 1986). The career ladder policy has loyal supporters in this leadership group. Several were on the original ERSC committee. These individuals, with others, informants concurred,

work hard to hang on to their creation. They have a strong interest in education and a special interest in preserving their reform.

Even though allocation decisions get bantered and bartered as the House and Senate posture for chamber preferences, these individuals "hang on to career ladder appropriations" and secure a "favored piece" albeit of a rather "small pie."

Allocation decisions are characterized as insulated, yet they are not immune to other pressures. Public education interest groups do have some influence at this stage. They do not have the clout to alter decisions regarding taxation, but they do have some impact on distribution.⁹

⁹ In order to overcome the fiscally conservative orientation of the legislature, a "broad coalition including business" is needed. As one succinctly stated: "Educators can't raise money by themselves." The Utah Education Association did attempt to mobilize public pressure for a tax increase for education in 1986. Its "energy was easily offset" by the Utah Tax Payers Association and informal constituency groups which demanded property tax relief (Fenton, 1985). As legislators stated, "The threat of property tax limitation was in the air. When that happens, you have to fend off those forces, not increase taxes, especially in an election year." Further, Governor Bangert had made a campaign promise, no tax increases for two years. There was, informants contended, "no chance" for the UEA campaign to be successful.

Since 1984, the public education interest groups have attempted to affect allocation decisions by projecting a more unified position on education issues in general and on the career ladder issue in particular.¹⁰ As an interest group spokesperson stated:

We've come to see that we're in a stronger position if we try to stand together. That helped us in 1984 and in 1985 and it was essential in 1986.

The "one voice" strategy is seen as persuasive given the consensus norms of the legislature, and essential, given the demographic demands and the strained revenues apparent in the state. As an interest group representative phrased it, "any crack gives an excuse to cut back funds." And legislators confirmed: "Their unity helps you hang on ... When people are looking for money anywhere they can get it, division in your ranks can hurt you."

The "one voice" strategy must not, however, be overstated. The solo voice of organizational alignment is, for some legislators, overshadowed by dissonant voices: teachers who "express their displeasure" with career ladder operations, superintendents who argue for different career ladder models, organizations that diverge on other program priorities or "go their own way" on campaign strategies. These, and other signs

¹⁰The cohesiveness of the education associations and state agencies was tested in 1986 as these units "fought behind closed doors about whose ox was to be gored ... the state office pet projects or the district programs." Sizeable revenue shortfalls meant that like other state funded services, public education was going "to take its licks." But the career ladder program was not a casualty in the exchange. It was "brought up" but not bargained. Even through the potentially divisive dynamics of redistribution within education categories, in spite of intra and inter-organizational disagreements, the public school lobby remained aligned on the career ladder policy. They realized "if we gave it up, we wouldn't get anything for it ... The money would be gone."

of divergence prompt informants to describe the public school lobby as operationally "disjointed ... fractured" albeit organizationally united, "tightly knit on the demand for more money in career ladders." While the legislature did "break the traditional balance" and allocate larger increases for public education than for other state employees, that decision was made, in large measure by a small group of legislators operating in a body that is inclined to put K-12 education first on its list of funding priorities. The unified position of the public school lobby operated to facilitate more than formulate that decision.

Feedback Effects

The state education agency is a major source of policy feedback. At the request of the legislature, the state education agency has compiled summaries of district career ladder plans and conducted surveys of teacher attitudes toward career ladder programs (Utah State Office of Education, 1985; Nelson, 1986). Other major sources of feedback include individual teachers, individual superintendents, and interest group spokespersons. Their feedback takes the form of surveys of teacher viewpoints, testimonials regarding career ladder activities in particular districts, complaints regarding career ladder operations, and media synopsis of special career ladder projects. These responses are injected into the legislative process through interim committee meetings, press releases, television advertisements, and private calls or personal contacts with lawmakers.

At this time policy feedback appears to be used primarily as an instrument of political influence and incidentally as a basis for substantive assessment. That pattern is not unusual (Lindbloom, 1968; Kingdon, 1984; Wirt and Mitchell, 1982). It is apparent in several ways.

First, legislators stated that they use policy information to legitimate their "prior convictions." Judgments are based on "experience with personnel matters" in their own businesses. Even legislators who seek information from staff in order to "balance the rosy picture" painted by education interest groups and state agencies said:

Most legislators relate to career ladders on the basis of their business sense ... They cite data, but mostly as a back up, as a way to validate their position after they've already made their judgment.

Second, information regarding "how teachers like career ladders" was reported to be of greatest value to lawmakers. These data help "handle the calls from disgruntled teachers" and help "gauge the UEA." Third, policy feedback was described by those who lobby, as a vehicle to keep the career ladder policy "on the front burner" and a way to give those who are "already supportive some ammunition." While several sources indicated that state agency reports and educator testimony might affect the "few who are on the fence," most contended that the information "puts out brushfires" if a legislator has received a complaint that funds "are being abused" and "gives legislators a way to justify" the position that they have taken. Finally, policy information has been infused into the system in an episodic manner. The prominent pattern is a "partial ... piecemeal" treatment of the information. The legislature, for example, requested from the state office of education, information regarding attitudes toward the policy and "effects" of it. While state education office reports were referenced in conversations and cited in testimony, rule negotiations were dominated by other forces and allocation decisions were made, as one legislative leader stated, "Thursday, and the big presentations came the following Tuesday."

Summary of Policymaking Processes

Career ladder policymaking in Utah is a complex process affected by the contextual forces which permeate the policy system, and the multiplicity of interdependent actors engaged with the issue. Demographic demands, fiscal constraints, the cultural commitment to quality education, a tradition of local discretion, and the conservative, consensual orientations of state officials prompt a search for "efficient" innovations and a respect for local capability-building strategies. Competing actors reflect those broad forces as they interact to produce career ladder decisions.

Career ladder decisionmaking is characterized by fragmentation and politicalization. Different sets of actors exert different degrees of influence on the various control mechanisms. The governor functions as the critical actor on articulation, legislative factions and interest groups negotiate the rules, and chamber leaders and appropriations committee chairs determine the allocations. Decisions on the various control mechanisms are interactive. Although these decisions are inter-related, they are fundamentally influenced by different clusters of actors in what is described as a "currently polite ... fairly friendly" but "potentially contentious" political exchange.

The fiscal stakes are small, relative to the total education funding package, but the limited availability of resources once enrollment growth is accommodated, makes even small stakes salient. Competing goals, notably the desire of some to break the lockstep salary schedule and the desire of others to protect it, the desire of some to centralize a merit model and the desire of others to protect the job enlargement approach, elicit

conflict. Policy feedback is used primarily as a power resource, to legitimate prior convictions or promote particular preferences. The tension has been managed by incremental adjustments in rules and modest infringements on local discretion.

Policy leadership is in the hands of state officials. The impetus for career ladder enactment and the initiatives for career ladder revision come largely from the governor and the legislators. Public education interest groups are certainly involved, primarily in exercising constraints on rules. The state education agency, a pivotal actor in implementation and thus a potentially potent force on the process, mirrors more than modifies these dynamics. While some scholars hold that the "politics of education at the state level is still a politics of interest groups" (Burlingame and Geske, 1979:71), on the career ladder issue in Utah the interest groups and state associations are forced to respond to the overtures and the directives of governors and legislators. The focus is established by officials, and others must adapt to those priorities.

Education groups are in a reactive rather than an initiating role. Within the parameters of a reactive strategy, these groups exert considerable influence on the process. They complicate the calculations of political feasibility and thereby constrict the options of state officials.

STATE LEVEL INFLUENCE ON CAREER LADDER PROGRAMS

The capacity of state decisions to influence the career ladder reform can be at least initially assessed by the extent to which the various control mechanisms are congruent with legislative intentions and linked to the control mechanisms of school systems. Policies are typically "a set of broad and often diverse intentions" (Farrar, 1983:114).

Such is the case with the career ladder policy in Utah. Recognizing the blend of intentions, several observations can be made.

If the most frequently referenced goal, to create a reform that channels more money into education, accurately represents legislative intention, then the career ladder policy appears to be in line with that aim. The policy embodies the salient themes of rewarding quality teachers while preserving local district discretion. The policy provides a contextually persuasive "handle" for justifying increased educational expenditures. The data provide support for this instrumental dimension of legislative intention. Informants from all perspectives maintain that in order to raise taxes for education and increase appropriations to education, there must be a legitimating rubric. It may be that a primary aim of the career ladder policy is simply to provide the "semblance of reform" needed to garner political support for greater financial investments in an overburdened and underfunded school system.

If the expressed goal, to break the salary schedule, represents legislative intention, the current arrangement of control mechanisms does not maximize that aim for several reasons. First, the extended contract provision constitutes a uniform salary increase for all teachers. It affirms and reinforces the basic salary schedule. Second, job redesign offers extra pay for extra work or added pay for new responsibilities. While this provision gives some teachers the opportunity to earn more money, the central tenets of the existing salary schedule are still in tact. Experience and training continue to govern the compensation formula for most teachers. The promotion of some teachers does not significantly alter the principles regulating the distribution of salaries

to most teachers. Third, the classroom teaching bonus is a commission on top of, not the integral determinant, of teacher earnings. Because the career ladder program is a categorical aid, monies are allocated in addition to, and in small amounts relative to, the foundation program funds. Thus, the resources targeted on breaking the salary schedule are modest in amount and diffused across provisions which either directly reinforce, or supplement rather than supplant, the existing salary schedule. Moreover, the articulation tool is not being used to foster this goal. Since major adjustments in the single salary schedule collide with the values of the teacher associations, considerable attention needs to be directed toward altering the orientations of educators. Little if any state activity is directed toward that end. Therefore, the current arrangement of the policy mechanisms does not maximize the "break the salary schedule" goal.

If legislative intention is defined more broadly, as an attempt to develop effective and enduring rewards for quality teachers, the control mechanisms currently used are more appropriate but not fully consistent with that aim. The policy mechanisms complement that objective in a number of respects.

First, the fiscal incentives focus attention on and stimulate experimentation with teacher incentive programs. All districts have elected to develop some type of career ladder plan. While fiscal incentives can generate opportunistic responses and distort expenditure patterns, there is evidence that districts and schools are investing effort in program development and implementation (Career Ladder Research Group, 1984; Hart, 1986; Murphy, 1986) as well as program promotion and fund

preservation. There is widespread agreement that if funds were not in the career ladder line of the budget, the funds would not be in education. As one legislative leader stated:

I'm ninety-nine percent sure that if we didn't put the dollars into career ladders we wouldn't have that money for schools. We need the reform to justify the expenditures. If you want money in education, you take it in career ladders or you don't take it at all.

Second, the rules allow for a broad repertoire of incentive strategies which could be used to address individual and organizational, motivational and regulatory dimensions of teacher quality (Mitchell, 1986). Individualized salary increases, staff development, role expansion, and revised supervision procedures are all permitted and encouraged. Each strategy implies a somewhat different view of the central components of improved teacher quality and each strategy places a different emphasis on the labor, craft, profession, and art aspects of teaching. While there is a tension among the strategies and a danger that limited funds spread across multiple strategies dilutes the impact of any or all, there is an opportunity to search for an appropriate balance among these tools in particular schools settings and in particular career stages (Murphy and Hart, 1985).

Third, the rules delegate substantial control to the localities, an approach which recognizes the complexity of school systems. Schools systems are both loosely coupled and bottom heavy (Elmore, 1980). Those features mitigate the impact of centralized mandates and standardized prescriptions. Attempts to control schools through centralized directives tend to divert resources from programmatic improvement to rule enforcement. Centralized prescriptions tend to either evoke resistance or

acquire conformity at the expense of cooperation and commitment (Elmore, 1980). The state's willingness to let local districts develop their own career ladder plans represents an attempt to embrace the complexity of schools, infuse resources into program development, and elicit cooperation through involvement in the implementation process.

It also represents an attempt to align program features with target population needs. To be even modestly effective, a reward must be valued by its recipient. Reward structures based on educator assessments of their needs are more likely to meet this criterion than reward structures based on legislative assumptions of educator needs and legislative assignments of valence to those preferences.

The decision to empower local districts is congruent then, with the aim of developing potentially effective and enduring teacher reward systems. Undoubtedly there are a number of factors that account for policy responses. However, the local capability-building approach apparent in the Utah context appears to be a viable strategy. Through its emphasis on local district discretion, Utah has been able to avoid litigation, avert criticisms regarding the proportion of funds utilized to administer the career ladder policy, secure educator cooperation, and garner educator support (Olson, 1986).

However, state actions are not fully consistent with the local development emphasis. Neither funds nor rules are stable. Although rule adjustments have been minor, they have been frequent. Although funds have been appropriated, they have been cut back. These conditions make it difficult for those involved in the reform to trust its continuation and plan for its implementation (Hart, 1986; Murphy, 1986).

In addition, rules are adjusted before consequences are fully examined. When states delegate control to localities, variance is inevitable. It is also helpful. It provides a rich information base for understanding which variations in local projects are enhancing and which are undermining the ability of career ladder programs to affect teacher quality. The state is shifting the career ladder policy to a classroom teaching merit prematurely. General surveys of teacher attitudes (Nelson, 1986) and summaries of plan features (Utah State Office of Education, 1985) have been prepared. Conferences, workshops, and sessions for informational exchanges have been organized. But indepth examinations of the effects of different combinations of plan features on the work lives of teachers have not been sponsored. The ability of the state to capitalize on diversity is thereby limited. The fundamental features of a career ladder, the relationship of this concept to other teacher incentive strategies, and the relationship of this concept to the work life of teachers and the school improvement aims of the system could be illuminated through such investigations. The insights could be transmitted through the collaborative networks that are already in place. And the information acquired could facilitate a clearer articulation of policy premises and a stronger foundation for policy revisions.

As Mitchell and Iannacone(1980) note, the capacity of state policy to influence school systems is circumscribed by the repertoire of available tools and the complexity of schools. In the case of career ladder reform in Utah, the capacity of state policy to influence school systems is also circumscribed by the political feasibility of particular combinations of control mechanisms. In the Utah context, the career ladder policy

is a blend of intentions and a mixture of mechanisms, the resultant of political compromise, not the epitomy of consistent policy. The compromises embedded may diminish the ability of the state to concentrate its legislative resources on a clearly delineated goal and a precisely defined teacher incentive system. But the compromises create opportunities as well as constraints. A commitment to the analysis of local district variance as a prerequisite to policy revision holds promise for reconciling incongruencies in the policy, discovering the constellations of incentives most appropriate for teachers, strengthening the articulation of the policy, and enabling the state to be an evermore powerful actor in the evolution of the career ladder reform.

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