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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of principal leadership styles on the development of the working styles of seven local school councils in Memphis (Tennessee) during their first 15 months of operation. The successful implementation of a school-based decision making (SBDM) management model depends upon the ability of the local school council to develop an effective working style. The councils are comprised of parents, community residents, teachers, and other assigned school staff. An analysis of information obtained from observations, interviews, and reviews of documents found that the nature of principal leadership was related to the nature of initial council functioning, but the principal was not the sole facilitating factor. The following findings are reported: (1) principals who exhibited laissez-faire and democratic leadership styles encouraged councils to function cooperatively; (2) authoritarian principals inhibited cooperative council functioning, especially when information was controlled, communication with the central office and administrators was limited, and teachers did not advocate involvement in decisions; and (3) councils were more likely to function cooperatively when chairpersons were strong leaders, council members cooperated with the director and the professional association, and there was a common understanding of the council's role. Four figures illustrating the evolution of council working styles are included. A list of 16 references is appended. (FMW)

LEADERSHIP, CONTROL, COMMUNICATION AND COMPREHENSION: KEY FACTORS IN SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF SBDM

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CONTROL, COMMUNICATION AND COMPREHENSION IN LEADERSHIP STYLES: KEY FACTORS IN SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF SBDM

Memphis, like many urban school districts, faces a multitude of problems that are complex, interrelated, multidimensional and entrenched. Like other school systems, Memphis has engaged numerous systemwide and local school improvement plans mandated by top level administrators. Major restructuring was necessary if increasing numbers of youth were not to be educationally lost. Therefore, in 1989, Memphis City Schools launched its first phase of school reform by initiating a school based decision making (SBDM) management mode in seven selected inner city schools.[1] The schools serve two Memphis communities containing low income Black populations. These schools, especially the secondary schools, had reputations as undesirable places to teach and have experienced the usual blight associated with inner city schools (i.e. low student achievement, violence, vandalism, teacher turnover, and derelict buildings).

The SBDM model was seen as a way to stimulate the initiation of additional school reforms that would result in better education. SBDM shifts decision making powers to the local school level. It is a formal inclusionary process whereby principals, teachers, parents, students, and community residents (the people closest to the school and students) participate in making
decisions.

Lisa Delpit, (1988) relates the problem of Black children not being served adequately by the present educational system to the fact that black parents, teachers, and community leaders do not have input into the type of instruction the school provides their children. In fact, scholars have long known that community participaton in schooling is related to student achievement. Accomplish full participation however, has been difficult (Marburger, 1985; Hatton, 1979; Havighurst, 1979; Coletta, 1977). As Cleveland (1985) suggested, American companies have already realized the benefits of providing opportunities for workers to share in decision-making with managers. Peters and Waterman in In Search of Excellence (1982) list eight principles of management that can be applied to education. The principles include offering a great deal of autonomy to non-administrative personnel. When people are allowed to make decisions concerning the company or school they will feel a sense of ownership and will support those decisions.

In the Memphis model, participation in decisions is through a local school council. The local school council operates for the school much as the school board functions for the school system. The council is the primary organizational vehicle through which the Memphis City Schools shares decision making authority at the local school level with parents, community residents, teachers, and other assigned school staff (Memphis City Schools SBDM Advisory Council, 1989, p.5). It does not make decisions about daily operations but sets goals, advises on implementation practices, and evaluates whether goals have been achieved. The councils have authority to approve annual improvement plans, recommend and evaluate employees for hire and retention, recommend school programs, develop and approve budget expenditures, and adivse and recommend programmatic procedures.

[1] This was a collaborative effort with the National Education Association and the Memphis Education Association.

Purpose of This Paper

This paper examines how the local school councils functioned during their first 15 months of operation. It also examines the effects different principal leadership styles had on the councils' functioning. Factors affecting processes, problems, and successes occurring during this initial implementation period are also identified.

Data Collection

Participant observation, interview, and document data were collected from April, 1989 through June, 1990.[2] Three researchers participated and observed at over 100 meetings including district level planning meetings, school board meetings, local school council and PTA meetings in all seven schools, miscellaneous school activities, and professional staff and school council training sessions. Researchers also observed at selected council sessions when prospective personnel were interviewed for positions in the schools.

Observations were recorded as abbreviated notes taken during or immediately after observations. The notes were expanded with details and transcribed onto coded protocols as field notes within 24 hours of the observation. Observations allowed researchers to accurately interpret interview data and provided increased understanding of how SBDM was implemented.

Representative participants from each of the project's councils, constituent groups (principals, teachers, parents, community members, central office personnel, and MEA staff), and all seven school sites, were interviewed throughout the 15 months. The focus was on their perceptions of the SBDM effort and their roles in it. Questions were asked about implementation activities, progress toward goals, problems encountered, and how problems were engaged.

Interviews were both formal and informal. Formal interviews were scheduled, conducted with an interview protocol, and tape recorded if the interviewee gave permission. Informal interviews occurred as opportunity permitted and were usually coupled with observations. Sometimes program participants contacted the researcher to share information. At other times, the researcher contacted participants to collect or clarify particular information. All interviews were tape recorded or reconstructed from abbreviated notes taken during the interview or immediately after the interview. All interviews were transcribed onto protocols and became part of the field note record.

Various documents were also examined as data sources. These included project proposals, newspaper reports, school newsletters, memos, minutes from local school council meetings, training materials, needs assessment instruments and data, school plans, and curricular materials. These were incorporated into the field note data base.

A stratified sample of three schools representing each school level (elementary, junior high, and high school) was used for detailed study. Schools were identified as case sites in September, 1989 before much was known about them. This detailed data enabled researchers

[2] This project was supported by the Center for Research in Education Policy, Memphis State University.

to better understand the broader issues affecting all schools. It also provided focus points for constant comparisons to determine the prevalence or uniqueness of observed patterns.

Controlling Bias

Several strategies were used to control for researcher or subject bias, hidden agendas, or inaccurate information. First, regular researcher presence at local school and central staff activities over the 15 month period increased the likelihood that normal occurrences were observed. This enabled discrepancies between interview data and observation data to be identified and explained. Researchers debriefed regularly. This served to maintain researcher objectivity and controlled close identification with any one school or subject group.

Data Analysis

As data were gathered from particular subjects it was constantly compared with data from other subjects to insure data accuracy. Discrepancies were identified, explained, or eliminated. Generalizations were then formulated based on patterns emerging from the data.

Patterns within school sites were identified and then elements of the patterns were compared with pattern elements emerging from other sites. When comparisons yielded cross-site similarities, generalizations were formulated and confirmed with additional cross site comparisons. When exceptions to generalizations were identified, explanations were formulated or new generalizations were derived that incorporated the exception.

Operationalizing Local School Councils

There are hundreds of definitions of leadership. Some differentiate between leaders and managers (Smith and Piele, 1989). Scott Thomson (April, 1980), who is the executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals offered a very simple definition of leadership as "getting the job done through people". The principal's role as a member of the local school council and as the provider of leadership is very important. As the number one administrator in the school, the principal is charged with working with and through other people to achieve organizational goals (Owens, 1987). Success of reforms, such as SBDM, lies in the ability of principals to make change happen and to provide the momentum and atmosphere for growth among teachers and students in the schools. (Effective School Principals, 1989, p. 4).

In 1953 White and Lippitt demonstrated that group behaviors differed according to the leadership style of the formal leader. Indeed, leadership is related to the cohesiveness that group members feel and the feeling of satisfaction that individuals receive from being members of the group. The sense of unity and pride that is so often observed in seemingly effective groups is closely linked to leadership (Owens, 1987). Not surprisingly, in SBDM schools, the initial behaviors of the local school councils were greatly influenced by the school principal, the school's formal leader.

During the initial three months of their existence, three principal leadership styles were observed: laissez faire, authoritarian, and democratic. A laissez-faire leader deliberately relinquishes control. The word actually means to let the people choose. Some

laissez-faire leaders have been described as passive (Drake and Roe, 1986). The authoritarian, or autocratic leader tends to centralize authority and may be more task-oriented than people-oriented (Daft, 1988). The authoritarian will rely upon reward/punishment and legitimate or appointed power to influence the group. The democratic leader is people-oriented and is adept at getting group members to do specific tasks by getting a commitment from them and being available to offer suggestions (Drake and Roe). The democratic leader has less trouble sharing authority. In the SBDM schools these leadership styles facilitated three initial council working styles: teacher controlled, cooperative, and principal controlled. Over time, councils either evolved to new working styles as other factors became influential or became entrenched in the original style fostered by the principal.

Two schools began SBDM implementation with cooperative styles. They were characterized by parents, principal, teachers, and community member participating openly, honestly, and cooperatively in discussion of issues. There was little evidence of attempts to avoid issues or exclude individuals and no one person or group always dominated meetings. Council members engaged in discussions as equals and usually made decisions through consensus. This style closely fit the council interaction style envisioned by the SBDM planners.

Four schools began with principal controlled councils. Decisions in principal controlled councils were made by the principal or reflected the principal's preferences. Teachers were controlled by the principal and discussions and decisions were principal dominated. These councils eventually experienced conflict that began when school faculties asked for more decision making involvement.

Although opinions contrary to the principal's position were occasionally expressed on principal controlled councils, the principal usually prevailed. Decisions usually occurred outside of council meetings, were announced at meetings, and sometimes a vote was taken for approval. Controversial issues or topics suggesting the school was not running perfectly were avoided. When these kinds of questions arose, an action was immediately recommended by a school professional and a vote taken to approve or disapprove the recommendation, or a motion was made to remand the issue to committee or to table and decisions were then announced at a later meeting.

One school began with a teacher controlled council. Decisions on this council were made by the teacher representatives or extensively influenced by them. Discussions were teacher dominated with some participation of the principal and negligible participation of parents or community members. Decisions were usually made by implied consensus and occasionally by hand vote.

Seven months after councils were established three working styles were observed: cooperative, principal controlled, and minimally cooperative. The working styles evolved as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: **Evolution of Council Working Styles**

Principal's Leadership Style		**Early Council Style**		**Late Council Style**
Laissez Faire	→	Teacher Control	→	Cooperative
Laissez Faire	→	Cooperative	→	Cooperative
Authoritarian	→	Principal Control	→	Principal Control
Authoritarian	→	Principal Control	→	Minimally Cooperative
Democratic	→	Cooperative	→	Cooperative

Working Styles Under Laissez Faire Leadership

The two principals exhibiting laissez faire leadership styles did not attempt to control their councils and were seemingly unthreatened by sharing information, decisions, and power with parents, community, and teachers. They assumed the posture of learning their roles along with the other council members and thus were catalysts for teacher or parent controlled and cooperative councils. However, seven months after council formation, these school councils worked as cooperative decision making bodies. Their paths to this point were very different and did not necessarily result directly from the principal's leadership. Their patterns will be presented here.

Teacher Controlled to Cooperative Style

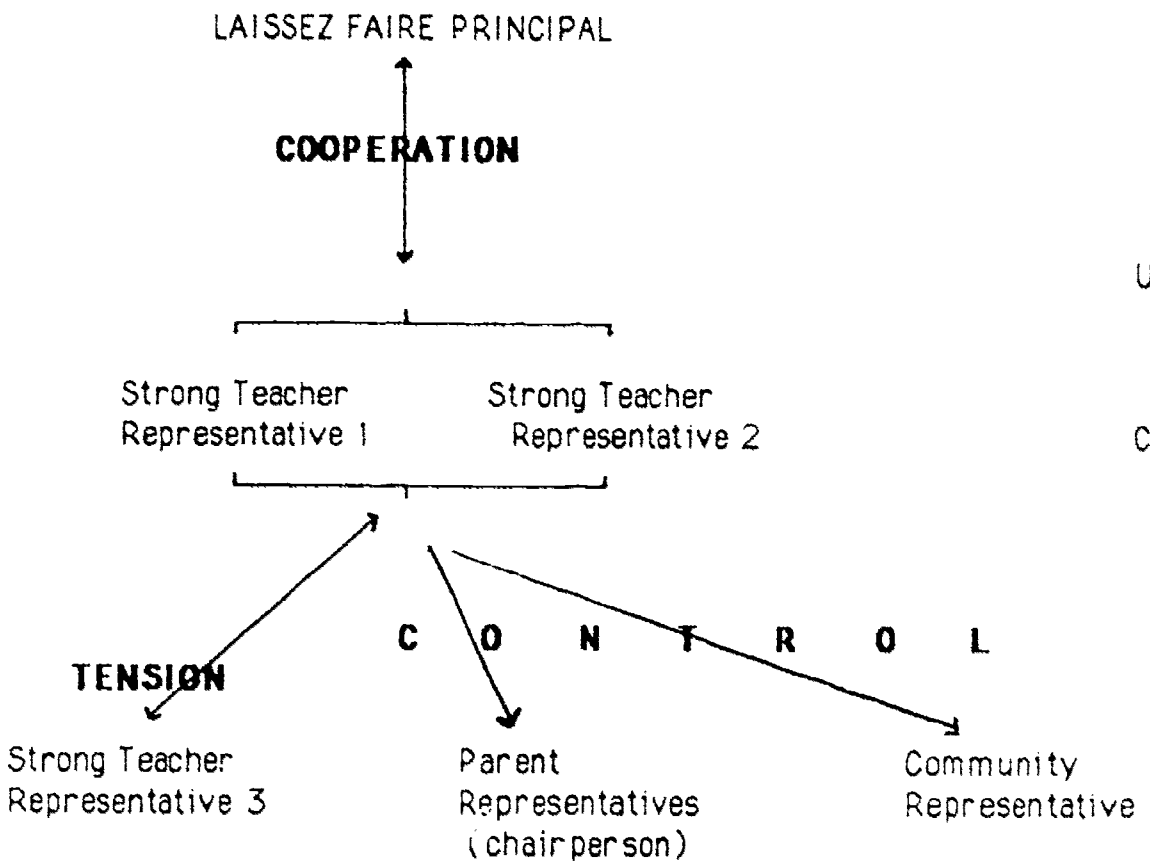
In one school the three teacher representatives elected to the local school council were opinionated people with domineering personalities. Their collective behaviors in council meetings included interruption of speakers, hostile confrontations, and loud voices. Their demeanor and their positions as professionals with knowledge of how schools are run intimidated parents and community members and served to control council decisions and discussions. Figure 2 illustrates the interrelationships of this council during its early existence.

The principal was energetic, intelligent, and not controlling in council meetings. She stated her views on topics but did not debate issues. On a daily basis, two of the teacher representatives worked with the principal by assuming quasi administrative responsibilities in the school. In council meetings, the principal usually acquiesced to the ideas these

representatives presented. The third council representative viewed the other two with animosity and some teachers believed that "friends of the principal" were running the school.

The parent and community representatives, due to illness and employment obligations, did not fully participate. They missed training sessions and council meetings and so were not well informed about their roles, the purpose of the council, or about school issues and topics. This facilitated teacher dominance and reinforced the unequal status of parents and teachers.

Figure 2: **Teacher Dominated Council With Laissez Fair Principal**



While minutes to council meetings were posted for faculty to read, they lacked detail; teachers complained they were uninformed about council activities and decisions. In addition, there were complaints that teacher representatives were not representing teachers. The council was not communicating well with the school faculty.

Thus, the early months of this local school council were characterized by a non-directive principal and council chair; discussions and decisions that were teacher dominated; distrust of council by the school faculty; and inaction. Everyone was frustrated; the union representative and project director were invited to meet with the faculty to clarify roles and responsibilities of council members and explain where and how the teaching faculty fit into SBDM. The project director answered their questions she provided suggestions and direction for them.

> *Each school should move at its own pace. Faculties can take the initiative and school councils should take initiative based on what has occurred or been done thus far. . . . Your council has not been as active as others. Your parents and community are not active and are missing a lot of training. It is imperative for the council representatives to be at training sessions if they are going to fill their roles.*

> *The council is a representative democracy. The representatives should represent you, not themselves.* [If] *the second grade teachers* [have a problem] *they should document their decisions* [about the problem], *- not lengthy, but with one or two sentences - and give their decision to the representatives and ask that the decision be brought before the council for discussion and decision.*

Parents and community representatives were subsequently informed of the need for their complete participation. Because they could not fulfill their obligations, they resigned their positions. Council guidelines allow members to appoint eligible persons to fill vacancies for the remainder of unexpired terms. After consulting with the school faculty regarding who they recommended as knowledgeable individuals who were active in the school, the remaining council members selected new parent and community representatives. Thus, four months after being established, the council had three new members, one of whom was the new chairperson.

The new council members were more active on the council and willing to speak for their constituents. The new council chairperson was an active parent in the school and community. He had a personal agenda of changes for the school and was not reticent to put forth his ideas. He was, however, patient and did not insist when others did not agree with him. Most importantly, he was able to attend training sessions and information disseminating meetings with central office support staff. Thus, he was informed and not intimidated by school professionals. He was an active leader on the council and in the school.

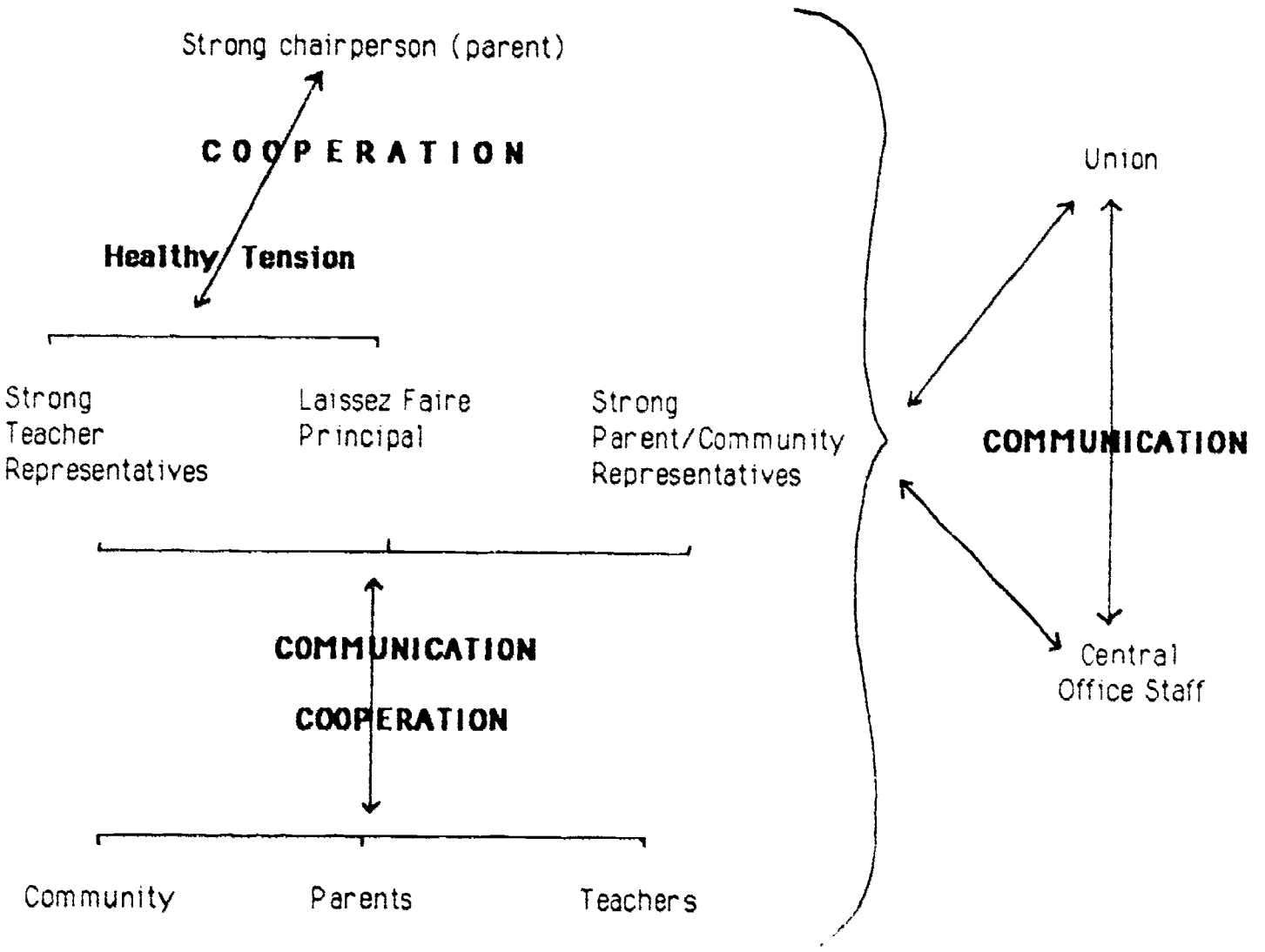
With changes in council membership came changes in council activities. In addition to representing parental perspectives, the council chairperson advocated for teachers. He repeatedly reminded council members that *"there are other teachers and people in the community who want to come to council meetings but are not ever given opportunity to do so. These meetings are open to the public and the teachers have a right to come"*. He also suggested that meetings be video taped. As a compromise, the council agreed to share information with teachers on the day after council meetings. In addition, at least one council meeting was changed from 2:45 to 5:30 so parents and other teachers could attend.

The balance of power on the council and in the school changed with council membership and leadership. The new, more assertive chairperson catalyzed several changes: (1) no one

group dominated the council but all spoke openly and honestly; (2) parent and community members had more opportunity to state their positions; (3) parental perspectives received more consideration; (4) school faculty were involved in decisions through a committee structure; and (5) communication with central office support staff increased and everyone was better informed.

Thus, as Figure 3 illustrates, with support from central office staff, the local school council was reconfigured. The reconfigured council gained a strong parent chairperson who maintained a healthy tension with teacher representatives and the principal. This allowed council members to engage in open dialogue with each other. Relations and communications among teachers and between teachers council began to improve. In this case, the strong council chairperson balanced the power on the council which allowed the council to move from teacher dominance to a cooperative working style.

Figure 3: **Cooperative Council Emergent from Teacher Dominated**



Maintaining a Cooperative Style

Another council began with a cooperative working style and maintained it over the year. Their election for teacher and parent representatives was competitive with teachers and parents campaigning among their constituent groups. From the beginning, teachers, and especially parents and community members, were enthusiastic about council elections. They campaigned and politicked for their favorites. One parent, Mrs. Lindy[3] illustrates this enthusiasm:

> [I] *could not be on the ballot so I got my sister to be on the ballot. I went around knocking on people's doors encouraging them to vote. Even if they didn't know* [the people] *on the slate* [I told them] *they should come pick one anyway because we need a representative to keep track of what is going on at the school .*

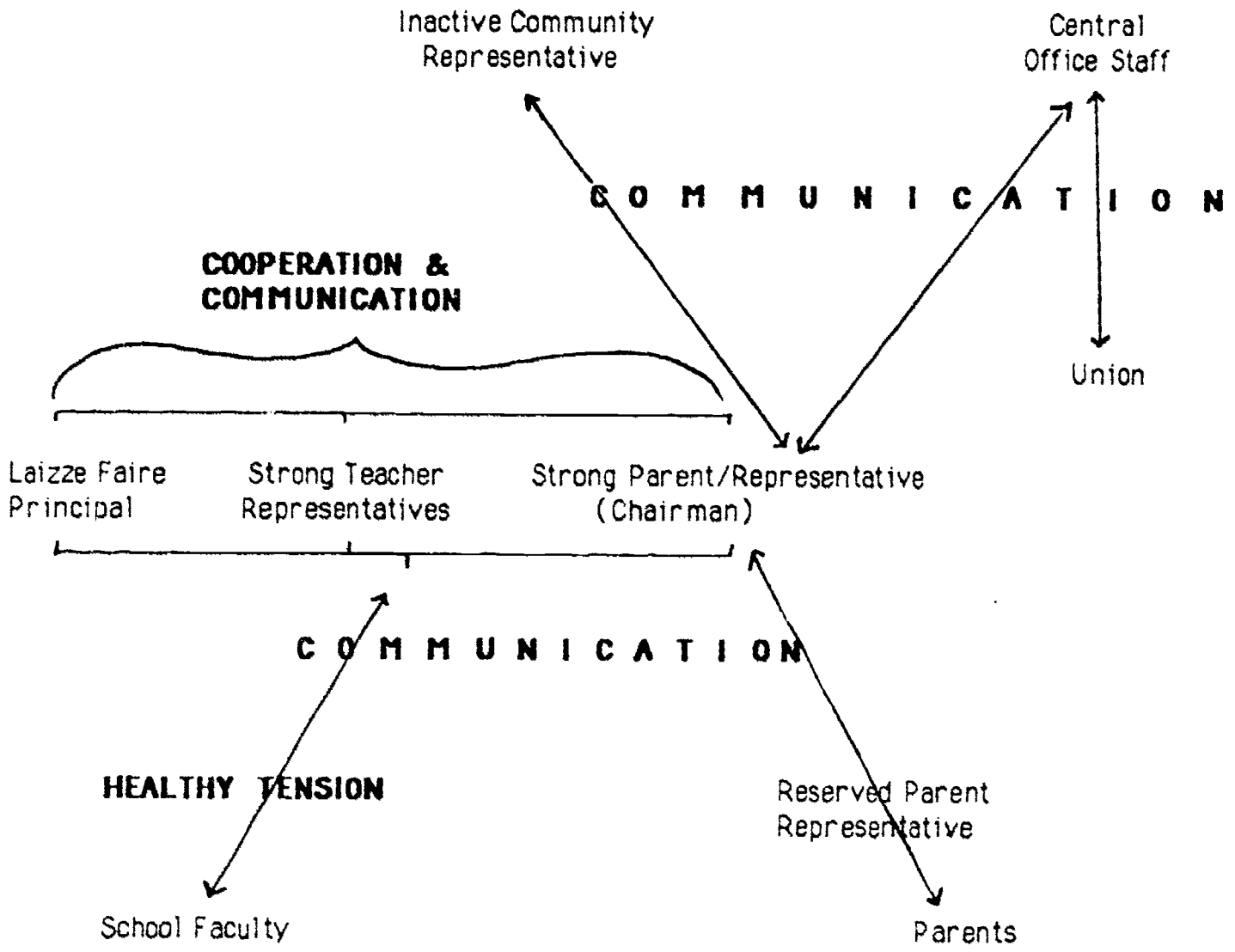
Three long time teachers at the school were elected teacher representatives and two parents who lived in public housing were also elected. A community minister became the community representative.
The tone for this council was set at the first meeting when the principal expressed pleasure that the council was finally meeting because "*we have a lot to do and we will probably have a lot of headaches before we get everything figured out*" The principal distributed council guidelines and explained that he was not sure how they were to proceed but had not yet read the guidelines because he did not want to be ahead of the other council members. This became characteristic of the council. They readily acknowledged areas in which they felt incompetent or ignorant and all worked together to learn and make the school a better place.

No one was in charge until the chairperson was elected. Mrs. Apple, a parent, was elected council chairperson. Nonthreatening, she had a ready smile, contagious enthusiasm, and a desire to learn. Mrs. Apple became active in the school and community five years prior when her child entered school. Since then she had been continuously and increasingly active in the local community center and school activities. Her leadership was strong, stable, and open. She actively sought to engage school faculty and parents in the SBDM process. When she needed more information she readily asked whoever was informed; this might be anybody -- assistant superintendent, principal, teacher, or community leader or resident.

In meetings, all council members were encouraged to engage discussions and to state their ideas and positions. Their meetings were characterized by open, honest discussions with decisions made through consensus. Figure 4 illustrates that teachers, parents, and principal participated equally or similarly at meetings. The community representative was frequently absent. The chairperson spoke with him by phone to keep him informed but he was really a non-functioning member. The other parent council member came to every meeting but, aware of her lack of education, seldom spoke. She, however, held defined ideas and opinions regarding how schooling should occur; these were conveyed by her to council members through individual contacts. Thus, her concerns and opinions were known and considered by the council along with those of the other representatives.

[3] Pseudonyms are used for people and schools to protect anonymity.

Figure 4: **Dynamics of a Cooperative Council Pattern Maintained Throughout the First Year**



This council, like the others, did not always operate smoothly. There were misunderstandings with teachers and uncertainty about their roles. They did, though, discuss and readily seek outside assistance. Their communication patterns were maintained and strengthened throughout the year. Thus, they avoided being the 'rubber stamp' that Gittel, et. al (1979) found so detrimental to school advisory committees.

Working Styles Under Authoritarian Leadership

The principals at four schools exhibited authoritarian leadership styles. These principals took immediate control of their councils by monopolizing discussions, selecting issues for discussion, discouraging discussion, not sharing decision making, and not sharing information with parents, community, or teachers. They announced decisions using the vague

phrase, "we decided." In addition, they assumed the posture of knowing everyone's proper role and informed the other council members in that regard. Thus, the initial working style of councils in these schools were principal controlled.

Seven months after they were formed, these principal controlled councils either maintained principal controlled styles or evolved into minimally cooperative styles. Patterns emerging under authoritarian leadership will be presented here.

Maintaining Principal Control

Council elections in schools with principal controlled councils were characterized by lack of information, minimal competition for council seats, and low parent participation. Most parents were uninformed about the elections. The few parent or community voters who came to the polls had to be very persistent in locating the voting place because no people or signs were available to give directions. An observer's experience in one school is representative:

> *On the inside of the school in the main foyer there were small signs that said 'vote today', however, there was no indication of where a person should go to vote. I saw a person who looked like a teacher so I asked her where the voting was and she replied, 'in the library.' She took me to a door that allowed me , she explained, to enter the polls without going through the library. However, the door was locked so I went through the library anyway.*

The polls were manned by teachers assigned the task or by friendly volunteers located at the last moment by central office staff.

Principals maintained complete control of teachers and council meetings by intimidating, misinforming, or providing perks to selected individuals in return for their support. In addition, they limited communication between council members and professional staff. Communications between teachers and professional association and central office staff were also discouraged in at least one case by not distributing communications to teachers. Finally, control was maintained by not sharing knowledge in areas such as school policy and budgets unless it was to advance their own agenda. With these limitations in place, some principals easily dominated the council and school during the early implementation period. As we will see, they and teachers had a difficult adjustment period but all was not bad as suggested by one teacher's description of her principal:

> *He has done many things for this school, but he doesn't have a* [SBDM] *bone in his body. He doesn't. He's a go-getter, he works hard and he will come in and do everything. But, that's the point, he wants to do it all and that's not what the process calls for. That's not what* [SBDM] *is about.*

It is difficult to know if this control was by design or inability to change. There is a long history of principals being the final and only authority in their schools which might explain the difficulty so many had in making the change to SBDM.

Whether control was by design or inability to change, in most cases it was not easily maintained. Control depended upon the cooperation of teachers and council chairman and they did

not always cooperate. Sooner or later teachers or parents broke the communication barrier by getting assistance or information from the project director, the union representative, or someone conducting training. Once these contacts were made movement toward sharing decisions was begun. This can be better understood by following the events in one such school.

Initially, at Southern School, communication with teachers, parents, and community outside the council were through the principal. The principal limited communications between teachers and project director, parents, community, and researchers by not distributing meeting minutes and other written communications, giving misinformation when asked for information, or refusing to provide information.

Teachers were not involved in school decision making except through informal communication channels that fostered a patronage system. Consensus decision making required by the project design did not exist. When teachers asked to be included in the decision process the principal chastised the faculty for being lazy and ineffective. In response to such treatment, the faculty called their own meeting from which the principal was barred. Almost immediately, they called the professional association representatives and project director to inform them and request their assistance with their crisis.

Teachers were advised that the professional association could not take action unless a formal grievance was filed or unless a representative was invited to answer questions. Teachers were encouraged to work through their local school council which they did. Nothing changed. The principal ignored teacher concerns and project director, professional association, and superintendent's advice. The principal became increasingly punitive toward some teachers and benevolent toward others. The faculty became increasingly factionalized and teacher issues continued to be barred from council consideration.

Hoping for positive change, teachers asked, begged, for training to help them work together. A national expert on team building was subsequently brought in to conduct a retreat for the school faculty. The principal was adamantly against the retreat but it was imposed on him and he seemed to participate with good will. Teachers thought they were capable of "*birthing, incubating, and nurturing*" this autocratic administrator into a cooperative one. However, decision making processes remained the same.

The problem existed because both teachers and principal understood that they would have increased decision making power under the new reform. The principal expected to be an absolute authority; not intending to share power. Teachers expected automatic inclusion; they did not expect to have to fight for their right to make decisions. Thus, differing understandings of what would be resulted in conflict over how the new school governance would occur.

A group of teachers increased communications with their professional association and the project director, and initiated contact with the superintendent. Teachers invited the director, professional association representative, and the principal to meetings where concerns were aired and advice sought Teachers met with the superintendent. The principal met with the superintendent. The principal became increasingly punitive to teachers. Demanding that these kinds of contacts not occur. Meanwhile, the principal cultured parent and community support by criticizing teacher competence and work ethic, and publicizing school programs.

Finally, in February, after much internal conflict and with the consent of the principal, the project director was invited to attend a council meeting. The principal explained the role of the council and asked council members to "*please not entertain any complaints that the teachers have against either the administration or school or whatever because the council was not the vehicle* [for this]. The principal explained the council's role and responsibilities and reported that a letter was sent to the superintendent suggesting "*maybe my teachers simply could not understand the function of the council*". The director then explained that the principal's interpretations of the council guidelines were incorrect.

From this point teachers and principal were polarized and each was determined to rid himself of the other. Principal and teachers alike fought for their survival. Teachers worked to remove the principal from the school and the principal worked to rid the school of "troublemakers." Troublemakers included teachers who advocated for their involvement in decisions and the professional association for advising teachers of their rights. Over half of the school faculty threatened to request transfers if the principal remained and one teacher representative resigned. A new representative was elected who teachers felt would speak on behalf of teachers. In May, the issue was still unresolved. This case illustrates that even though they engaged the process of their own free will, one year is too soon to expect some principals to develop a cooperative, shared leadership style. The traditional top-down management tradition became a serious barrier to establishing the new management style.

Teachers appeared ready to change. They were able to keep the goal alive in the face of severe administrative pressure and uncertainty. Two factors allowed this to occur. First, teachers engaged their jobs with the expectation and eagerness to be involved with school decisions. Thus, they had a psychological readiness not held by most administrators. Second, teachers did not have the skills to negotiate access to decision making under authoritatian principals but they sought and received support and information from the professional association and central office leaders. This enabled them to counter or withstand the principal's control until they were included in the decisioning process.

The principal was able to maintain control throughout the school year because of intelligence, articulateness, positive publicity in the local press, and history of positive changes in the school. The community was convinced that only the principal impelled teachers to teach.. This served to obfuscate the fact that the principal was not allowing shared decision making to occur. In addition, some teachers supported the principal. Finally, the council was divided and did not recommend that the principal be removed. Therefore, the superintendent was reticent to remove the principal based solely on teacher complaints.

Principal Controlled to Minimally Cooperative

In one instance the principal was wedded to the traditional authoritarian management style but modified this style somewhat over the first year. In this instance the council began as principal controlled but evolved to a minimally cooperative style.

Several factors came together and facilitated the change. First, the council chair took and used the council leadership granted by council guidelines. When barriers were encountered from the principal, the chair immediately consulted council guidelines and sought advice and information from the project director. Armed with information, the council chair was able to

begin to counter the principal's controlling tendencies. In one instance, under the chair's leadership, the council relegated the principal's talk to one portion of the meeting labeled "principal's report." This allowed parents, teachers, and principal to discuss issues as equals during the rest of the meeting.

Second, the principal controlled council that became minimally cooperative encountered problems to which no one council member, including the principal, had an answer. For example, the council was confused over teacher evaluation. Some department chairswere evaluating teachers. Teachers complained to their professional association. To clarify the role of grade and department chairs and to answer the question of how the council would evaluate teachers, the council invited the union representative and project director to several council meetings to advise. The ensuing questioning and discussion established some sense of equality among council members and gave them a common understanding and knowledge base. In addition, they experienced the director and professional association representative as facilitators rather than people who interfered. Thus, the council more readily called on them for other assistance.

Finally, once the council experienced discussions as equals they were able to engage that mode at other times throughout the first year. This council did not become fully cooperative but neither did the principal did not completely dominate at all times. Thus, they progressed toward the intent of SBDM.

Only one of the four principal controlled councils moved away from complete principal dominance during the first academic year of implementation. The authoritarian leadership style was the most difficult pattern under which to establish a cooperative council working style. The fact that one council did begin to change suggests that changing this style is possible. However, it is more difficult and takes longer than under laissez faire leadership.

Working Style Under Democratic Leadership

One principal held a well defined view of what needed to be done to improve the school. While these ideas and preferences were conveyed to the school faculty and the school council, the principal sought input from teachers, parents, and community. Unlike the authoritarian principals, the democratic principal understood that the principal did not always prevail on all issues. Teachers, parents, and community members were viewed as capable and willing to make decisions. Thus, committees were established to work independently of the principal. Appropriate people from the central office staff and professional association were invited to advise before final decisions were made. Committee decisions were brought to the council, discussed, modified, approved or disapproved. The principal allowed and encouraged all council representatives to bring issues to the council for open discussion. While each participant argued for his position, each willingly and without hostility modified his position or acquiesced to others in the face of strong, logical argument. Decisions were made based on consensus.

The democratic principal guided the council and teachers toward pre-established and evolving, but agreed upon, goals by building a sense of community and shared decision making. This principal informed teachers, parents and community directly. Praise was given where deserved and constructive criticism was delivered with sensitivity. Most importantly, everyone felt valued for their unique skills. Thus the council and entire school, at the end of the first year, functioned in a cooperative mode much as the project planners envisioned.

Summary

After fifteen months, three of the seven local school councils exhibited cooperative decision making styles. The nature of principal leadership was related to the nature of initial council functioning. Principals who exhibited laissez faire and democratic leadership styles more readily facilitated the councils to function cooperatively. The principal, however, was not the sole facilitating factor. Councils were more likely to function in a shared decision making style when:

(1) Chairpersons were strong leaders or readily sought and received assistance to improve their leadership capabilities.

(2) All council members, but expecially the chairman and the principal, cooperated with director and professional association for the purpose of keeping informed or for problem solving.

(3) There was a common understanding of the council's role.Four school councils were controlled by authoritarian principals but one of these councils had become minimally cooperative.

Authoritarian principals inhibited cooperative council functioning especially when information was controlled, when communication with the central office staff and professional association were limited, and when teachers did not advocate for involvement in decisions. Four schools councils were lead by authoritarian principals. One of these exhibited some elements of a cooperative style at the end of fifteen months but was still dominated by the principal. This suggests that the main barrier to implementation of SBDM is the principal. Full implementation will take considerable time if it is anchored to retraining of principals.

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