Interrelationships between innovation and school policy indicate that 
guiding change in educational organizations may require great sophistication.

MY PURPOSE is twofold: (a) to indicate some interrelationships 
between innovation and school policy; and (b) to show that pressures for inno-
vation in education are analogous to processes of demand-making in politi-
cal contexts.

Preferences and Demands

The various stages of the political process (illustrated in Figure 1) pro-
vide pertinent background for discussing interrelationships between innova-
tion and school policy. Figure 1 indicates that individuals and groups in or-
ganizational or community sys-
tems (shown as A, B, C) possess preference structures based upon significant 
beliefs, values, and expectations. These structures of preference very largely 
determine their orientations to ques-
tions and issues arising in organiza-
tional and community life. Moreover, 
system participants usually attempt to 
implement their preference structures to whatever extent they can within the 
limits of their resources and the range of constraints which they perceive.

Considerable activity is also directed toward influencing others toward ac-
ceptance of whatever preference deci-
sions have been formulated (including innovative decisions affecting curricu-


learning processes, or other matters). The important point is that individuals 
and groups develop preference struc-
tures and decisions which they attempt to implement in community or organi-
zational life as fully as their resources and capabilities will permit. Such ac-
tivities lead to competition within sys-
tems. At this stage, however, they do not necessarily lead to conflict.

What occurs, however, when a group insists that the existing allocations of 
values within a system be changed to coincide more nearly with its own struc-
ture of preference? To have this hap-
pen, the group must register a demand within the system. Such a demand 
usually indicates both major dissatis-
factions and acceptable remedies.

Demands in school systems may emanate from many sources: (a) teach-
ers may demand higher salaries, better 
working conditions, more resources for teaching, or a greater voice in decision-
making processes, etc.; (b) parents may demand increased pupil services, better counseling, teaching of new math or foreign languages, Head Start programs, etc.; (c) taxpayer groups may demand efficiency, lower tax rates, curtailment of services, etc.; (d) administrators may demand greater teaching efficiency, increased use of new instructional procedures, implementation of organizational arrangements such as team teaching, and so forth.

If demands within the system are not met by counter demands, it may be possible to move immediately to new policies governing any of these matters. However, if counter demands are made by those who are happy with existing system outcomes, there will be need for conflict resolution before the system can move to any new policy stance.

**Policy and Pressures**

What, then, does the above discussion appear to imply concerning linkages between school policy and pressures for innovation? Four generalizations appear tenable.

1. Policies of boards of education represent explicit and implied recognitions of legitimized value allocations which are expected to prevail within educational systems. The policies represent a codification of the preference decisions derived from the preference structures of influential and dominant individuals and groups.

Several strategies of change may have been used to arrive at whatever set of policies currently prevails in educational systems:


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**Stage:** Stage 1 ———— Stage 2 ———— Stage 3 ———— Outcome

**Groups**

- **A**
  - Preference Structure
  - Preference Decisions

- **B**
  - Preference Structure
  - Preference Decisions

- **C**
  - Preference Structure
  - Preference Decisions

**System Policy**

**Conflict Resolution Process**

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*Figure 1. Individuals or Groups*
These strategies depend upon demonstration of the effectiveness of the change being sought. Because those affected by change are reasonable and can often profit from espousing the demonstrated change, they are willing to accept it.

b. Normative, reeducative strategies. These strategies involve attitude changing. They may require work with individuals and groups as media of change, targets of change, and agents of change.

c. Power strategies. Three types of power strategies are available: coercive, remunerative, and normative. Coercive power involves the application, or the threat of application, of sanctions. Remunerative power involves control and manipulation of material resources. Normative power is based on leadership skill, on the manipulation of esteem, prestige, and ritualistic symbols, as well as on allocation of acceptance and positive response. All power strategies involve compliance.

2. Since policies represent codifications of prevailing preference structures, pressures for innovation (or proposals for change) may be interpreted as demands for reallocation, realignment, or redistribution of value outcomes in a system.

Pressures and proposals for change may take several forms and may be generated from both within and outside the system. When funds are made available at national levels, if school districts can meet or conform to criteria set in legislation or administrative regulations, it soon becomes apparent that a remunerative power strategy has been set in operation.

External grants of money under legislation such as NDEA and ESEA may be sufficient to trigger extensive change in education. Also, change strategies based on coercion may be initiated and exercised by both elites and followers and are exemplified in such widely separated phenomena as legislative activity and teacher strikes. The ultimate goal of most coercive change strategies is to redistribute power within systems—and thus to alter the existing allocations of values.

3. Demands for change may be met by counter demands from those who are satisfied with system outcomes based on current policies. Effective conflict resolution processes are essential if demands and counterdemands are to be channeled toward constructive purposes.

The problems of boards of education in dealing with forces generated by demands and counterdemands have been vividly illustrated in recent controversies involving integration, school prayer, and teacher strikes. School systems are increasingly functioning in a milieu of community, state, and national power. School leaders and boards of education require new sophistication in working with power systems and in handling social forces that are generating incompatible educational expectations and problems of unusual societal import.

4. The adoption of any important innovation or change proposal may be regarded as legitimation of new value outcomes within the system. Such out-
comes will be explicitly reflected in new policies representing a codification of revised preference structures within the system.

**Implications**

The interrelationships between innovation and school policy indicate that guiding change in educational organizations may require great sophistication. Change in itself may be threatening, for it may violate deep-rooted values and well-established preference structures. Change agents must not only cope with the emotional reactions which change processes may engender, but they must also avoid being tagged as designing manipulators.

A number of generalizations appear important with respect to change initiation within school organizations:

1. **Go slow.** Since proposals for major change can be interpreted as demands for reallocation of value outcomes in a system (and since such changes may violate long-established preference structures), innovation may have a better chance for success if it is evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Evolutionary change is likely to generate less anxiety, fewer rumors, and less unrest, opposition, and conflict than revolutionary change.

2. **Calculate the cost.** Innovation is often costly when measured in terms of organizational time, risk, and demands placed on leaders and followers. Change requires time for planning, initiation, control, and evaluation—and time is an expensive organizational commodity. Change also may create anxiety, unrest, and conflict.

   Is the demand for change important enough to create extensive organizational disturbances? Change also poses demands in terms of the difficult and disagreeable actions that may need to be undertaken to initiate change processes. Will such actions jeopardize possibilities for future cooperation? Will the expenditure of psychic energy in the organization be worthwhile in terms of the change that is contemplated?

3. **Communicate the advantages.** If change can be used to generate greater individual or organizational status, prestige, security, efficiency, or power, such advantages should be communicated, for they provide powerful incentives to change.

4. **Review the alternatives to power strategies.** Although force can be used to generate change, consent may provide a better foundation for innovation in education. Change brought about through force must usually be maintained by force. Power approaches often restrict communication, choke interaction, and introduce studied formality into system relationships. Alternatives to power strategies in engineering policy changes were mentioned earlier, i.e., empirical-rational and/or normative, reeducative strategies.

5. **Understand the change process.** There are clear linkages between innovation and school policy: pressures for educational change generate processes similar to demand-making in political contexts. Processes underlying change, and the ways in which change can be initiated require clear understanding from those associated with education.

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