

Teacher and Administrator Attitudes and Extent of School Involvement in Title III Projects

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AFTER studying 149 projects established under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, one researcher concluded: "... the strength of Title III lies in its ability to stimulate local initiative and innovation, where significant adoption and adaptation take place" (8: 43). While engaged in an evaluation of a regional Title III Educational Improvement Center, the authors noted a great disparity among school districts (and even among schools in a given district) in their willingness to participate in Center-supported, innovative, instructional improvement projects.

The importance of administrator attitudes in effecting educational change has been well documented (1, 3, 6). This ex post facto study was conducted in an attempt (a) to ascertain attitudinal factors associated with the extent to which a Center was able (or unable) to "stimulate local initiative and innovation," and (b) to compare administrator attitudes with those of teachers in an attempt to determine possible differences that could influence the extent of involvement in projects for the improvement of instruction.

The Problem

Is there a significant difference between project and no-project schools in the atti-

tudes held by school personnel with respect to the:

1. Necessity for outside aid in the solution of local educational problems?
2. Need for curriculum change within the school?
3. Quality of current instructional programs in the school?
4. Promotion of current educational improvement projects by the Center?
5. Activities in the local school setting that encourage efforts to improve instruction?

In addition, is there a significant attitudinal difference between teachers and administrators within project and no-project schools in regard to these five factors?

Procedures

Personnel from the Educational Improvement Center were asked to identify those schools that had undertaken educational improvement projects with Center support and encouragement, and those schools that failed to establish projects al-

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Project Schools				No-Project Schools			
School	School Enrollment	No. of Teachers	Level	School	School Enrollment	No. of Teachers	Level
1.	153	6	Elementary	1.	231	9	Elementary
2.	325	15	Elementary	2.	394	15	Elementary
3.	338	20	Elementary	3.	491	23	Elementary
4.	630	26	Elementary	4.	689	30	Elementary
5.	1543	75	Elementary	5.	1161	57	Elementary
6.	344	22	Secondary	6.	336	24	Secondary
7.	435	26	Secondary	7.	388	24	Secondary
8.	440	28	Secondary	8.	412	19	Secondary
9.	475	36	Secondary	9.	371	28	Secondary
10.	729	34	Secondary	10.	608	32	Secondary

Figure 1. Demographic Characteristics of Project and No-Project Schools

though they had the opportunity and were offered support by the Center. Ten project and ten no-project schools were then selected to form two groups equated on the bases of enrollment, educational level, number of teachers, and community setting. All of the schools included in the investigation were in rural communities. Demographic characteristics of the schools selected are shown in Figure 1.

From each of the project schools, one administrator who worked closely with the project was identified, along with one teacher, randomly selected, from those who were involved in the project. For no-project schools, the Center's personnel identified those teachers and administrators who were aware of the services available from the Center and who had participated in one or more activities sponsored by the Center. One teacher and one administrator in each no-project school were then randomly selected by the investigators from the list provided by the Center.

As part of a personal interview, each of the 20 teachers and 20 administrators completed a 29-item Likert-type instrument (4) constructed to assess attitudes relative to each of the five factors under investigation. Some of the items were positively stated,

Factor	No. of Items	Kuder-Richardson 20
1	6	.68
2	4	.65
3	4	.75
4	10	.89
5	5	.63
Total Instrument	29	.87

Figure 2. Internal Consistency of the Instrument as Measured by the Kuder-Richardson 20

others were stated negatively. The response categories were: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Inter-item correlations were computed for all items to ensure that the items were scored in a consistent direction. Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 was employed to determine the internal consistency both for the items used to measure each of the five factors and for the total instrument (5: 380; 7: 194). The reliability coefficients are reported in Figure 2.

The following are examples of items used to assess the factors measured.

Factor One—necessity of outside aid in the solution of local educational problems—was measured by items such as:

1. Federal and/or state supported educational improvement projects have made a significant contribution to education in America.
2. If local districts were given the money spent on federally supported programs, they could solve their own educational problems.

Factor Two—need for curriculum change within the school—included such items as:

1. The local school system must provide substantial improvement in its personnel and curriculum to keep up with the rest of the state and nation.

Factor Three—quality of current instructional programs in the schools—was measured by items such as:

1. Students from your school system do as well as most others when they go away to college.

Factor Four—promotion of educational improvement projects by the Center—included items such as:

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Source of Variance	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	P
Between project and no-project schools	3.60	1	3.60	0.44	n.s.
Between teachers and administrators within project and no-project schools	26.50	2	13.25	1.63	n.s.
Error	291.80	36	8.11		
Total	321.90	39			

Figure 3. Nested Analysis of Variance for Teachers' and Administrators' Attitudes Toward Necessity of Outside Aid in the Solution of Local Educational Problems

Source of Variance	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	P
Between project and no-project schools	21.02	1	21.02	3.00	$p < .10$
Between teachers and administrators within project and no-project schools	19.45	2	9.72	1.39	n.s.
Error	251.90	36	7.00		
Total	292.37	39			

Figure 4. Nested Analysis of Variance for Teachers' and Administrators' Attitudes Toward Need for Curriculum Change Within Their Schools

Source of Variance	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	P
Between project and no-project schools	72.90	1	72.90	15.62	$p < .01$
Between teachers and administrators within project and no-project schools	17.00	2	8.50	1.82	n.s.
Error	168.00	36	4.67		
Total	257.90	39			

Figure 5. Nested Analysis of Variance for Teachers' and Administrators' Attitudes Toward the Quality of Their Current Instructional Programs

Measures	Project Schools		No-Project Schools		Administrators		Teachers	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	20.35	2.52	19.75	3.10	19.50	2.77	20.60	2.80
2	13.85	2.76	12.40	2.44	12.95	2.18	13.30	3.13
3	10.80	2.36	8.10	1.92	8.80	2.36	10.10	2.55
4	41.60	5.70	38.90	5.12	39.65	5.28	40.85	5.82
5	21.05	2.69	19.05	2.13	19.85	2.06	20.25	3.08
Total	107.55	9.64	98.20	10.57	100.75	8.06	105.10	13.22

Figure 9. Means and Standard Deviations of the Attitude Measures

Source of Variance	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	P
Between project and no-project schools	72.90	1	72.90	2.34	n.s.
Between teachers and administrators within project and no-project schools	54.40	2	27.20	0.87	n.s.
Error	1120.20	36	31.12		
Total	1247.50	39			

Figure 6. Nested Analysis of Variance for Teachers' and Administrators' Attitudes Toward Promotion of Educational Improvement Projects by Outside Agencies

Source of Variance	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	P
Between project and no-project schools	40.00	1	40.00	6.15	$p < .05$
Between teachers and administrators within project and no-project schools	1.70	2	0.85	0.13	n.s.
Error	234.20	36	6.51		
Total	275.90	39			

Figure 7. Nested Analysis of Variance for Teachers' and Administrators' Attitudes Toward Activities in Their Schools Which Encourage Efforts for the Improvement of Instruction

Source of Variance	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	P
Between project and no-project schools	893.03	1	893.03	8.74	$p < .01$
Between teachers and administrators within project and no-project schools	141.85	2	207.42	2.03	n.s.
Error	3676.90	36	102.14		
Total	4711.78	39			

Figure 8. Nested Analysis of Variance for the Total Attitude Measures of Teachers and Administrators

1. The Center had clear-cut goals which were made known to our school's personnel.
2. Conferences and meetings of the Center lacked organization.

Factor Five—activities in the local school setting that encourage efforts to improve instruction—was assessed by items such as:

1. New teaching ideas are encouraged in this school.
2. Formulation of written objectives is essential if teachers are to be effective in the classroom.

The data were analyzed by using a nested analysis of variance design with teachers and administrators nested under project and no-project schools (2, 9). This design permitted comparison not only between project and no-project schools, but also between teachers and administrators within project and no-project schools. The results of the analysis are reported in Figures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Findings

Significant differences between project and no-project schools were observed for the second factor (need for curriculum change within the school) at the .10 level of confidence, the third factor (quality of current instructional programs) at the .01 level, and the fifth factor (activities that encourage efforts to improve instruction) at the .05 level. No significant differences were found between project and no-project schools for factors one (necessity for outside aid) and four (promotion of projects by the Center). When responses to the total instrument were considered, reported in Figure 8, a difference significant at the .01 level was observed between project and no-project schools.

As evident from the higher mean scores shown in Figure 9, teachers consistently displayed a more positive attitude toward all of the factors than did administrators. There was, however, no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of teachers when compared with administrators as nested within project and no-project schools.

Discussion

Teachers and administrators in both project and no-project schools generally responded in a positive manner to factor one (necessity for outside aid in the solution of local educational problems). Virtually the only difference in responses occurred in one of the sample items presented previously where 45 percent of those individuals in schools without Center-supported projects believed local districts could solve their own educational problems if they were given the money spent on federally supported programs, whereas only 20 percent of the respondents from project schools agreed with this contention.

The second factor was concerned with the need for curriculum change within each school. There was some indication that respondents from project schools were more favorably disposed toward change than their counterparts in schools without projects.

The responses to the third factor, which assessed attitudes concerning the quality of current instructional programs, gave additional support for the findings reported for factor two. Respondents from project schools indicated less satisfaction with current programs than those from no-project schools. The level of satisfaction with present instructional programs thus appeared to be related to the extent to which a felt need for curriculum change existed; that is, dissatisfaction with current instructional programs was related positively to favorable attitudes toward curriculum change.

There was no significant difference between project and no-project schools in responses given to factor number four dealing with attitudes toward activities and personnel of the Center. There was general agreement that the meetings conducted by the Center were well organized, and that the Center's personnel conducted themselves in a professional manner in their contacts with local schools.

The fifth factor was concerned with activities in the local school setting that encouraged efforts to improve instruction. Teachers and administrators in project

schools generally displayed a more positive attitude toward such activities than the respondents from no-project schools. For example, a higher percentage of the respondents from project schools agreed that formulation of written objectives (one of the activities stressed by the Center in curriculum improvement projects) is essential if teachers are to be effective in the classroom.

The results of this investigation indicated that teachers and administrators of project schools, when compared with their counterparts in no-project schools, (a) show a more positive attitude toward curriculum change, (b) show a lower level of satisfaction with the quality of their educational program, and (c) show a more positive attitude toward activities of the local school that encourage the improvement of instruction. In general, a significant relationship was found to exist between attitudes held by teachers and administrators and the extent of school involvement in instructional improvement projects.

Implications

Generalizing from the results of this study is limited for at least two reasons. First, procedures used to select respondents within the schools may not have produced a representative sample; and second, items comprising the instrument may not have measured all aspects of the five factors con-

sidered. The implications of this research study for regional Title III centers should be interpreted in light of the stated limitations.

One implication of the study seemed to be that favorable attitudes by school personnel toward external support for instructional improvement projects is not a sufficient condition to assure cooperation in establishing such projects. It appears that educational agencies formed under Title III not only must establish rapport with the clients served, but also must exert a great deal of initial effort to assist schools in identifying facets of curriculum and instruction that need improvement. Stimulation of local initiative and innovation through Title III will be difficult, if not impossible, unless teachers and administrators exhibit a felt need for improvement of the instructional program. This need may be evidenced by some dissatisfaction with the existing program, accompanied by a receptive attitude toward curricular change.

It further appeared that with additional research and instrument refinement, attitude scales could be developed to ascertain the extent to which school personnel are ready for change and interested in improving instruction. The utilization of such an instrument could play a part in the most expeditious allocation of Title III funds, since one could predict in advance those schools that would have the highest probability of success in inaugurating projects for the improvement of instruction.

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