

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 270 424

SP 027 656

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TITLE Leadership and Ownership: Key Factors in Organizational Change.

PUB DATE [83]

NOTE 8p.

PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Adoption (Ideas); *Change Strategies; *Curriculum Development; *Educational Change; Higher Education; Mainstreaming; Preservice Teacher Education; *Teacher Education Curriculum; *Teacher Education Programs

ABSTRACT

This study investigated and identified factors which influenced the ability of teacher education institutions to change their programs to increase the amount of study of special needs of all pupils. Institutional representatives from each of five program areas--early childhood, junior high/middle school, secondary, and special education--elementary, at 107 institutions responded to a survey regarding their programs' response to the mandate for mainstreaming. Respondents rated nine variables on the curricular decisions made in response to the mandate and commented on curricular change brought about as a consequence of the mandate. Findings indicated that the institutional administrator must be in support of the change if it is to occur successfully. An obvious area of support was financial. Faculty "ownership" will motivate faculty members to participate actively in program change. (CB)

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LEADERSHIP AND OWNERSHIP: KEY FACTORS IN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

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SP 027656

LEADERSHIP AND OWNERSHIP: KEY FACTORS IN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

by

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of this paper is change--in particular the factors which can increase the likelihood of a change process being effective.

Teacher education, as well as the rest of higher education, has the reputation of being very slow to change--a reputation that certainly has some validity. However, times are now different, and there are many forces causing changes, often substantial changes, in teacher education. These changes are brought about by new legislation, new regulations from the state, accreditation standards, pressure from special interest groups, as well as the internal factor of motivation for change. A great amount of energy is being expended in addressing these causes for change. Those who really want the change to occur, however, must have a high concern with improving the efficiency of the change process. That is, how can we increase the likelihood of change while reducing, when possible, the amount of effort being expended.

The purpose of the study being reported here was to investigate a particular change process. The study sought to identify those factors which influenced the institutions' ability to change their programs to increase the amount of study of special needs of all pupils. Over the past few years, a variety of factors have influenced institutions to increase the instruction for all preservice teachers in dealing the special needs student. This set of circumstances provided an opportunity to determine which factors most influenced the decision-making process. From this study, we hoped to be able to generalize those factors to other such change strategies which might be employed by an institution.

As you will see, the results are not surprising, but, we believe, will provide reasonable conclusions to guide us in approaching change processes in our institutions.

CONDUCT OF THE STUDY

In order to determine how institutions nationwide react to forced change and to determine what factors are influential in smoothly bringing about that change, we developed a survey instrument designed to elicit responses from each of five program areas at the institutions selected for participation in the study. The program areas include early childhood, elementary, junior high/middle school, secondary, and special education. All program areas were asked the same questions. The decision to send five questionnaires to each institution resulted from comments made on a pilot study questionnaire which we had sent to Illinois teacher preparation institutions. Those responding to the pilot study reported that it was difficult for them to describe on a global institutional basis how they implemented the Illinois mainstreaming mandate because the method of implementation was not the same for all programs

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at their institutions. Secondary education majors, for instance, might be receiving their mainstreaming instruction through a separate course, while elementary education majors were being instructed through special education units infused into pre-existing courses.

The subjects we chose were institutional representatives from each of the five program areas at 107 selected institutions. These institutions were chosen on the basis of the homogeneity of their demographic data. The selection criteria included 1) an undergraduate population of approximately 15,000 to 20,000; 2) a large teacher preparation program, with at least three of the five program areas offered and a minimum of 500 students enrolled in those programs; 3) both masters and doctoral programs in education offered; and 4) status as a public rather than private institution. The institutions were identified, based on these criteria, through data available from AACTE. Consequently, for an institution to be selected, it had to be a member of AACTE, as well as fulfill the previously stated criteria.

The respondents tended to be chairpersons, program coordinators, or faculty from the various program areas. In only three instances did a dean elect to respond for the program areas at his or her institution.

We received responses from 346 program areas, resulting in a 65% response rate. Of that number, 243 were usable. Those we could not use either contained too little data or else the respondent indicated that mainstreaming instruction was not required in that program area.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Although a formal analysis of the data with all of the usual treatments was conducted, we are not presenting a full analysis here because we feel that the implications of the study are of more interest than the statistics from which we derived those implications.

The data we are reporting have been taken from two separate but related parts of the study. In the first portion of the study, respondents were asked to rate the influence of nine variables on the curricular decisions made in response to the mandate. Those variables are 1) specific language of the mandate; 2) ability to document implementation of the mandate; 3) policy of the teacher education governing unit; 4) commitment of the SCDE to support implementation of the mandate; 5) non-mandated, voluntary commitment of the SCDE to require mainstreaming instruction; 6) availability of instructional personnel with special education expertise; 7) NCATE special education standard 2.1.2; 8) award of a Dean's Grant; and 9) results of follow-up studies of program graduates which indicate a need for mainstreaming instruction.

The forced response scale ranged from 1, not important, to 4, very important, with 2 being somewhat important and 3, important.

The data revealed that the commitment of the SCDE to support implementation of the mandate was the most important influence on the change process, with a mean rating response of 3.14.

The second part of the study examined the curriculum decision-making process and who took responsibility for that process. We asked for responses to the following questions: 1) Was the decision to initiate the curriculum development process a unilateral one, and if so, who made the decision? 2) Was the decision to initiate the curriculum development process collaborative, if so, who was involved? 3) Who was responsible for planning and developing the course, courses, or units? 4) Who was responsible for implementing the course, courses, or units?

Out of 234 responses, only 54 program areas or 22% indicated that the decision to begin the curriculum development process was made unilaterally. In these cases, respondents indicated that either the dean or a special committee such as a Dean's Grant committee made the unilateral decision.

Of the program areas responding that a collaborative decision was made, 78% reported that a group comprised of faculty, deans, and chairpersons ^{were} responsible.

When asked who took responsibility for the planning and developing stage, 178 program areas perceived faculty to be most responsible, with program coordinators becoming more actively involved than they were during the initiation stage.

Responding to the question about who had responsibility for implementing the course, courses, or units, 75% of the respondents indicated that faculty were responsible.

The last part of the questionnaire was left open-ended so that respondents could write any comments they wished to make regarding mandated curricular change. And write they did! Since their comments were made an integral part of the study and its implications, we deemed it important to summarize them for you.

These written comments indicated that mandated curricular is costly in terms of both fiscal and human resources. Respondents wrote ^{such} comments as "We were coerced by fiat," and "We resent having the mandate crammed down our throat." Furthermore, they resented having to implement instruction which might or might not prove effective for regular classroom teachers. In addition, they reported an apparent interdisciplinary lack of cooperation in implementing the mandate, with academic areas outside the SCDE viewing implementation as strictly a problem of the SCDE. Faculty unwillingness to implement the instruction was another problem. A lack of agreement among faculty on what to delete from or modify in an already overcrowded curriculum also caused concern, with one respondent writing that teacher preparation programs would soon take five years to complete. Most respondents, however, reported that a lack of resources necessary to provide extra incentives or released time for faculty involved in the curriculum decision-making and development process was the greatest problem encountered.

CONCLUSION

Mandates for change can take many forms. We have based this study on a legislative mandate. But we regard the implications as applicable to any type of directive for change, whether it comes from the legislature, a state or federal agency, an accreditation agency, the system's office, or from "higher up" in the institution.

We would like to reflect, then, on two sets of implications found in the results of our study on how we behave toward change. The first of these concerns the type of activities on campus if the change is to succeed. The second set is directed toward those who wish to initiate some change, that is some mandate, and have it succeed.

Before beginning, we must note that we are assuming that the desired change should really take place, and these remarks are directed at making the change succeed. We must take note that the natural reaction of most faculty toward a mandate is to resist it because it must not be right if someone else is imposing it. It has been said that change takes place on a campus in one of two forms: not at all or, at best, without an overall plan. With that broad generalization, we will return to a discussion of the two sets of implications.

The first finding from our study indicated that the administration of the SCDE must be in support of the change if it is going to occur. The Dean, Department Chairs, and perhaps the central administration must understand the need for the change to the extent appropriate for their levels of responsibility and their level of commitment must be apparent to those involved in implementing the change.

The most obvious area of support is financial. This type of support must manifest itself in several ways. Obviously, if implementation of the mandate requires additional resources to conduct any type of response to the mandate, then, of course, these must be provided. The change may require additional faculty, library materials, or other instructional resources. But an important additional resource is the need to support the development of the method of responding to the mandate. This support could be extra employment in the summer or released time during the regular term for one or more faculty to study the alternatives, develop the appropriate syllabus, and perhaps develop the instructional materials. It could mean financial support for travel, for communication by telephone, for consultants, or for retraining of faculty.

Probably as important to the provision of financial support is the attitude reflected by the administration. There is more than one way to respond to a mandate. If the administrators believe this mandate is not important to the students in the program, then it may reflect to the faculty through actions

and words that responding to the mandate should be done at the minimal level. Faculty will most likely respond in kind. If the administrators believe that this mandate will improve the instruction for teacher education students, their actions and words should make this very clear to faculty. This type of response will provide a better foundation for the second element identified in the study: Ownership of the change by faculty.

It is commonly accepted that if you want the job done right, then get the right person. In addition to finding the person with the right skills, you need a person who will "buy into the project." This "buy-in" is referred to as "ownership" in the discussions of this study and is one of the critical elements to the success in responding to the mandate. Without a doubt, any SCDE faculty can identify more issues than there is time to respond to adequately and still maintain the expected instructional level. Which activities are selected to be dealt with by faculty in an effective manner will depend on which ones are thought by faculty to be their own highest priority.

This ownership will be reflected in the way faculty approach the problem, the level of extra energy they put into the solution of the problem, and the level of implementation of the change. Support by the administration will not alone provide faculty with the ownership of an issue. It must be appealing to faculty, both from a professional as well as a personal perspective, which may mean that the activity must have some type of pay-off to the faculty in terms of recognition or remuneration.

What are the implications for those who wish to cause change through some type of mandated action? It appears to us that those who originate the mandate must take these same two factors into consideration. If those who write the mandate really expect their idea to have an impact on the education of those involved, they must take into consideration the necessity for a commitment by the SCDE and ownership by the faculty. To the extent possible, those planning for the change will need to work ahead of the declaration of the mandate to attempt to bring about that commitment and ownership.

For commitment, this prior planning means obtaining support of the administration during the development of the mandate. Administrators must believe that adequate resources can be obtained through allocation or reallocation. They must understand the potential impact of the mandate on their instructional programs, both for the good it will do students and for the impact on other elements of the programs. The commitment might come about through public hearings on the issues involved or through actions taken by professional organizations to which the administrators belong.

Ownership by faculty may be much harder to anticipate. If, as this study indicates, change processes function in the direction of faculty to administration to state, then it may be necessary to begin development of the language of the mandate with the faculty to be involved. A resolution from a state association that is predominantly faculty which supports the need for some type of response

to the problem could lay the groundwork for later acceptance by faculty. We do not mean to imply that thousands of faculty must be involved in the development of a solution. But it does mean that some faculty should be involved prior to the development of the declaration of the mandate.

It occurs to us that we may simply be stating the obvious. Experience, however, has shown that when actions have been taken to mandate some type of change that does not have both the administrative commitment and faculty ownership as described here, the action has usually not had a lasting impact, a real impact on the education of students.