1982

Decision making in the secondary school: a case study of the constructs of the teacher using the repertory grid

Kevin Patrick Moffat
University of Wollongong

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG
COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author.

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.

Recommended Citation
https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/1331
NOTE
This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING
You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
DECISION MAKING IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL:
A STUDY OF THE CONSTRUCTS OF
THE TEACHER USING
THE REPERTORY
GRID

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
from
THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG
by
Kevin Patrick Moffat,
B.A. (N.E.), M.A. (Syd.), Dip.Ed. (N.S.W.)

Department of Education
1982
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS   i
ABSTRACT          ii

Chapter

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem   1
1.2 Organization of the Study   2
1.3 Significance of the Study   6
1.4 Conceptual Framework     8
1.5 Methodological Approach   11

PART 1

2 EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

2.1 Change and Society      13
2.2 Contemporary Criticisms of the School
   (a) General Criticisms   14
   (b) Criticisms of Public Schools in New South Wales   19
2.3 The Possibilities for Change in Schools  19
2.4 Summary and Conclusions  28

3 ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

3.1 The Nature of the Organization and Some of its Problems  30
   (a) Organizations in Society  36
   (b) Organizational Structure  39
   (c) Functions of Organizations  40
   (d) Decisions and the Organization  41


3 ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE (cont.)

3.2 Organization Development as a Strategy for Change

(a) The Concept of Organization Development

(b) The Technology of Organization Development

1. Laboratory Training
2. Process Consultation
3. Survey Feedback
4. Other Technologies

(c) The Effectiveness of Organization Development

3.3 Organization Development in the Schools

3.4 Summary and Conclusions

4 EDUCATIONAL DECISION MAKING

4.1 Decision Making and the School

(a) The Nature of Decision Making in Organizations

(b) Organizational Goals, Decision-making Power and Change

(c) An Alternative Model for Exercising Decision-making Powers

(d) The Advantages of Participation

(e) The Present and Desired Levels of Participation in School Decision Making as Perceived by the Teacher
4 EDUCATIONAL DECISION MAKING (cont.)

4.2 The Role of the Teacher in Decision Making
   (a) The Teacher's Life-space
   (b) The Concept of Role
   (c) Role Expectations, Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict and Teacher Stress
   (d) The Role of the Teacher as a Professional

4.3 Summary and Conclusions

PART 2

5 A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INVESTIGATION

5.1 The Study of Problems in Psychology
   (a) The Conventional Approach to Methodology
   (b) The Criticism of Conventional Methodology
   (c) Consequent Influences on Psychology

5.2 Phenomenology as a New Approach
   (a) The Nature of Phenomenological Method

5.3 The Theory of Personal Constructs
   (a) Foundations of Kellian Theory
   (b) Kelly's View of Role

5.4 Summary and Conclusions

6 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

6.1 Background to the Problem
   (a) Educational Change
   (b) Educational Decision Making
   (c) A Conceptual Framework for Investigation
   (d) Review of Empirical Investigations
6 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM (cont.)

6.2 Statement of the Problem 138
6.3 Significance of the Problem 141
6.4 The Development of Testable Hypotheses 144
   (a) The Individuality Corollary 144
   (b) The Dichotomy Corollary 146
   (c) The Choice Corollary 147
6.5 The Pattern of Involvement in Decision Making 149
6.6 Summary and Conclusions 150

7 METHODOLOGY 153

7.1 Personal Construct Theory and Repertory Grid Technique 154
7.2 Modus Operandi of the Repertory Grid Technique 156
7.3 Applications of the Repertory Grid Technique 159
   (a) Clinical Applications 159
   (b) Social-psychological Applications 164
7.4 Studies of the Validity and Reliability of the Repertory Grid Technique 166
   (a) Clinical Applications 166
   (b) Social-psychological Applications 172
7.5 Applicability of the Repertory Grid Technique to the Present Study 178
7.6 Design of the Study Using Repertory Grid Technique 180
   (a) Major Parameters of the Study 180
   (b) Population of the Study 181
   (c) Pilot Study 181
   (d) Sample Selection 182
   (e) Data Collection Procedure 182
   (f) Response Rate 183
7 METHODOLOGY (cont.)
   (g) Statistical Procedure 183

7.7 Summary and Conclusions 184

8 RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS 185

8.1 Recapitulation of the Issues 186

8.2 Results of Hypotheses Testing 191
   (a) The Individuality Corollary 193
   (b) The Dichotomy Corollary 195
   (c) The Choice Corollary 197

8.3 Discussion of the Results of Hypotheses Testing and their Implications 200
   (a) The Individuality Corollary 200
   (b) The Dichotomy Corollary 205
   (c) The Choice Corollary 215

8.4 Recommendations Concerning Strategies for Change Arising from the Study 218
   (a) Social Changes Likely to Influence the School 218
   (b) Recommended Actions for Change in the Schools 220

8.5 Suggestions for Further Research 230
   (a) Role Ambiguity 230
   (b) School Functions 231
   (c) Decisional Deprivation and Saturation 232
   (d) Teacher Education 233
   (e) Other Variables Limiting School Decision-making Involvement 234
   (f) Other Roles in the School Organization 234

8.6 Summary and Conclusions 236
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to acknowledge, with deep appreciation, the advice and encouragement of the Supervisors of the study: Dr. A.J. Fielding and Professor R.C. King.

The assistance of the Principals and Teachers of the co-operating secondary schools in the Illawarra District of the New South Wales public schools system in providing data contributed materially to the completion of the empirical part of the study and this assistance is greatly appreciated.

Thanks are also due to those who made helpful suggestions from time to time in the course of the study: Mr. N.R. Aylward, Dr. D.M. Cavanagh, Dr. P.T. Mawter, Mr. B.E. Murray and Mr. M.R. Stone.
The rate of change is generating problems in society. Technological development is profoundly affecting social life, in particular, employment and leisure.

Educational planning is being influenced by the increasing rate of change. Pressure is being felt of criticisms of existing practice and of the development of technology.

Traditionally the school has modelled its structure on hierarchical principles which maintain that the main decisions are made by those of higher rank. Uncertainty, however, exists in the locus of certain decisions and it has been suggested that decisions should in any case, be shared.

If change is required in the structure of decision making a suitable strategy for change may be required. Organization Development, a recently developed strategy for effecting change in organizations, has been used extensively in the United States and Canada.

Measurement of the effectiveness of Organization Development is still unclear but it has been suggested that an improved approach to Organization Development in schools would involve the study of how relationships are 'coupled'.
This study proposes that a major coupling mechanism in schools is the decision-making relationship that links organization roles and organization functions. There is evidence that role ambiguity, conflict and stress exist in school situations but few studies probe the decision-making role of the teacher in relation to school functions. The principle of hierarchical decision making may not be applied strictly in schools. Who does share in decision making and who should share is an open question.

Based on the theory developed by G.A. Kelly, testable hypotheses were developed relating to the perceptions of the teacher in relation to school decision making. A modification of Kelly's Repertory Grid Technique was used to investigate these hypotheses.

The results of hypotheses testing were found to have implications for school planning. A number of strategies for change were suggested by the results. Furthermore, an overall pattern of involvement in decision making appears to have emerged. Further research was suggested.