12-1-1993

Citizens' perception of the relationship between school board operating structure and board planning, board goals and board behavior

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Very little research has been done on the dynamics of school boards. This study was undertaken to examine perceptions of school board behavior. Also the study attempted to determine the relationship of board behavior, board planning and board goals.

Sources of data for the study included questionnaire, formal and informal conversation. The subjects were graduate students enrolled in Clark Atlanta University Education department; other subjects were nongraduate (citizens).

Statistical procedures used was the Pearson correlation analysis. Some findings emerged from data analysis. When respondents see the school board as planning and cooperative in terms of the clients' needs, they also see the board as reaching its student goal. Respondents see dominated and fragmented boards as negative for student achievement goal, cooperative behavior and system planning, while they see
positive relationship for board consensus and passive board with cooperation and planning. However, there is no significant relationship among board consensus, passive board and board goals.

The general perception is that school boards should improve public relations. The recommendations were the school board should improve the citizen perception or improve their performance.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

In 1983, the Nation at Risk Report observed the fall in educational standards and called for a reform and restructuring of American education.\(^1\) Several years later, however, the National Center for Education Statistics provided data to show that the dropout rate was still a problem and in many cases there was minimal improvement in student achievement nationwide. Reports such as this made it appear that school boards had not been responsive to the demands for improvement in education.\(^2\)

The Georgia Basic Education Act\(^3\) was an attempt by the state to urge the various school districts to improve the quality of education by requiring school districts to administer a new teacher and leader evaluation program, teacher and leader certification tests, and to provide for additional school financing, staff development and supervision. These changes, initiated by the state, did not come from within the school districts, but primarily from

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\(^1\)National Commission on Excellence in Education, \textit{A Nation at Risk} (Washington, DC: GPO, 1983).


politicians. This could have resulted from the fact that school boards and their respective bureaucracies were unresponsive to the demands of the "Nation at Risk Report", although educational administration is a state managed entity. The involvement of Federal government and the concerns expressed by Public Officials in general, is an indication of mounting dissatisfaction with the present state of education.

According to Rothman, President Bush met with the Governors of all 50 states in a national meeting of the Governors Association to adopt nationwide educational goals for the year 2000. The intent was to set new standards for states and school districts to meet, on the assumption that the statement of national standards would push state and local school boards into making the education system more responsive. The following goals were enumerated: (1) all students will start school ready to learn, (2) high school graduation will increase to 90 percent, (3) student competency will increase subject matter, (4) U.S. student placement will increase to first in the world in mathematics and science, and (5) eliminate drugs in every school. One would expect that following this charge, local school boards would have responded to this in some positive and practical ways.

Observations of the Public Television channel broadcast of the Atlanta School Board meetings may suggest, or lead one

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to believe, that Board members are more concerned with their own political agenda than building consensus necessary for promoting student academic achievement. A case in point is that of one member who is on federal indictment for alleged conflict of interest with respect to contracts with business organizations.\textsuperscript{5} The result of this and other conflicts is a demand by citizens to "erase the board".\textsuperscript{6}

In an investigative report of DeKalb County Schools on March 28, 1993, the \textit{Atlanta Journal Constitution} reported that the system was not innovative and had not responded to the racial integration needs of the community.\textsuperscript{7} Situations such as this and those previously presented point to problems such as: (1) lack of performance by school boards, (2) communities being unable to influence the school boards to be responsive to their needs, (3) lack of cohesiveness among school board members, and (4) undue influence by business interests on board members. These issues indicate a need to survey the opinions of responsible citizens to determine if they also perceive problems.

In Oakland, California, more than a dozen Oakland school employees (some of whom have already left their jobs) were arrested during the past year following an investigation

\textsuperscript{5}John Head, "Board Member Indicted for Conflict of Interest," \textit{Atlanta Journal Constitution}, 7 May 1993, C3.

\textsuperscript{6}Channel 2, WSB News, 14 September 1993.

into wrongdoing in the district. The school board and senior administrators came under fire for allegedly running a patronage mill. The superintendent was given therefore authority in making hiring and firing decisions, and the district is under a limited state trusteeship to ease it through financial difficulties.8

In New York City, approximately a third of the 32 community school districts are under investigation for corruption and cronyism. In Brooklyn, for example, two superintendents have alleged that board members forced them to hire friends and family members for unnecessary school jobs. While in Queens, a former school board chief pleaded guilty in April to charges of coercion and fraud dealing with hiring practices. The pleas followed an investigation that began with the superintendent secretly taping conversations with board members. In the Bronx, a former school board president has pleaded guilty to taking kickbacks from vendors dealing with the school district.9

In its program to bring massive reform to Kentucky schools, the state legislature has banned nepotism and set up procedures to eliminate its vestiges.10 In Kentucky, on the

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9Ibid.

10Ibid.
other hand, critics of the state's schools have charged that nepotism and patronage run rampant in some school districts.

The Washington Post\textsuperscript{11}, in its editorial column, reported that only 10\% to 15\% of metropolitan eligible voters participate in school board elections. The editorial argued that the same electorate that shows such apathy and indifference in board elections consistently maintains that lay governance of education is a critical part of our democratic society and that elected boards are the best means of providing that oversight.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how taxpayers in the Metro Atlanta area perceive the relationship between school board operating structure and board goals, board behavior and board planning. Specifically, the board operating structures being investigated are dominated boards, fragmented boards, consensus boards and passive boards. It is also perceived that information gathered will be useful to school boards who, hopefully, will use the information to assess their operations in light of the data yielded.

The History of School Boards

According to Firestone, Fuhrman and Kirst, the local school board started in New England, where in 1647, Massachusetts provided for some kind of public schools and for their supervision and inspection by town committees. The early boards, in the simple life of pioneer communities, exercised direct control of the schools because the citizens in the early New England colonies were considered knowledgeable. Their personal knowledge of the Bible was the basis for the development of public education throughout the colonies. The first law requiring parents to send children to school originated in 1642, in Massachusetts, as a blueprint for other towns to follow. School was mandatory for all children. The leadership structure was provided by a select group of men to oversee the administrative selection of teachers and curriculum.

The selected leaders were responsible for the approval of other committees to act as the governing body for the school. Increased population created a demand for student enrollment, and consequently increased administrative tasks. These appointed committees were the historical example for today's local Boards of Education which eventually acquired

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legal authority. Firestone, Fuhrman and Kirst cited Horace Mann, as stating, that the "common school was to be free, financed by local and state government, controlled by lay boards of education, and mixing all social groups under one roof". The model and aim of the school board was to be free from one-sided factional, pro-favoring interest groups.

As big city boards became sprawling and awkward, collections of individual schools created difficult leadership situations for management to occur satisfactorily. A different leadership originated from the business and professional sectors of the cities. This leadership became more responsive to corrupt city politicians, who used jobs and contracts to influence the school board leadership in order to gain favorable decisions. Kirst discussed records of corruption of school board members who allied themselves with textbook publishers and contractors to covertly arrange profitable deals that would mutually benefit each other.

The large cities, in some cases, created ward-based committee systems which operated with a strong measure of autonomy from one ward to another in each district. The

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concept of a decentralized, ward-based committee system for administering the public schools, provided an opportunity to narrow the influence of political activity. In 1905, for example, Philadelphia's 43 elected district school boards had 559 members. The Minneapolis board had only 7 members, while Hartford had only a third as many people, with 39 school visitors and committee members. Although there were great variations at the turn of the century, 16 of 28 cities of more than 100,000 population had boards consisting of 20 members or more.17

The orientation and background of board members, according to their occupation including class strata, provided indicators of why and how they behaved in terms of conflict or consensus.18

Reformers investigated cases where ward systems with its political freedom, elected members that favored special interest, and parochial loyalty appeared to block the common good of the school district. A convention in 1910 was convened to reform the ward system. This convention redesigned the governance structure and smaller school board membership in which elected-at-large positions were intended


to flush all affiliations with political parties and officials of local government. The reformers recommended an election using smaller numbers, thereby reducing this example by 1923, to an average of 7 per board.\textsuperscript{19}

Reformers made their impact on the growth of the superintendency concept in the first decades of the twentieth century. Board members were unable to adequately meet the rigorous demands of policy making and other specific school issues. At the same time members fulfilled their responsibilities as executive leaders of their own careers in industry, business, and the military. The position of superintendency duplicated the same administrative concept based on the same foundational features of a rigid organizational pyramid structure found in business or military organizations. Hageman\textsuperscript{20} asserted:

Unfortunately, at this time business and military organizations appeared acceptable patterns for school organizations and many systems developed more in the nature of business corporations, or the army than in the nature of schools. Contrary to the desires of many superintendents, the superintendent and other administrators were held to be employers and the teachers to be employees in a management labor dichotomy which denied the status of the administrator as a teacher among teachers. Communication in larger systems became one-way, and interaction between teachers and administrators became exceedingly


difficult even when the administrator actively sought the opinions and participation of teachers in making administrative decisions.\textsuperscript{21}

These organizational structures created communication problems among some professionals. Reformers, seeking to minimize conflict between the school board and professional leaders of the schools created a description of board functions. These guidelines eventually placed the superintendent in the position of proposing and administering policies. The separation provided advantages for board members to specialize in legitimizing policy matters and leaving educational and business matters which might affect the classroom to the professional staff.

\textbf{School Board Problems in Modern Urbanization}

Political incidents of conflict in the community usually occurred in urban populations about the location of the school district. The large populations were diverse, with various viewpoints from the citizens from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The concept of centralization caused consolidation of schools and created widespread curriculum choices. However, the smaller rural or ward districts lost their community harmony because consolidation of districts created disharmony and conflicting viewpoints among previously homogenous school boards.

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., 75.
Downsizing the number of school board members created a shortage of representation available to address emergent issues. Centralization did not change the composition of the school board representation to accommodate pluralistic citizenry. Downsizing school boards limited representation opportunities for minorities and other candidates from diverse socioeconomic status. A research survey conducted by Feistritzer in 1989 identified a majority of school board presidents as being 97 percent white males with a college education, 71 percent of whom were 40 years or older, financially stable with families at home.\(^{22}\)

The male dominated school board underwent significant changes—from 12% female in 1930 to 33% female representation in 1991.\(^{23}\) A specific study confirmed differences in the roles of males and females. A national study showed that males exercised their efforts primarily on contract, management and money issues, while females concentrated on the programmatic aspects of education and curriculum.\(^{24}\)

The global race to reach the moon initiated scientific innovations that affected education, including global


\(^{24}\)Barbara McLoud, "Are There Differences in Male and Female School Board Roles," Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1990.
communication and economic competition. During the early 1980s school boards were confronted with ever growing partnerships between politics and educational aims. The alliances of various groups of diverse viewpoints within the community and within the school system created a challenge for school boards to develop strategies to maintain a balance as technological demands increased the demand for curriculum specialization. New math appeared and disappeared as society and education proponents placed emphases on training additional specialists for teaching bilingual education, career education, nutrition and health.

The state has constitutional and legal powers that significantly distinguish the difference between local school districts. States as constitutional components in the federal system have superior powers over local government. The bottom line in local districts is that the agents are legally responsible for implementing the functional daily activities of public education. The aim of the policy-makers gravitated away from categoric curriculum classroom subjects for minority groups and their preferences and focused on the central core of instructional policy and what content should be taught, what strategic approach should be used, and the certification standards to determine teacher qualifications.

In the early 1980s, disagreement among local school policy makers regarding over interest in the basic math approach and simple reading exercises seemed to have been a
contributing factor to low student achievement in the schools. The disagreements over low expectations generated the interest of several governors and legislators to campaign for these public concerns. The new reality supported the effort to change the curriculum to emphasize advance needs for abstract thinking skills and a more advanced curriculum. Competition and successful labor efficiency generated from such countries as Germany and Japan motivated economic competition. Their school systems seemed to be successful in training and transforming citizens to a more flexible work force, equipped with knowledge and skills, while America’s local school leaders struggled to find solutions.

State officials mobilized their energy to seek information from policy activists. Policy activists were consulted for advice. Activists such as the National Educators Association (NEA), the American Federation of Educators (AFE), the State Administrators Association (SAA), State School Board Association (SSBA), and the Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) were concerned about issues of curricula realignment, specifically, as well as state control of local curriculum. In the meantime, unfortunately, state decision makers read strong published reform reports that failed to show that school boards are critical allies for upgrading schools and reinforcing the local school’s ability to
implement and observe change. Publications suggested local boards can be overlooked.\textsuperscript{25}

Several school boards disagreed with the local government that they harbor resentment to change.\textsuperscript{26} As society and education continued to evolve, school boards experienced vice-like pressures from various interest groups, such as the federal and state levels of government regulations generating from the administrative and legislative judicial branches. Other forms of pressures that encircled the school boards stemmed from national organizations such as the Council for Exceptional Children, the Education Commission of States, the professional reformers from the Carnegie Foundation of Education and private interest groups. Governmental powers, as well as interest groups and social movements such as women's rights, and minority needs multiplied. Consequently, the decision making powers of the school boards were altered, particularly since the 19th century era of Horace Mann. These combinations of governmental and various social movements have narrowed the boundaries of decision making powers by school boards. Public pressures from all levels of society have created a roller coaster effect on decision making powers. Consequently, board members are concerned that public pressures may force the usual process of school board

\textsuperscript{25}Firestone, Fuhrman, and Kirst, The Progress of Reform: An Appraisal of State Educational Initiatives.

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid.
decisions at the state level to some alternate form at the non-local level. Thus, the popularity of school boards remains strongly entrenched and supported by the citizens of the United States.

In 1986, a study entitled "Strengthening Grass Roots Leadership" was conducted by the Institute for Educational Leaders in Washington, D.C. 

The study identified the relationship between community support for maintaining the basic institutional role and structure of school boards. The study revealed public support for keeping local school boards away from total control of professional educators or state officials. The study indicated that there is very little communication between local or mainstream politics, and boards exhibit a tendency to remain an isolated local membership, keeping their distance from government sources from whom they receive funding.

The Research Problem in Context

The reason that school boards are viewed in such negative ways by a cross-section of society could be the result of a variety of factors. Some of these might be factual as shown in some research, or some might be the result of perceptions.

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Metro Atlanta school districts such as Atlanta, Fulton, DeKalb, Cobb, and Gwinnett have school boards with memberships of approximately seven. Some board members are elected at-large to represent the whole district with the intention that they will not be swayed by particular interest groups. Other members are elected by specific constituencies and are responsive to such constituencies. It is possible that the members at-large may be more responsive to business interests while the constituency members may be more parochial. This may give an appearance of conflict. School board members may also come from business communities and, hence, be unconcerned about the performance of lower social class groups. They may be unwilling to vote for funds which will tax business and higher income groups.

Each school board appoints a superintendent to function as the day to day executive officer. The selection of the superintendent might reflect the interest of board members, but there is also the chance for conflict here. The school system provides for education of children K through 12, however, there is variation in test scores along the lines of social class differences. Parents alone do not elect board members. If parents alone did, there is a chance that they would elect members who would be sympathetic to their cause. Because of the method of selection and the diversity in interests of school board members, it is possible that the operating structures of the board may vary, and that such
operating structures could significantly affect the effectiveness of school boards.

**The Research Problem**

From media reports and research, it would appear that there are variations in the operating structures of school boards and that these affect board members' behavior, board goals and planning techniques. It is the intention of this study to examine how citizens view selected methods of board operation and how they relate to board goals, board behavior, and planning techniques.

**Significance of the Study**

As we seek ways of improving the quality of education for our students, it is hoped that this study may point us in a direction wherein significant steps can be taken towards this goal. Specifically, it is hoped that:

1. The information yielded by this research will cause board members to reexamine their method of operation and the ways in which such structures affect or relate to their ability to function effectively.

   It is also hoped that:

2. Board members might use the data to see how citizens view them, and that they might modify their behavior accordingly in order to respond to the needs of their constituencies.
3. Board members might see that they could administer their own surveys to help them align their decisions with the public needs.

4. Researchers could examine the results on the selected variables in relation to other variables in the literature and determine further variables for research.

**Research Questions**

The following are the main research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between citizen perception of dominated boards and the variables (a) board goals, (b) board behavior and (c) board planning?

2. Is there a relationship between citizen perception of fragmented boards and the variables (a) board goals, (b) board behavior and (c) board planning?

3. Is there a relationship between citizen perception of consensus boards and the variables (a) board goals, (b) board behavior and (c) board planning?

4. Is there a relationship between citizen perception of passive boards and the variables (a) board goals, (b) board behavior and (c) board planning?

**Summary**

This chapter gave an overview of some public concerns about school boards. Recently, nationwide publication of journal articles and media news have cited incidents of school board responsiveness or the lack of responsiveness based on
the demand of their local constituents advocating more student achievement and lower dropout rates.

The historical role of school boards provides a pictorial legacy of past leadership behavior in communities that created committees for the purpose of exercising direct control over schools. This pictorial legacy was a blueprint of the (1) school board structure; (2) leadership structure; (3) administrative structure, (4) political behavior, and (5) the influence of business structure.

Current trends and some declining conditions that are disturbing to the taxpayers were discussed. The statement and evaluation of the problem, purpose and significance of the study were also presented.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The research literature was reviewed in relation to the variables under consideration. It should be noted, however, that there are very few extensive studies of school boards. The Institute of Education Leadership’s 1986 study was among the first since the late 1960s focusing explicitly on boards.¹ The contemporary body of literature on school boards is mostly composed of journal articles, chapters in a few books, doctoral theses, and media articles. This researcher was unable to find controlled research studies that isolate variables in governance behaviors and assess impact on degrees of success in specific education reforms.²

Influences on Board Policy, Goals and Planning

Carpenter, DeeDee and Currier³ examined superintendents’ perceptions of their influence on the school boards’ roles in agenda-setting in education policy and decision making. The researchers used the same interview guide over a two-month period to interview 30 Minnesota superintendents about their perceptions in relation to

¹Danzberger, School Boards: Strengthening Grass Roots Leadership.


³Carpenter, DeeDee, and Currier, Superintendents’ Perception on School Board Roles and Education Policy and Decision Making, 1987, ERIC, ED 298 186.
environmental contexts, group demands, issues control, and district enrollment size. The results indicated that the majority of superintendents perceived their political influence as responsible "gatekeepers". The superintendents also saw 10 major themes in agenda setting, noting that agenda setting (1) legitimizes districts' and boards' authority, (2) fosters school governance in a political system, and (3) structures district ideology. The superintendent’s influence was based on expertise. Perceived relationships between role and influence varied by district size. Gatekeeping and informed influence characterized superintendents from medium-size districts; democratic perceptions and strategic influence typify those from large districts. This suggests school operating structure is influenced by the size of the school district according to rural, suburban and urban. These characteristics reflect potential satisfaction or dissatisfaction among employees in various school districts.

Banach, Banach and Cassidy conducted two national studies at St. Clair Intermediate School District and the Illinois Association of School Boards. The purpose of the surveys was to determine board presidents' and superintendents' opinions relative to the common characteristics of winning board teams. They identified 24

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values as being relevant to effective organizations. Survey instruments were mailed to 600 randomly selected school board presidents and 600 randomly selected superintendents in 50 states. The researchers found that (1) on a scale of one (low) to ten (high), respondents said school boards ranked above 8 in being careful with exercising moral integrity and treating others as equals; (2) a "willingness to try new things" got only a 5.8 rating from the board presidents surveyed; (3) board members are less sure of their roles today than they were five years ago; (4) superintendents identified personal agendas advanced by individual board members as the leading inhibitor of board effectiveness; and (5) "Inadequate Finances" (26%) and "governmental mandates" (13%) were the most frequently cited frustrations of school board members.5 "Maintaining relations with board members" was identified as the least favorite part of the superintendency.6

Participants in the study also ranked school boards against values which characterize high performing organizations. Using a scale of zero (low) to ten (high) board presidents assigned the highest ratings to school boards in the areas of moral integrity (8.7), the extent to which board members were conservative and careful in their spending (8.5), and the extent to which board members treated others as equals (8.4). The lowest ratings were given to the tendency

5Ibid.

6Ibid.
of board members to try new things (5.8), the extent to which board members pursue personal growth, learning, and development (6.7), and board member creativity (7.1). Superintendents rated boards highest on their independence and autonomy (8.2), their fiscal conservatism (7.9), and their moral integrity (7.8). The lowest ratings assigned by superintendents were in the same areas identified by board presidents: the tendency to try new things (6.0), the extent to which board members pursue personal growth, learning, and development (6.0), and creativity (6.2).

Both board presidents and superintendents also rated their boards against eleven characteristics of effectiveness. Using the zero-to-ten scale, board presidents gave the highest rating (8.0) to leadership support"--the degree to which members of the board support the superintendent. Superintendents gave "leadership support" a 7.6 rating, the highest rating they assigned to any of the eleven characteristics."

Board presidents gave their school board colleagues the lowest rating (6.8) on the characteristic of "Political Savvy", which was defined as the "tendency not to shoot anyone--including yourself in the foot".

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7Ibid.
8Ibid.
9Ibid.
Superintendents assigned their lowest ratings (6.2 each) to the characteristics labeled "sense of togetherness" (the extent to which board members know and capitalize on one another’s strengths) and "external backing" (the level to which the board’s constituency provides support for the vision, goals, and direction of the school district).10

Further, superintendents’ influence is restricted to their area of expertise, and in most instances they see themselves as "gatekeepers". School boards are not perceived as innovative. Peers see themselves in favorable and unfavorable ways.

**Social Structure and Recruitment of Board Members**

The social structure of the community and how members of boards are recruited may explain causes of behavior once candidates are seated on the board. A recent survey conducted by the American School Board Journal and Virginia Tech in 1991, pointed out an overrepresentation of board members from backgrounds that predominantly have the general features of socioeconomical elites. The study included a random sample of 4,841 school board members who subscribe to the American School Board Journal. A population total of 1,305 or 27 percent responded.11 This study suggests that the wealth and power will perhaps create intra board struggle among decision makers.

10Ibid.

makers based on extent of school members’ diverse campaign issues.

A previous study was conducted in February 1987 by the American School Board Journal and Virginia Tech. The study examined the recruitment and selection process of school board members and the representative nature of board service. The subjects were randomly selected from a population of 4,493. Researchers found (1) that subjects anticipating a position on the board campaign on a nonpartisan platform; (2) those candidates anticipating board membership campaign on a single issue; (3) the majority of candidates aspiring for a board position were inspired by friends and family, instead of by political affiliations; and (4) a preponderance of subjects are elected or appointed at-large instead of in a small demographic location.

Counts described basically the same socioeconomic characteristics. His study revealed evidence which showed that the general public was screened out of an opportunity to participate as a candidate for school boards. Counts examined recruitment as it relates to the socio-background of board members. He gathered data that showed that the overwhelming majority of board members across the United States during that period.

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time were chosen from upper status. He found that the school board members and formal decision makers were chosen from business executives and professionals and that this recruitment pattern of higher age, upper class and ethnic groups of higher status indicates a selection based on "class bias". The researcher concluded that it was not a good democratic situation because a large number of businessmen and professionals of higher status would favor educational programs that would protect the upper class while ignoring the working class. This suggests that background behavior such as "class bias" board members would likely dominate the allocation of educational resources and that this reflects the nature of school board operating structure and controversial issues of reform.

**Board Roles and Perceptions**

Stapley\(^{14}\) reported that effective behavior was characteristic of higher educated board members. He, with the assistance of his students, conducted a study to find evidence to support effective or ineffective board behavior. Stapley tried to determine the kinds of board member behavior that caused positive or negative impact upon the decision making outcome or on the students outcome. The research consisted of

\(^{14}\)M. E. Stapley, *School Board Studies, Chicago Board Members* (Chicago, IL: Midwest Administrative Center, University of Chicago, 1957).

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six major categories which focused on the skills and knowledge necessary for positive boardmanship:

1. The principles of group unity versus self interest on the part of an individual.
2. Utilizing planning techniques, current knowledge and strategies, and policy making activities.
3. Understanding board/staff roles and a desire to follow-up the administering of policies.
4. Positive and productive personal relationships.
5. Positive and successful relationships in staff and group relations.
6. Demonstrated valor in the face of external pressures and cohesive strategies.\(^{15}\)

The findings indicated that the majority of effective behaviors were located in categories 2 and 5, as compared to three-fourths or ineffective behaviors in categories 1 and 3.

The research suggested that (1) the areas to evaluate board members' behavior did not take into account that individuals who were political candidates were chosen to represent community concerns; (2) the research ignored the function of the board supervision process; (3) the methodology has certain limitations regarding the personal value system of the subjects' perceptions how they demonstrated their preferences according to contemporary judgements of values held by subjects' on certain value items. The research did

\(^{15}\text{Ibid.}\)
not clearly determine factual consequences of the subjects' behaviors; therefore, it did not point out specific outcomes in terms of effective or ineffective behaviors. Stapley's study sensitized board members to the "do's and don'ts", and provoked a speculation as to whether probable behavioral outcomes can be predicted. He concluded that advanced educated board members had a tendency to act in a more effective manner. This study did not state a direct cause of board members' effective or ineffective behaviors; however, it did point out the possibility that board members are motivated because of political and/or personal gains.

In comparison to Stapley's findings, Neal Gross,¹⁶ a professor at Harvard, concluded in a survey of school boards and superintendents in the State of Massachusetts that motivation factors such as "good" or "bad" characteristics were not related to educational background, occupation, and income. He attempted to determine a measure of behavior. The sample included 508 school board members, and 105 superintendents from Massachusetts.

Gross's methods used the judgement of superintendents to determine the degree to which boards adhered to professional standards and their motivational forces for civic duty. He defended the use of superintendents' judgement versus board members' judgements because he thought that

superintendents were in positions to be more objective in their viewpoint rather than board members' version of motivations for civic duty.\textsuperscript{17}

Another point of rationale was that superintendents had a close view of board members to determine actual behavior versus legitimate motivational forces. The researcher found that if only changes brought about by improving school board behaviors were for the benefit of the superintendent, they would probably have positive consequences for public education in general.\textsuperscript{18} Secondly, that one of the most serious problems of the public schools in many communities may be the irresponsibility or ineffective behavior of their school boards.\textsuperscript{19} Gross found evidence to stress that school communities (districts) should elect candidates who have the "right" motivations to serve with a reasonable sense of civic duty rather than an overwhelming sense of using the position for personal experience to gain clout or to place emphasis on pro interest groups. The researcher found that certain areas of board functioning which dissatisfied a large number of board members was the lack of information about the school and educational practices. Gross and other researchers tried to determine the divisions of labor and various functions of decision making among school board members (governing vs.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 45.
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 80.
administering). Gross determined that there was potential conflict based on disagreement among and between superintendent and board members. Gross stated, "board members and superintendents each assigned greater responsibility to their own position than to the other, and each group sensed different obligations to the community and to working within the chain of command".20

Gross and Stapley's findings suggest that motivational factors such as "good" or "bad", "effective" or "ineffective" board behaviors are characteristics that perhaps potential perceptions reflect upon board operating structure as the source of harmony or disharmony which impact decision making.

**Governance/Decision Making**

Kerr21 conducted research into the socialization process of school board members. The research provided data that determined the aspects of the recruitment process which influence inputs, outputs and outcomes of decision making. Kerr studied two suburban school districts where he sought to reveal variables of events and internal structure of school boards that intervened between the socioeconomic background of their members and their attitudes and behavior. He found that under conditions that are not uncommon, school boards demonstrated the functions of legitimating the policies of the

20Ibid., 83.

school system to the community, rather than representing the community to the school.

The research by Kerr\textsuperscript{22} separated features of urban boards and other school systems. The purpose of the research was to examine behavioral characteristics of recruitment and socialization. The research model was constructed to point out those inherent features of relations among variables of school systems that encourage board members to accept superintendents definitions of situations. The researcher reported that the role of legitimator of the professional decisions predominated in a large district, compared to the role of community the representative appeared often in small districts.

Zeigler and Jennings\textsuperscript{23} examined linkages and multiple factors that may affect decision making in school systems. They attempted to determine differences among school systems in different locations. They suggested theoretical propositions that the more diverse social context (situations) of the city generates more potential conflict over school decisions, more likely placing the board in opposition to the superintendent, but because of its own divisiveness, it is less likely to overcome her or him.

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid.

Dissatisfaction and Diversity

Wirt found the forces generating these distinctions. It is argued that it arose from the phenomenon of social diversity. A prime attribute of a large city is its diversity in social, economic and political terms. Wirt found that it is the extent of the diversity in different locations that generated the potential bases for the kind and volume of demands that are generated from a more diverse, social structure with its greater variety of preference in public policies.

Zeigler and Jennings in 1974 conducted a study to determine the relationship between board turnover, superintendent departure and policy change. They found that a shakeup on the board frequently preceded a change (often involuntary) in superintendency. The leader of the social district, the superintendent supporters and opponents became the focal point of the newspaper or school district conflict. Dissatisfaction is expressed electorally by removing the superintendent’s supporters, creating a new electoral climate and later leading to new district policies. Consequently, the superintendent and supporters may win through the electoral process.

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25Zeigler and Jennings, Governing American Schools.
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\textsuperscript{25}Zeigler and Jennings, \textit{Governing American Schools}.
Cronin\textsuperscript{26} studied aspects of school superintendent and big city politics. The researcher found the high involuntary turnover rate of superintendents in some districts indicate that boards are not merely passive pawns in the hands of superintendents.

Zeigler and Jennings\textsuperscript{27} published a book entitled \textit{Governing American Schools}. In their book, they tried to determine ideological differences between board superintendents and local citizens. The researchers found that compared to board members, superintendents are less likely to be in agreement with district population. In terms of district agenda regarding specific issues, the agreement between boards and local population is usually higher than that between superintendents and those same constituents.

Trotter and Downey\textsuperscript{28} discussed the influence of female board members, accountability, and parental pressure on school boards in an article entitled, "Many Superintendents Privately Contend School Board Meddling". The authors revealed that school board members refuse to honor the elusive line separating governance and management, policy and administration.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26}J. M. Cronin, \textit{The Control of Urban Schools} (New York: Free Press, 1973).
\item \textsuperscript{27}Zeigler and Jennings, \textit{Governing American Schools}.
\item \textsuperscript{28}A. Trotter and G. W. Downey, "Many Superintendents Privately Contend School Board 'Meddling' Is More Likely It," \textit{American School Board Journal} 176, no. 6 (1989): 21-25.
\end{itemize}
Summary

In summary, the review of the literature was conducted to provide a framework for the study. The literature focused on citizens' perceptions of school board behavior, board goals and board planning. There has been some interest and investigation into board roles and citizens' perceptions of school board structure, particularly the decision making structure and political behavior.

Chapter II discussed evidence by the researchers that the first sign of dissatisfaction is the turnover rate of superintendents. The evidence also pointed to signs of urban diversity by the inordinate amount of disharmony as perceived by taxpayer responses. In contrast, each researcher's study, in each separate section of the literature review, concurred that the perception of the citizen responses were approximately similar in behavior.
CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It would appear that there are variations in the composition of board members that might influence board operating structure, goals, planning, and board behavior. These variations no doubt are observed by citizens, however the variations observed might be influenced by the citizens' demographic backgrounds among other factors. The intention of this study, however, was to examine how citizens view the boards' operating structure as it relates to board goals, planning techniques, and behavior.

Definition of Variables

Board operating structure is measured in terms of the variables dominant board, fragmented board, consensus building board and passive board.

Dominant board is defined as the extent to which citizens rate one or two members to be making real decisions of the board.

Fragmented board is defined as the extent to which citizens rate board members as argumentative or pushing for their own constituencies interests.

Consensus building board is defined as the extent to which citizens rate board members as making compromises and minimizing differences among themselves.
Passive board is defined as the extent to which citizens see board members as inactive and non-persistent and allowing the superintendent to make decisions.

Board goals are defined as the extent to which citizens rate board members as showing from their behaviors and policies that they genuinely want students of varying abilities to achieve and or to make gains from their previous performances.

Board behavior is defined as the extent to which citizens feel they are proud of board members' cooperative behaviors, achievements, understanding and motivation of different social groups, and cultural sensitivity as shown in their policy formation.

Board planning is defined as the extent to which citizens see the board members as examining causes for low student performance, selecting programs/curricula to counteract the causes, selecting cost effective programs, evaluating programs, revising programs based on evaluation.

Rationale for Selection of Variables

Respondents satisfaction with board goals and planning was selected as a variable because several reforms in education referred to this need. If respondents perceived the boards as meeting their goals and utilizing planning techniques, it was expected that they would also see the boards as cohesive. The respondents' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with dominated board, fragmented board,
consensus board and passive board were selected variables because of (1) political influences, (2) the structure of decision making methods, and (3) several reform efforts referred to the need. If respondents perceived the school boards as dominated and fragmented in their behavior, it was expected that they would also see dominated by a few members as overbearing and fragmented board is conflictual. Both would be counterproductive influences affecting variables such as board goal, board planning, and board behavior. If respondents perceived consensus board and passive board as diverse behaviors, it was expected that they would see the board as cohesive in terms of structure, yet not cohesive in their decision making behaviors. In general, if the perceptions are pervasive, it would not be expected that the respondents' perceptions would be influenced by their demographic characteristics, although it would be expected that additional qualifications among the black college population might influence their perceptions significantly. The demographics of the respondents are not included as part of the theoretical framework or as selected variables. Figure 1 sets out a diagrammatic representation of this research.
Hypotheses

The correlation coefficients for the variables were analyzed in relation to the following hypotheses.

\( H_{01} \): There is no significant relationship between dominated board and the variables (a) board goal, (b) board planning, and (c) board behavior.

\( H_{02} \): There is no significant relationship between fragmented board and the variables (a) board goal, (b) board planning, and (c) board behavior.

\( H_{03} \): There is no significant relationship between consensus board and the variables (a) board goal, (b) board planning, and (c) board behavior.

\( H_{04} \): There is no significant relationship between passive board and the variables (a) board goal, (b) board planning, and (c) board behavior.

Limitations

The study was limited to the parameters of the variables in the investigation. In some cases, the variables were represented by only one or two items. The need to keep
the questionnaire short breached measurement principles. The sample was not randomly selected, and hence, sources of error due to non-random selection of the population might influence the results. Despite efforts to balance the sample in terms of numbers in specific categories, some of the categories in these variables were over- or underrepresented. The findings of the study are, therefore, limited to the investigation population.

**Summary**

Chapter Three set out the design of this study and identified the variables which interacted to compose a theoretical model. These variables suggested that there was a relationship between citizens' perception of board operating structure and the effectiveness of boards in terms of board goals, board planning and board behavior.
CHAPTER FOUR
METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research Design

The research design is a survey of opinions of a selected population in Metro Atlanta. This study is designed to investigate the relationship between board operating structure in terms of dominant board, fragmented board, consensus board, passive board, and board goal, board behavior and board planning.

Description of the Setting

This study was conducted among taxpaying citizens in selected Metro Atlanta districts. Respondents were predominately black and were surveyed at educational institutions, offices and business places.

The key demographic variables are education level and school districts. At least one category in each case is over or under represented, therefore, although the selection of the demographic variables are intended to compensate for the lack of a random sample, the over- or underrepresentation of a category in a variable presents a limitation on the findings.

The metropolitan Atlanta area used in this study geographically comprise the following school districts and counties: (1) Atlanta, (2) Cobb, (3) DeKalb, (4) Fulton, and (5) Gwinnett. The counties represent central city and suburban school districts. The ethnic characteristics are
Black, White and Immigrant. The economic characteristics range from poor to wealthy families. The occupational distribution of the population are (1) white collar, (2) blue collar, and (3) service workers.

**Sampling Procedures**

The sample was not random, but selected on the basis of varying characteristics as follows:

(1) The citizen respondents received the questionnaire in the hair salons, medical doctors' office and tailoring shops by permission of the owners.

(2) A librarian dispersed and collected surveys in selected small elementary schools.

(3) Citizen groups in the Y.M.C.A. volunteered after attending various activities at this site.

(4) Eleven academic classes were randomly selected among other classes available. Six of ten academic classes of graduate students volunteered responses during a personalized visitation by the researcher. Other graduate classes received questionnaires via the class instructor who was conducting different classes within the graduate School of Education. Total population was N = 166.

A one sentence instruction at the top of the first page of the questionnaire in the same format was used to distinguish between the teachers, general respondents and doctoral students.
**Statistical Application**

The statistical tool that was used to analyze the data was the Pearson Correlation analysis. The Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted to analyze relationships among the selected variables at the established level of significance of .05.

**Working With Human Subjects**

The questionnaire circulated asked each classroom instructor for permission to allow graduate students the opportunity to participate by completing the questionnaire. Citizen respondents participated in a volunteer setting based on permission of owners. Each participant such as classroom instructor, business owner, school personnel and respondents subjects were assured that their response to the survey would not identify them personally. The survey instrument does not provide areas for individuals or group identification.

The personalization method of face-to-face interaction with each classroom instructor and business owner was considered appropriate strategy.

**Description of the Instrument**

The instrument for collection of data is a questionnaire (see Appendix A) designed to cover the dimensions of each variable as follows:

(1) School Board Structure

   (a) Domnated board (items 17-18)
(b) Fragmented board (items 19-20)
(c) Consensus board (items 21-22)
(d) Passive board (items 23-24)
(e) Superintendent control (items 25-29)

(2) Board Goals
(a) Goals for student achievement (items 1-4)

(3) School Board Behavior:
(a) Cooperative behavior (items 5-11)

(4) Board Planning (items 12-16)

(5) Demographic Variables of Respondents such as:
(a) Education level (item 25)
(b) School district (item 30).

Content Validity

Content validity was obtained by defining the variables as stated in the theoretical framework, and developing items to match each definition. The items were tested for face validity on a group of policy education students (N=14) and experts in the field of educational research and school governance.

Data Collection Procedures

The academic classes in the School of Education involved 12 classes of volunteer graduate students. The citizen participants received questionnaire located in different buildings such as (1) Y.M.C.A., (2) medical doctors offices, (3) selected small elementary schools, (4) hair
salons, and (5) clothing tailoring shops. Each subject received a three page questionnaire containing only research questions. Each subject was asked to answer questions relating to board goals, board behavior, and board planning.

**Summary**

The research design chapter discussed the nature and development of the survey questionnaire. It also presented information impacting the scientific administration of the study. A description of the setting, sampling procedures, working with human subjects, description of the instruments, and data collection procedures and statistical applications were described.
CHAPTER FIVE
DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The data were analyzed to determine correlations among the selected variables.

The Pearson Correlation Analysis among the selected variables was conducted to determine significant relationships among the variables at .05 level of significance.

Results on Pearson Correlational Analyses

The results on the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis for the selected variables are listed in Table 1. The correlation coefficients for the variables as listed are analyzed in relation to the following hypotheses.

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between dominated board and the variables (a) board goal, (b) board behavior, and (c) board planning. Dominated boards have a correlation of -.0749 with board goal, -.2418 with behavior, and -.1499 with planning. Only the relationship with board behavior is significant at .05 level, and this null hypothesis is rejected; the other null hypotheses are accepted.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between fragmented board and the variables (a) board goal, (b) board behavior, and (c) board planning. Fragmented board has a correlation of -.1565 with board goal, -.3086 with board
# Table 1

**Pearson Correlations: School Board Operating Structure and Board Goals, Board Behavior and Board Planning**  
\(N = 166\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board Operating Structure</th>
<th>Board Goal</th>
<th>Board Behavior</th>
<th>Board Planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dominated Board</td>
<td>-.0749</td>
<td>-.2418*</td>
<td>-.1499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fragmented Board</td>
<td>-.1565*</td>
<td>-.3086*</td>
<td>-.2541*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Consensus Board</td>
<td>.0009</td>
<td>.2543*</td>
<td>.2298*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Passive Board</td>
<td>.1265</td>
<td>.3851*</td>
<td>.3553*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** \(p > .05.\)
behavior, \(-.2541\) with planning. The null hypothesis between fragmented board and board goal, board behavior and board planning are rejected as there is a significant relationship at the .05 level. The negative sign indicates an inverse relationship.

**H03:** There is no significant relationship between consensus board and the variables (a) board goal, (b) board behavior, and (c) board planning. Consensus board has a correlation of \(.0009\) with board goal, \(.2543\) with board behavior, \(.2298\) with planning. The null hypothesis between consensus board and board goal is accepted as there is no significant relationship at the .05 level, while the coefficient correlations are significant for board consensus with board behavior and planning. Hence, these null hypotheses are rejected.

**H04:** There is no significant relationship between passive board and the variables (a) board goal, (b) board behavior, and (c) board planning. Passive board has a correlation of \(.1265\) with board goal, \(.3851\) with board behavior, and \(.3553\) with planning. The null relationships are significant at the .05 level for passive board with board behavior and planning. Hence, these null hypotheses are rejected.

Overall, respondents see fragmented board as negative for board goal, board behavior and systematic planning, while they see positive relationship for board consensus and passive
is no significant relationship between consensus board, passive board and board goal.

Summary

The Pearson Correlation Analysis among the selected variables indicated that:

(a) When respondents see the school board as planning and cooperative in terms of the clients's needs, they also see the board as reaching its goal.

(b) Respondents see fragmented boards as showing a negative relationship with regard to board goals, board behavior and systematic planning, while they see a positive relationship for consensus board and passive board with regard to board behavior and planning. There is no significant relationship between consensus board and passive board with board goals.
CHAPTER SIX
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined citizens' perception of methods of board operating structure and their relationship to board goals, board behavior, and board planning.

One hundred sixty-six subjects made up of citizens of various demographic backgrounds in the urban metropolitan area of Atlanta, Georgia comprised the sample. A survey was designed to collect information with respect to perceptions of subjects regarding the different variables. The instrument was administered to students enrolled in the spring and summer graduate classes at Clark Atlanta University and citizens in urban city areas.

The data obtained from the instrument were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Technique.

Summary of Findings

The following are Pearson Correlation results for the correlates of board operating structures:

1. The correlation coefficient of -0.0749 indicates no significant relationship between dominant board and board goal at the .05 level.

2. The correlation coefficient of -0.2418 indicates a negative significant relationship between dominant board and board behavior at the .05 level.
3. The correlation coefficient of -.1499 indicates no significant relationship between the dominant board and board planning at the .05 level.

4. The correlation coefficient of -.1565 indicates a negative significant relationship between fragmented board and board goal at the .05 level.

5. The correlation coefficient of -.3086 indicates a negative significant relationship between fragmented board and board behavior at the .05 level.

6. The correlation coefficient of -.2541 indicates a negative significant relationship between fragmented board and board planning at the .05 level.

7. The correlation coefficient of .0009 indicates no significant relationship between consensus board and board goal at the .05 level.

8. The correlation coefficient of .2543 indicates a significant relationship between consensus board and board behavior at the .05 level.

9. The correlation coefficient of .2298 indicates a significant relationship between consensus board and board planning at the .05 level.

10. The correlation coefficient of .1265 indicates no significant relationship between passive board and board goal at the .05 level.
11. The correlation coefficient of .3851 indicates a significant relationship between passive board and board behavior at the .05 level.

12. The correlation coefficient of .3553 indicates a significant relationship between passive board and board planning at the .05 level.

Conclusions

This study examined citizens' perceptions of school boards' goal, board behaviors, and planning techniques as they relate to methods of board operating structure. Willey¹ reported there is a dearth of school board training materials and that school boards are not the subject of research efforts.

Very little research has been done on the dynamics of school boards, thus, this qualitative study was undertaken. The subjects were students enrolled in graduate classes and citizens in the metro Atlanta area. Sources of data derived from a selected population using a questionnaire. Four general research questions emerged and some general conclusions were drawn from the analyses.

1. The correlation coefficient of -.0749 between dominant board and board goal resulted in the null hypothesis

being accepted as data revealed no significant relationship at the .05 level. This suggests that whether or not a board is dominated by a few members does not affect goal attainment efforts by the board.

2. The correlation coefficient of -.2418 resulted in the null hypothesis being rejected as the data revealed a significant negative relationship at the .05 level between dominant board and board behavior. This suggests the board behavior is unlikely to be cooperative and more likely to be dominated.

3. The correlation coefficient of -.1499 resulted in the null hypothesis being accepted as the data revealed a negative relationship at the .05 level between dominant board and board planning. This suggests that null hypothesis is accepted.

4. The correlation coefficient of -.1565 resulted in the null hypothesis being rejected as the data revealed a significant negative relationship at the .05 level between fragmented board and board goal. This suggests that it is unlikely fragmented boards achieve board goals.

5. The correlation coefficient of -.3086 resulted in the null hypothesis being rejected as the data revealed a negative significant relationship at the .05 level between fragmented board and board behavior. This suggests that fragmented boards are more likely to be uncooperative.
6. The correlation coefficient of -.2541 resulted in the null hypothesis being rejected as the data revealed a negative significant relationship at the .05 level between fragmented board and board planning. This suggests that a fragmented board is more unlikely to participate in planning activities.

7. The correlation coefficient of .0009 resulted in the null hypothesis being accepted as the data revealed no significant relationship at the .05 level between consensus board and board goal. This suggests that consensus boards do not significantly affect board goal attainment.

8. The correlation coefficient of .2543 resulted in the null hypothesis being rejected as the data revealed a significant relationship at the .05 level between consensus board and board behavior. This suggests that consensus boards tend to increase cooperation, whereas if it is not a consensus board there is less likelihood of having cooperative behavior.

9. The correlation coefficient of .2298 resulted in the null hypothesis being rejected as the data revealed a significant relationship at the .05 level between consensus board and board planning. This suggests consensus boards are more likely to participate in planning.

10. The correlation coefficient of .1265 resulted in the null hypothesis being accepted as the data revealed no significant relationship at the .05 level between passive board and board goal.
11. The correlation coefficient of .3851 resulted in the null hypothesis being rejected as the data revealed a significant relationship at the .05 level between passive board and board behavior. This suggests that passive board members are more likely to be non-resistant and allow the others to make decisions. They would also tend to be inactive and follow while others make decisions.

12. The correlation coefficient of .3553 resulted in the null hypothesis being rejected as the data revealed a significant relationship at the .05 level between passive board and board planning. This suggests that passive boards are less likely to participate in planning. Therefore, the more passive the board is the less likely they will be inclined to participate in planning activities.

Implications

In Table 1, dominated board is inversely related to board behavior. This means that when the citizens see the board as dominated, they also see the board behavior as less positive in behavior. When the board is seen by the citizens as fragmented, the citizens also see the board as both less positive in board behavior and board planning. However, when the citizens see the board as consensus oriented and even passive, they also see the board behavior and board planning as positive.

The implications of the above findings are: (1) that board members try to be less dominated or less fragmented in
order to be seen positively in behavior and planning by the citizens; (2) that the board can work towards consensus in order to be seen as positive; (3) that if the board cannot achieve consensus, then it is better for them to be passive in order to be seen as positive in behavior and planning.

Passive boards, according to the study data, revealed a significant relationship with board behavior and board planning. This implies that a passive board relies on the superintendents and political influence in making decisions. Consequently, the effect of the pressures from state or local businesses, special interest groups as well as personal interests can influence the effectiveness of such a board. This is not necessarily always damaging as sometimes these influential persons are more knowledgeable about the matter at hand. On the other hand, however, this influence can be damaging depending on the basis for such influence.

Recommendations

Very little research has been done on school boards because of the scarcity of available research studies and the rarity of research on governance behaviors. One general recommendation appears appropriate: research focused on urban school boards and communities can promote new knowledge, particularly if the major emphasis examined unique characteristics associated with urban school demographics or asking citizens the degree to which school board training is important.
During the survey of this survey one specific suggestion evolved. If the school boards are concerned about how they are perceived in the community, which is really its base, then board members must either improve their performance or change how it is perceived. Because if the board is doing an excellent job and the public perceived it this way then the public is wrong. On the other hand, if the public perceived this because of something they have seen in their performance that is a reality, then the school board has a long way to go in its performance.

Based on the findings and conclusions the following recommendations are:

(1) School boards must do a better job in their performance or in their public relations in an effort to reveal to the community its duties and responsibilities.

(2) School boards should create greater community involvement via the planning process.

(3) School boards should provide an opportunity for citizens to view a cohesive process.

(4) School boards should hire a consultant to the board for the purpose of conflict resolution.

(5) School boards should conduct planning activities among themselves to create a more positive condition of behavior.
Dear Colleague,

We are trying to estimate how citizens feel about their respective school boards. The data will be used as a teaching and learning exercise. Please complete the questionnaire by choosing a response for each item:

SA=Strongly Agree  A=Agree  U=Uncertain  D=Disagree  SD=Strongly Disagree

A. As a citizen, I am satisfied that my school district board members have shown by their policies and behaviors that they genuinely

Circle One Response

1. Wanted students who had low grades the previous year to make significant gains.  

   SA  A  U  D  SD

2. Wanted at-risk students to make significant gains.  

   SA  A  U  D  SD

3. Wanted average ability students to make significant gains.  

   SA  A  U  D  SD

4. Wanted overall test scores of district to improve significantly.  

   SA  A  U  D  SD

B. My school district board members, by their behaviors and policies, have

5. Made me proud of their cooperative efforts.  

   SA  A  U  D  SD

6. Made me proud of their achievements.  

   SA  A  U  D  SD
7. Made me proud of the way they have represented the whole school system.

8. Showed me, that they facilitate my role as a citizen.

9. Showed me that they are highly motivated about their work.

10. Showed me that they understand the educational aspirations of lower class parents.

11. Showed me they understand cultural issues of different ethnic or socio-economic groups.

C. From my perception of the board's policies and what I have heard or observed in the implementation of policies, I feel the school board

12. Has evaluated the functioning of current programs in schools.

13. Uses the results of evaluation to improve implementation of programs.


15. Has provided leadership in selection of curricula/programs to counteract the causes of student low performance.

16. Selects programs that cost less than alternative methods for solving the same problem.

D. From my perception or what I have heard or observed about how the school board debates/discusses issues, I feel

17. One or two members dominate meetings.
18. A few members make the real decisions.  
SA A U D SD

19. Members are argumentative and a picture of a fragmented groups.  
SA A U D SD

20. Different members of the school board tend to push their constituencies’ positions without looking at general good.  
SA A U D SD

SA A U D SD

22. The board presents view that there is not much difference of opinion among members.  
SA A U D SD

23. Members are passive and follow the superintendent’s to make major decisions.  
SA A U D SD

24. Members tend to rely on the superintendent to make major decisions.  
SA A U D SD

E. Educational Background (Circle One)

25. Education: BA/BS  MA/MS  EdS

26. Doctorate or Doctoral Program

F. Number of years as a taxpayer (circle one)

27. 1-3 yrs.  4-6 yrs.  7-9 yrs.  10-12 yrs.  13 or more yrs.

G. Status (circle one)

28. Classroom Teacher  Building Level Administrator  Central Office Administrator  Other

H. School Type (circle one)

29. Elementary  Secondary

30. Atlanta  Cobb  DeKalb  Fulton  Gwinnett  Other


Stapley, M. E. School Board Studies, Chicago Board Members. Chicago: Midwest Administrative Center, University of Chicago, 1957.


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