

Organizational Perspectives

Before attempting to determine the implications of faculty bargaining for the administration of colleges and universities, it is essential to recognize the special qualities these institutions possess. Institutions of higher education are unique as organizations; their structure, their organizational goals, and the characteristics of their employees are notably different from business or industrial organizations. The dynamics of power and influence relationships within colleges and universities affect and are affected by the collective bargaining relationship. Examining some of the characteristics of these organizations, apart from their role in the bargaining relationship, provides a foundation for subsequent examination of the implications of faculty bargaining for administering an institution of higher education.

Complexity of Structure

Institutions of higher education are complex organizations (Thompson 1967), but this factor in itself does not distinguish them from other organizations. The technology employed by a college is "intensive," for its professional employees select and combine the "production" techniques to be used on the basis of their judgment about the requirements of the task or problem to be addressed (Thompson, p. 17). In addition to their complexity, institutions of higher education are "loosely coupled" systems (Meyer 1975). Faculty are not closely supervised, and enjoy considerable autonomy in determining course content and selecting the manner of teaching they will employ. The amount of time outside the classroom spent on professional duties is normally left to the faculty's discretion (Platt and Parsons 1968). Specialists usually cluster within a department or discipline, and develop their own criteria for monitoring their "product" and evaluating the performance of their colleagues. Clark cited specialization by discipline as a "fracturing" device that limits participation in institution-wide activities and increases the complexity of educational organizations. As a result of the diversity within higher education institutions, "the formal structure in itself is bound to be full of overlap, gap, and contradiction. It becomes somewhat like a confederation of tribes that have wandered into the same campground" (Clark 1968, p. 18). Baldrige et al. (1977) confirmed that increasing size and com-

plexity of colleges and universities appear to reinforce the professional autonomy of faculty.

In a similar vein, Cohen and March have described institutions of higher education as "organized anarchies." They cite problematic goals, unclear technology, and fluid participation of organizational personnel as evidence of the chaos within these organizations (1974, pp. 2-3). These features of colleges and universities complicate the decisionmaking process, for the amount of interest and participation that any particular issue may generate is unpredictable. Cohen and March conclude that standard management tools and procedures are inappropriate and inadequate to deal with "organized anarchies" (p. 4).

Despite the specialized nature of their technology, institutions of higher education as a whole are highly susceptible to pressures from the environment. Their non-profit status causes great dependence on external support. Demand for higher education fluctuates, affecting the numbers of students and the types of educational programs in which they choose to enroll. Regulations promulgated by state and federal governments affect decisions on hiring practices, admission criteria, and building design. Funding sources, both public and private, must be courted. Market conditions influence the number of faculty available to teach, with concomitant impacts on personnel policies. The health or survival of the institution may depend on its ability to adapt to fluctuations in its environment (Terreberry 1968). This question of flexibility and adaptability will have relevance to a later discussion of collective bargaining and organizational change.

Professional Employees

Added to the structural and organizational complexity of colleges and universities is a second factor that may have even more relevance for individuals attempting to manage these institutions. The primary "employees" of these organizations, the faculty, are professionals, a term that implies specialized knowledge or expertise, long training, and a set of norms developed during this training (Blau 1964). Professional norms include the desire for autonomy over their work, evaluation by disciplinary peers, control over entrance to the profession and to the colleague group, and participation in any decision concerning matters of academic policy, personnel policy, or other areas affecting faculty welfare (Epstein 1974).

Yet faculty must function within colleges and universities which are, to some degree, bureaucratic. Although these organizations may not exhibit all of the characteristics of a pure bureaucracy described

by Weber (1947), enough bureaucratic features are present to create conflict with professionals who resist being controlled by individuals outside their specialized discipline (Stroup 1966). Lay boards of trustees have formal, legal, and fiduciary responsibility for the performance of the institution. Much of this responsibility may be delegated to administrators and some also to faculty, but final accountability for institutional performance remains with the trustees (Wollett 1975). This responsibility requires a central authority that coordinates activities of the faculty, allocates resources, and reviews decisions made at lower levels of the hierarchy (Lewis and Ryan 1977). Often, organizational goals collide with the orientation of faculty professionals (Etzioni 1964), especially where resources are scarce. In a bureaucracy, authority is derived from hierarchical position and role, while a professional's authority results from specialized knowledge and the respect of disciplinary peers (Scott 1966).

The conflict engendered by the presence of professionals in a bureaucratic organization is usually embodied in a power struggle. Blau conceptualized power as an exchange process between the supplier and the consumer of a good or service, with corresponding dependency relationships between both individuals (1964). Power relations within colleges and universities involve the exchange of professional services (e.g., teaching, research, and service) for organizational rewards such as salary, tenure, travel, research funds, or other benefits (Epstein 1974). Professionals develop expectations for these rewards during their training, and these expectations act as the incentive to "make the greater investments needed to become a professional" (Blau 1964, p. 161). When demand for faculty is low (as with the depressed academic job market, which began declining in the early 1970's), rewards lessen and militancy may ensue (Blau, p. 161). Corwin found, in studies of teacher unionization in elementary and secondary schools, that inconsistencies between faculty expectations for authority and their actual power led to militancy and subsequent union organization (1970). Before unionization, even on the most prestigious campuses, the amount and scope of faculty autonomy was rarely formalized between the administration and the faculty, while faculty senates and other policy groups were often merely "advisory" (Foote, Mayer et al. 1968).

Researchers and other writers have tended to agree that the authority to make decisions on academic campuses should be shared between faculty and administrators (Millett 1962; Kerr 1963; McConnell and Mortimer 1971; and numerous others). Yet little agreement exists as

to the way decisionmaking authority is divided, how decisions are made in colleges and universities, and the propriety of allocating certain decision areas to specific individuals or groups. Differences among institutions on the basis of size, type of control, mission, and institutional history also influence the manner by which decisions are made (Begin 1973a).

The area of decision authority that faculty probably value most highly and guard most jealously is control over evaluation and personnel recommendations. Dornbusch and Scott suggested that the power to evaluate an individual's performance was a control mechanism in any organization (1975, pp. 198, 201). The cardinal element of a faculty member's value system is peer evaluation (Blau 1973; Ladd and Lipset 1975), which includes the authority to determine evaluation criteria, procedures used for peer evaluation, and standards of performance. Faculty authority to evaluate their peers has been threatened during the past decade by tight budgets, increased centralization of policymaking by state and system education offices, and a decline in student enrollments. Faculty have resisted the erosion of their former power, and many have turned to unionization to conserve, reestablish, or strengthen their authority to evaluate their colleagues.

The foregoing discussion presumes widespread faculty authority to evaluate their peers prior to the onset of collective bargaining. In actuality, this power was not present on some campuses, and existed in varying degrees on others. Parsons and Platt studied power and influence in academic decisionmaking in institutions of varying structural and quality types, and found considerable differences in faculty power. Faculty at large or high-quality institutions made many decisions and influenced many more, while faculty at smaller institutions (such as private colleges and public teachers' colleges) had little power to make decisions and less ability to influence the administrators and trustees who wielded most of the decision power (1968).³ Research conducted on faculty autonomy by Baldridge et al. (1973) confirmed that greater institutional size and complexity tend to enhance faculty autonomy.

³ The lack of group power of faculty did not limit the power of faculty members as individuals to influence decisionmaking. Indeed, individual faculty members often influenced decisions made by chairpersons, deans, and central-level administrators. However, this "power" was informal and idiosyncratic to the particular individuals involved in decisionmaking (cf. Stroup 1966; Dressel et al. 1970).

Political Processes on Campuses

Irrespective of the size, structure, or quality of a college or university, political processes occur that resemble those in other types of organizations and in society at large. Baldrige described governance within institutions of higher education as a political process, dominated by interest groups that attempt to influence decisionmaking by pressuring policymakers and forming veto groups (1971). But despite faculty pressure for the right to participate in decisionmaking, many faculty members have refused to participate when given the opportunity (March 1966; Dykes 1968; Clark 1968; Thomas 1976). Milbrath explained that this behavior is typical of democratic political systems. He wrote that in most democratic societies three levels of participation occur. The "apathetics," who comprise approximately one-third of the electorate, neither vote nor participate in political activities. Approximately 60 percent of the electorate are "spectators" who vote and discuss political issues. One to two percent are the "gladiators" who are the political activists, office holders, and actual decisionmakers (1965, p. 21). McConnell and Mortimer noted the usefulness of this model for understanding the lack of faculty participation in academic decisionmaking. The low participation rate also explains the tendency for oligarchies of senior faculty to control much of the decisionmaking prior to collective bargaining, since the "apathetics" and the "spectators" delegate their decisionmaking authority, either through choice or by default, to a small number of faculty who then act in the name of all faculty members (McConnell and Mortimer 1971, p. 22).

Michels, in his study of oligarchies in labor unions (written in 1911), concluded that organizations were prone to develop ruling elites that were more conservative than their membership. These elites grew out of the need for centralized planning and coordination (1962). In academic institutions, a small group of individuals (usually senior faculty) gains experience in campus politics and often develops special relationships with the administration. Oligarchies frequently are "casual about their accountability to the general body politic" (McConnell 1971), and tend to perpetuate themselves by dominating important committees. Oligarchies often control faculty senates, and have been blamed for the ineffectuality of the senate "as a vehicle for promoting educational change or stimulating discussion of the fundamental purposes of the university" (Foote, Mayer et al. 1968, p. 33). The power of these oligarchies thus tends to reinforce faculty apathy, so that oligarchic power often remains unchallenged.

Role of Conflict and Change

Another element inherent in political systems is conflict. Coser saw conflict as a normal component of any social group, and found it to be beneficial in organizations such as colleges and universities. When conflict is focused on "goals, values or interests that do not contradict the basic assumptions" of the groups within the organization, then it allows "the readjustment of norms and power relations" (Coser 1956, pp. 151-152). Coser asserted that conflict was dysfunctional only when the organizational structure was too rigid to tolerate and institutionalize conflict (p. 157), rather than providing channels for conflict to be examined and resolved.

Causes of conflict within colleges and universities are numerous and varied, depending on the type of institution, its traditions, mission and history, and the personal characteristics of faculty and administrators (Begin 1973a). However, common sources of conflict in these institutions include differences in responsibilities between faculty and administration, the diversity within the institution, and differing loyalties to internal and external reference groups (McConnell and Mortimer 1971). The late 1960's and early 1970's brought extensive change to college and university campuses, and these changes exacerbated the conflict already present on campuses. A catalog of these changes is unnecessary, for each institution was affected by a different combination of factors with differential impacts. There is little doubt, however, that contributing causes of faculty unionization were the conflicts resulting from the numerous changes affecting colleges and universities in the late 1960's and early 1970's, coupled with the enactment of public employee bargaining legislation and the 1970 decision of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to allow unionization in private colleges.

Governance and Decisionmaking

The foregoing discussion of the political nature of colleges and universities and the existence of conflict on their campuses offers an explanation for the decision by faculty to unionize. Collegial governance relations such as those described by Millett (1962) and Goodman (1962) are based on loyalty to the institution and trust between faculty and administrators. The "shared authority" form of governance was not formalized and could be changed or eliminated at the whim of the administration or trustees. Common norms and values adhered to by faculty and administration alike were the basis for shared authority (Mortimer 1974a). But the conflicts of the past decade called into question the commonality of faculty and administrative values,

and weakened or destroyed the trust purported to exist at many campuses (Gamson 1968; Bloustein 1973). David Leslie noted that

colleges and universities are obviously no longer the norm-governed (and so communal) institutions they once were supposed to be. The ideal of the mutually responsive professional community that engaged in self-government based on philosophy of shared authority does not square with the practical realities of open recognition of conflicting interests . . . (1975, p. 47).

Relationships once based on trust were unable to offer the protection needed by faculty to combat the changes imposed by the environment. Administrators were pressured by funding sources, by state- and system-level educational bureaucracies, and by the exigencies of their own shrinking budgets to reduce costs and to increase productivity. Loyalty, trust, and collegial norms offered little protection against these forces for change.

A brief description of decisionmaking processes in higher education may clarify later discussions of collective bargaining in higher education. Attempts to create governance models have proved unsatisfactory because the bureaucratic model (Stroup 1966) and the collegial model (Millett 1962) are incomplete and inadequate to address the complexities of unionized academic governance. Baldrige's political model (1971), mentioned earlier, is more successful, but cannot describe the locus of decisionmaking or the actors involved. None of these governance models takes into account the many extra-institutional forces and characteristics of individual institutions that influence the process of academic governance.

A joint AAHE/NEA Task Force (1967) studied decisionmaking in several differing institution types and found five "zones of authority," ranging from administrative dominance through shared authority to faculty dominance (pp. 15-16). The locus of decisionmaking power depended upon the the type of decision being addressed, the type of institution, and the particular policies of an individual institution.

Nearly a decade later, Mortimer, Gunne, and Leslie used the "Five Zones of Authority" to examine the variable loci of decisionmaking and faculty perception of the legitimacy of decision structures. They found that certain issues fell into specific zones for similar institutions, but that competition between faculty and administrators for decisionmaking rights produced a shifting, often inconsistent, pattern of decisionmaking (1976, pp. 285-288).

A third study of academic decisionmaking linked structure to organizational effectiveness. Helsabeck (1973) conceptualized decisionmaking as two continua of participation and centrality. Participation

ranged from democratic to oligarchic, while the centrality of those individuals making the decision might vary from a corporate body to a federated system. Additional variables that addressed features of individual decisions (such as level of decisionmaking unit and perceived legitimacy of the group making the decision) were included in Helsabeck's "compound system" of interactive decisionmaking structure.

The foregoing discussion of the specialized structure, organizational participants, and internal dynamics of colleges and universities only begins to describe the complexities of these institutions. Individual institutional characteristics must also be considered when examining the effects of faculty bargaining, whether on an individual college or on higher education in general. With a basic understanding of the specialized nature of academic organizations, one can hardly be surprised at the initial resistance to and misunderstanding of faculty unionization on the part of administrators and faculty alike.