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William H. Sumrall
Bellhaven College

David W. Cox
Arkansas State University

D. Adrian Doss
Belhaven College

Don W. Jones
Belhaven College

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Participative Decisions and Organizational Commitment: A Quantitative Analysis

William (Bill) H. Sumrall,
David W. Cox, D. Adrian Doss, and Don W. Jones

Introduction

The Mississippi Legislature established public community colleges in the early twentieth century (Young & Ewing, 1978). The

William (Bill) H. Sumrall, Ed.D., is associate professor of business administration, Memphis campus, Belhaven College, Memphis, TN, 38137.

David W. Cox, Ed.D., is professor of education, Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, AR, 72467.

D. Adrian Doss, Ph.D., is assistant professor of business administration, Memphis campus, Belhaven College, Memphis, TN, 38137.

Don W. Jones, M.B.A., M.Div., is enrollment manager, Memphis campus, Belhaven College, Memphis, TN, 38137.

Recipient, Best Paper Award, 28th Annual Southern Industrial Relations and Human Resource Conference (SIRHRC), Savannah, GA 31401.

prediction has been made that future administrators and faculty, as educational leaders, will find increasing demands for their institutions to be assessed and held accountable for broadened arenas of responsibility (Newman, 1995). Researchers have anticipated that successful higher education institutions will find it necessary to implement new organizational goals and objectives. Further, the suggestion has been made that highly developed human relations skills will be needed as institutions adjust organizational purposes and abolish long established practices (Lorenzo & Banach, 1992).

At this critical juncture, a considerable quantity of the literature related to community college education has expressed a crisis in leadership (Maloney, 2003). College boards of trustees, through the Association for Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), have supported the continuance of hierarchical leadership in a call for more efficient, issue responsive, and centralized decision making

procedures (Association for Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 1996). Faculty members and their representative groups, however, have reiterated the importance of decentralized, participative decision making (Leatherman, 1998).

American society has experienced considerable change in the last two decades. Elements of this change have primarily been economic and political in nature. These changes have intensified the debate concerning the roles of boards of trustees, presidents, and faculty members in the governance of educational institutions (Maloney, 2003). Faculty members have found the strength of their position on some cherished professional and institutional issues deteriorating. Exclusive faculty rights previously taken for granted are no longer guarantees that come with faculty position. Job quality and security have grown into significant areas of faculty concern (Woodruff, 1992). In spite of this situation, literature in the field of human resource theory indicates that

employee participation in decision making and the resulting organizational commitment are important variables impacting achievement of organizational goals (Meyers, 1994).

Practical application of governance procedures has required a knowledge base upon which pertinent decisions are made. A review of the literature indicated data have not been collected and analyzed relative to the relationship between reported level of faculty participation in institutional decision making and organizational commitment of faculty in Mississippi community colleges. This study reviewed the relationship between the reported level of faculty participation in decision making and organizational commitment of faculty in Mississippi community colleges.

The primary purpose of this study was to test the premise that the degree of organizational commitment of faculty in Mississippi community colleges is related to the reported level of their participation in institutional decision making. The question of this study, therefore, was this: What relationship does faculty participation in institutional decision making in Mississippi community colleges have to faculty organizational commitment to those institutions? The second objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between

organizational commitment of faculty in Mississippi community colleges and the personal demographic characteristics of faculty age, gender, education level achieved, and years of teaching experience with the current institution.

This study is significant because there is a void in the available knowledge base concerning faculty participation in institutional decision making and organizational commitment of faculty in Mississippi community colleges. This study offers significance and utility for political and economic reasons at both the federal and state levels as it contributes to this important, but limited, knowledge base.

Literature Review

Human resource theory developed in the literature of business and industry during and after the 1950s (Morgan, 1997). A primary underlying assumption of human resource theory is the belief that employees who are allowed to participate in decision making will fulfill higher order psychological needs and, therefore, exhibit higher levels of satisfaction, morale, and outcomes closely linked to improved performance (Meyers, 1994). Although limited in educational application, there is increasing recognition in the higher education literature that individuals are most committed when they perceive

higher levels of participation in decision making on issues closely related to their professional work arena (Meyers, 1994).

Studies in the literature have suggested that educational leaders will find considerable positive outcomes associated with the development of stronger systems of participative decision making in higher educational institutions (Drummond & Reitsch, 1995). Bureaucracy has traditionally been the model of governance in community colleges (Alfred, 1985). Community college leadership has been described as being in a condition of crisis (Maloney, 2003). In an effort to improve institutional functioning and efficiency, some state legislatures have attempted to legally mandate shared governance in public institutions of higher education (Maloney, 2003); however, the suggestion has been made that incentives to encourage colleges to implement participative governance will be more purposeful than legal mandates (Howell, 1997).

Organizational commitment has received considerable attention in the literature as an important employee-organization linkage in understanding employee behavior in organizations (Mowday et al., 1982). Organizational commitment is the strength with which an individual identifies with and is involved with an organization (Mowday, et al.,

1982; 1979). The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire was developed by Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian to measure organizational commitment (Mowday et al., 1982; Mowday et al., 1979; Porter et al., 1974; White et al., 1995). Outcomes of organizational commitment have been reported in the literature to include job performance, tenure, absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover (Mowday et al., 1982). The literature has indicated influential variables which act upon organizational commitment to include age, tenure on the job, educational level attained, and gender (Mowday et al., 1982).

In the 1920s and 1930s, the human relations theory of organizations emerged under the leadership of Elton Mayo in response to studies at the Hawthorne Plant of Western Electric Company in Cicero, Illinois (Morgan, 1997). The Hawthorn studies marked the beginning of the human relations movement, a second major school of organizational theory. Unlike the classical school which assumed "efficient organizations would be satisfying ones," the human relations school assumed "only satisfying organizations would be efficient" (Meyers, 1994: 13). The underlying foundation of the human relations movement was that individuals and groups perform more effectively when their needs are satisfied (Morgan, 1997). Managers began to use

the human resource theory to justify providing more concern for the worker, more participation in decision making, and a more friendly work atmosphere (Meyers, 1994). The human relations movement was an attempt to improve morale and productivity through emphasis on employee participation (Fleishman, Harris, & Burt, 1955). Researchers began testing people-related variables such as status, informal groups, morale, attitude, and personality (Coch & French, 1948; Whyte, 1948; Given, 1949; Dalton, 1950).

An important outgrowth of the human relations approach to organizational theory was a third school entitled human resources (Meyers, 1994). Raymond Miles is credited with a model to summarize the sequence of human outcomes associated with application of a human resources approach to organizational theory (Meyers, 1994). The model suggests participation of employees in decision making leads to an overall increase in quality of decision outcomes as subordinates exercise responsible self-direction in the accomplishment of decisions they helped to establish, which results in more satisfied employees, improved performance, and reinforcement of creative decision making (Meyers, 1994).

Human resource theory developed in the literature of business and industry during and after the 1950s. Human

resource theory was based on the works of Maslow, McGregor, Herzburg, and Likert (Meyers, 1994). Maslow (1954) founded the hierarchy of human needs model in which human adults are identified as being motivated by the achievement of needs ranging from physiological need achievement to self actualization need fulfillment. McGregor (1960; 1967) is credited with writings in which he describes employees as being naturally responsible and motivated to achieve organizational goals so that combining the achievement of individual and organizational goals is basic to human resource theory.

Herzberg (1966) wrote that individuals are motivated by such elements as achievement, recognition, and the work itself. Likert wrote and described how employee participation results in maximum performance in most situations (Meyers, 1994). Blake and Mouton (1964) are known for creation of their managerial grid model. The managerial grid model is designed to indicate managerial concern for people versus concern for production. Peters and Waterman (1982) explain how excellent organizations search for and promote autonomy, entrepreneurship, and innovation from all employees, and remain productive through the human factor.

Human resource theory and its emphasis on the

linkage between employee participation, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and higher levels of performance have received high levels of acceptance and following over the last few decades (Meyers, 1994). Human resource theory provides a theoretical foundation of support to the participative or shared governance movement and represents a significant theoretical alternative to classical organizational management (Meyers, 1994).

Community colleges must overcome a number of significant traditional issues when implementing participative institutional decision making. These issues have included resistance to changing historically political and bureaucratic governance methods, invasive state legislation, and lack of a strong system with a local board legally authorized to govern (Nussbaum, 1998). Additional problem situations that have been associated with participative governance include turf battles among faculty, staff, students, and management constituencies as all pursues their organizational agendas; bilateral agreements between the district and the warring groups resulting in fragmented budgets; resistance to change; unsound legal justification in decision making; and a slow decision making process (Healy, 1997; Nussbaum, 1998).

According to Healy (1997), presidents have stated

that the high degree of consultation in participative decision making limits their ability to do their jobs as chief operating officers. Presidents have expressed the perception they are besieged by numerous pressure groups, such as employee unions wanting more money and state officials wanting rapid change and improvements (Healy, 1997). Boards of trustees often ignore the term participative decision making because its implication is a level of cooperation that is impossible, in reality, to provide (Leatherman, 1998).

Cohen and Brawer (1996) provided a reality check when they reported that actual governance procedures maintained at many community colleges continued to exhibit bureaucratic and political organizational structures with little meaningful concern for the protection of staff's rights, satisfaction, and welfare, even while education leaders expressed verbal support for the existence of participative decision making. Kezar (1998) further predicted a similar degree of constituent exclusion in decision making under a participatory model as under a bureaucratic model.

Organizational commitment has received considerable research attention as an employee-organization linkage and has been identified as an important factor in understanding employee behavior in organizations (Mowday, Porter, & Steers,

1982). Organizational commitment goes beyond "passive loyalty" to an organization because it involves an "active relationship" where the individual is willing to offer some personal contribution of self to enhance organizational well-being (Mowday et al., 1982).

Study of the employee-organization linkage in relation to the commitment variable expands understanding of the general psychological processes underlying the human decision to identify with selected organizations and therefore assists in better understanding the human life experience (Mowday et al., 1982). Individuals join organizations seeking to find a work situation in which they can apply their abilities in exchange for the opportunity to satisfy various human needs, which might include economic and psychological needs (Mowday et al., 1982). Organizations receive in return the abilities of the employee applied toward achievement of the organizational goals and objectives (Haynes, 1999). The psychological contract between the employee and organization is strengthened by the nature and quality of the association and therefore the extent to which the employee identifies with and is bonded to the organization (Mowday et al., 1982).

For purposes of this study, organizational commitment is defined as the "relative strength of an individual's

identification with and involvement in a particular organization” (Mowday et al., 1982, p. 27). The definition implies three primary characteristics of the individual highly committed to an organization. These characteristics include (a) strong support of the organization’s value system, (b) the will to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and (c) the intention to remain associated with the organization (Mowday et al., 1982). As defined, commitment is a broader concept than job satisfaction. Satisfaction relates to specific job tasks. Commitment involves a global set of conditions extending to the organization’s goals and values (Mowday et al., 1982).

Research studies reported by Mowday et al., (1982) indicated that the personal characteristics of age, tenure on the job, educational level attained, and gender are influential variables upon organizational commitment. Studies have, in general, reported commitment to be positively related to age and tenure (Mowday et al., 1982). One possible explanation is that as an individual’s age and tenure increase, the number of alternative employment opportunities decreases, thus reducing the perceived level of freedom and increasing the psychological attachment to the present organization (Mowday et al., 1982).

Education is generally reported in the literature to be inversely related to commitment (Mowday et al., 1982). Explanations include the greater difficulty organizations might experience meeting the needs of higher educated individuals and the possibility that higher educated individuals are more committed to a profession or trade (Mowday et al., 1982). Gender is, in general, related to commitment with women reported as being more committed than men (Mowday et al., 1982).

The outcomes of organizational commitment reported by Mowday et al., (1982) include job performance, tenure with the organization, absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover. Studies have consistently reported a weak relationship between commitment and job performance (Mowday et al., 1982). However, highly significant positive correlations were reported in the literature between increased tenure with the organization and increased organizational commitment (Mowday et al., 1982). Commitment to the organization was reported to be one of several variables motivating employee attendance (Mowday et al., 1982). Organizational commitment was reported to be a very significant variable in reducing employee turnover (Mowday et al., 1982).

Methodology

The levels of faculty participation in institutional decision making were reported by study respondents on a four-point scale that varies from a high level of participation at zone four, faculty primacy, to a low level of faculty participation at zone one, administrative dominance. Organizational commitment was measured on a four-point Likert scale that ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Demographic variables included age, gender, education level achieved, and length of teaching experience with the institution.¹

The data reported by respondents in section two were submitted to a reliability analysis using Cronbach’s alpha on the SPSS 14.0 program. A Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.918 was calculated using the data responses on the 15 organizational commitment items. This level of Cronbach’s alpha coefficient indicates good reliability with no obviously poor survey items (Cronk, 2004).

The target population for this study was defined as all full-time academic, technical, and career faculty members in the public community colleges in Mississippi. There are fifteen individual public community college districts in Mississippi. Branch campuses were included in this study. Approximately 2,349

academic and career-technical faculty members are employed in the Mississippi community college system. The entire population was included in the study to assure an adequate number of responses. Given a universe population of $N = 2349$, the required return size was 331. The number of required returns was based on tabulations by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) which are conservative estimates of sample proportions within + or - 0.05 of the known population proportions at the ninety-five percent level of confidence. A response rate of 38.53 percent was achieved through the participation of 905 faculty members from 2,349 survey instruments mailed to the entire population of academic, technical, and career education faculty in the fifteen public community colleges comprising the Mississippi community college system.

Frequency data and descriptive statistics were calculated for all of the items on the questionnaire. The SPSS-PC 14.0 software package was used to generate frequency distributions. Questionnaire return rates and percentages were generated and reported in tables. The frequencies and percentages of the responses to demographic variables were also generated and presented in tables. A frequency table demonstrated responses for each of the 15 items in Section II, the OCQ. The SPSS-PC outputs were analyzed to determine

measures of dispersion and measures of central tendency. Two-factor Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the relationship between the factor reported level of participation in decision making, adjusted for the demographic factors and organizational commitment, the dependent variable. Two-way interactions of these factors were included in the ANOVA. Organizational commitment was measured, for each respondent, as the mean of the 15 commitment items.

Discussion

The study was timely in relation to the current political interest in the management of the higher education system to improve educational outcomes in relation to student performance in the United States. Second, the importance of this study in relation to its implications for economic development in Mississippi makes this study very consequential. Observations by this researcher indicated the Mississippi Legislature recognized the importance of effective community colleges in the deliverance of post-secondary education. The politically motivating variable has been the advancement of economic opportunity for Mississippi citizens through growth of the Mississippi economy. Highly competent community college leaders, capable of generating the highest level of organizational

performance, are needed to accomplish these educational and economic goals.

This study was delimited to the investigation of the relationship between faculty participation in institutional decision making and organizational commitment of full-time academic and career-technical faculty in the fifteen public Mississippi community colleges. These institutions are relatively homogenous because they are subject to the same laws, exist in the same political environment, and rely upon Mississippi state tax monies for the majority of their operational financing. Limitations of the study included the methodology employed and the instrumentation. The study assumed the survey participants provided honest responses to the questionnaire. The study was limited by the definition of the terms used, the level of significance ($p = < 0.05$), and the statistical techniques employed.

The study researched two questions: (1) Does a relationship exist between the level of reported faculty participation in the decision making process in Mississippi community colleges and the commitment faculty claim to these institutions? and (2) Are the personal demographic characteristics of Mississippi community colleges' faculty participants in this study of age, gender, education level attained, and length of

teaching experience at their present institution related to the degree of commitment faculty claim to these institutions?

The hypothesis H_1 for question one stated, "There is no significant relationship between the level of reported faculty participation in the decision making process in Mississippi community colleges and the degree of commitment faculty claim to these institutions." The hypothesis H_2 for question two stated, "There is no significant relationship between the personal characteristics of age, gender, education level attained, or length of teaching experience at present institution and the degree of commitment faculty in Mississippi community colleges claim to these institutions."

Findings

A demographic profile of the 905 respondents was reported by gender, highest degree earned, age, and years of service at their present institution. Female respondents numbered 597 or 66 percent of the sample and male respondents numbered 308 or 34 percent of the sample. Faculty holding the Master's degree represented 438 respondents or 48.4 percent of the sample. The age group, 46 years to 60 years, represented the largest percentage of respondents. The years at current institution group, five years to

15 years, represented the largest percentage of respondents.

Forty-four percent or 398 faculty members reported administrative dominance as the level of faculty participation in decision making on their campus. Respondents indicating administrative primacy numbered 262, or 29 percent, of participants. Respondents indicating shared authority numbered 164 or 18.1 percent of participants. Respondents indicating faculty primacy numbered 81, or 8.9 percent, of participants.

Participants responded with a 92 percent or higher total agreement in five of the nine positively-worded items on the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. Respondents indicated 97.8 percent total agreement with the survey item, "I really care about the fate of this institution." Respondents indicated 96.0 percent total agreement with the survey item, "I am willing to put forth a great deal of extra effort in order to help this institution be successful." Respondents indicated 94.4 percent total agreement with the survey item, "I am proud to tell others I am a part of this institution." Respondents indicated 92.3 percent total agreement with survey item, "I am extremely glad that I choose this organization to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined." Respondents indicated 92.0 percent total

agreement with the survey item, "I talk up this college to my friends as a great organization to work for." Respondents indicated 84.2 percent total agreement with survey item, "I find my values and the institution's values are very similar." Respondents indicated 45.6 percent total agreement with the survey item, "I would accept almost any job assignment in order to keep working for this organization." Respondents indicated 77.0 percent total agreement with the survey item, "This organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance." Respondents indicated 78.3 percent total agreement with the survey item, "For me this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work."

On the negatively-worded items, respondents indicated a 3.8 percent total agreement with the survey item, "Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake on my part." Respondents indicated a 17.3 percent total agreement with the survey item, "It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this college." Respondents indicated a 19.0 percent total agreement with the survey item, "I feel very little loyalty to this institution." Respondents indicated a 19.1 percent total agreement with the survey item, "There is not too much to be gained by sticking with this organization indefinitely."

Respondents indicated a 30.5 percent total agreement with the survey item, "Often, I find it difficult to agree with this organization's policies on important matters relating to its employees." Respondents indicated a 45.0 percent total agreement with the survey item, "I could just as well be working for a different organization as long as the type of work was similar."

The first study question asked, "Does a relationship exist between the reported level of faculty participation in the decision making process in Mississippi community colleges and the commitment faculty claim to these institutions?" A one-way ANOVA computation comparing commitment means for the four levels of participation was applied to analyze this question. A significant difference was found among the levels of participation in decision making ($F(3,901) = 78.96$, $p < 0.05$) and the commitment means reported by respondents. The Scheffé post hoc test indicated significant differences for all comparisons of total commitment means and level of participation except for shared authority (3.42) versus faculty primacy (3.52). Hypothesis H_1 was rejected because statistical analysis revealed that faculty in Mississippi community colleges do report a significant difference in the degree of commitment they claim to their institutions and the level

of participation in decision making they experience on their campuses. Means of total commitment reported in this study formed a hierarchy by level of participation that is distributed as follows: faculty primacy ($m = 3.52$), shared authority ($m = 3.42$), administrative primacy ($m = 3.24$), and administrative dominance ($m = 2.90$). The rejection of hypothesis H_1 verified the conclusion of Mowday et al., (1982) that higher levels of participation in decision making are related to higher degrees of total commitment of faculty to their colleges.

The second study question asked, "Are the personal characteristics of Mississippi community college faculty participants in this study of age, gender, education level attained, and length of teaching experience at their present institution related to the degree of commitment faculty claim to these institutions?" Commitment means and standard deviations for levels of participation by gender indicate 308 respondents were male with a commitment mean of 3.04 and a standard deviation of 0.56; and 597 respondents were female with a commitment mean of 3.20 and a standard deviation of 0.48. Respondents reported administrative dominance to represent the most frequently perceived level of faculty participation in decision making on their campuses. Female respondents reporting

administrative dominance numbered 237 with a mean commitment level of 2.98 and a standard deviation of 0.52. Male respondents reporting administrative dominance numbered 161 with a mean commitment level of 2.80 and a standard deviation of 0.56.

Male and female respondents reported faculty primacy to represent the least frequently perceived level of faculty participation in decision making on their campuses. Male respondents numbered 27 with a commitment mean of 3.50 and a standard deviation level of 0.43. Female respondents numbered 54 with a commitment mean of 3.53 and a standard deviation of 0.31. The commitment mean by level of participation for male respondents ranged from a low of 2.80 to a high of 3.50. The commitment mean by level of participation for female respondents ranged from a low of 2.98 to a high of 3.53.

A two-way ANOVA computation on commitment means for levels of participation, gender, and the interaction effects was applied to analyze the gender aspect of this question. A significant main effect for level of participation was found ($F(3,897) = 76.56$, $p < 0.05$). However, the main effect of gender to organizational commitment was not significant ($F(1,897) = 3.51$, $p > 0.05$). The interaction was not significant ($F(3,897) = 2.40$, $p > 0.05$). Although

participation was found to be significant in relation to commitment, gender had no significant effect on the degree of commitment that faculty claim to their institutions.

Commitment means and standard deviations for levels of participation classified by age groups were analyzed. Administrative dominance had a total of 398 respondents with a mean of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 0.54. The age group of 46 years to 60 years represented the largest number of respondents with 230 responses. Administrative primacy had a total of 262 respondents with a mean of 3.24 and a standard deviation of 0.40. The age group of 46 years to 60 years represented the largest number of respondents with 146 responses. Shared authority had a total of 164 respondents with a mean of 3.42 and a standard deviation of 0.34. The age group of 46 years to 60 years represented the largest number of respondents with 97 responses. Faculty primacy had a total of 81 respondents with a mean of 3.52 and a standard deviation of 0.36. The age group of 46 years to 60 years represented the largest number of respondents with 41 responses. The total number of respondents was 905 with a mean of 3.15 and a standard deviation of 0.51. The age group of 46 years to 60 years represented the largest number of respondents with 514 responses.

A two-way ANOVA

computation on commitment means for levels of participation, age groups, and the interaction effects was applied to analyze the age aspect of this question. A significant main effect for level of participation was found ($F(3,889) = 19.22, p < 0.05$). However, the main effect of age group to organizational commitment was not significant ($F(3,889) = 4.13, p > 0.05$). The interaction was also not significant ($F(9,889) = .62, p > 0.05$). Although participation was found to be significant in relation to commitment, age group had no significant effect on the degree of commitment that faculty claim to their institution.

Commitment means and standard deviations for levels of participation classified by level of education were analyzed. Administrative dominance had a total of 398 respondents with a mean of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 0.54. Master's level of education represented the largest number of respondents with 179 responses. Administrative primacy had a total of 262 respondents with a mean of 3.24 and a standard deviation of 0.40. Master's level of education represented the largest number of respondents with 133 responses. Shared authority had a total of 164 respondents with a mean of 3.42 and a standard deviation of 0.34. Master's level of education represented the

largest number of respondents with 88 responses. Faculty primacy had a total of 81 respondents with a mean of 3.52 and a standard deviation of 0.36. Master's level of education represented the largest number of respondents with 38 responses. The total number of respondents was 905 with a commitment mean of 3.15 and a standard deviation of 0.51. The Master's level of education was characteristic of the largest number of respondents with 438 responses.

A two-way ANOVA computation on commitment means for levels of participation, education level, and the interaction effects was applied to analyze the education level aspect of this question. A significant main effect for level of participation was found ($F(3,889) = 37.93, p < 0.05$). The main effect for education level was not significant ($F(3,889) = .43, p > 0.05$). The interaction was also not significant ($F(9,889) = .75, p > 0.05$). Although participation was found to be significant in relation to commitment, education level had no significant effect on the degree of commitment faculty claim to their institution.

Commitment means and standard deviations for levels of participation classified by level of teaching experience in years at present institution were analyzed. Administrative dominance had a total of 398 respondents with a mean of

2.90 and a standard deviation of 0.54. The experience group of 5 years to 15 years represented the largest number of respondents with 207 responses.

Administrative primacy had a total of 262 respondents with a mean of 3.20 and a standard deviation of 0.40. The experience group of five years to 15 years represented the largest number of respondents with 114 responses. Shared authority had a total of 164 respondents with a mean of 3.42 and a standard deviation of 0.34. The experience group of five years to 15 years represented the largest number of respondents with 71 responses. Faculty primacy had a total of 81 respondents with a mean of 3.52 and a standard deviation of 0.36. The experience group of five years to 15 years represented the largest number of respondents with 35 responses. The total number of respondents was 905 with a mean of 3.15 and a standard deviation of 0.51. The experience group of five years to 15 years represented the largest number of respondents with 427 responses.

A two-way ANOVA computation on commitment means for levels of participation, years of experience, and the interaction effects was applied to analyze the years of experience aspect of this question. A significant main effect for level of participation was found ($F(3,889) = 57.98, p < 0.05$).

The main effect of experience group to organizational commitment was not significant ($F(3,889) = 1.14, p > 0.05$). The interaction was not significant ($F(9,889) = .39, p > 0.05$). Although participation was found to be significant in relation to commitment, years of experience at present institution had no significant effect on the degree of commitment faculty claim to their institution.

Null hypothesis H_2 postulated that the relationship between the personal characteristics of gender, age, education level attained, or length of teaching experience at present institution and the degree of commitment faculty in Mississippi community colleges claim to these institutions is not significant. The two-way ANOVA was used to measure the significance level in the relationship between each of the personal characteristics of gender, age, education level attained, and years of teaching experience at the present institution with commitment. The 905 cases reported valid data on these specific personal characteristics and commitment. The statistical findings indicated a sufficiently small F value with the resulting $p > 0.05$ such that the null hypothesis was retained. The relationship between the personal characteristics of gender, age, education level attained, or length of teaching experience

at present institution and the degree of commitment faculty in Mississippi community colleges claim to these institutions was not significant.

Conclusions

The demographic findings indicate a profile of the typical Mississippi community college faculty member. She is female, holds the Master's degree as the highest level of education attained, is between the ages of 46 years to 60 years of age, and has taught five to fifteen years at the present institution.

Institutional decision making in Mississippi community colleges is reported by faculty to be located primarily within the administrative levels of these organizations. This conclusion is drawn from findings of the study which indicate 73 percent of faculty participants report administrative dominance (44 percent) or administrative primacy (29 percent) as the level of faculty participation in decision making on their respective college campus. Results of this study suggest that rather than share authority, administrators continue to hold onto decision making authority.

Administrative dominance may be effective in leading Mississippi community colleges in an emergency situation, such as the recent hurricane Katrina; however, this study suggests that the long-term application of

administrative dominance may have negative consequences. These negative consequences might include faculty who desire to work somewhere else, who feel there is little to gain by continuing to work with the college, and who disagree with the institution's policies concerning its employees.

Administrative primacy is preferred to administrative dominance in that faculty members are considered in the decision making process by administrators on certain issues; however, administrative primacy is incorporated into the decision making process when necessary to achieve organizational goals requiring faculty participation. A preponderance of decision making authority and resulting outcomes continue to be made by individuals in administrative positions.

An interesting finding of this study is that Mississippi community college faculty members remain committed to their institutions in spite of a low level of participation in decision making. Faculty respondents indicate relatively high institutional commitment with a mean of 3.15 on a four point scale; however, only 27 percent of the faculty respondents report shared authority or faculty primacy in decision making on their campus.

The existence of a committed faculty does not preclude the opportunity for expanded faculty commitment

within Mississippi community colleges in this critical element of organizational development. Increased faculty commitment through more shared participation in decision making remains available. This study is grounded in the theoretical assertion that commitment increases as higher levels of faculty participation in decision making are nurtured within the organizational culture. For example, study respondents find considerable difficulty agreeing with their institution's policies on important matters relating to personnel. This conclusion is supported by the relatively large 30.5 percent of study respondents who indicated total agreement to item twelve in the survey instrument which stated,

Often, I find it difficult to agree with this organization's policies on important matters relating to its employees.

A significant relationship exists between the reported level of institutional decision making by faculty in Mississippi community colleges and the degree of commitment they feel to their respective institutions. In addition, the relationship between the personal characteristics of gender, age, education level attained, or length of teaching experience at their present institution and the degree of commitment faculty in Mississippi

community colleges claim to these institutions is not significant.

Mississippi community colleges benefit from the high level of institutional commitment faculty claim. Faculty respondents indicate that they care about the fate of their institution (98 percent) and put forth a great deal of effort to help the institution be successful (96 percent). Faculty respondents indicate that they proudly report to others their association with their institution (94 percent). Faculty respondents are confident in the decision they made to work for the institution (96.2 percent) and desire to continue employment at their institution (80.9 percent). In this manner, committed faculty respondents contribute positively toward the achievement of institutional goals and outcomes through increased employment tenure, less tardiness and absenteeism, and perhaps increased job performance.

Recommendations

Mississippi community college leaders should take note of the high level of institutional commitment indicated by faculty members. However, educational leaders in Mississippi community colleges should realize that there remains additional commitment to be gained by including faculty in higher levels of meaningful decision making. In addition,

Mississippi community colleges with a highly committed faculty are likely to obtain organizational benefits which include longer employment tenure, less tardiness and absenteeism, and perhaps increased job performance.

College leaders should not assume a significant difference in faculty commitment based upon demographic characteristics of gender, age, education level attained, and years of teaching experience at the institution. This study reports no significant relationship between organizational commitment and gender, age, education level attained, and years of teaching experience with the present institution.

Opportunities should be provided for faculty to have input into the college decision making process. Faculty should fulfill their professional responsibilities by accepting these opportunities to participate in decision making at their respective colleges.

Mississippi community college leaders should be aware of the high percentage (58.8 percent) of study respondents in the age group of 46 years to 60 years. This high percentage of respondents in this age group implies the likelihood of a large number of faculty retirements in the next few years. Further research is needed to determine the following:

1. The organizational level in the decision making process in which faculty members report meaningful involvement.
2. The perceptions of community college administrators concerning faculty participation in institutional decision making.
3. The reasons for Mississippi community college administrators adopting administrative dominance or administrative primacy zones of decision making, given the benefits to be received by greater faculty participation in decision making.
4. What additional variables account for Mississippi community college faculty having a high level of commitment in spite of their reported low level of participation in making decisions.
5. If Mississippi community college faculty members desire additional involvement in the decision making process and at what organizational level they desire to participate.
6. If there is a significant difference in the reported levels of participation in decision making and

commitment levels of faculty by teaching discipline (for example, academic versus career-technical education).

Endnote

1. The survey instrument may be obtained from the authors upon request.

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