

Relationship Between Pupil Control Ideology and the Quality of School Life

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The public school is considered a special type of service organization with respect to selectivity in the client-organization relationship. What Carlson (1964) noted almost three decades ago remains true today. That is, public schools have little choice in the selection of the clients (students) and, conversely, students have little choice in their participation in the organization of the school. The mandatory nature of the pupils' participation suggests that schools are of necessity dealing with some students who have little or no desire to take advantage of the services delivered by the school. It seems reasonable that the control of pupils would be a major concern, as well as the students' perception of the method of control upon their relationship with the school as an institution.

Pupil control has been conceptualized along a continuum ranging from "custodialism" at one end to "humanism" at the other (Willower, Eidell, & Hoy, 1973), and as the "integrative theme" of the school (Willower & Jones, 1967). The Pupil Control Ideology Form (PCI), was constructed by Willower, Eidell and Hoy (1973) to measure the pupil control ideology of teachers on a humanistic-custodial continuum.

While considerable attention has been given to pupil control in the schools and to teacher effectiveness (Bidwell, 1965; Brookover, & Erickson, 1975; Cleor & Alexander, 1992; Deal & Celotti, 1980; Dobson, Goldenberg, & Elsom, 1972), relatively little attention has been given to the influence of pupil control on students' satisfaction and the perception of the quality of their life in school. However, several well-established studies have discussed student reactions to school as a separate outcome of schooling (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967). In addition, innovations in school organization have made educators more aware of student reactions to school (Weber, 1976).

The concept of quality of life, taken from environmental studies of adults, has been applied to elementary, middle and high school students by Epstein and McPartland (1976). They utilized the construct of quality of school life to identify schools with a climate of positive affect. In a subsequent work, Lunenburg and Schmidt (1989) posited that three factors contribute to the quality of life in a school: (1) satisfaction (a measure of the level of students' general

reactions to school); (2) commitment to class work (a measure of the level of student interest in work prompted by the educational opportunities available); and (3) reactions to teachers (a measure of the nature of the student-teacher relationship). Epstein and McPartland (1976) developed the Quality of School Life Scale (QSL) to measure students' perceptions of the quality of life in classrooms and schools through their personal satisfaction with various elements of school life.

The problem investigated in this study is whether teacher-pupil control ideology is associated with the perception of the quality of school life in the classroom. Furthermore, this study examined whether teachers' orientations concerning pupil control are related to the quality of school life as perceived by students. It was hypothesized that teachers possessing a humanistic pupil control ideology would create a more positive quality of school life for students than teachers who maintained a custodial posture.

Experimental Design

Operational Definitions

Willower, et al., (1973) defined pupil control ideology as the teacher's stated belief regarding the control of students in classrooms and schools. This ideology is operationalized and measured by the PCI Form on a scale that ranges from a custodial to humanistic perspective. A custodial pupil control ideology stresses the maintenance of order, impersonality, unilateral-downward communication, distrust of students, and a punitive, moralistic orientation toward the control of students. At the other end of the scale, a humanistic pupil control orientation emphasizes the psychological and sociological bases of learning and behavior, an accepting, trustful view of students, and confidence in their ability to be self-disciplining and responsible.

Quality of school life is a measure affected by the informal and formal aspects of school, social and task-related experiences and relationships with authority figures and peers as viewed by students. Because school is a major part of youngsters' lives, students who are positive in their evaluation of life in school may be more likely to experience feelings of general well-being. They also may be more likely to behave in socially acceptable ways and help other students in the school setting (Lunenburg, 1983).

Method

The measure selected for teacher pupil control orientation was the Pupil Control Ideology Form (PCI, Willower, et al., 1973), an instrument adapted from the work of Gilbert and Levenson (1957). This instrument consists of 20 Likert-

type scale items that generate a range of scores from 20 to 100. The higher the score, the more custodial the individual is judged to be.

In earlier studies, validity of the PCI Form was based upon principals' judgments concerning the pupil control ideology of some of their teachers (Willower, et al., 1973). Principals were asked to read descriptions of the custodial and humanistic viewpoints and to identify a specified number of teachers whose ideology was most like each description. The number of teachers of each type was based on the size of the school. A t-test for the difference of the means of two independent samples was applied to "test the prediction that teachers judged to hold a custodial ideology would differ in mean PCI Form scores from teachers judged to have a humanistic ideology" (Willower, et al., 1973). Using a one-tailed test, the calculated value was 2.639, indicating a difference in the expected direction, which was significant at the .01 level. The split-half reliability of the scale resulted in a .91 reliability coefficient (Willower, et al., 1973).

The instrument used to measure students' perceptions of quality of school life was the Quality of School Life Scale (QSL, Epstein & McPartland, 1976). The QSL is a multi-dimensional measure of student reactions to school in general, to their class work, and to their teachers. It is designed for use with students in grades 4-12 to help teachers and administrators measure students' reactions, to describe and monitor the conditions of school life, and to make decisions about the success of school programs. Three sub-scales form the 27-item QSL, based on three dimensions of the quality of school life construct. The Satisfaction with School (SAT) sub-scale examines students' general reactions to school. The Commitment to Classwork (COM) sub-scale deals with the level of student interest in class work. The Reactions to Teachers (TCH) sub-scale examines student evaluations of instructional and personal interactions with teachers. The scoring system for the QSL is a simple tally of the number of positive evaluations for each sub-scale and for the total scale.

The hypothesis in this study stated that there is a relationship between teacher humanism in pupil control ideology and student reports of a favorable attitude toward the quality of school life. Sub-hypotheses were generated for each of the three sub-tests of the quality of school life. The first sub-hypothesis was that teacher humanism in pupil control ideology will be associated with high student satisfaction with school in general. The second sub-hypothesis was that teacher humanism in pupil control ideology is associated with high student commitment to class work. The third sub-hypothesis was that teacher humanism in pupil control ideology is associated with positive student reactions to their teachers.

Subjects

Five school districts in Illinois were selected to participate in the study. These districts are located in the northeastern and north central regions of the state. They represent communities of varying sizes with diverse socioeconomic and racial backgrounds. The study included six schools in the five school districts: two urban schools, two suburban schools and two rural schools.

The grade levels chosen in the elementary schools were fifth through eighth grade. These grade levels were chosen because of the reading and comprehension levels required in administration of the scales to students. Grades nine through twelve comprised the four high schools in the sample. Usable data were obtained from nearly 250 teachers and approximately 5,000 students who voluntarily and anonymously participated.

Procedure

A trained researcher administered the instruments in all schools. An effort was made to standardize procedures for the administration of the instruments by using the same administrator for all the respondents. The same instructions and instruments were administered to all teachers and students. Specifically, each teacher completed the PCI Form and each student completed the QSL scale.

All students were informed that their participation was strictly voluntary. Nevertheless, no student decided to opt out of the experiment. No attempt was made to contact teachers or students who were absent on the day the instruments were administered. There was no evidence that any teachers or students remained away from school to avoid participation in the study.

Results

The statistical procedures employed in this study include the Pearson product-moment coefficient of correlation and multiple stepwise regression analysis. Results are reported in Table 1.

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between teacher humanism in pupil control ideology and student reports of the quality of school life.

The computation of the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) yielded a value of $-.18$ which was significant beyond the $.01$ level. The coefficient of determination was computed to give the percentage of the variance in one variable that is accounted for by the variance in the other variable.

The negative value of r indicated an inverse relationship. That is, a low mean PCI score is correlated with a high mean QSL score. While the predicted relationship was statistically significant at the .01 level, the relationship was low. Only 3 percent variability has been accounted for between the variables-pupil control ideology and the quality of school life. Hence, the hypothesis is substantiated with some reservation.

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between teacher humanism in pupil control ideology and students' high satisfaction with school.

The computation of r obtained in testing the second hypothesis yielded a value of $-.17$ which was significant at the .01 level. The negative value of r indicated an inverse relationship. In this case, a low PCI score is correlated with a high SAT score and vice versa. This means that the hypothesis is accepted, although it should be noted that the coefficient of determination is .0289. Therefore, only 2.9 percent of variability is accounted for between pupil control ideology and students' satisfaction with school.

Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between teacher humanism in pupil control ideology and student reports of positive commitment to class work.

The computation of r derived from testing the third hypothesis yielded a value of $-.20$, which was significant at the .001 level. Again, the negative value of r indicated an inverse relationship. This means that a low mean PCI score is correlated with a high mean COM score. Thus the prediction was confirmed, with reservations as with hypothesis one and two. Only 4 percent of the variance has been accounted for between the variables-pupil control ideology and commitment to class work.

Hypothesis 4: There is a relationship between teacher humanism in pupil control ideology and student reports of favorable student-teacher relationships.

For the fourth hypothesis, a correlation of $-.17$ was obtained. Again, the negative value of r indicated an inverse relationship. In this case, a low PCI score is associated with a high TCH score, and vice versa. While the predicted relationship was statistically significant at the .01 level, this relationship was low as indicated by the degree of closeness of association. About 3 percent variability has been accounted for from an analysis of the relationship between the variables-pupil control ideology and student-teacher relationships.

Table 1
Pupil Control Ideology vs. Quality of School Life

Variable	N	Mean	Sigma	r
Pupil Control Ideology	239	57.49	10.28	r= -.180*
Quality of School Life	239	12.57	3.23	
Pupil Control Ideology	239	57.49	10.28	r= -.168*
Satisfaction with School	239	2.02	0.75	
Pupil Control Ideology	239	57.49	10.28	r= -.203**
Commitment to Class work	239	4.92	1.45	
Pupil Control Ideology	239	57.49	10.28	r= -.180*
Student-Teacher Relations.	239	5.59	1.34	

*p = .01 **p = .001

Discussion

This investigation began with the hypothesis that teacher humanism in pupil control ideology would be related to students' positive reactions to the quality of school life. The prediction was that students would report the quality of school life more positively when their teachers were more humanistic in pupil control ideology.

The findings of the present study indicate that statistically significant relationships exist between teacher pupil control ideology and the quality of school life as perceived by students. These relationships make sense theoretically. The school classroom is a social system with an important degree of integration between teacher and pupils. According to Parsons' classic work (1960), teaching cannot be effective if the pupil is simply a recipient of information without any further relationship to its purveyor. There are no simple prescriptions for changing the climates of schools. Schools should consider in-service programs designed to diminish the tendency of some teachers toward custodial pupil control ideology. Teacher training institutions should include activities designed to decrease the emphasis on activities which reinforce rigid pupil control ideologies. Administrators and teachers need to design strategies to make the school a more attractive place for students to be.

School leaders must be concerned with the quality of school life in their organizations. They should seek for themselves the possible relationships between quality of school life and other variables in addition to pupil control ideology. It is imperative that school administrators seek any and every means of improving the quality of school life for teachers and students. There is a need for additional research into the cause and effect relationship between pupil control ideology and the quality of school life and student achievement. The study reported in this article generated significant, yet low, correlation between these variables.

School climate has been studied with a number of variables using different methodologies, theories, and models. Unlike most research that uses climate as an independent variable, this study used it as an outcome variable. Studying human behavior in schools involves ordering and conceptualizing mutually interacting variables. More precise models are needed at this time. Meaningful school research in the future requires the careful specification of causal models. Outcomes tied to a specified model will prove beneficial not only to educational researchers but to practitioners and policy makers as well.

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