School Leadership and Teachers' Motivation to Implement Accountability Policies

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Guided by a synthesis of theory on human motivation and evidence about teachers' motivation to implement school reform, this study aimed to better understand the responses of teachers and school administrators to government accountability initiatives and to assess the extent to which leadership practices had a bearing on those responses. Interview data from 48 teachers and 15 administrators in five secondary schools provided evidence for the study. Results help explain the largely negative motivations to implement government accountability policies and indicate differences in such motivation between teachers and school-level administrators. These results also imply that some forms of school leadership may serve as antidotes to negative teacher motivations when such motivations are caused by shortsighted and abrasive government implementation strategies.

There is considerable variation on the surface of reform initiatives across educational jurisdictions in developed countries at this time—changes in curriculum, student testing, school governance, funding formulae, roles and relationships of principals, and trustee power, for example. But this variation often masks fundamental similarities below the surface. For example, over the past decade, without giving it this label, many jurisdictions have been

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pursuing some form of performance-based approach to large-scale reform (Massell et al., 1994).

Performance-based approaches to large-scale reform are nothing if not comprehensive in the array of tools they use to stimulate change. Nonetheless, increasing the accountability of schools is, to advocates of this approach, what a silicon chip is to a computer or what an engine is to an automobile. Without mechanisms for increasing accountability, a performance-based approach to reform is just a hollow shell. Indeed, the same reform efforts are often described in different places as both performance-based approaches (Odden, 1999; Smith & O'Day, 1991) and instances of the new approach to educational accountability (Elmore, Abelman, & Fuhrman, 1996). Accountability, as Adams and Kirst (1999) pointed out, is viewed by many reformers "as a springboard to school improvement" (p. 463).

The prevailing dominance of accountability on the agenda of educational reformers might cause one to assume that quite a lot is known about the actual effects of increasing school accountability. However, from a broad review of the existing literature, Fuhrman (1994) concluded that "much current policy . . . assumes a great deal about how the strategies actually work and how [educators] are likely to respond" (p. 336). But educators are a diverse group and are likely to respond in diverse ways to the same accountability initiative, depending on the sense they make of it. Furthermore, although empirical evidence about the effects of some accountability tools has grown in the past few years (e.g., Lee, 1993; Spillane & Zeuli, 1999), in reference to the broad array of such tools currently in use, our knowledge is still quite limited.

Most government reform initiatives calling for greater accountability on the part of schools assume a key role for principal leadership (e.g., Wolf et al., 2000). But recent quantitative evidence suggests that principal effects may be considerably smaller than reformers imagine. Furthermore, the realization of those effects is likely to be indirect (Hallinger & Heck, 1996), leading to the recommendation that more attention be given to school conditions through which such leadership influence flows.

The aim of this study was to better understand the responses of teachers and school administrators to government accountability initiatives and to assess the extent to which leadership practices had a bearing on those responses. Other questions guiding the study were, How do teachers and administrators respond to government-initiated calls for greater accountability in schools? How can their responses be explained? How might school leaders be more helpful to teachers in making productive use of external accountability initiatives?

CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

Evidence for the study was collected in the Canadian province of Ontario during the 1999-2000 school year. This was 5 years into the mandate of a conservative government elected on a platform that it labeled "the common sense revolution." Modeled after other neoconservative government initiatives in, for example, New Zealand (Lauder & Hughes, 1999); Alberta, Canada (Levin & Young, 1998); and England (Finkelstein & Grubb, 2000), this platform aimed at the restructuring, downloading, and downsizing of public services and a series of ambitious tax cuts (Bedard & Lawton, 2000). For schools, this resulted in substantial changes in school governance, financing, and curriculum and assessment policies during the first 5 years of the government's tenure.

With respect to school governance and administration, for example, school districts were amalgamated, reducing their numbers from 129 to 66 and, on average, doubling their size; the total number of elected trustees in the province was reduced from 1,900 to 700; school councils having a majority of parent members were established but with advisory powers only; principals were removed from the teachers' bargaining unit; and a college of teachers was mandated to regulate the profession, monitor teaching standards, and take responsibility for certification and the review of preservice training and professional development programs offered by faculties and other agencies in the province.

Significant changes also were made by the government to education funding in the province. Education was removed from the local property tax base, for example, and boards of education were no longer allowed to set and collect local taxes, relying instead on grants from the province alone. Per pupil funding was reduced to something approximating the average for provinces in Canada, and students older than 21 were no longer eligible for funding as full-time students but as continuing education students, regardless of their program.

Many changes were made in provincial curriculum and pupil assessment policies. New curriculum frameworks were written for all grades, this having the greatest effect on secondary schools in which the program was reduced from 5 to 4 years. The government also mandated use of a common provincial report card in all schools aligned to the curriculum frameworks and student standards. Provincewide, every-student testing was initiated (initially in Grades 3 and 6 in mathematics and English), giving the media the resources to compare schools and districts and to publish the ranking of schools within districts, which, of course, they did.

These changes, and many others aimed at increasing the accountability of schools, were sweeping in scope, occurred at a very fast pace, and were carried out with very little attention to the advice or preferences of professional educators in the province. At least in these respects, the Ontario experience was very similar to experiences in many other jurisdictions subject to the performance-based reform efforts of recent governments.

FRAMEWORK

The framework for our study consists of variables and relationships from recent theories of human motivation, and evidence about conditions likely to influence teachers' and administrators' motivation to implement accountability policies.

There exists, already, a mature literature about the first of these matters and a small but significant amount of evidence about the latter. Such conditions, as Miles and Huberman (1984) have so convincingly argued, make a relatively tight, prestructured design appropriate. So the qualitative data collected in this study were used both to test and possibly to modify our conceptual framework. A synthesis of two approaches to theory and research on motivation by Pittman (1998) informed our framework. One approach explains the motivational processes associated with people's construction of their understandings or mental representations of the world; this approach is the source of one of the variables included in our framework, that is, the attributions and related judgments teachers and administrators make about the outcomes and intentions of government policies. The second approach to motivation identified by Pittman (1998) explains how motivation affects people's overt actions. Developed most fully by Ford (1992) and Bandura (e.g., 1986, 1990), this approach offers some refinements to those goal-setting, expectancy, and contingency theories that have been noted in some previous studies of teacher motivation in school reform contexts (e.g., Heneman, 1998; Kelley & Protsik, 1997; Milanowski, 2000). According to this approach, motivational processes are qualities of a person oriented toward the future and aimed at helping the person to evaluate the need for change or action (Ford, 1992). These processes are a function of one's personal goals, beliefs about one's capacities, beliefs about one's context, and emotional arousal processes, the four remaining variables in our framework. Both approaches to motivation identified by Pittman (1998) include a central role for emotions, and both attach considerable importance to goals and intentions.

Perceived Policy Outcomes

Evidence reviewed by Pittman (1998), Jones and Davis (1965), and Weiner (1990) suggests that the meaningfulness of government accountability policies begins with educators' judgments about the anticipated or experienced desirability of policy outcomes. When a policy is judged to have desirable consequences, it is likely to be viewed favorably for implementation, provided that educators perceive such outcomes to be relevant to their work and that the government both intended such outcomes and is responsible for their realization. Educators are likely to reject a policy as not meaningful under exactly the same set of conditions, except for a judgment of outcomes as undesirable. This judgment will give rise to feelings of anger and frustration, although these feelings will be less extreme when the government is understood to have been constrained in some way (could not make the decision it might have preferred) by factors outside its control. When the government is viewed as acting in a largely unconstrained environment, extremely negative evaluations are likely to occur, evaluations that will be even more extreme if, as in the context of this study, the government is also viewed as generally critical of school professionals and their work.

Although not a focus of this study, educators' beliefs and judgments about government intentions may be more or less accurate. Evidence suggests that one's perceived sense of control (ability to make sense of a policy) influences one's emotional states positively or negatively. These emotional states, in turn, have a bearing on the degree to which one will be concerned about the accuracy of one's information processing. Such accuracy is further influenced by expectations of future interactions with the other person or group (in this case, the government) and the extent to which one is dependent on this interaction for important outcomes. Also an influence on accuracy concerns is personal accountability for justifying one's attitudes or inferences, the importance of the task, and a number of personal qualities such as desire for control and the need for closure and structure.

The experience of lack of control has two effects according to this perspective: an increased desire to regain understanding or potential control and an increased desire to avoid the negative implications of any further loss of control. If increased attention, effort, and thought seem likely to succeed, then accuracy motivation will predominate. If not, the teacher or administrator may initiate ego-protective measures such as self-handicapping or fall prey to illusions and biases as part of the price of defensive behavior. Accuracy motivation, furthermore, will be highest during the process of deciding what to do, whereas motivationally compatible illusions are more likely when one has decided to act and is in the process of acting.

Although it seems likely that teachers' perceived policy outcomes are influenced by what school leaders do, we are unaware of research exploring the matter.

Goals

Personal/professional goals are the objects of a person's commitment and engagement, representing desired future states (aspirations, needs, wants, interests) that have been internalized by an individual. Goals energize action toward the implementation of government accountability policies when a person's evaluation of present circumstances indicates that it is different from the desired state and when goals are perceived to be hard but achievable. To have motivational effects, goals also must be clear and concrete and include goals for the short term that are understood within the context of the longer term and, perhaps more important, more obviously valuable goals (Bandura, 1986; Locke, Latham, & Eraz, 1988).

The most often cited goals motivating teachers are typically viewed as intrinsic in nature: helping students learn and seeing them meet achievement goals (Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975). Nonetheless, intrinsic and extrinsic goals interact. Although teachers primarily are motivated by intrinsic goals, money matters, especially to teachers whose pay falls short of personal needs (Ozcan, 1996). Johnson (1986) distinguished three problems that require different orientations to teacher goals: attracting people into the profession, retaining them once there, and engaging them in improving their own performance. Most relevant to our study, the third goal requires the orchestration of organizational incentives that encourage teachers to think about their work in new ways and commit themselves to new standards and goals. According to Johnson's (1986) review, these incentives should "coordinate teachers' efforts, provide them with shared purpose, enhance the conditions of their work, and reaffirm their professional identity" (p. 74).

Several recent studies carried out in school reform contexts further clarify the nature of teacher goals in the face of government reform initiatives. Studying the implementation of the whole-school reform Success for All (SFA), Datnow and Castellano (2000) found further evidence of the primacy of intrinsic goals for teachers. SFA appealed to many teachers because they believed that it did a good job of teaching their students to read (the teachers' dominant goal), even though it was hard to implement. Kelley and Protsik (1997) and Heneman (1998) inquired about teacher motivation in response to pay-for-performance policies in Kentucky and North Carolina, respectively. Both studies reported that bonuses were appreciated by teachers as a form of recognition and a source of pride but had little, if any, "before-the-fact"

motivational value. The performance-based measures used in Kentucky focused more than did North Carolina's on clarity, reliability, content, fairness, and teaching to the test. As a result, they caused more extensive change in classroom instruction than did the tests used for determining bonuses in North Carolina (see also Wolf et al., 2000). Kentucky teachers also were acutely aware of negative sanctions prompted by poor test results (including state intervention in the management of schools and dismissal of teachers) and were anxious to avoid them. Firestone, Mayrowetz, and Fairman's (1998) comparison of the effects on instruction of performance-based assessment in Maine and Maryland produced results very similar to those found in Kentucky and North Carolina.

Although teachers seem primarily motivated by the goal of reaching their students even in the context of specific reforms that are difficult to implement, other more extrinsic goals also come into play. When reforms are accountability oriented and the stakes are high, teachers' intrinsic goals may be partly displaced by such extrinsic goals as money and "winning" the school's ranking competition. This shift in motivational goals may have nontrivial consequences. Teachers who are constrained in ways likely to reduce their own intrinsic motivation to teach may behave in more controlling ways and be less effective in teaching their students. Furthermore, perceptions of the teacher as intrinsically motivated increase the chances of students' being intrinsically motivated as well (Pittman, 1998).

School goal-setting and visioning processes initiated by school leaders have significant effects on teachers' personal goals (Hallinger & Heck, 1996) when those processes allow for authentic engagement by teachers in deliberating about the most appropriate directions for themselves and their schools (Heald-Taylor, 1991). Specific leadership practices toward this end include, for example, helping provide teachers with an overall sense of direction, exciting teachers with a vision of what they may be able to accomplish if they work together, and assisting teachers to understand the relationship between external initiatives for change and the school's mission (Leithwood, Tomlinson & Genge, 1996).

Capacity Beliefs

Such psychological states as self-efficacy, self-confidence, self-concept, and aspects of self-esteem are included in the term *capacity beliefs*. It is not enough that people have energizing goals in mind. They must also believe themselves to be capable of accomplishing these goals. Beliefs about personal teaching efficacy influence students through the type of classroom environment teachers create (Bandura, 1993). Perceived self-efficacy

increases the intrinsic value of effort and contributes to a sense of collective efficacy on the part of a group as well (Goddard, 2000). Teachers' beliefs about their individual professional efficacy are significantly related to the effectiveness of their classroom practices, student learning, and the likelihood that they will engage in classroom and school improvement initiatives (Ross, 1998; Smylie, 1990). Teachers' sense of collective efficacy also has been associated with improved student achievement (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 1999).

Bandura (1990) claimed that increased perceptions of self-efficacy may result from a person considering information from three sources: their actual performance (specifically, perceptions of success perhaps formed through feedback about the adequacy of that performance from others), vicarious experience (often provided by role models), and verbal persuasion (the expressed opinions of others about one's abilities to acquire needed capacities). Teacher efficacy beliefs are influenced by such variables as school size, sense of control over classroom conditions, sense of community, teaching assignment, the nature of the school's culture, and feedback from colleagues and supervisors (Lee, Dedrick, & Smith, 1991; Ross, 1998). In quite different school reform contexts, both Heneman (1998) and Kelley and Protsik (1997) reported that teachers were influenced by the confidence they had in their ability to implement the necessary changes in their practices. Successful teachers perceived a link between their efforts and subsequent improvements in student achievement.

Significant relationships have been reported between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and leadership practices exercised by principals such as buffering and delegating (Lee et al., 1991), modeling behavior, providing contingent reward, individualized support (Hipp & Bredeson, 1995), and inspiring a sense of shared purpose (Ross, 1998).

Context Beliefs

As we reported above, capacity beliefs are influenced by such features of the organizational context as school size, sense of community, teaching assignment, and feedback from colleagues. Additional features of the context influence teacher motivation in reform contexts, however. As a result of previous mismanaged, ill-conceived, or short-lived initiatives for change, many experienced teachers have developed considerable skepticism about how supportive the school context will be for their implementation efforts (Huberman, 1988). Negative context beliefs created by these past experiences easily may graft themselves onto teachers' perceptions of current

reform initiatives in their schools eroding the motivation to implement such reforms.

Recent studies of school reform identify specific features of the context affecting the motivation of teachers. Datnow and Castellano (2000) found that some teachers were positively influenced by their belief that the SFA program created consistency across the school in the way teachers were able to talk to one another about the teaching of reading. Implementation also was aided by the strong support perceived by teachers from the principal, the facilitator, and the SFA trainers. In her study of reform in San Diego, McLaughlin (2000) found that how the reform was introduced "soured people from believing in the benefits of the 'what,' causing teacher resistance, animosity, and angst within some schools" (p. 3). Furthermore, some teachers resisted the initiative because they believed there was insufficient evidence to support the positive effects claimed by the reformers. Heneman's (1998) investigation of teacher responses to a school-based performance award program found that teachers were influenced by the availability of resources, curriculum alignment, team teaching and planning opportunities, professional development, and parent support for their work. Receiving best practice information was an important feature of the context in studies by both Heneman (1998) and Kelley and Protsik (1997).

Principal leadership has a more significant effect on teachers' context beliefs than the three other sources of motivation included in our framework (Earl, Levin, Leithwood, Fullan, & Watson, 2001; Leithwood, 1994). Positive context beliefs by teachers are associated with such school leadership practices as helping to clarify the reasons for implementing the policy, empowering teachers to participate in decisions about how the policy will be implemented, providing resources to assist such implementation, and making available opportunities to acquire the new skills necessary for policy implementation (Leithwood, 2001).

Emotional Arousal Processes

Emotions and feelings may arise from judgments about the desirability of policy outcomes, as well as capacity and context beliefs. They influence the accuracy of one's understandings, as well as serve to maintain or discontinue patterns of action such as policy implementation; teachers' engagement from day to day in such actions will be sustained by a positive emotional climate. Conditions supporting such a climate are likely to include, for example, frequent positive feedback from parents and students about their experiences with the school's change initiatives, frequent positive feedback from one's

teaching colleagues about one's success in achieving short-term goals associated with change initiatives, and a dynamic and changing job (Ozcan, 1996).

Positive emotions help teachers persist in attempting to accomplish long-range goals when evidence of progress is meager. But they can also be subordinated in the service of goals considered more central to teachers' motivation. Datnow and Castellano (2000) found that the structured and highly prescribed nature of SFA was viewed by some teachers as boring, monotonous, demeaning, and generally interfering with their enjoyment and creativity. Some teachers adapted the program extensively for this reason. But some endured their negative feelings because they felt the program was helpful for kids, and that mattered more to these teachers than their own enjoyment. Firestone et al. (1998) found weak effects of "avoidance of shame" responses on the part of teachers and administrators faced with high-stakes state-testing policies. Although the stakes were not exceptionally high in this study, educators clearly wished to avoid the embarrassment that would accompany the failure of the school to score adequately on the tests. So they were inclined to make relatively superficial changes in their practices that would ensure success rather than more fundamental changes called for by the reform.

School leaders contribute to the positive valence of teachers' emotions by complimenting teachers on good work, requesting their advice on important matters, and ensuring that others inside and outside the school are aware of teachers' contributions to the success of the school. These are honorific rewards that can produce feelings of enjoyment, satisfaction, and happiness when they are interpreted by teachers as evidence of appreciation and respect for their work (Johnson, 1986; Ozcan, 1996).

RESEARCH DESIGN

Although qualitative in nature, the purpose of our research design was to test the propositions included in our framework, to extend our understanding of the framework-related variables in one context, and to develop a better appreciation of the relationship among the variables in the framework. Using Miles and Huberman's (1984) terms, our purposes lie "off center" (p. 28) toward the confirmatory end of an exploratory-to-confirmatory continuum.

Data for the study were provided by a total of 48 teachers and 15 school administrators selected in approximately equal numbers from five secondary schools in south-central Ontario. Schools were located in four different districts. All districts were large (80,000 to 300,000 students), geographically close to the university, and as a group represented both public (two districts) and Catholic school (two districts) contexts. Schools within these districts

were selected by central office staff because they volunteered to participate in response to information distributed about the study. Teachers within these schools were selected randomly, and administrators included the principal/ vice principal administrative team for each school.

A semistructured questionnaire consisting of two sets of questions was used to guide interviews with both teachers and administrators. One set of questions, the focus of this article, asked the following:

> The provincial government has launched a great many new initiatives over the past two years in particular. Which of these seem to you to be aimed at holding schools more accountable? For each, have you been able to observe any actual effects? If so, describe.

There was no additional probing other than "anything else." Care was taken to ensure that unanticipated responses and opinions had a chance to surface during the interviews. All interview data were audiotaped, transcribed, and coded using both the interview questions and the constructs in the framework as a guide. For each accountability initiative mentioned by respondents, identical comments made by an individual were coded only once. The number of comments is sometimes more than the number of teachers because the same comment could have been made about more than one initiative.

RESULTS

Results are reported in five sections, corresponding to the variables in our framework. These results include both teacher and administrator responses to government accountability policies as a whole (15 were mentioned).[1]

Perceived Policy Outcomes

The motivation for educators to implement an accountability policy begins with the perceived desirability of its outcomes. Forty-seven teachers and all 15 administrators interviewed made comments about the desirability of policy outcomes. Teachers made a total of 473 comments, of which 19% (37 teachers) were neutral (e.g., "hasn't yet begun," "mixed feelings," "we've had meetings," "seems to be business as usual," "I try to take what the Ministry says and mold it into something I can live with"), 14% (35 teachers) were positive (e.g., "good idea," "has interesting aspects," "potential benefit for parents and students," "good if used to improve," "great in theory," "helps us be accountable"), and 67% (40 teachers) were negative (e.g., "not an

effective strategy," "we're not prepared," "too much work," "parents and students will suffer," "not enough time").

Administrators made a total of 174 comments, of which 28% (13 administrators) were neutral, 22% (12 administrators) were positive, and 51% (11 administrators) were negative. The content of administrators' comments were similar to those of teachers, with an added focus on their responsibilities to their staff, for example, "we need to make sure that teachers are inserviced." Other comments coded as neutral included "it's too soon to tell," "we have no choice," and "we have to provide proof to parents that we are implementing." In addition to the kinds of positive comments made by teachers, 5 principals expressed faith that their teachers would be able to handle the implementation. The content of administrators' negative comments was very much like the comments of the teachers. Twelve teachers and 4 administrators saw not much difference between existing practices and one or more of the practices advocated by the initiatives (no "gap" to be reduced). Although teachers and administrators identified similar ratios of positive, neutral, and negative effects, administrators were more likely to express positive and neutral effects, overall. Negative comments by teachers about the effects of government accountability initiatives ranged from 37% to 90%, with 10 out of 15 accountability initiatives mentioned having 60% or more negative comments. For administrators, the range was 7% to 100%, with 5 out of 12 accountability initiatives mentioned (42%) having 60% or more negative comments.

Goals and Intentions

Teachers and administrators made approximately the same proportion of comments about government intentions for accountability policies: 37 of 48 teachers made 109 such comments as compared with 11 of 15 administrators who made 30 such comments. Teachers averaged 2.9 such comments per person as compared with 2.7 for administrators.

The majority of teacher comments expressed disbelief that the government's accountability initiatives were motivated by educational concerns. Instead, such intentions were perceived to be either political in nature—for example, "a political ploy pandering to business interests," "good little sound bites," "have taxpayers believe that something new is afoot"—(44% of responses, 21 teachers; 57% of those who made attributions) or aimed at achieving greater consistency across schools (16%, 14 teachers), making teachers more accountable (15%, 10 teachers), or increasing parent involvement (11%, 6 teachers). Only three comments attributed to the government an intent to improve teacher effectiveness (3 teachers), and only 13 com-

ments (12%, 12 teachers) identified an intent to benefit students (6 of these comments from 5 teachers) were explicitly connected to student learning. Most government accountability policies were perceived by at least some interviewees to arise from intentions on the part of the government not closely aligned with their own central professional goals—the improvement of teaching and learning. As one teacher said,

> The whole scrutiny that teachers are under right now . . . I think [it's] ostensibly to improve student learning, but I think there's another agenda that's . . . there . . . it's certainly veiled, but I think it's definitely there. . . . I don't think [these initiatives] are educationally driven, I think they're more politically driven. I think they've really been about who has the power and who's going to wield it.

The administrators who were interviewed held less skeptical views of the governments' motives than did teachers. Of their 30 comments coded as "government motives," 53% (7 administrators) identified student benefits, with about two thirds of these referring explicitly to student learning. Albeit less frequently, administrators, nonetheless, did identify many of the same noneducational intentions as teachers: politics (17% of comments, 4 administrators), achieving greater consistency (10%, 3 administrators), and making teachers or schools more accountable (17%, 4 administrators). One comment was made about increasing teacher effectiveness as a motive.

Capacity Beliefs

Almost all evidence relevant to capacity beliefs was negative. With the exception of some inservice probably provided by the school or district, the government's actions surrounding their accountability initiatives conspired to erode teachers' sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their work generally, as well as in their ability to respond productively to the specific accountability initiatives of the government. As one teacher said,

> [With all] that we've been required to do in terms of teaching, it makes it very, very, very difficult to embrace any new initiatives that are coming out and also to get excited about them. Because people are just very, very tired.

Comments from teachers indicating reduced capacity beliefs included talk about feeling unprepared and uncertain about what implementation would look like (35 teachers); challenges to professional discretion, which included the belief that the new curriculum "left no room for artistry" (5 teachers); and challenges to their sense of professionalism (21 teachers),

which included the belief that the government did not value their existing practices:

> I frankly think we've been doing this all along. Can we do it better? Of course we can. But it's not to say that we haven't been accountable in the past. And that's an insult when that's almost hinted at.

Such talk also was about lack of confidence in the ability to deliver the program that needed to be delivered (4 teachers), the increased difficulty of doing their job caused by, for example, increased workload, need to prepare students from different cultures to take standardized tests, or pressure to teach to the test (30 teachers). Nine teachers simply said that it was hard to comply with the implementation requirements, and 9 teachers mentioned widespread evidence of burnout and low morale:

> We've been reprimanded, we've been denigrated, both provincially and locally. And the morale among teachers is extremely low as a result, extremely low. I've spent 18 years teaching and, yes, I'm considering leaving the profession.

Also eroding capacity beliefs was lack of confidence regarding the effectiveness or even the worth ("it's a waste of money") of the initiatives (31 teachers). Speaking directly to their professional self-concept was the fear, mentioned by 17 teachers, that implementing some of the initiatives actually would be detrimental to students.

Administrators also felt that their capacity was eroded primarily because of the added burdens resulting from the need to bolster teachers' sagging morale (9) and the difficulty of overcoming teachers' resistance to change (8). Ten respondents also pointed to the responsibility of having to train staff without adequate information: "How do we prepare staff for a test they know nothing about . . . as an instrument, . . . in terms of its delivery mode, in terms of its marking and reporting?"

Context Beliefs

The generally critical attitude of the government toward public education and the constant barrage of criticism toward teachers, in particular, were major contributors to teachers' uniformly negative context beliefs. "I think the shots that are being lobbed at teachers and education through the media, through being forced into strikes . . . there seems to be a war that this government is having with various sectors of our public servants." Specific factors

leading to skepticism about support for implementation were insufficient or vague information (11 teachers); inadequate resources, for example, textbooks and computers (9 teachers); unrealistic timelines (11 teachers); and uncertain access to inservice (2 teachers). One teacher expressed her feelings about the context as follows:

> I need time to implement all these wonderful . . . attempts . . . to make us more accountable. . . . I need to have time on my side. I need to have more professional development days. I need more inservices. . . . It seems like everybody's relying on the teacher to do all of this . . . that's great, as an individual I can accept that as something you want me to do, but you must give me the time to develop, you must give me the time to implement, and you must give me the time to receive professional development.

In addition, teachers feared misuses of data by the media resulting in unhelpful reactions from parents (24 teachers).

Administrators faced the same impediments to supportive context beliefs as did teachers, but they tended to talk about them in terms of their ability to help teachers deal with the consequences that had a direct impact on administrators' capacity beliefs (see above). For example,

> It's sad when you're asking heads of departments to initiate and implement curriculum and major, major changes in program and, at the same time, not give them the time to do it.

Emotions

Implementing a new initiative is fostered by experiences that elicit positive feelings. This source of motivation also interacts with other sources. For example, diminished capacity beliefs and unsupportive context beliefs give rise to negative feelings.

Anxiety caused by the pressure of uncertainty or lack of meaning associated with the government's policies was the most prevalent negative emotional response by teachers. Across all categories of initiatives, 35 teachers worried about what the changes would mean and wondered if they would be ready to implement them: "So there's a bit of anxiety about that. We're not sure what we're doing." Thirty-three teachers expressed frustration mainly about the lack of resources, information, and time for proper implementation. Thirty-one teachers complained about the ineffectiveness of the initiative for accomplishing its intended purposes, and 30 teachers complained that their own practices were impeded by the increased workload created by

government accountability initiatives: "I feel as though somebody's turned up the treadmill under us without our permission."

Teachers were annoyed (25), primarily at the government, for its not being accountable for its own initiatives, and teachers reported stress (22) because so much was happening so quickly. Public misperceptions and uninformed reactions, according to 24 teachers, contributed to such stress. Twenty-one teachers felt that the policy initiatives constituted an attack on their professionalism, also a source of stress. Seventeen teachers worried about possible negative effects on students, for example, "a lot of kids don't fit into either academic or applied [streams]," "kids get the fallout when we don't have time to give them extra help," and "students who are disadvantaged socioeconomically will be discouraged by the results [of provincewide tests]." Administrators, too, expressed frustration. For them, it was due to incomplete information for providing inservice to their staff (10). They were upset also at the attack on the professionalism of teachers (9). As one principal said, "I recognize that a significant number of my colleagues feel that they have been dissed." Eight principals were anxious about how they were going to deal with teachers' resistance to change. Overall, though, administrators were less anxious about the effects of government accountability initiatives than were teachers—for example, 41% of teachers who talked about curriculum reform made positive comments, whereas 54% of administrators did so; 31% of teachers who talked about provincial testing effects made positive comments, whereas 67% of administrators did so; and 50% of teachers who talked about the effects of report cards made positive comments, whereas 67% of administrators did so.

DISCUSSION

Our study aimed to better understand the sources of motivation influencing teachers' and school administrators' implementation of government accountability policies. Evidence from the study is consistent with theoretical explanations of human motivation encompassed by our framework. The majority of respondents perceived the effects of most accountability policies to be negative. This negative judgment of effects was aligned with perceptions that the government's intentions for many of its policies were unrelated to improving teaching and learning. Because these policies were unlikely to be a source of educators' most powerful sources of job satisfaction (Johnson, 1986; Lortie, 1975), they gave rise to sometimes extremely negative feelings toward the policies. On the other hand, most respondents were positively

motivated to implement curriculum-related policies unambiguously associated with the intention to improve teaching and learning. And larger proportions of administrator than teacher respondents consistently found some accountability policies meaningful, possibly because they had opportunities to experience policy effects in more and different settings than did teachers.

The context in which these judgments were formed was characterized by conflict and hostility between educators and the government not only about the nature of the policies but also the authoritarian, nonconsultative process used by the government to both develop and introduce them into the provincial education system. It seems likely that this context introduced a pervasive, negative bias into educators' judgments about the desirability of policy outcomes, suggesting that government approaches to policy making have an important influence on the success of policy implementation.

The government's accountability policies were part of a larger effort to restructure the provincial education system and so have some important parallels with the restructuring efforts of large corporations. Such initiatives are typically viewed as multistaged (Gouillart & Kelly, 1995), moving from restructuring (e.g., downsizing, pruning the business portfolio, overhauling structures and processes), through revitalization (rejuvenating strategies, renewing core competencies), to renewal (continuously identifying and eliminating waste, building new capacities). Corporate leaders typically assume that the first of these stages should be carried out in a centralized manner until performance improves while more participative processes become appropriate for the next revitalization and renewal stages.

But this transition rarely occurs in the smooth fashion that is anticipated, a problem that Chakravarthy and Gargiulo (1998) attributed to the erosion of leadership legitimacy; the primary difficulty is "the inability of top management to maintain its [social] legitimacy with the firm's employees through the restructuring stage" (p. 441). Loss of social legitimacy, as a consequence of authoritarian practices during that stage, leads to a dramatic reduction in the commitment top management is able to generate among employees for the organization's mission and strategies. Organizational transformation "may get stalled after the restructuring stage because of top management's inability to empower the firm's employees, at will, having lost their trust during the restructuring" (p. 437). This explanation seems directly applicable to the educational restructuring efforts of the provincial government.

School leaders may be in a position to recover at least some of the teacher commitment to policy implementation lost when governments use authoritarian strategies in their initial restructuring and policy making. Such recovery, usefully included in the concept of buffering, entails replacing social

legitimacy and trust lost by governments with social legitimacy and trust from another source. To do this, school leaders will need to appropriate government intentions for many accountability policies, as perceived by teachers, with a set of intentions to which those in the school are committed.

Evidence about educators' personal/professional goals indicated that because the majority of our respondents did not believe the government's intentions for many of their accountability policies to include the improvement of teaching and learning, they found little that resonated with their own professional goals. However, a small minority of teachers mostly from one school, and a small majority of administrators, did associate some of the government's policies with goals close to their own. So even though nonalignment with teachers' goals was the dominant finding, the motivation to implement government policies might have been significantly enhanced had stronger connections been made with such motives as improving the quality of teaching and learning rather than only reducing the budget for education and pursuing political ends.

Our evidence makes clear that not only do teachers believe they are primarily accountable to students and parents but also that they are likely to rank the government last among the agencies to whom they feel they should be accountable. Evidence from this study suggests that lack of moral authority on the government's part, growing out of a perceived discrepancy in goals, is one important reason for this attitude toward the government.

Educators in this study had overwhelmingly negative beliefs about their abilities to implement accountability policies. In the face of such evidence, theory and research predict not only a significant dampening of educators' commitment to implementing accountability policies (Heneman, 1998; Kelley & Protsik, 1997) but also the likelihood of quite superficial forms of implementation, when it does occur (Dweck, 1990). A considerable influence on the creation of these negative capacity beliefs was the general reform strategy adopted by the Ontario government. Popular among many other governments at present as well, this strategy includes the creation of a crisis and its attribution to the teaching profession (Berliner & Biddle, 1995), in the process eroding educators' confidence in their professional capacities, as well as their expectations for the continuing and crucial support of students, parents, and the public at large. In the setting for this study, the strategy also included creating policies that significantly reduced educators' discretion and sense of control over their work, a variable strongly linked to teachers' sense of efficacy (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Lee et al., 1991).

To the extent that negative capacity beliefs erode the likelihood of authentic policy implementation, this strategy must be viewed as myopic. In the

short term, it may undermine unwanted organizational stability or upset an equilibrium resistant to change. But its long-term consequences seem mostly damaging to the goal of authentic school improvement (not to mention unethical). Furthermore, as we have already noted, strategies for initiating large-scale reform in organizations that, at the same time, undermine the trust organizational members have in their leaders are cancerous for subsequent efforts to implement and institutionalize that reform (Chakravarthy & Gargiulo, 1998; Webb, 1996).

Evidence from the study about educators' context beliefs suggests that even under conditions of strong agreement with government intentions and a robust sense of efficacy, resistance to policy implementation may still exist. The prospects for such implementation are likely to be viewed as unrealistic given lack of time, resources, weak evidence of positive effects, inadequate professional development, and the like (e.g., Datnow & Castellano, 2000; Heneman, 1998; Huberman, 1988). Our data also suggest, however, that a relatively modest revision in the timelines for implementation, a revision entailing little or no financial cost, could have had a large effect on some teachers' and administrators' context beliefs. This is especially the case with many of the curriculum reforms. Consistent with evidence reported by Geijsel, Sleegers, van den Berg, and Kelchtermans (2001), from one quarter to one third of interviewees noted that there were aspects of the curriculum reforms with which they agreed and which were, in fact, overdue. But the changes were being introduced far too quickly. This response finds support in the empirical evidence about timelines for change (Fullan, 2001), usually interpreted to mean that implementation of a single, significant change in schools is a 3- to 5-year proposition.

Emotions featured prominently in our evidence of teachers' and administrators' responses to accountability policies, as they do in response to other types of large-scale reforms (Geijsel et al., 2001). However, the specific policies of direct interest to this study were introduced during a time of unprecedented conflict and hostility between the province's teachers and the government on many fronts, as pointed out above. So, the emotions (i.e., frustration, stress, annoyance, anxiety, insult) associated with the accountability policies in our data may well have arisen in response to a host of other matters involving the government, not just their accountability initiatives. This is one more reason for policy makers to begin to build commitment for their efforts during the policy-making or initial restructuring stage and avoid strategies that erode their social legitimacy among those whose cooperation will be key to successful policy implementation.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to a better understanding of teachers' and administrators' motivations to implement government accountability policies. Although these matters have been given little attention by governments with reform agendas (except when forced to by strikes, demonstrations, and acts of civil disobedience), they are likely to have a powerful bearing on the extent to which much of value for students materializes from "the new approach to accountability" (Elmore et al., 1996). Waugh (2000) has pointed out that the research community, as well, has been negligent in its attention to these matters. To conclude, we examine four implications from this study about government strategy and school leadership.

The broadest implication from our study hinges on a distinction made by Rowan (1990) between control and commitment strategies for bringing about organizational change and enhancing student achievement. The implication from our study is that control strategies are overrated by governments for implementing their own policies. Control strategies, mirroring the basic features of the strategy used by the government in this study, are "based on an elaborate system of input, process and output controls" (p. 354) designed to regulate and standardize school practices. Commitment strategies, in contrast, intend "to develop innovative working arrangements that increase educators' commitment to their work, thereby unleashing the energy and expertise of committed teachers" (p. 354).

Although Rowan (1990) cited inconsistent evidence of the effects of these strategies, results of this study point to some of the more serious, negative consequences of using control strategies. Our results also support one of the recommendations for large-scale restructuring learned from a more extended series of studies in British Columbia: "Disproportionate efforts during restructuring should be devoted to creating the conditions which foster teachers' commitment to the initiative. Commitment-building strategies for change seem especially productive in the context of the uncertainty and complexity associated with school restructuring" (Leithwood, 1996, p. 381).

A second implication from this study is that shifting from the early use of a control strategy to the later use of a commitment strategy (the "having your cake and eating it too" approach) is difficult to do successfully. The starting point for the control strategy used by the government in this study was far from unique among jurisdictions implementing accountability-based reforms, an ideologically driven reform agenda, assertions of a crisis in both education and the economy, and considerable impatience for change, along with an active predisposition against consultation with special interest groups (i.e., anyone claiming special knowledge).

In the space of its first 4 years in office, the government did manage to transform a very large proportion of its original educational platform into legislation. Evidence from this study suggests, however, that these same "winning conditions" for policy approval are major impediments in efforts to use these same policies for improving teaching and learning. Some teachers and approximately half of the administrators in our study did ascribe some purposes for the government's accountability policies with goals that they could endorse. But conditions associated with all other sources of their motivation made it unlikely that the government's initiatives would willingly become a priority for implementation.

The word *willingly* is a critical qualifier in this prediction. Many of the accountability policies discussed by educators in our interview data, for example, are now being implemented in most schools across the province. In the case of the provincial report card, teachers have had no choice over the past year but to report to parents using this form. In the case of provincewide achievement tests, the government agency responsible for this function has collected several rounds of data from all elementary schools and reported results to districts. Predictably, the media have consumed these results with great enthusiasm, publishing "league tables" unadjusted for variation in the family backgrounds of students, even though this is not very hard to do (see Clotfelter & Ladd, 1996; Sanders, 2000).

These examples demonstrate that control strategies are far from impotent in their effects. Furthermore, some may consider these effects to be evidence that schools are being reformed—and quickly (perhaps even before the next election). But this is a far cry from being able to claim that teaching and learning in schools are improving. That is what many of our respondents were saying, and that is what much of the relevant evidence now reported by others also seems to be telling us. Examples of reform initiatives implemented using control strategies, for which evidence of impact on schools and classrooms is negative or questionable, include school choice and related policies (Lauder & Hughes, 1999; Lee, Croninger, & Smith, 1997), school councils and site-based management (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998), high-stakes student testing (Clotfelter & Ladd, 1996; McNeil, 2000), student standards (Ohanian, 1999), and school inspection (Kenan, 2000).

We do not interpret this disappointing evidence to mean that initiatives such as these have no potential. Rather, we argue (see also Fullan, 2001) that without active advocacy, support, contextual refinement, and further development by educators at the local school level, there is little chance of these initiatives enhancing the educational experiences of children. These are things governments cannot legislate: Support must be earned, special expertise ought to be used, hubris should be resisted, and lack of evidence about the

consequences of many popular policies ought to be acknowledged. Since Lortie's landmark study in 1975 to the present (e.g., Dinham & Scott, 2000), virtually all relevant evidence portrays a level of commitment to their "clients" by teachers that other organizations can only dream of with their employees. Reform-minded governments would do well to consider what is to be lost by squandering such a resource through the heavy-handed use of control strategies and what the costs would be of finding an equally effective replacement.

Evidence from this study, as a third implication, also offers some insights about what would be some of the important features of a commitment strategy should a government choose to adopt one. Such a strategy would rationalize the intentions of policy initiatives in terms that resonate closely with educators' concerns about student learning; that is, governments would work hard to convince teachers that their reform initiatives are both intended and have the potential to pay off for children if skillfully implemented. A commitment strategy also would acknowledge the legitimate concerns teachers have about the different types of resources they will need to implement the government's initiatives. Slogans about working smarter and doing more with less ring hollow in schools that have lived through a decade of declining resources. Using commitment strategies, governments also would avoid going out of their way to attack teachers' capacity beliefs or feelings of self-efficacy. Because it is teachers, ultimately, whose practices must change in response to accountability initiatives, at least not eroding their confidence in themselves as valued professionals is of obvious importance.

Furthermore, most of what we know about building commitment to change tells us that feelings of enthusiasm and satisfaction are an important part of what sustains people under conditions of risk and uncertainty. Even though the primary sources of these feelings reside at the local level (peer approval of one's work, positive student reactions, and the like), governments embarking on commitment strategies for policy implementation would not make it harder than necessary for these sources to have their effect with shrill and manufactured criticisms, negative advertising, and punishment-based incentive systems. Although such tactics may increase the government's popularity with some voters, they are likely to erode the government's social legitimacy with educators, thereby reducing the likelihood that their policies will be successfully implemented (Chakravarthy & Gargiulo, 1998).

Finally, evidence from the study holds implications for what it is that school leaders can do, in the face of government control strategies, to successfully continue their improvement efforts. Acting as an antidote for an otherwise toxic implementation environment, such leadership seems likely to entail rebuilding at the school level at least some of those conditions that

motivate authentic policy implementation and that the use of control strategies by governments seem to destroy. Practices of school leaders are likely to have an especially strong influence on teachers' beliefs about the supportiveness of the context in which they worked for their policy-making efforts.

Our data also imply that more attention by school leaders to the potential contribution of the government's accountability policies to the improvement of teaching and learning, and the capacity of teachers to realize such outcomes, might significantly increase the likelihood of teachers' using accountability initiatives for their own purposes, rather than dismissing them out of hand. Evidence from other sources argues that many of the leadership practices likely to build these commitments on the part of teachers are encompassed in a transformational model of school leadership (Day, Harris, Tolley, Hadfield, & Beresford, 1999; Geijsel et al., 2001; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999).

NOTE

1. The 15 strategies identified are initiatives in general, program reform, provincial testing, teacher testing, report cards, literacy test, evaluation rubrics, increasing teachers' workload, school council, outcomes-based learning, Ontario College of Teachers, reduction of secondary schools from 5 to 4 years, teacher advisory program, changing the tax base, and capping average class size at 22.

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